



The Beekeeper: Rescuing the Stolen Women of Iraq

Dunya Mikhail

Max Weiss, Translator

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The Beekeeper is Dunya Mikhail's haunting account of Abdullah, who devoted his life to rescuing mostly Yazidi women and children kidnapped and kept captive by the Daesh, aka the Islamic State. The book includes autobiographical elements about growing up in Baghdad and confronting war, told through poetry and lyrical prose.

Intensely relevant and powerful, the book carries the stories of the Islamic State's victims forward with appalling details, including descriptions of abuse, rape, and slave markets. Beyond the atrocities, it tells the true and inspiring story of Abdullah's selfless heroism in a time of crisis.

This is a stunning creative study that blurs the lines between prose and poetry. Through her inspired descriptions of the Iraq of the past, Mikhail gives a glimpse into what has been lost, skillfully utilizing elements of journalism and creative nonfiction for a uniquely varied structure and voice.

Photographs of the captives give faces to the unthinkable atrocities committed by Daesh. Other memorable photographs, taken by Arab women, are included to show the inspiration behind Mikhail's poignant personal prose and poetry; they center on Baghdad during the Iraq-Iran war.

Mikhail brilliantly captures the large-scale atrocities of Daesh in an individualized way. An extensive and beautiful passage about her own experience of fleeing from Baghdad recalls, "From above, there are no souls, only bodies," contrasting her feelings with her mother's, who "seems concerned about the heavy stuff we can't carry with us—the Persian carpet, the piano, the antique sewing machine." Poetic portions are where Mikhail is most in her element; they glow with inspiration. Still, transitions between the first-person accounts of former captives and the autobiographical, creative portions of the book are abrupt.

The Beekeeper is a brutally important, electrifying, and lyrical true story.

PAIGE VAN DE WINKLE (March/April 2018)

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