



★ **Djinns**

Fatma Aydemir

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Tragedy strikes a dysfunctional Turkish German family in Fatma Aydemir's searing novel *Djinns*.

Hüseyin worked hard his entire life so he could bring his family back to his homeland in style. He dies only a week after accomplishing this dream, leaving his widow and four children to consider the seeming futility of his life's work and the high cost of assimilation. Their personal traumas make the difficulties of existing as Turkish immigrants in xenophobic Germany intolerable.

Each of the story's six sections is devoted to a different family member, revealing their painful rifts and the secrets they keep. The eldest daughter, Sevda, fears and resents her mother Emine for her cold disapproval, while her sister Peri, having experienced mental health problems herself, feels a measure of sympathy for their mother's struggles and suffering. The story closes with Emine's section, allowing her the chance to unburden herself of that which has haunted the family since its beginnings. The family members are variously selfish, sympathetic, fascinating, and frustrating, and all of them—from the parents to lonely Ümit, the youngest child—are held hostage by circumstances they believe themselves powerless to change.

The children see the consequences of their parents' mistakes but can do little to avoid the same missteps, no matter how much they rebel against the choking traditions that have added to their misery. The final line, as crushing as death itself, reveals a truth learned too late: a successful legacy is not measured by where a person lives or how well they obey rules, but in the memories they leave with loved ones.

Djinns is a devastating multigenerational saga in which an immigrant family struggles to find acceptance in a world where no one and no place will take them as they are.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (September / October 2024)

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