



The Scar of David

Susan Abulhawa

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The Scar of David is historic fiction about a Palestinian family from the village of Ein Hod, which was emptied of its inhabitants by the newly formed State of Israel in 1948. It is told in the first person by Amal, who is born into that family in a UN-administered refugee camp in Jenin, where her family would eventually die waiting, or fighting, to return to their beloved Palestine. Set in lap of one of the 20 th century's most intractable political conflicts, this novel weaves through history, friendship, love, frayed identity, terrorism, exhaustion of the spirit, surrender, and courage. Three massacres and two major wars provide five corners to this novel: 1. Sabra and Shatila, Lebanon, 1982; 2. US embassy bombing, Beirut, 1983; 3. Refugee camp of Jenin, West Bank, 2002; 4. The Naqbe , Mandate Palestine, 1948; and 5. The Six Day War, Middle East, 1967. During the family's eviction from their ancestral village, Ishmael, Amal's brother is lost in the mayhem of people fleeing for their lives. Just a toddler at the time, Ishmael is raised by a Jewish family and grows up as David, an Israeli soldier. During the 1967 war, Yousef, Amal's eldest brother, comes face to face with David, his brother the Jew. Yousef recognizes his brother by a prominent scar across David's face. The title of this story takes its name from this scar, and assumes other layers of meaning as it is told. The end is the beginning: terrible suffering packaged by Western press into perfidious sound bites, like "the Middle East Conflict," and "War on Terrorism." But through the course of this story, a suicide bomber is given a name, face and life of a man pushed to incomprehensible limits; An Arab girl of pious and humble beginnings escapes her destiny and lives the "American Dream," which her soul cannot bear; An Israeli man becomes tangled in a truth he cannot reconcile, and his identity can find no repose but in the temporary anesthetic of alcohol.

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