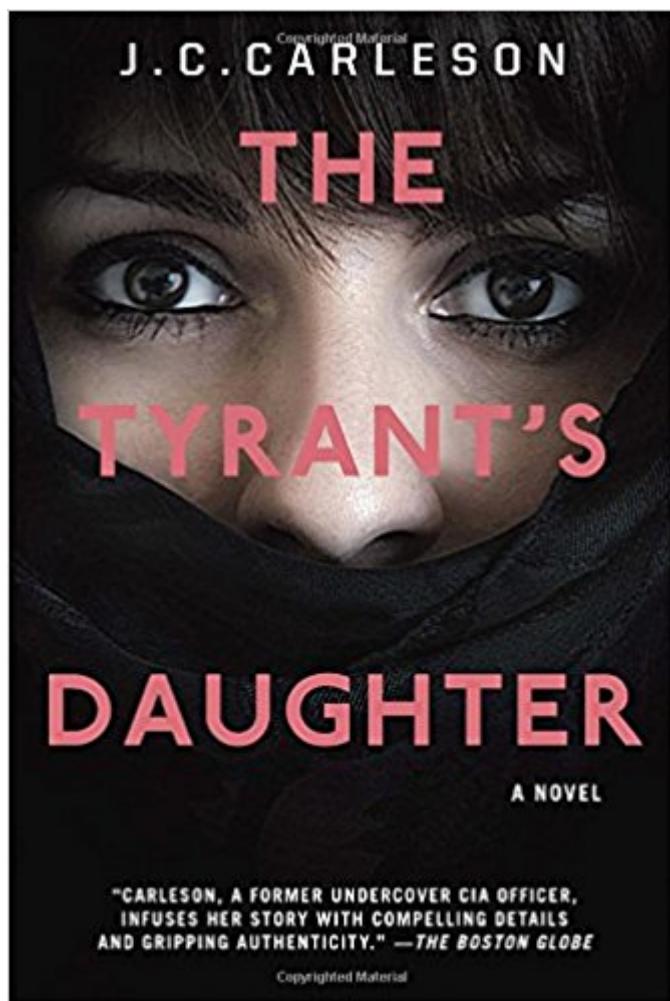


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The Tyrant's Daughter



Synopsis

“Filled with political intrigue and emotional tension, Carleson’s riveting novel features a teenage refugee caught in a web of deceit and conspiracy.” PW, starred review When her father is killed in a coup, Laila and her mother and brother leave their war-torn homeland for a fresh start in the suburbs of Washington, D.C. At her new high school, Laila makes mistakes, makes friends, and even meets a boy who catches her eye. But this new life brings unsettling facts to light. The American newspapers call her father a brutal dictator and suggest that her family’s privilege came at the expense of innocent lives. Meanwhile, her mother would like nothing more than to avenge his death, and she’ll go to great lengths to regain their position of power. As an international crisis takes shape around her, Laila is pulled in one direction, then another, but there’s no time to sort out her feelings. She has to pick a side now, and her decision will affect not just her own life, but countless others. . . . Inspired by the author’s experience as a CIA officer in Iraq and Syria, this book is as timely as it is relevant. Praise for *The Tyrant’s Daughter*: “Carleson, a former undercover CIA officer, infuses her story with compelling details and gripping authenticity.” The Boston Globe “Every American should read this book. It’s an eye-opener.” • Suzanne Fisher Staples, Newbery Honor-winning author of *Shabanu*

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 0720 (What’s this?)

Paperback: 304 pages

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Best Sellers Rank: #593,187 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #55 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Emigration & Immigration #137 in Books > Children’s Books > Geography & Cultures > Explore the World > Middle East #732 in Books > Children’s Books > Geography & Cultures > Royalty

Age Range: 12 - 17 years

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

Gr 9 Up  •Growing up in an unidentified Middle Eastern country, Laila had no reason to question her parents' narrative-her father was king, and her privileged life was one afforded by birthright. That changes, however, when her father is killed in a coup, and she, her younger brother, and their mother flee the family's palace compound with aid from the U.S. government. Now in a suburb of Washington, DC, the 15-year-old is exposed for the first time to a Western view of both her homeland and father. The news reports of a tyrant whose regime was responsible for atrocities against its people are at odds with her memories of a loving parent. A devastated Laila, realizing that "his was an authority based more on bloodshed than blood right," begins to question all that she's been told. Laila struggles to adjust to American life; Carleson portrays her peers as rather flat in order to underscore Laila's emotional distance from other teens. Although Laila's mother is still embroiled in dealings with the CIA, this smart, complex novel refrains from falling into clandestine spy tropes and deftly shows that innocents get caught on both sides of any conflict. The concluding pages leave Laila's story open-ended, but readers will hope that the teen's good nature continues to prevail.  •Amanda Mastrull, School Library Journal --This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

Removed from her unnamed Middle Eastern country after her father is murdered during a coup, 15-year-old Laila is now living near Washington D. C. with her mother and brother. In addition to navigating an American high school, Laila tries to act as guardian to her younger brother, Bastien, now the King of Nowhere, and as her mother's spy by getting close to Amir, a teenage boy from her country involved in the resistance. Laila is a strong narrator, expressing her feelings about American dress and social interactions in ways that will get readers thinking. Being raised in the palace, Laila was immune to many of the difficulties of life in her country and never saw her father as a dictator or harsh ruler, raising a very real question about the children of world leaders: Do they see their parents as the world sees them? This is more than just Laila's story; rather, it is a story of context, beautifully written (by a former undercover CIA agent), and stirring in its questions and eloquent observations about our society and that of the Middle East. Grades 9-12. --Tiffany Erickson --This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

A CIA operative whisks a dictator's family out of the country when the tyrant's brother grabs power. In a flash the blood-stained widow and her two children shift from a life of secure luxury to humdrum

apartment life in suburban Washington D.C. Laila, the murdered leader's 15-year old daughter, tells the story through the eyes of a young, very intelligent, and aristocratic middle-eastern woman experiencing American-style freedom and the high-school social scene for the first time. An astute observer and articulate narrator, one might imagine her modeled on other near-eastern female political leaders educated in the west (Golda Meir - U. Wisconsin, Indira Ghandi - Oxford, and particularly Benizar Bhutto - Harvard/Oxford). I found this book fascinating on many levels. The basic story line focuses on Laila's observations, relationships and cultural challenges as she acclimates to her new surroundings. Author J.C. Carleson, a Cornell U. psychology graduate as well as a former intelligence operative, crafts engaging dialog filled with subtle insights and perspectives. As other reviewers mention, there is a good deal of teen drama, but it is not overdone. On the contrary, Laila's interactions with her peers are believable, help build her character, and add to the suspense about how this bright young woman will evolve. This, however, is only the top layer of a more complex story simmering beneath the surface. Scene shifts from chapter to chapter at times feel contrived, as in too abrupt or unexpected. One gets the sense of a movie or a play that is a bit too carefully scripted. There are only a few characters whom we get to know well. Others, important ones, are vaguely described and left to imagination to fill in the details. The same is true for events. I would like more background to make the story line more understandable. However, I think this patchwork of facts, people and events mirrors the real world as seen by a spy. You must make sense of things based on incomplete information. In this regard, Carleson does an excellent job of putting the reader in the shoes of a spook! The bottom line is that I really like this story for its compelling main character, clever dialog, plot development and surprises, and especially for its unique cultural perspective. Anyone following current events through the timeframe of 9/11 through the Arab Spring to today will see the parallels and gain new insights. As a work of literature it is outstanding as well.

This book blew me away!!!! I was searching and searching the internet for a voice that's deep, strong, and sensitive to personal relations - power relations and in-depth psychology TO THE UTMOST degree - and I've found it! I've found it in this book! The fact that it's been written in the first person just brought me more into the story and the protagonist's head, and I soooo enjoyed getting to know how she thinks what she observes and overall - how she perceives the world! What tops this experience is: ..ladies and gentleman, let me outline: the protagonist of this book is 15 year old girl!!! Finally!! Finally to have someone showing us that Women can be (just as much or even more) aware of the circumstances around themselves as some men are shown to

be!LailaÃ¢Â¢Â¢s personality is a fascinating example of a kind of wisdom, that only extraordinary experiences and a certain position allows. Besides, her character also stands for the fact that fashion, beauty, parties, boys and relationship stuff is certainly NOT every girlsÃ¢Â¢Â¢s center of attention. The same time she definitely has the ability, the desires and all that mysteriousness - to Be the kind of woman whom every man and every woman would find attractive. The book tells a lot about the circumstances of a fictional middle-east country whichÃ¢Â¢Â¢s traits ABSOLUTELY cover reality. I am not a fan of these issues (I rather be ignorant then misinformed), but that is why I particularly enjoyed reading HOW negotiation, and politics is DONE within these relations. (hereby I should quietly point to the background of the author (look it up)Ã¢Â¢Â¢ trust me, I think she knows what she speaks) I felt like I was shown the CORE characteristics of entanglements, manipulation, and the quickly shifting nature of interests, conditions, power-relations. ITS BRILLIANT!!! Just-freakin-brilliant! This book entertained me, educated me, and opened up a new horizon! I strongly recommend it!

There were parts of this book I felt were so relevant and true, it should be read in schools. Others were a little more typical YA fiction, but that's okay, too. In any case, it was enjoyable, and thought-provoking, and thereby I can only recommend it. The premise of the story deals with a teenage girl being uprooted from an unnamed Middle Eastern country to Washington DC. Her father was a dictator/tyrant, as the title suggests, and after his ousting, her family is forced into exile. The story sounded intriguing, as one rarely hears much about the consequences of political coups for the ruler's family. Maybe this is because the powers that be want to protect them, by keeping their identities relatively low-key and giving them new ones, as in this book. I don't know, it does make you wonder, though. I sympathized with Laila and her family, and their struggle in having to adapt to new surroundings and a totally new standard of living. Carleson portrays Laila's worries with simple subtlety, which I found far more effective than dramatics. Laila has to try to fit in with her American surroundings, unsure whether she wants this, or whether it is even possible. I didn't love Laila, her character was a distant and cool for that kind of connection, but her story instantly drew me in, and maybe Carleson's portrayal of her subdued personality would be accurate. I suppose the thing that could have bumped up my rating here, is just that though. If Laila had come across as a warmer person, I think this would have been a really fantastic book. As it is, it's still very good and well worth reading.

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