


# The Night Counter

*Alia Yunis*

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

# The Night Counter

Alia Yunis

## The Night Counter Alia Yunis

After 85 long years, Fatimah Abdullah is dying, and she knows when her time will come. In fact, it should come just nine days from tonight, the 992nd nightly visit of Scheherazade, the beautiful and immortal storyteller from the epic *The Arabian Nights*.

Just as Scheherazade spun magical stories for 1,001 nights to save her own life, Fatima has spent each night telling Scheherazade her life stories, all the while knowing that on the 1,001st night, her storytelling will end forever. But between tonight and night 1,001, Fatima has a few loose ends to tie up. She must find a wife for her openly gay grandson, teach Arabic (and birth control) to her 17-year-old great-granddaughter, make amends with her estranged husband, and decide which of her troublesome children should inherit her family's home in Lebanon--a house she herself has not seen in nearly 70 years. All this while under the surveillance of two bumbling FBI agents eager to uncover Al Qaeda in Los Angeles.

But Fatima's children are wrapped up in their own chaotic lives and disinterested in their mother or their inheritances. As Fatima weaves the stories of her husband, children, and grandchildren, we meet a visionless psychic, a conflicted U.S. soldier, a gynecologist who has a daughter with a love of shoplifting and a tendency to get unexpectedly pregnant, a Harvard-educated alcoholic cab driver edging towards his fifth marriage, a lovelorn matchmaker, and a Texas homecoming queen. Taken in parts, Fatima's relations are capricious and steadfast, affectionate and smothering, connected yet terribly alone. Taken all together, they present a striking and surprising tapestry of modern Arab American life.

Shifting between the U.S. and Lebanon over the last hundred years, Alia Yunis crafts a bewitching novel imbued with great humanity, imagination, and a touch of magic realism. Be prepared to be utterly charmed.

## The Night Counter Details

Date : Published July 14th 2009 by Crown (first published 2009)

ISBN : 9780307453624

Author : Alia Yunis

Format : Hardcover 384 pages

Genre : Fiction, Fantasy, Magical Realism, Historical, Historical Fiction, Cultural, Lebanon

 [Download The Night Counter ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The Night Counter ...pdf](#)

**Download and Read Free Online The Night Counter Alia Yunis**

---

## From Reader Review The Night Counter for online ebook

### Anna says

Bittersweet ending. There were times that I did wish for a family tree just so I could see how everyone was related and keep everything straight in my head.

---

### Mary Walters says

Not only was I impressed with the warmth and affection packed into this interesting story about how a family with its roots in Lebanon grows and flourishes in the U.S., I was also intrigued by its structure.

The Night Counter is built on the premise that Scheherazade wanders the earth seeking human stories to relieve the boredom of her immortality. The subject of her current focus is one Fatima Abdullah, 85, of Los Angeles, formerly of Detroit and Deir Zeitoun. Fatima is telling Scheherazade her 992nd story when the novel opens, and she is also busy planning her own funeral: sure that her time will be up when she completes Tale 1001.

Fatima, a bright and feisty woman even in her mid-eighties, came to the U.S.A. as a young bride with her first husband Marwan. With him and then her second husband Ibrahim (who married her after Marwan died), she gave birth to ten children. She always believed that Ibrahim married her out of kindness rather than love, so at the age of 82 she left him in Detroit and went to live with Amir, her grandson, in LA. Amir is openly gay but Fatima is determined to find him a wife before she dies. Her other major mission (aside from ordering food for the funeral) is to decide to which of her many children and grandchildren she should leave the key to her beloved home in Lebanon. Scheherazade (who can only be seen by Fatima; everyone else thinks Fatima is talking to herself) is assisting in this enterprise by zipping around the world on her magic carpet between Fatima's stories in an attempt to assess the pros and cons of awarding the cherished key to each of Fatima's descendants.

Through Scheherazade's short trips, we learn the stories of the members of Fatima's family. They are now living all over the USA - one grandchild is in the middle east doing peace-corps work. Some remain loyal to the religion and lifestyles of their childhoods as others move deeper into the melting pot. Their lives are in many ways typical of most second- and third-generation families from other cultures now living in North America, and the novel is a reminder of how much alike we all are, rather than how different. For the most part amusing and light-hearted, The Night Counter does also not hesitate to address some of the darker issues that confront Muslims and all humans in America today. It is an auspicious debut, and I look forward to reading future novels by Ms. Yunis.

---

### Jackie Doyle says

I was fortunate to read the un-proofed galley of the Night Counter, and am so excited I need to review it.

This book is so much fun to read and entertaining on so many levels, the Night Counter is a wonderful blend of fantasy and family that is worthy of Scheherazade herself. In a twist on the classic story, Scheherazade visits Fatima nightly, to hear her stories. Fatima realizes that her last night of storytelling is quickly on the

horizon and she has lots to do and decide before her story comes to an end. As we travel with Fatima (and Scheherazade) through her life past and present in Lebanon and throughout the U.S.A., we find ourselves fascinated observers of lives filled with misery, foolishness, yearning and love. The Night Counter is a delightful journey through the lives of a big family, who are separated by more than distance and will touch that piece in each of us that is forever bound to and by family.

Merged review:

I was fortunate to read the un-proofed galley of the Night Counter and am so excited I need to review it.

This book is so much fun to read and entertaining on so many levels, the Night Counter is a wonderful blend of fantasy and family that is worthy of Scheherazade herself. In a twist on the classic story, Scheherazade visits Fatima nightly, to hear her stories. Fatima realizes that her last night of storytelling is quickly on the horizon and she has lots to do and decide before her story comes to an end. As we travel with Fatima (and Scheherazade) through her life past and present in Lebanon and throughout the U.S.A., we find ourselves fascinated observers of lives filled with misery, foolishness, yearning and love. The Night Counter is a delightful journey through the lives of a big family, who are separated by more than distance and will touch that piece in each of us that is forever bound to and by family.

---

### **Jalilah says**

This is tale of an extensive Lebanese family that immigrated to the U.S. in the early 1900s. The appearance of Scheherazade, as well as the ways many tales are told that all flow into one main tale gives the novel a magical realist bend. However it's really a story about immigrants and how it is important for family members to care for each other really talk to each other.

This review goes into more depth <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/...>

---

### **Özlem Atar says**

A book I would like to read for the third time.

---

### **Melissa McCauley says**

A charming multi-generational tale about a Lebanese-American family. When we join the story 85 year-old Fatima is 6 days away from the 1,001st day living with her gay grandson Amir in Hollywood after divorcing her husband Ibrahim in Detroit. Every night she tells a story to the spirit Scherezade, who visits far-flung members of Fatima's dysfunctional family to better understand them, while Fatima frets over who will inherit her mother's house in Deir Zeitoon, Lebanon. The tale has just enough comic relief and levity to keep the dysfunction from becoming overwhelming and depressing.

---

## Rashida says

This was an enchanting novel, and I am astounded that it is a debut effort. It presented a kaleidoscope of experiences, each one ringing true and striking a different emotional color. What was real was the frustration you felt at the characters' shortcomings and the relief you felt at their triumphs. Remarkably, Yunis avoided the saccharine sweet and trite confections of happy endings that I was afraid was coming, but instead gave us something that felt both real (well, maybe a bit stretched for entertainment's sake) and wholesome. This novel left laughing at times, and sitting in contemplative quiet of the gentle ache evoked by the scenes of still tragedy. I can't wait for Yunis to write again.

---

## Buchdoktor says

Darf man über andere Kulturen und Religionen lästern? Wenn es die eigene Kultur ist, wie bei Alia Yunis, sicherlich. Auch wenn mir das Lachen einige Male im Hals stecken bleiben wollte, habe ich mich über Fatima, die fast hundertjährige Patriarchin eines ausufernden libanesischen Familien-Clans köstlich amüsiert. Fatima mit ihrem unfreiwilligen Sprachwitz (der auch in der Übersetzung ins Deutsche noch funktioniert), ist einfach komisch – solange man selbst nicht mit ihr in einem Haushalt leben muss.

Die Last, die die zweite Einwanderer-Generation trägt, weil sie es keiner der beteiligten Kulturen rechtmachen kann, trifft Alia Yunis punktgenau. In einer Großfamilie aus fünf Generationen mag mancher Leser zunächst Probleme haben, die Verwandtschaftsverhältnisse zu erfassen, ohne sich einen Stammbaum aufzuzeichnen. Köstlich amüsiert habe ich mich auch über das Thema Verschweigen konfliktreicher Themen, wegen Alter, Krankheit oder Religion einer anderen Person – und deshalb als Gesprächsthema eines Tages nur noch das Wetter bleibt. Wie wenig sich doch die Gewohnheiten in Fatimas Clan von denen in Clans anderer Länder unterscheiden - wäre da nicht die ironische zusätzliche Tonspur, die die auf den 11. September folgende US-amerikanische Xenophobie aufs Korn nimmt.

Die Autorin sieht sich selbst als Amerikanerin, Libanesin und Palästinenserin, wie sie im sehr informativen Nachwort erzählt.

---

## Nancybethjackson says

Scheherazade could learn a thing or two about storytelling from Alia Yunis, who uses the 1001 Nights conceit to tell the tale of Fatima Abdullah, an 85-year-old matriarch who trades beauty tips with Scheherazade as she counts down the nights she thinks she has left to live. Both Fatima and Scheherazade display a lot of L.A. lip, which is not surprising given that Yunis is a filmmaker from L.A. Fatima, a purple-haired Detroit Tigers fan, is a character hard to beat, but she gets competition from her highly dysfunctional family. How glad I am that I didn't have to wait 1001 nights to hear all their stories. But *The Night Counter* is more than a collection of wonderfully zany characters. It's also a cautionary tale about how living in the past can keep you from living in the present and how little family members understand one another.

---

## Clare says

The blend of realism and magic reminded a bit of Alice Hoffman but with a unique middle eastern point of

view. I loved the characters! Fatima is an older woman. She has had a large family of sons and daughters, and she wants each of them to find happiness. When she is visited by the legendary Scheherazade who is no stranger to story-telling, Fatima tells her the story of her family from her two husbands to her many children.

I am so impressed with this author who kept me spellbound for 365 pages (was that figure - one full year - by accident?). I didn't want the book to end and can only hope that this talented young writer will continue to write (this was her first novel). In particular, I would love to read more about Fatima and her wonderful, imperfect group of relatives.

Choose this book for a charming and fantastic journey on a literary magic carpet!

---

### **Jess says**

I *loved* this book. But what made it different from most books, for me at least, is the way in which I read it. It was not a book that consumed me, that I felt I needed to devour. I did that with my other favorites, like Harry Potter (die-hard fan here) and *East of Eden*. Instead I digested it over the course of a few nights, kind of like the nights you read about in the book.

The subtle, wry humor in this book made it an enjoyable, entertaining, but also thought-provoking novel. I think Yunis did a fantastic job at portraying family unity despite the diverse people comprising the family. From this compilation of vignettes, I felt that I got to know each member of the family, and had some insight as to who they were and what their lives were like.

Yunis crafted a compelling story that is important because of its treatment of families and history. It also addresses Arab-American lives in modern times without overemphasizing issues pertaining to terrorism or the post-9/11 world. I feel that this novel could be extrapolated to other hyphenated American communities, making it an even better tale.

---

### **Elinor says**

At first, I just enjoyed the creative premise. Then I became entranced by the main character and her version of her life history, as contrasted by the versions of her many relatives. I began to lose track of all the threads and to be a bit annoyed by a silly subplot, but the ending was bittersweetly satisfying.

---

### **Rima says**

The best word I can come up with to describe this book is "charming." The premise is really interesting; it's use of fantasy (the matriarch of an Arab-American family is being visited nightly by Scheherazade) demystifies Arab-American identity, oddly enough. The characters are generally accessible, some admirable, some flawed. Indeed, one of my favorite things about this novel is that it doesn't create a heavy-handed account of Arab-Americans that perpetuates the problematic stereotype of the friendly immigrant who is grateful and obsequious -- a stereotype just as damaging as that of the angry, ignorant terrorist. This is a family, flawed and problematic who, though they often don't realize it, are constructing an identity that is uniquely Arab-American -- they no longer belong to their parents' home country (Lebanon, in this case) nor do they know how best to be Americans without erasing their Arab heritage. They weave past and present,

East and West, fantasy and reality, creating a hybrid identity that allows their family to thrive. Another thing I really appreciated was the ending; Yunis does not patronize her readers. The conclusion of the novel is both satisfying and challenging. This is one I'll definitely read again.

---

### **Thomas says**

A modern and innovative retelling of *The Arabian Nights* centered on Fatimah Abdullah, an old matriarch who tells her life story to Scheherazade in an attempt to alleviate the latter's boredom. The novel begins on Fatimah's 992nd night while she also starts to plan her own funeral, because she believes that by tale 1001, she will complete her purpose and pass away. Alia Yunis moves us back and forth between Fatima's present-day situations as well as the scenarios that encompass her sprawling family.

I enjoyed how Yunis dispersed the idea of identity in *The Night Counter*: she moved away from Arab-American stereotypes and portrayed an array of experiences. She gives us glimpses into the lives of Amir, Fatimah's out-and-proud gay grandson, Zade, a dysfunctional and uncouth matchmaker, Dina, a Texas-homecoming queen who goes to volunteer in Gaza, and more. Yunis deconstructs the idea that only one type of Arab-American exists, and she paints Fatimah's family with eclectic color and vivid personality.

While I did not love this book with all of my heart, I would recommend it to those with an interest in *The Arabian Nights*, Arab-American identity, frame stories, or humanity in general. A good college read that exposed me to culture and a family outside of my own.

---

### **Bayan Al hijjawi says**

I was impressed by the blend of magic in this book.

Scheherazade who wanders the earth seeking for human stories to relieve the boredom of her immortality meets Fatima, the old grandma with a large family of sons and daughters, and she wants each of them to find happiness. And who insists on finding the right one to take care of her house in Lebanon.

And after reading this book i came up with some quotes

"Zaka,giving alms is one of the true pillars of Islam. You don't hear Cnn talks about. "

"A good bargain never goes out of fashion".

This book is absolutely charming.

---