

Hakim's Odyssey: Book 1: From Syria to Turkey

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Thrilling, contemplative, tragic, and inspirational, *Hakim's Odyssey* recounts a Syrian man's difficult journey of survival.

Hakim, a young man with a bright future in Syria as the owner of a new apartment and a thriving nursery, has his life derailed by what he calls "The Events." In the wake of the Arab Spring, protests and calls for more freedom in Syria prompt President Assad to react with harsh measures. Despite Hakim's efforts to avoid trouble, he's imprisoned, tortured, and loses his business. When his brother disappears, Hakim's parents send him away for his own safety. He travels to Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey in search of work. In Turkey, he meets Najmeh, who becomes his wife; the book ends with Hakim, Najmeh, and her family moving to Istanbul in search of opportunity.

The book illuminates human beings' many sides. There are those who take advantage of others, and those who refuse to help. But friends, family, and strangers also offer small kindnesses that make important differences to Hakim, a smart, charming person in an untenable situation. He notes that "anyone can become a 'refugee.' / If your country falls apart. / You fall apart with it, or you leave." Framing sequences show Hakim in his present with his family in France, sharing how the story came to be told and providing context and perspective.

The artwork enhances the narrative through a myriad of small details while keeping the overall look clean and appealing. *Hakim's Odyssey* is an engaging, personal view of refugees' experiences.

PETER DABBENE (November / December 2021)

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