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# A Brighter Fear

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~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

3

This tale of the life of Lina, a young middle class Christian Iraqi, takes us from the time of Saddam Hussein, through the Iraqi war, to the withdrawal of allied troops from the troubled country. During the course of the book, Lina loses both her parents. Her mother, a lawyer, disappears during Saddam's regime after refusing to work for the government. Her father, a university professor, dies working as an interpreter for the American army during the occupation. Lina's account of her life knits together all those images and stories so familiar from news reports: the disappearance of political opponents during Saddam's reign; the dreadful loss of civilian life during the war and the collapse of civic life afterwards: the suicide bombings and the kidnappings, the failure of power supplies; intercommunal violence and the rule of the militias. Through all this, Lina struggles to hold on to her dreams of a normal life and a university education, as well as the apparently vain hope of seeing her mother again; at one point sustained only by an unlikely and dangerous romantic attachment to an American soldier. If this account of Lina's life by a British author does sometimes seem to be put together at a distance from news reports (it is perhaps indicative that the account of her parent's courtship takes place in London while they are students ) there is nevertheless a toughness and sense of reality here that challenges the reader. The account of Lina's mother's sufferings in jail, which is interspersed with Lina's story, is truly harrowing, not in gratuitous detail but in placing the reader precisely inside Sacha's experience. It's a book that implicitly and insistently asks a difficult question: how might you survive in circumstances as terrifying and demanding as these?

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