

★ **They Will Drown in their Mothers' Tears**

Johannes Anyuru

Saskia Vogel, Translator

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Johannes Anyuru's stunning *They Will Drown in Their Mothers' Tears* is a rare, powerful multiverse novel that reflects the best and worst of human potential.

Pushed from a bridge by a fascist, the young woman's mother declares "There is no God." The girl's center is lost. But then: "There is no God but God." Each one of the novel's heartbreaking truths and possibilities flourishes in the gap between what might have been heard as a disavowal of faith and the mother's last strained utterance of the shahada.

After this dual pronouncement, the girl and her father's fight fades away. They are unsurprised when they're carted off to the Rabbit Yard, a makeshift camp for supposed enemies of the state. Next come moths fluttering across images that are at the same time current and past, and a terrorist act in a comic book store that, for the girl, is a memory, though she finds that the bomb is strapped to her own chest this time. Everything is wrong.

The girl knows that images from the terrorist attack will be used to justify fascism and genocide. But she's both the girl from the Rabbit Yard and the terrorist's wife, a girl who woke up one morning with a story about a prison camp, wearing someone else's face. In the moment where her memories meet her present, she makes a desperate play to save those she loves.

Narrated in and out of time to a Muslim writer for whom Sweden's slide toward fascism is frightening but surreal, the girl's story is full of hard revelations, including that those who want to justify genocide will always find a way, whether bombs go off or not. Only love can subvert such impulses; only it can fill the spaces between times and realities.

They Will Drown in Their Mothers' Tears, with its final revelation that is as dismaying as it is triumphant, is gorgeous, unforgettable speculative fiction.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (November / December 2019)

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