

Booklist

Advanced Review – Uncorrected Proof

Issue: February 1, 2018

In the Cemetery of the Orange Trees.

Talarigo, Jeff (Author)

Feb 2018. 192 p. Etruscan, paperback, \$16. (9780997745542).

Talarigo, a peripatetic global citizen whose spare, exquisite fiction also tends toward the international—Japan for *The Pearl Diver* (2004), the North Korean and Chinese border for *The Ginseng Hunter* (2008)—alchemizes his time in Gaza into this affecting novel in loosely linked stories. An unnamed American finds himself welcomed into a local's home in Jabaliya, the Gaza Strip's largest refugee camp: "I trust your eyes," Fayez explains as they walk down the aptly named School Street. Thus begins the American's education in the occupied Palestinian experience, through history, memories, myths, and parables. As children learn, "It is in the cemetery of the orange trees that we keep alive our story." So, too, the American absorbs the tales of a man whose wife births a goat; a fratricidal hawk; a fatherless boy obsessed with photographs of the dead; a book-ingesting man; and a birthday boy's encounter with a young lion, the Gaza Zoo's animals, and the single veterinarian who cares for them. "There is so much the American does not know," Talarigo presses, adding further urgency with stinging, ruthless lessons—ironically, so gorgeously rendered—that deserve immediate empathic attention.

— *Terry Hong*