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Pea Boy and other stories from Iran

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~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

This collection of seven traditional stories from Iran is a vivid combination of the strange and the familiar. The title story concerns a heroic chick pea that leaps alive from the stew he has been simmering in, declares himself son to the poor couple who have been about to eat him, then performs all manner of murderous wonders in his quest to secure prosperity for his adopted parents. 'Kayvan the Brave' shares the Jack the Giant killer motif of a humble weakling bluffing and blundering a convincing course towards greatness. In 'The Sparrow's Quest', a feeble, starving bird seeks the most powerful force in the world, and just as she is about to expire with hunger and exhaustion, realises that in an important sense, it is herself. As in many storytelling traditions, episodes of magic and of romantic affection alternate with unflinching harshness, as when, in the first story, a solicitous husband boils to death in the soothing turnip soup he has been preparing for his sick wife.

Laird's introduction invites us to contemplate the beauty and the cultural and physical diversity of a land frequently depicted in mainstream media as menacingly austere. Shirin Adl's illustrations support this richer vision, combining bright story scenes with botanical motifs, and providing sumptuous fabric and paper textures as endpapers and backdrops to the text.

Running Order:

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