



Mistaken Enemy

Dennis Nehamen

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The Arab-Israeli conflict is distilled through personal battles in this thriller with a poignant edge.

In a thoughtful and fast-paced thriller, Dennis A. Nehamen introduces Zach Miller, a writer thrust into a deadly plot from almost the moment his plane touches down in Tel Aviv. *Mistaken Enemy* is an intriguing and carefully drawn work that moves at breakneck speed, with early hints that unfold in a series of surprising ways.

Fiction writer Zacchaeus Miller decides to travel to Israel on a whim, drawn strongly to the country for reasons he cannot fully articulate. On the flight over, he meets a man named Amir Hamdallah, and the two part on pleasant terms. Zach is sure he'll never run into Amir again. But a series of coincidences culminate in an invitation to Amir's home, where Zach is introduced to Amir's mysterious and headstrong sister Bahlya. His impromptu trip suddenly turns into a high-stakes adventure involving a long imprisonment, dark accusations, and a murderous plot.

This novel does not waste words, but instead features a first-person narrator with a distinctive, colloquial, and dramatic voice. It is heavy on action rather than description, from its teaser of a prologue through to Zach's eventual imprisonment. Some of this speed makes the book hard to follow, even discombobulating at times, especially since scenes aren't developed much before they launch into action.

Some common typographical mistakes, such as the confusion of "complimented" with "complemented," occur early on in the novel. These distract from the otherwise clean and deft prose.

The book takes place in an Israel rocked with conflict, from Arab-Israeli dissension to intrafamily disputes that cause ripple effects throughout the narrative. One of the strengths of the prose is that it distills some of these conflicts into personal battles that come to have more poignant and immediate meanings than a broad-strokes approach to these issues could provide. For example, the ideological conflicts between Amir and his father present a stark contrast between two generations' different viewpoints, further highlighted by the later revelations in the novel, even as the stakes spiral out from one powerful family to the wider world.

Mistaken Enemy is a smart thriller from a talented voice. Nehamen has crafted a story with a quick-moving plot, an unusual setting, and multidimensional characters, perfect for thriller readers looking for quick scenes and multiple moving parts over long descriptions and heavy reflection.

STEPHANIE BUCKLIN (February 3, 2016)

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