



# Haifa Fragments

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## **Haifa Fragments** Khulud Khamis

Jewellery designer Maisoon wants an ordinary extraordinary life, which isn't easy for a tradition-defying, peace-activist, Palestinian citizen of Israel who refuses to be crushed by the feeling of being an unwelcome guest in the land of her ancestors. Frustrated by the apathy of her boyfriend Ziyad and her father Majid—who want her to get on with her life and forget those in the Occupied Territories—she lashes out, only to discover that her father is not the man she thought he was.

Raised a Christian, in a relationship with a Muslim man and enamoured with a Palestinian woman from the Occupied Territories, Maisoon must determine her own path.

## **Haifa Fragments Details**

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Author : Khulud Khamis

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# From Reader Review Haifa Fragments for online ebook

## Rawan Bishara says

WOW! one of the best novels i have read.  
its full of feminism,sexuality,politics,nationalism and religion.  
absolutely RECOMMENDED!!

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## Nir Manasherov says

I highly recommend the book "Haifa fragments" by Khulud Khamis.  
Unique, well-written and interesting.  
For me this book captures a bit of the intricate reality in Israel.  
This book took me through a journey of identity and pride.  
In addition, this book made me realize and appreciate the most simplistic life-pleasures which I come across every day.  
This book is deeply inspiring and makes the reader view the world he/she lives in, in a such different way-throught the eyes of a strong palestinian woman.  
The plot of the book overwhelms the reader with emotions and draw the reader into a rich and complicated world.  
Personally, I like the way this book was written- sophisticated, delicate yet powerfull.  
Moreover, the book has a very authentic and charming style by combining Arabic, Hebrew and English within its lines- a style that i have never came across in other books.  
The book did not lose my interest up until i've finished reading it and kept me thinking about it for a while now.  
As an Israeli, this book gave me a new point of viewing the reality of every-day life in Israel.  
Truly a work of art!

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## Abumidian says

I just finished a book I want to recommend to you: "Haifa Fragments" by Khulud Khamis. Normally I don't read English novels if I don't have to. Especially not novels on the land I am living, working, struggling for: Israel/Palestine/Canaan (name it as you wish).  
But this novel is written originally in English, and not by a tourist, and not by an "expert". Khulud Khamis lives here, in Haifa. So, why does she writes in English? (What forces me to read English, and forces me to write this recommendation in English..) Of course, this is an interesting question, and there are others, like: Why is its name "Haifa Fragments". But I would prefer to speak about the novel.  
Maisoon, the main character in the novel, begins the novel with serious questions about her carrier and her love, and these questions deal with a bigger question: the one about her identity, mainly her identity as a Palestinian woman. And then cross her way two "incidents", which make these questions more complicated, the one is related to Shahd, a woman from a refugee camp, the other to Majid, her father. We have the opportunity to accompany Maisoon on her way, without being injured, physically, and Maisoon helps us to understand the extreme complexity of a life as a Palestinian woman, in this case: a Palestinian woman with a blue Israelian identity card, raised in a Christian family. Will she stay with her lover Ziyad (who comes from

a muslim family)? Will she be successful in her work, despite the fact she is a Palestinian in the Israeli society? What prices does she have to pay?

I feel, after finishing the novel, as if I made a long long march along the Mediterranean. I am exhausted, but it is worthy!

And if you think you don't know enough English: Look at me, and my lousy English....

<http://www.spinifexpress.com.au/Books...>

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## **Ayala Levinger says**

this is the review I wrote after reading the book for the first time in 2016:

When I read this book I thought about the TED lecture of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, "the danger of a single story". The story in this book is different than other stories by Palestinian writers that I have read (Susan Abulhawa and Sahar Khalifeh for examples). I am glad I was reminded and also made think of unfamiliar narratives of Palestinians who are citizens of the Zionist entity and what they struggle with, that is a story that is not often told.

Another thing that I really liked in this book is how sexuality is handled. It doesn't happen often that I come across characters that are bisexuals and that it is just one part of their life and not the whole center of the story. I like that.

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## **Prestel Claudia says**

In the centre of this wonderful novel is Maisoon, named after her grandmother's daughter who was born prematurely during the ethnic cleansing of 1948 and died being buried in the garden of the family home. Maisoon who was supposed to study medicine according to her father's wishes (as her brother was also supposed to fulfil the middle class dream of upward mobility) drops out of medical school and becomes a jewellery designer with a "political statement" according to Amalia, the Israeli-Jewish boutique-owner that Maisoon bumps into by accident to the dismay of the elderly lady. But Amalia gives Maisoon a chance to display her jewellery in the boutique and gets her into contact with Mr. Yuval - another Jewish Israeli - but living abroad and who does not seem to notice that Maisoon has created jewellery with coins from the British Mandate with the name Palestine on it, coins that Maisoon receives from Um Loia who - according to Maisoon's father - is a different Palestinian, living in a refugee camp in the Occupied Territories of the West Bank. Maisoon met Um Loia's daughter by chance and develops a relationship with Shahd - the Palestinian - as Ziyad, Maisoon's (Muslim) boyfriend calls her. Ziyad seems to have no interest in the fate of the occupied Palestinians nor in his own past. But Ziyad has to cope with his own trauma - that he is not able to convey even to Maisoon. The novel manages very well to weave into the narrative the frictions within Palestinian society, be they those between the Palestinian citizens of Israel and those in the Occupied Territories or between Muslims and Christians. Maisoon, a Christian, does not only not pursue her father's professional dreams for her, she also lives by herself and has a Muslim boyfriend as everybody in Wadi Nisnas (a poor neighbourhood in Haifa) knows. Majid - Maisoon's father works in a bank and never gets promoted for reasons that Maisoon is about to find out when she goes through her father's writings and pictures. And there is more to it: Majid who clumsily confronts her on Christmas eve (against his wife's wishes) that she should find a nice Christian boy to marry has a past before marrying Leila at the age of 40. This brings him into conflict with the Israeli secret service ... and Majid goes to jail. But there is still more. The man who has no

interest in politics and literature - so it seems - has actually been a poet in the past and written nationalist poetry about resistance (his father burning his writings and only the illiterate mother encourages him to write again). Maisoon's mother Leyla (whose fiancé was shot dead during the Judaization process in the Galilee) supports Maisoon and is a strong woman in her own right. There are other strong women such as Tamar who is active in a human rights organisation and who sometimes gets the soldiers to do what she wants them to do. But even her connections and her shouting have limits when the soldier at the checkpoint does not feel like letting Palestinians through.

There are also incredibly funny scenes: Amalia who gets invited for Christmas decides to buy bed-sheets (a strange present for Christmas) and oblivious to the struggle and identity of Palestinian citizens of Israel can't decide on the colour: blue or green.

Maisoon transforms everybody that crosses her path: her father who opens up to her and talks about his past and Amalia who was brought up hating Arabs. And finally Ziyad who is annoyed that instead of hiking they need to spend hours in the hospital where Dunya, a young Palestinian girl from Gaza (a victim of being in the wrong place at the wrong time but Palestinians are always in the wrong place) is treated. "I don't understand these Jews" says Abu Sufian, her father. "With one hand they kill us, and with the other hand they offer us life. I really don't understand them." There are very touching and heart-breaking moments. When the father (whose wife has been torn to pieces) combs his daughter's hair and tells her that he loves her more than the moon.

The novel has a happy ending but I won't tell it: read for yourself as it is not only very well written (I particularly like the Arabic and at times Hebrew words thrown in - and even people who would not understand those languages find a glossary at the end, so don't panic) but with so much insight and with so many different narratives that reflect the complexity and enormous steadfastness of Palestinians. It also tells its readers what it means to be a woman in this society, one that transgresses about every boundary that there is to transgress.

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## **Inga says**

I won this book on Goodreads Giveaways. I was pleasantly surprised to see a personal note from the author. As a debut, this is a good book. The author Khulud Khamis tries to depict the complications of a Palestinian living in Israel. This theme intersects with that of being a woman in a rather conservative society and all the pressures that come with it.

I think that the author should have written the book in her native language which I presume is Arabic. I can understand the reasons for her choosing English, however, writing in native language is always more natural. I feel that the style is a little too simple and the main reason for this is writing in a foreign language.

I also felt that the author could not keep focused on the main character and a more elaborate account of other characters' lives was in some places unnecessary for such a short book. This prevented the author from developing a deeper narrative of Maisoon's - the main character's - life and problems.

Another thing that prevented me from giving the book a higher rating was that it is suitable only for those readers who know about the conflict and Palestinian situation. Most people have no clue about what is going on there, therefore, many of the issues would not be clear. Many people don't even know about the occupation or the division of the Palestinian nation, about the separation, permissions and checkpoints. In this sense, only those already familiar with the situation could read and understand this book. This is the audience that I would recommend this book for, not for a lay reader.

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## **Julie says**

Haifa Fragments is a beautiful first novel by khulud khamis. It is also the kind of novel (strong women around which the story centers, politics integral to the lives of the women, care and compassion for a range of people, plots that center people and politics with complex situations and resistant to easy answers) that only come from women's presses. Maisoon, one of the central characters in Haifa Chronicles, is an independent, strong willed woman who still is vulnerable, uncertain, human. She is a Christian Palestinian in a relationship with Ziyad, a Muslim man. She also has close friendships with other women, including on erotic relationship with a woman. Part coming of age novel, coming of age in one's early twenties as one grapples with the questions how shall I live? With whom will I made my life? What choices will I make?, but also part character study, Haifa Chronicles maps the challenging terrain of people living, loving, struggling and being in Haifa and the Occupied Territories. Unique in its characters and setting, compelling in its plot and writing, Haifa Chronicles has few comparable books. We need more books like it, which means, of course, we need more feminist publishers.

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## **Sam Bahour says**

Hafia Fragments is not just a well-written novel for the purpose of entertainment, rather it has embedded within it the dispossession, colonization, and structured discrimination being carried out to this very day against Muslim and Christian Palestinians across Historic Palestine. This sad reality is interwoven in real feelings of love, hate, hope, and despair, like any normal person would experience. Khulud, job well done. Onward and upward.

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## **Tali Shapira says**

Haifa Fragments tells the Palestinian story from a different angle, where love is boundless. Not by physical borders, military occupation, prison, gender, marriage, or time. It creates a world where a Palestinian women- so often caught between the rock and a hard place- can take their time, wonder, and make their choices. A soft-spoken tale of a hard-headed woman. I enjoyed every minute!

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## **David Langsam says**

Glimpses of Fragments  
Review by DAVID LANGSAM

Khulud Khamis writes a straightforward account of life for an Israeli Arab woman, Maisoon, who discovers her inner Palestinian through a deliberate journey into her father's youth and an accidental one into the closed military zone known as the Occupied West Bank.

The generally linear account is surprisingly riveting as Maisoon unexpectedly turns her jewellery-making

from a hobby to a craft and is adopted by an Israeli shop-keeper, a Yahudiyya.

At the same time, Maisoon has discovered some old pages of poetry written by her boring, conservative bank-clerk father, that makes her realize – as so many other children have about their parents – that BC (before children) they might not have been quite so boring and conservative.

And throughout, there is a taste of Palestine: in words and food flavors and colors and the wait at the checkpoint for the Israeli boy-soldiers to wave through the car or ambulance or tourist, after a suitable amount of humiliation and time wasting.

There is also a surprisingly subtle discourse about sex and the single Palestinian, along with the ambitions of a modern woman with an eye to the 21st Century of Western freedom and a foot caught in the 14th Century of Palestinian mores.

Published by the Melbourne-based Spinifex and available at Readings for \$A26.95, Haifa Fragments is a must-read for anyone interested in another view of the Israel-Palestine conflict, the Palestine-Palestine conflict and anyone who claims that there is no apartheid in the only democracy in the Middle East.

‘Haifa Fragments’

Khulud Khamis

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## Michael says

I read a lot. I love literature. Once or twice a year, in average, it happens to me that a book leaves me speechless with a need for reflection, unable to move on to the next book quickly; in a kind of a hangover. Haifa Fragments is a masterpiece which gave me that addictive feeling of a literary hangover.

It's a cultural time journey which I, as a reader, was constantly tossed between worlds, times, cultures, conflicts, traditions and realities, and most importantly between literature and poetry. I thought I knew Haifa by heart, but just like Maisoon discovering her father's other façades after many years of silence, I feel like I've been exposed to fascinating unknown façades of my favorite city. It is hard to believe that this is Khulud Khamis's first novel. I really need time to process all the love and appreciation I feel in me.

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## Sumaiyya says

4.5/5 stars for this amazing book!

Where do I start? First of all, thank you Khulud for sending me your book, though it took us 8 months or more to make it happen! (thanks to political restrictions and postal issues). It truly proved that nothing can keep people and ideas apart, there will be harmony where there is the intention for it to exist. And in so many ways, your book speaks for this. Haifa Fragments is beautifully written, it's prose is so personal and yet also very objective. Though our strong willed protagonist, Maisoon, has her own ideas, Khulud doesn't shy away

from bringing forth ideas that may counter Maisoon's personal beliefs. I love that both the traditional and modern is given a voice in this story, and I absolutely loved the influence of art on identity, expression, and peace. I also liked that we got to see the frustrations and troubles of life in the Occupied territories and on the other side of the fence too. It added a lot of perspective on how, no matter what situation a person is in, there is always worse and always better. More importantly, it exposes the fact that having a comfortable existence comes with its own worries and tensions. Another thing I loved about the book is the multilayered nature of the story. There's a lot going on, politically and personally (and many times the two intersect), so it was a relief to see it all balanced out. If you want to read a book that shows how oppressive forces influence lives, identities, how history is perceived, and how history might have two faces, then Haifa Fragments is a great place to start. I definitely recommend Haifa Fragments to everyone looking for more Middle Eastern / Arab literature. The book is available on Amazon websites, and the publishers websites (Spinifex Press and New Internationalist).

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## **Mari says**

I discovered Haifa Fragments while browsing in Blackwell's with a visiting American friend. It looked like my kind book (one of the kinds I like to read): a feminist novel set in a Middle Eastern country, which would give me insights into women's lives in a different culture to my own, along with some idea of the political scene and how young ambitious women live in a complicated regime in what is essentially a potential war zone. In other words, plenty to learn and think about, while telling a story.

I was not disappointed. This story of Maisoon, born into a Palestinian Arab Christian/Muslim family is packed with contrasts and curiosity - the curiosity of an Israeli Arab about the Palestinians of Gaza, of whether she can or should work for and with a Jewish Israeli, of how and why her parents are together, and whether or not she wants to commit to her Muslim boyfriend and even get married.

The story doesn't settle all these issues: it explores them. It's not a romance: it's a cultural tour. It is hugely satisfying in its own way, and makes no sentimental mistakes, and somehow you can't not like the characters, because even if they do what you wouldn't, they are young, exploring, curious, and sympathetic. Underlying this is a clever theme or symbol of how, in her work, Maisoon is bringing together the cultures of the two groups, Jewish and Arab, who inhabit modern Israel. And while is there, is is never clumsy or forced.

I really enjoyed this book, and hope to find more by this author in the future.

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## **Fragmentage says**

I loved the atmosphere and the descriptive style of day to day situations in Israel/Palestine which felt very authentic and personal throughout. Nothing about it seemed too far fetched or constructed so I caught myself wondering time and again how much of it might be autobiographical rather than mere fiction. I do agree with one of the other reviewers however that you probably need to be at least a little bit familiar with the complexities on the ground here in order to fully appreciate the struggles, doubts and emotional tangles the main characters experience. I also feel that some gentle editing would improve the plotline and make it feel more of a novel and slightly less a collection of situation narratives.



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## Gaby says

This week's review is over a different sort of book, "Haifa Fragments" , which I was fortunate enough to win in a Goodreads giveaway.

I don't have much to say about this book, other than that I really enjoyed it.

The point of view switches some throughout the book without warning, so it takes some getting used to and at times you won't know exactly who you're reading about until other characters are mentioned. And the story itself is a little rushed, lacking some of the exposition that would help understand the characters' history a little better.

However, I thoroughly enjoyed this book. The only other story like this I've read would be the "Almond Tree" a few years ago, and even then it's very different. I enjoyed both stories, but while story follows years of development of the main character, this is a story that takes place in the present day. The situations are different, and the main idea is different, but they're both done beautifully in their own ways.

This book read a bit like poetry and I think anyone who considers themselves a feminist, a pacifist, anyone who wants to read about self discovery without necessarily reading a coming of age novel will enjoy this book.

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