



Mahtab's Story

By Libby Gleeson

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Mahtab was hollow. Empty, as if her flesh and blood, her energy, that kept her breathing and running, thinking and talking, was gone. Nothing was in its place. She was hungry. Hungry for water, for her father, for her grandmother, her aunts and uncles, for the trees in the back yard, the cabinet on the wall, the silver and glass objects so lovingly collected, for her mountains, the jagged peaks that cut the sky. Her father was dead. She felt sure of it. She was just a speck of dirt on the floor, drifting through the gap between the boards, falling to the ground.

Mahtab and her family are forced to leave their home in Herat and journey secretly through the rocky mountains to Pakistan and from there to faraway Australia. Months go by, months of waiting, months of dread, with only memories and hopes to sustain them. Will they ever be reunited with their father, will they ever find a home? The plight of refugees from war-torn countries and what it really means to leave everything behind and to start a new life are vividly explored in this unforgettable story.

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Grade 6–10—In 2004, Gleeson met with a group of young Muslim expatriates. They shared their stories of persecution in their homelands and their arduous journeys to safety in Australia. *Mahtab's Story*, a work of fiction, is based on the experiences of an Afghani teenager. When readers first meet Mahtab, her family has been torn apart by the Taliban and she, along with her father, mother, and younger siblings, is preparing to make a dangerous escape by way of Pakistan. Her father eventually separates from the group and treks ahead, leaving the rest of the family to live in a one-room hideaway where they depend on the kindness of a stranger they refer to as "Hairy Man." Eventually, the family tires of waiting and decides to continue on to Australia, though they've not heard from Mahtab's father in months. The journey is both sad and inspiring. Gleeson has created a protagonist with the strength of a woman yet the naïveté of a child. Her writing style is fluid, and it captures readers' attention from the very beginning. This is a striking piece of literature.—*Kelly McGorray, Glenbard South High School, Glen Ellyn, IL*

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Review

"Readers will hold their breath with every heart-stopping bump in Mahtab's journey." —Deborah Ellis, author, *The Breadwinner*

"Subtle, direct, and profound." —*Booklist* starred review of *Half a World Away*

About the Author

Libby Gleeson is a highly acclaimed writer who has published more than 30 books for children and teenagers, including *Cuddle Time*, *Half a World Away*, and *The Great Bear* (with Armin Greder), which won the prestigious Bologna Ragazzi in 2000. She has been shortlisted for the CBC Awards 12 times.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Florence Wiggins:

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Woodrow Harker:

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