

★ Fine Dreams

Linda N. Masi

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A young victim of terrorism watches over those she left behind in Linda N. Masi's novel *Fine Dreams*.

Kubra loved running, the color pink, and studying to become an educator like her mother. After she becomes collateral damage in a brutal grenade attack, Kubra's spirit remains in her hometown, able to observe but not interfere with the world around her. As her loved ones grieve her loss and fall victim to the same extremists who took her life, all Kubra can do is hope that someday they will all find their way home.

Each of Kubra's friends and relatives is rendered in humane terms. Bright and affectionate, these characters enjoy life and are ready to make a difference in the world. But neither they nor their ambitions are safe in northern Nigeria, where terrorism is rampant. The military that's meant to protect people is ineffectual at best and destructive at worst. When terrorists abduct the girl students from Kubra's old school, her friends do what they must to survive. One forms a genuine yet fraught bond with her abductor; another embarks on a suicidal escape attempt; all resolve to stay true to their principles until the very end.

Both the girls and their loved ones struggle to hold on to their dreams through the horror of their situations. While their stories are often bleak and devastating (their lives were not easy even before the abductions), their spirits and strength remain unbroken. Refusing to allow tragedy to define them, they figure out how to tell their own stories, to make peace with the past, and to create a future in which they can pursue the happiness they deserve.

Fine Dreams is a wrenching novel in which young women claw back control of their lives after unimaginable violence.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (March / April 2024)

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