



by Hengameh
Yaghoobifarah
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Fiction

Dizzy *Schwindel*

review

Dizzy by Hengameh Yaghoobifarah is a wonderfully messy open-air chamber drama and a bold addition to the canon of queer literature.

Ava uses an intricate matrix to manage assignments with her three lovers, Robin, delia and Silvia. But it all falls apart one afternoon when she finds herself trapped on the roof of her apartment block with all of them.

The novel is told alternately from the perspectives of each of the four main characters, with the tone and language shifting accordingly; delia's sections – written entirely in lower case – are particularly experimental, with elements of prose poetry. The narrative shifts back and forth between the present afternoon and moments from Ava's relationships with her lovers up until this point.

Robin has a long-term boyfriend but has been having something of an identity crisis. Sleeping with Ava – who gave Robin her number in an STI clinic waiting room – is helping her to feel like 'more than just an involuntary het'. delia met Ava at a house party, and their anxiety is always close to the surface; 'i look at a girl who wants it and feel inadequate,' they say. Silvia is the same age as Ava's mother. Having lived through the AIDS crisis, she has something of a chip on her shoulder about how easy younger queer people have it.

The novel opens with a tryst between Ava and Robin, which is

interrupted by delia, who is looking for their phone. Just as Ava is trying to usher delia out of the flat, Silvia storms in, demanding to know why Ava has been ghosting her. Panicking, Ava flees to the roof of the building – and the other three follow her, unthinkingly letting the door to the rooftop slam behind them.

The arguments start almost immediately. Ava asserts that she was open with all of them about their relationship status from the get-go but when none of the others seem convinced, she tries to pass off her behaviour as the result of generational trauma. After all, the father who abandoned her and her mother is a master of ghosting.

The four are eventually saved by a couple having a candle-lit dinner on the roof, one of whom turns out to be Ava's father. He explains that he didn't abandon her as a child; her mother threw him out because he is gay. The revelation is too much for Ava, whose panicked reaction is portrayed through the scattering of the text across the final few pages, leaving the reader with an ambiguous and open ending.

With a striking voice and a strong sense of pace, *Dizzy* is an ambitious piece of queer literature exploring themes ranging from generational differences and the experience of diaspora to gender and desire. It will appeal to fans of works such as *Boulder* by Eva Baltasar and *Old Enough* by Haley Jakobson.

Find out more:

<https://www.aufbau-verlage.de/blumenbar/schwindel/978-3-351-05123-5>

press quotes

'No-one writes so excitingly, so wisely and so incredibly wittily about queers as Hengameh Yaghoobifarah. You literally inhale this novel, and as you do, you learn a new language and laugh yourself half to death. Every one of their pages is deliciously bulging with life.'

Daniel Schreiber

about the author



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Hengameh Yaghoobifarah lives and works in Berlin. They have been a member of the editorial team at Missy Magazine since 2014. They wrote a column, *Habitus*, for *taz* magazine between 2016 and 2022.

Together with Fatma Aydemir, they published the highly-acclaimed essay collection *Your Homeland is Our Nightmare* (2019, Ullstein). Yaghoobifarah's successful debut novel, *Ministry of Dreams*, was published by Blumenbar Verlag in 2021.

Previous works: *Ministerium der Träume*, Blumenbar (2021).

Previous works translated into English: *Your Homeland is our Nightmare*, Literarische Diverse Verlag (2022).

Find out more: @habitus (Instagram).

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