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Message in a Bottle

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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This portrayal of an aspect of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict uses the familiar literary contrivance of a relationship across the battle lines. However, Tal and Naïm's friendship, developed through e-mails, never brings them face to face; and, even at the end, the secretive Naïm, who has sheltered earlier behind the username of Gazaman, has not sent Tal his photograph, although he has hers. She knows him only from her brother's description: the perception of a soldier of occupation who has placed his sister's message in a bottle (an invitation to exchange e-mails) on a beach in Gaza and then waited to see who picks it up. The kind of virtual relationship depicted here, in which as much can be held back as revealed, is a near perfect metaphor for the incompleteness and fragility of contact in a situation embittered by years of violence and distrust. Not that either Tal or Naïm are bitter. Both are sensitive and intelligent and have some sense of being outsiders in their own societies. Although there is suspicion and resentment on Naïm's side to begin with, and both he and Tal suffer during the story because of the conflict, there is only a frustration and a little anger displayed in their correspondence, never any cruelty. The author was born in France, and lived in Israel as a young woman. She tells a gentle story from which Tal and her world emerge more clearly than Naïm and his, but both are believable. The story is told in an enviably brief direct style ? a lot is said in 160 pages ? which seems to have been well served by an almost transparent translation by Adriana Hunter. Also of interest to older readers.

Running Order:

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