

Drawing on an intimate knowledge of modern Arabic writing, Denys Johnson-Davies brings together in this collection a colorful mosaic of life as lived and portrayed by Arabs from Morocco to Iraq. From a diverse area of the world with the common factor of a written language, these thirty stories tell of an old Moroccan peasant woman who kills snakes; an Iraqi soldier who returns home as a stranger after years as a prisoner-of-war; a repairer of lost virginities in a Tunisian village; a typically Mahfouzian start to a train journey; the steamy meeting of two women and a cat at the height of an Iraqi summer; the ill-fated attraction of a boy to a magical bird in the Tuareg deserts of Libya; and a novel way of hunting ducks in the Nile Delta. The purveyors of this strange and delightful cornucopia of fictions include Naguib Mahfouz, Yusuf Idris, Gamal al-Ghitani, and Mohamed El-Bisatie from Egypt; Fuad al-Takarli and Mohamed Khudayyir from Iraq; Zakaria Tamer from Syria; Hanan al-Shaykh from Lebanon; and Ibrahim al-Kouni from Libya.

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