

The Saint of Istanbul

ChanCe

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AuthorHouse

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Set in major metropolitan locales such as Chicago, New York, London, and Berlin, *The Saint of Istanbul* is an intriguing assortment of literary snapshots that resemble life as represented by the pages in a scrapbook. Far from aimless, these twenty-three short stories are a creative stroll through the sights, sounds, and sensations experienced by a seasoned world traveler.

Written in Turkish, the book has been translated into English. The quality of the translation is good, despite the occasional awkward phrase.

For a reader seeking the strong plot lines with single-minded characters typical of commercial fiction, ChanCe's book is not a good choice. But for any literary aficionado, her writing offers a welcome departure from the mainstream. Evocative and direct, ChanCe's style enhances the interesting vignettes which are delivered in rapid-fire succession.

With a feminist slant, the author traverses cultural and religious boundaries using courage and humor. A straightforward approach is executed with confidence in "The Fifth Azan," a contemporary look at the invasive aspects of established tradition: "Having sex on Moslem soil is always a challenge. Suddenly, you have the risk of becoming a trio—you, your partner and the Arab guy on the minaret, which is called the muezzin. At least once a day, you are in danger of being interrupted by a man screaming Arabic words when you are in a compromising position ..."

With a spirited lack of inhibition, "Love Castration" offers a candid glimpse of a Paris brothel from the viewpoint of Fatima, a madam savoring the power she has over men: "If you ever want to be a real hooker, you've got to strangle your man with your sexuality..." Fatima tells her story about falling in love with a client who treated her badly, narrating it in gritty, explicit detail: "Our last sexual encounter had to be an event remembered by generations, like the last supper [sic] of Christ."

The book's downfall is a tendency to overplay scenes to the point of crudeness. A blurb on the back cover in need of a proofreader is also problematic.

ChanCe was born in Istanbul. A medical professor, writer, and singer, this brilliant newcomer is sure to find her niche with a sophisticated American audience that seeks urban realism.

JULIA ANN CHARPENTIER (October 11, 2011)

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