



The Night Counter: A Novel

Alia Yunis

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After 85 long years, Fatimah Abdullah is dying, and she knows when her time will come. In fact, it should come just nine days from tonight, the 992nd nightly visit of Scheherazade, the beautiful and immortal storyteller from the epic *The Arabian Nights*.

Just as Scheherazade spun magical stories for 1,001 nights to save her own life, Fatima has spent each night telling Scheherazade her life stories, all the while knowing that on the 1,001st night, her storytelling will end forever. But between tonight and night 1,001, Fatima has a few loose ends to tie up. She must find a wife for her openly gay grandson, teach Arabic (and birth control) to her 17-year-old great-granddaughter, make amends with her estranged husband, and decide which of her troublesome children should inherit her family's home in Lebanon--a house she herself has not seen in nearly 70 years. All this while under the surveillance of two bumbling FBI agents eager to uncover Al Qaeda in Los Angeles.

But Fatima's children are wrapped up in their own chaotic lives and disinterested in their mother or their inheritances. As Fatima weaves the stories of her husband, children, and grandchildren, we meet a visionless psychic, a conflicted U.S. soldier, a gynecologist who has a daughter with a love of shoplifting and a tendency to get unexpectedly pregnant, a Harvard-educated alcoholic cab driver edging towards his fifth marriage, a lovelorn matchmaker, and a Texas homecoming queen. Taken in parts, Fatima's relations are capricious and steadfast, affectionate and smothering, connected yet terribly alone. Taken all together, they present a striking and surprising tapestry of modern Arab American life.

Shifting between the U.S. and Lebanon over the last hundred years, Alia Yunis crafts a bewitching novel imbued with great humanity, imagination, and a touch of magic realism. Be prepared to be utterly charmed.

From the Hardcover edition.

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