

I Remember Fallujah

Feurat Alani

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A grieving son reconstructs his dying father's painful life story in Feurat Alani's historical novel *I Remember Fallujah*.

Rami has always been a secretive father, spending long hours working and refusing to indulge the curiosity of his son, Euphrates, about what he did before leaving Iraq for France. Now that cancer is about to claim Rami's life, Euphrates knows this is his last chance to dig up old secrets and heal from cycles of abuse and alienation.

Though conflicted about taking advantage of his father's newfound vulnerability, Euphrates presses on, determined to find the answers he has long been denied. His efforts reveal striking parallels between Rami's traumatic childhood in Fallujah and his own safer yet nonetheless difficult upbringing in Paris. Both of their stories are intertwined with the modern history of Iraq.

Revolution, dictatorship, and invasion trouble the father and son in different ways, driving one to brooding, drunken solitude and the other to turn his back on the suffering that he feels he should be a part of but that he can never understand or experience. Indeed, Euphrates is an outsider even among other immigrants: before his young eyes, Iraq shifts from a hazy dream to a beautiful adventure to a war-torn tragedy that threatens to break his family. But in the final days of Rami's life, father and son have one last chance to learn the truth about their lives and histories. Neither man can revive or fix the past, so they seek instead peace in the words they share and the silences that remain.

Poignant and devastating, *I Remember Fallujah* is a novel about how the vagaries of memory support the weight of secrets too painful to speak out loud.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (September / October 2024)

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