

The Bridesman

Savyon Leibrecht

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In Savyon Leibrecht's novel *The Bridesman*, an Iranian Israeli family is changed by the arrival of a new bride.

Micha was just nine years old when his elders embarked on an impossible quest to find a suitable bride for his Uncle Moshe. They settled for Adella, a headstrong young orphan whom everyone but Moshe and Micha disapproves of. After a brief acquaintance and a longer separation, Micha returns to Israel at Adella's request. He finds her more changed than he could have ever imagined, and he ends up uncovering a dark secret at the heart of his family's story.

Micha's return to Israel after decades abroad comes as a culture shock, with once-familiar faces and language more foreign than the United States, his adopted country. Adella—now Adel, a sought-after designer—tells him of the sweet and unlikely romance between herself and Moshe, a mentally disabled man twice her age. Through grit and determination, she built an independent life for the two of them, away from the relatives who manipulated and undervalued Moshe his entire life. Her tale inspires, even as it raises questions of how far she was willing to go to achieve her happy ending.

Still, though Adella cherishes her memories of young Micha, he has not thought of her in decades. It becomes apparent that Adella knows more about Micha's family than he does. All the while, the question of why Adella asked him to visit hovers over their interactions. Only after an abrupt dismissal does Micha recognize what she did not (or could not) say. Though horrifying, the revelation seems set to play little role in their futures, which were set long ago by actions beyond their control.

The Bridesman is a novel about the price of finding one's own place in the world.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (November / December 2023)

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