



The House of Djinn

Suzanne Fisher Staples

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It has been ten years since Shabanu staged her death to secure the safety of her daughter, Mumtaz, from her husband's murderous brother. Mumtaz has been raised by her father's family with the education and security her mother desired for her, but with little understanding and love. Only her American cousin Jameel, her closest confidant and friend, and the beloved family patriarch, Baba, understand the pain of her loneliness. When Baba unexpectedly dies, Jameel's succession as the Amirzai tribal leader and the arrangement of his marriage to Mumtaz are revealed, causing both to question whether fulfilling their duty to the family is worth giving up their dreams for the future.

A commanding sequel to the novels *Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind* and *Haveli*, *The House of Djinn* stands on its own. Suzanne Fisher Staples returns to modern-day Pakistan to reexamine the juxtaposition of traditional Islamic values with modern ideals of love.

The House of Djinn is a 2009 Bank Street - Best Children's Book of the Year.

The House of Djinn Details

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Author : Suzanne Fisher Staples

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From Reader Review The House of Djinn for online ebook

Wisteriouswoman says

The House of Djinn should only be read after you finish the first two in the series. This is not a fast paced story and would be boring for many young adults. I thought that her first book, Shabanu, was much more exciting. Ms Staples does write well, and even though she jumps from one character's story to another throughout the book, I had no trouble figuring out what was going on. She gives a helpful glossary of all the Urdu terms that the characters use, even though most of the dialog is in English--I definitely had to flip to this section several times. I enjoyed the book because it gave me a glimpse of what Pakistan is like today and how the culture is still very much the same as it was 100 years ago. It would have been nice if the author had included a genealogy chart so I could keep the family relationships straight. Mumtaz's father had three wives, several children, and an extended family that includes a father, a sister and two brothers. It is very confusing because there is a certain amount of intermarriage going on between cousins and she calls her half-sister 'aunt'. Why it isn't considered incestuous is beyond me. The main characters, 15 year-olds Jameel and Muti, are very likeable. An additional element that adds interest is the mystical experiences that the characters have upon the death of their beloved grandfather.

Josiah says

Has it been ten years? Ten years in seclusion for Shabanu at the Amirzai haveli, away from her parents and daughter, who continue to believe she died at the hands of power-mad Nazir? A twist of fortune at the end of *Haveli* allowed Shabanu to fake her own death so Nazir would think he'd succeeded in having her murdered, and only a loyal servant and Auntie Selma know Shabanu still lives. From age five to fifteen Shabanu's daughter, Mumtaz (now called Muti), has lived with Omar and Leyla in the home where she was born, suffering the same indignities once inflicted on Shabanu by Leyla and her mother, Amina. The youngest wife of wealthy, influential Rahim, Shabanu was the object of envy for his other wives, and that resentment is still being taken out on Muti. Shabanu fears revealing herself to be alive because Nazir remains on the scene, disgraced as he is for killing his brother Rahim, and that tiger could pounce if he finds out Shabanu has duped him all these years. A decade is a long time to be confined, and soon Shabanu must take steps to reintegrate herself into her old life. The day is near for a reunion with Muti.

Though Leyla is a constant thorn in her side, Muti enjoys summers on Omar's estate. Her cousin Jameel, also fifteen years old, flies in with his parents from San Francisco. Jameel is Muti's only real friend, and she shares secrets with him that she'd never open her mouth about to anyone else. They both have forbidden love interests, a Hindu tennis instructor in Muti's case and a blue-eyed blonde in San Francisco for Jameel. Their parents would be appalled at their kids showing interest in romantic partners of dissimilar religion and ethnicity, but Muti and Jameel have limited regard for the Amirzai family legacy that has helped hold Pakistan together for the past several hundred years. When Jameel visits Pakistan he feels as though he's traveling back in time. He's interested in life today, not his family inheritance in a foreign land. Neither of them want to be constrained by cultural demands, but their parents take it seriously, and Muti and Jameel's responsibility will increase as they come of age.

Muti's surrogate grandfather, Baba, is her staunchest advocate, a modernist Muslim who insists on equality for Muti when Leyla would treat her like a servant. As long as Baba is in charge Muti has minimal reason to

fear, but a sudden decline in his health pitches everything into chaos. If Baba dies, Nazir could make a power grab as he did ten years ago, and whoever Baba names as successor in his will would be in mortal danger. Meanwhile, Muti has to come to grips with the revelation that her strong, spirited mother, that untamable daughter of the wind, didn't die all those years ago. If Baba's situation deteriorates, Muti could meet up with Shabanu and flee to the Cholistan desert to hide out with Auntie Sharma, but no one else must learn that Shabanu is alive. If Leyla finds out—or worse, Nazir—Shabanu will end up dead for real, with no shocking resurrection a decade down the line. Amirzai intrigue has risen to a fever pitch after ten years of lull, and Muti and Jameel are right in the middle, forced to make decisions for the sake of family that could dismantle their own hope of a normal future in the modern world. How are a pair of teens to handle the fact that their lives aren't their own, that their personal choices will affect hundreds of people? The cultural limitations that dictated preteen Shabanu's future are now coming for her daughter, and whatever happens, the future will be a far cry from what Muti imagined for herself.

It's hard for Muti and Jameel to understand the stress of each other's roles in Amirzai family affairs. Muti is glorified chattel, her life planned for her with no option for dissent. She'll marry whom she's ordered to, and rebellion won't be tolerated. She isn't quite the free spirit Shabanu is, but Muti despairs being forced to marry and give up her aspirations for higher education and personal liberty. Jameel, as an American, wants to lead a life independent of ancient tradition. He wants to fall in love with someone like his skater girl Chloe in San Francisco and not worry that his parents will veto it. Being dragged into Pakistani land disputes is not on his wish list. Both of them live to some degree in bondage to their Amirzai heritage, but Muti's understanding of it is more expressive. "That was the thing about being a captive bird...You learned to adapt, and before you knew it your captivity seemed normal. If you were free once again, you would become confused and miss the security of your captivity." We tend to adjust to the restrictions life puts on our freedom. Living in the time and culture you're part of means certain behaviors, lifestyles, and ways of thinking are going to be taboo, and you have to maximize your happiness without straying too far out of bounds. The ones who adapt find ways to lead a satisfying life, whether in Pakistan, America, or some future nation with its own taboos. The world changes, and so do the ambitions of the people in it. Worldwide peace may be unattainable, but peace with yourself is not impossible. You'll take hold of it someday if you search diligently.

A pronunciation guide for the character names in this book would have helped. Maybe one is included in other editions of *The House of Djinn*, but not the copy I read. *Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind* and *Haveli* each feature a pronunciation guide before the story starts. Another small thing I wonder about is why the word "haveli" isn't italicized in this book. Every time it pops up in *Haveli* it is italicized. Of the three novels, *Shabanu* is best, in my opinion, a lovely, sprawling epic of Middle East culture in the late twentieth century. *Haveli* is second-best, an emotional read with an evocative setting. *The House of Djinn* ranks third, but it's an above-average novel that moves faster than *Haveli* and has quality ideas to consider. It suffers from the lack of Sharma's presence; as a source of transcendent wisdom, she's irreplaceable. Everything considered, I'll rate *The House of Djinn* two and a half stars. I've learned much from Shabanu's nearly twenty-year saga, and I'd recommend the series in a heartbeat to readers wanting a story of life from an unfamiliar perspective. We would do well to more often emulate Suzanne Fisher Staples's irrepressible daughter of the wind.

Raygina says

I didn't like this one as much as the first or even the second ones.

Caroline says

I'd give it 2.5 stars if I could. This book is a sequel, and if another doesn't follow this one, I'm totally lost.

Meti's mom, Shabanu, is hiding from her treacherous brother-in-law, Nazir, who killed her husband and tried to force her into marriage with him. So for the past ten years, she's lived on her sister-in-law's roof. Meanwhile her daughter is living under the cruel thumb of her half sister Leyla, who makes Meti call her 'auntie.' Did I mention that Layla's husband, Omar, was/is in love with his sister-in-law? Grandpa kicks the bucket and it is revealed he wanted his American grandson Jameel to become the next leader and to marry his first cousin Meti. In tears the kids run away to meet with Shabanu. Wait did I forget a djinn of the dead granddad pushes them out of harm's way (a falling chandelier, how cliché) and whispers in their ears the path they need to take? Anyways, the trio shall return to Shabanu's native land, but the nefarious Nazir (aka the toothless lion) tries to kill Jameel and succeed him. But da-da-da-daa! Uncle Omar kills Nazir. As Shabanu, Jameel, and Meti recover (they were in a car accident set up by Nazir) Jameel begins to come to terms with marry his sister-like first cousin and leaving his life in America.

All in 201 pages.

Come again? I believe the author is a white woman, but this book reads like some HORRIBLE Bollywood film. Just needs some sudden musical interludes and frequent costume changes. I can't say I'm any better for reading this book, but then again I picked it up from young adult fiction.

Shannon says

I started this book series when I was twelve and I will keep reading them as long as they continue to come out. They are something special and I love them even as an adult.

Cindy Mitchell *Kiss the Book* says

Staples, Suzanne Fisher *The House of Djinn*, 202 p. Farrar Straus Giroux, 2008.

Shabanu has been in hiding from Nazir for ten years. Her daughter Mumatz has been raised in relative safety in the home of the tribal chief, Mumatz' grandfather. When Baba dies, however, Shabanu decides that it is time to brave and to come out of hiding. Mumatz has challenges of her own. Her half-sister is trying to arrange an undesirable marriage for her, but Baba has already arranged for Mumatz to marry the new tribal chief, Jameel, her friend who has been raised in America.

From the wandering desert nomads to the city-living Pakistanis, Staples has bridged the gap from an ancient lifestyle to the modern world. Together, *Shabanu*, *Haveli* and *The House of Djinn* paint a vivid, very human, picture of the changes and challenges of the last 30 years for the country. I would love it if a class had all three books approved and had book groups read them and discuss the history and progression.

MS - ADVISABLE. Cindy, Library-Teacher.

Jori Richardson says

Suzanne Fisher Staples could have, and certainly has in the past, done better.

The storyline here is - A young girl in modern Pakistan is struggling to find her place in a world where family life is a battle, and Islamic traditions confuse and frustrate her. Her life takes a shocking turn when she discovers that her mother Shabanu, supposedly dead for years, is actually alive, her beloved grandfather falls ill, and her place in the family is reversed.

"The House of Djinn" never captured my attention, save for small snippets here and there that richly describe the setting of exotic Pakistan. However, a handful of sentences peppered through this book are far from enough to save it.

I disliked it - the characters are defined on the surface, and then left. For example, Leyla is immediately depicted as cruel, selfish, conniving. And stays that way. Not that this is bad, but I felt that the author didn't think she needed any character development.

Also, the plot was a mess.

The supposed villain of the book, Nazir, is built up (though, not well) through-out the story as an impending threat. The author describes him as "a tiger without teeth." However, besides being mentioned a few times, he never appears until the end of the story. And in fact, the main character faints during the time that Nazir actually emerges, and is only briefly told about it after she wakes up. Nazir never even speaks once in this entire book, and is barely mentioned. This makes him the weakest opposing character I have ever heard of. Another character who could be called a villain, Leyla, is a cruel woman who finds joy in humiliating the main character, Mumtaz, into being her servant. She is built up a bit more, and certainly far more prominent than Nazir. However, toward the end of the story, she simply vanishes. There is no conclusion to her and Mumtaz's struggles.

The entire storyline was incredibly weak, jumped from focus to focus, and was ridiculously blunt and abrupt. Lastly, I felt cheated by the ending. Through out the story, Mumtaz's mother Shabanu references the pain that her arranged marriage caused. She loved another man, who also loved her. He too was forced to marry someone else, unhappily. Arranged marriage is portrayed as hurtful, and the reader simply assumes that the author does not support it.

So, I was very surprised when, at the end (view spoiler)

The ending seems more like the end of a chapter than the actual end of the entire book - not because the author used a cliffhanger (that would have taken away another star from this book, so I am glad that the author didn't try that "Buy my next book!" trick here) - but because it simply wasn't... Conclusive. I said to myself "Okay... What now?"

This book had an entirely unsatisfactory ending, a message that made absolutely no sense, and one of the weakest supposed villains ever.

Not recommended - read "Shabanu" instead, but don't bother with this sequel.

Susan says

Read in one sitting. A great #3 to the series. Wish there was a #4

Sophie Baker says

This is a decent book

Emily says

This is not great literature, this is YA, and that's okay. I loved the first two books when I was a teenager, so I was excited to read this this installment, and I was not disappointed. It was really refreshing to read something where feelings didn't rule the day, and the glimpse it offers into Pakistani life is fascinating.

Veronica says

Before I review, I must say that I read Shabanu a few years ago and didn't realize there was another sequel (Haveli) before House of Djinn. That being said, I was quite disappointed with this book. I had previously read two of Staples' other books, and really enjoyed them. I just couldn't get into this book though. It took me a while to read it because I kept stopping to put it down. The various perspectives only made me feel disconnected with the characters, and the juxtaposition between America and Pakistan, though an interesting idea, was awkward at best. The story was choppy, and the chapters ended much too quickly for any kind of flow to be established. Staples' tried to do too much in such a short book, and, as a result, I felt pulled in different directions.

Ashley says

This was the third book following Shabanu: daughter of the wind and Haveli. It was good, but my least favorite of the 3. There is such a cultural divide that it is impossible to relate to the sense of honor and duty of the Pakistani people. The books narrate a young Pakistani desert girl named Shabanu. In the 1st book it mostly details her life in the desert and taking the camels to trade (it was very very good), the following book jumps forward in time about 7 years and she has been married off to a wealthy tribal leader with other wives. She has a 5 yr old daughter mumtaz and I don't want to give anything away, but a bunch of shit goes down and she is forced to fake her own death and go into hiding. Now fast forward another 10 yrs and we begin the House of Djinn. The story was more about Shabanu's now 15 yr old daughter and her cousin Jameel. This might be why I didn't enjoy the book as much as the previous installments. I had grown very attached to Shabanu. It was still good, but more modernized. I'd really only give it 3 1/2 stars. The problem really is that being so American strong-willed and independent, I can't understand anyone giving up such powerful love and life and choice in the guise of duty or responsibility. I don't know how people can accept the will of others and relinquish their desires so freely, so quietly. I probably never will.

Mary says

This was the last book in the trilogy of Shabanu. I really liked the three stories as they unfold Shabanu's life steeped in traditional Pakistani culture. Even though the books span a 20-year period, I still think it would have been better if they were just ONE book. Staples must have felt the reader needed to catch-up, because The House of Djinn had so much repeated information, I just wanted to say, "Get on with it!" It did offer a conclusion to the trilogy -- finally.

Meredith says

I read "Shabanu" and "Haveli" in junior high and high school respectively. I thoroughly enjoyed the novels, the strong character of Shabanu, and the elegantly pace of the novels. "The House of Djinn" doesn't seem to fit with the elegance of the first two novels. Told from the voices of Mumtaz, Shabanu's daughter, and Jameel, Mumtaz's cousin, the story-line was easy to follow if lackluster.

This installment included elements of mysticism that just didn't fit with the first two novels, giving the story a more childish feel. Maybe it's that in "Shabanu" and "Haveli," the protagonist realized that she had to grow-up, and that in "Djinn" the protagonists don't want/aren't ready to take on adult responsibilities.

I also took issue with the ending... The novel just ended without many things being resolved. Does this mean that there'll be a fourth novel coming to the "Shabanu" series?

VJ says

Disappointed at the waste of 10 years of Shabanu's life. Disappointed with this tale.
