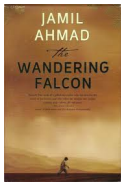


The Wandering Falcon



Afghanistan and Pakistan are areas that are in the news...a lot. The Middle East has its problems, but what about its culture and traditions? In Jamil Ahmad's book, The Wandering Falcon, the reader gets a short glimpse into the Tribal areas of the border lands between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Through a weaving train of stories, the reader gets to know the culture of wandering tribal families and individuals. The story starts after WWII, by my calculations, with the birth of Tor Baz and the tragic story that accompanies his earliest years. From this point the story wanders along with different individuals who work for the government in these lands and people looking out for their family, themselves, and their tribes. It's about outcasts and people trying to make it through life in the mountains and plains, finding happiness in those around them or disappointment in the lot life hands them. Ahmad loosely ties these stories together through a "Where's Waldo" with the character Tor Baz. He shows up in almost every story playing minimal roles or just sticking his head in.

Ahmad is a storyteller. He knows how to introduce characters and situations without much back story and flag down the reader's interest. Although the names could be confusing, it was not hard to follow. The stories were short and to the point without much pomp and circumstance. Often these stories abruptly ended, but Ahmad made it work. As the reader, perhaps you never figured out the full story, but maybe you're never supposed to. The characters are surprising. In many stories, the women speak their minds and are unguarded. You meet people who are looking out for what's best, and some who are looking out for their best interests. I found myself surprised and amused unexpectedly throughout the book.

The physical book is a little thing, small enough to fit in your back pocket (not quite, but close) and about 250 pages in length. For those who enjoy literary short stories, want a look into tribal life in the Middle East, or are curious readers, give this book a read.

Posted by kmilks on January 18, 2012

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