



## Mishka

**Edward van de Vendel**

**Anoush Elman**

**Annet Schaap, Illustrator**

**Nancy Forest-Flier, Translator**

Levine Querido (Nov 12, 2024)

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A white dwarf rabbit brings a refugee family together in Edward van de Vendel and Anoush Elman's novel *Mishka*.

Roya and her family are refugees from Afghanistan. When they learn that they have been permitted to stay in the Netherlands, they are elated. To celebrate, they bring home a white dwarf rabbit as a pet. Every day, they feed, play, and bond with Mishka. Trouble arises when Mishka goes missing on the day when Roya is to give a presentation on dwarf rabbits at school.

Central to the novel are animal-human affinities. The family bonds of Roya's household tighten as they speak to Mishka about their memories. They have him nearby as they process their emotions from their time fleeing Afghanistan. Roya, who was too young to remember much of the journey, is inducted into this oral family history as her brothers and parents recount funny and happy moments (broom soldiers sweeping away their steps; a fellow refugee's beautiful singing) alongside sad and harrowing ones, like being forced to burn photographs of their escape.

On occasion, Roya's narration is awkward. Her first meeting with Mishka is described as a telepathic exchange, for example: "He looked as if he was thinking, 'Hey.' And that's just what I was thinking: 'Hey.' But right after that I thought, 'YESSS,' because the dwarf rabbit was also thinking, 'YESSS.' I saw it and I heard it in my head." Nonetheless, she is an earnest narrator who's steadfast in her love for Mishka and who is persistent and determined about recovering him when he disappears. And the accompanying illustrations, done on brown paper in oil pastel, are impressionistic and whimsical.

In this moving novel about home and belonging, a beloved bunny helps a refugee family tap into their collective stories.

ISABELLA ZHOU (November / December 2024)

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