



Homeless Bird

By Gloria Whelan

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Leaving Home...forever.

Like many girls her age in India, thirteen-year-old Koly is getting married. When she discovers that the husband her parents have chosen for her is sickly boy with wicked parents, Koly wishes she could flee. According to tradition, though, she has no choice. On her wedding day, Koly's fate is sealed.

In the wake of her marriage, however, Koly's life takes an unexpected turn, and she finds herself alone in a strange city of white-sari-clad windows. Her only choice seems to be to shed her name and her future and join the hopeless hordes who chant for food.

Even then, cast out in a current of time-worn tradition, this rare young woman sets out to forge her own exceptional future. And a life, like a beautiful tapestry, comes together for Koly-- one stitch at a time.

Books for the Teen Age 2001 (NYPL) and 2000 National Book Award Winner

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

"What if I don't like him?"

"Of course you will like him."

"But what if I don't?"

Maa impatiently slapped at a fly. "Then you must learn to like him."

But Koly never gets a chance to find out if she does care for her intended groom. Married and promptly widowed at 13, Koly finds herself in the grim position of being cast out by a society that has no place for girls like her. With a seemingly hopeless future in India, this courageous and spirited young woman sets out to forge her own destiny. Through perseverance, resourcefulness, and sheer luck, she manages not only to find a niche for herself, but even to find happiness again.

Gloria Whelan's tale of a remarkable girl in an extraordinary situation will linger with the reader long after the last page is read. The shaping of Koly's life, as anyone's, is in her own hands, as well as the hands of the society in which she lives. Her ability to express herself--and ultimately support herself--with her exceptional skill in embroidery is a symbol of the creative ingenuity that will serve her well throughout her tribulations. (Ages 8 and older) --*Emilie Coulter*

From Publishers Weekly

Whelan (Miranda's Last Stand) blends modern Hindu culture with age-old Indian traditions as she profiles a poor girl's struggle to survive in a male-dominated society. Only 13 when her parents find her a husband, Koly can't help feeling apprehensive about leaving home to live in a distant village with her in-laws and husband, none of whom she has met. The truth is worse than she could have feared: the groom, Hari, is a sickly child, and his parents have wanted only a dowry, not a wife for him, in order to pay for a trip to Benares so Hari might bathe in the holy waters of the Ganges. Koly is widowed almost immediately; later, she is abandoned in the holy city of Vrindavan by her cruel mother-in-law. Koly, likened to a "homeless bird" in a famous poem by Rabindranath Tagore, embodies the tragic plight of Hindu women without status, family or financial security. She is saved from a dismal fate by her love of beauty, her talent for embroidery and the philanthropy of others--and by Whelan's tidy plotting, which introduces a virtuous young man, a savvy benefactress and a just employer in the nick of time. The feminist theme that dominates the happily-ever-after ending seems more American than Indian, but kids will likely enjoy this dramatic view of an endangered adolescence and cheer Koly's hard-won victories. Ages 8-12. (Mar.)

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From School Library Journal

Grade 5-8--Thirteen-year-old Koly's arranged marriage seems a blessing for her impoverished family. Her mother embroiders a wedding sari, while the girl stitches her family memories into a quilt. But when she arrives at the home where, according to custom, she will live for the rest of her life under the supervision of her mother-in-law, she discovers that her 16-year-old husband Hari is gravely ill with tuberculosis. She learns that her dowry was needed to finance a journey to Benares, with the hope that the holy water of the Ganges River will cure him. Hari dies there and she is trapped, a widow with no future. Luckily, her father-in-law recognizes her desire to learn and teaches her to read. A few years later, when he, too, dies, her mother-in-law abandons her in another holy city, Vrindavan. Raji, a young rickshaw driver, helps Koly find a place to live and keeps track of her progress. Eventually, she finds work embroidering saris. Raji has a

plan, and a dream. He wants to make enough money to buy seed and tools and return to his village, with Koly as his wife. In a happy ending that suggests that established custom can be challenged in positive ways, she agrees. Whelan has enhanced a simple but satisfying story with loving detail about traditional Indian life, the harsh reality of feudal customs that persist today, and the complexity of cultural change. Readers with a curiosity about other worlds and other ways will find Koly's story fascinating.

Kathleen Isaacs, Edmund Burke School, Washington, DC

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Scottie Hicks:

Beside this Homeless Bird in your phone, it can give you a way to get nearer to the new knowledge or details. The information and the knowledge you may got here is fresh from the oven so don't possibly be worry if you feel like an aged people live in narrow town. It is good thing to have Homeless Bird because this book offers for you readable information. Do you often have book but you don't get what it's exactly about. Oh come on, that would not happen if you have this in the hand. The Enjoyable option here cannot be questionable, just like treasuring beautiful island. Techniques you still want to miss the item? Find this book and also read it from currently!

Megan Snyder:

Within this era which is the greater man or woman or who has ability to do something more are more special than other. Do you want to become one of it? It is just simple approach to have that. What you need to do is just spending your time not very much but quite enough to have a look at some books. One of many books in the top checklist in your reading list is Homeless Bird. This book that is certainly qualified as The Hungry Inclines can get you closer in growing to be precious person. By looking up and review this guide you can get many advantages.

Jeffrey Blough:

That reserve can make you to feel relax. This kind of book Homeless Bird was bright colored and of course has pictures on there. As we know that book Homeless Bird has many kinds or genre. Start from kids until teenagers. For example Naruto or Private investigator Conan you can read and feel that you are the character on there. So , not at all of book are usually make you bored, any it offers you feel happy, fun and unwind. Try to choose the best book for you personally and try to like reading this.

Della McDonald:

What is your hobby? Have you heard in which question when you got pupils? We believe that that concern was given by teacher to the students. Many kinds of hobby, Every individual has different hobby. And you know that little person similar to reading or as reading become their hobby. You need to know that reading is very important as well as book as to be the factor. Book is important thing to incorporate you knowledge,

except your personal teacher or lecturer. You find good news or update about something by book. Numerous books that can you choose to use be your object. One of them is actually Homeless Bird.

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