



# Felaheen

*Jon Courtenay Grimwood*

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**Felaheen** Jon Courtenay Grimwood

In a world where secrets kill, an ex-cop discovers he's got the biggest secret of all....

Set in a 21st-century Ottoman Empire, Jon Courtenay Grimwood's acclaimed Arabesk series is a noir action-thriller with an exotic twist. Here an ex-cop with nothing to lose finds himself on the trail of a man he doesn't believe in: *his father*.

Ashraf Bey has been a lot of things-and most of them illegal. Now, having resigned as El Iskandryia's Chief of Detectives, he's taking stock of his life and there's not much: a mistress he's never made love to, a niece everyone thinks is mentally incompetent, and a credit card bill rising towards infinity. With a revolt breaking out across North Africa, the world seems to be racing Raf straight to hell. The last thing he needs is a father he's never known. But when the old Emir's security chief requests that Raf come out of retirement to investigate an assassination attempt on His Excellency, that's exactly what Raf gets. Now, disguised as an itinerant laborer, Raf goes underground to discover a man-and a past-he never knew...and won't survive again.

"Fast, furious, fun and elegant, the Arabesk trilogy is one of the best things to hit the bookstores in a while."  
-*SF Revu*

"*Felaheen* is SF at its most inventive." -*Guardian*

## Felaheen Details

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Author : Jon Courtenay Grimwood

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## From Reader Review Felaheen for online ebook

### Fantasy Literature says

In this review, I'm going to write about the willing suspension of disbelief. Perhaps more precisely, I'm writing about the intersection of world-building and the willing suspension of disbelief. Enter Jon Courtenay Grimwood and the ARABESK trilogy: Pashazade, Effendi and Felaheen.

In Grimwood's world, the Ottoman Empire never collapsed. Woodrow Wilson brokered peace between London and Berlin in 1915, World War II never happened, and the major world powers seem to be Germany, France, the USA and the Empire. This alternate timeline stretches a few decades beyond current time, but in terms of fashion and technology, there's nothing the science fiction reader won't recognize. It's the social, political and economic things that are ... Read More:

<http://www.fantasyliterature.com/revi...>

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### Michele (Mikecas) says

Da:

<http://www.webalice.it/michele.castel...>

*Terzo e conclusivo capitolo della trilogia Arabesk, di cui avevo già presentato Pashazade ed Effendi. Questa volta, come anche evidenziato dalla quarta di copertina del libro, si torna al filone principale della vicenda, cioè su chi (cosa) sia Ashraf Bey e cosa significhi il suo passato.*

*La trama è abbastanza lineare, anche se con alcune tortuosità, ma magari sono state difficoltà mie a fare le necessarie correlazioni, che lasciano alcuni aspetti non del tutto chiari. Lo stile narrativo ritorna ad essere quello concreto del primo romanzo, ma a me rimane qualche perplessità, come se Grimwood non avesse saputo davvero concludere la vicenda, forse più interessato all'ambientazione che aveva creato che a dare una struttura narrativa solita alla storia che voleva presentare. Lo scontro tra Raf e il suo fratellastro è sia scontato che banale, non riuscendo mai a raggiungere livelli di tensione efficaci, e quindi anche tutte le sottostorie di contorno ne risentono.*

*Mi rendo ben conto di essere probabilmente troppo negativo, perché questo è un romanzo che ho letto con un discreto piacere, ma non posso evitare di far notare un certo senso di disillusione che alla fine mi è rimasto...*

*O forse era stata troppo alta l'aspettativa data dal primo romanzo della trilogia.*

*In ogni caso vale sicuramente la pena di leggerlo, e ogni casa editrice seria dovrebbe sempre concludere le serie che incomincia, vero Mondadori e Rizzoli ? (per non parlare di altri più piccoli), per cui lode a Zona 42.*

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### Mary Z says

Set in Islamic North Africa, in a world where Germany won the First World War and the Ottoman Empire remains powerful well into the 21st century, "Felaheen" is the third installment of Grimwood's "Arabesk" trilogy.

The story begins right after the events of “Effendi”. Ashraf, Former Chief of Detectives, former Governor of El Iskandriya, possible son of the Emir of Tunis, caretaker to his 11 year old genius niece Hani, living (but not sleeping) with the beautiful and wealthy Zara, finds himself at loose ends. Currently unemployed and still on his journey of self-discovery, he is approached by the director of security for his father the Emir. Eugenie de la Croix tries to enlist his help to protect the Emir from an assassination attempt. Raf goes undercover to discover not only who is behind the planned assassination, but also to obtain proof once and for all as to who he in fact is: the son of Emir Moncef al-Mansur, or the nameless Swedish hiker that his mother maintained fathered him.

Leaving a note for his precocious niece, Hani, he leaves her and Zara behind and takes off in pursuit of the truth but Hani tracks him down, putting herself and her cousin, the Emir’s youngest son, in the middle of a civil war.

These books, while forming a trilogy, are designed to be stand alone novels as well. As with the other two books, the present day story is interspersed with one from the past. This time, the story of Raf’s mother, Sally. But while these novels do form complete stories of their own, they are best read together as each one builds from the character and story-line development of the previous one. I, for one, am glad that I did read them that way. It took me till well into the second novel to really want these characters to figure certain things out and in “Felaheen,” I was not disappointed. But Grimwood doesn’t spoon feed his readers and one has to actually be engaged in the story in order to understand what’s going on.

Fortunately, that’s not hard to do. Grimwood seems to be at ease in the world of his creation and brings us into the sights and sounds and setting till we feel that we are there, right alongside his characters. By showing us the points of view of different characters, the story gets fleshed out in a unique way. I would love to see more books about these characters that I have come to enjoy reading about, especially the relationship between Ashraf and his niece Hani. The relationships in this novel are so complex and layered and difficult. Much like real life.

Not at all light reading, but enjoyable and rewarding. I would recommend the series.

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### **xdroot says**

the final book in the trilogy made a great ending to the series. you find out about the fox, the motivations of ashraf's mother, and more secrets of ashraf bey. the ending seemed a foregone conclusion, until the author threw in a delicious twist!

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### **Luca Cresta says**

Ottima conclusione del trittico Arabesque di quest'autore assai interessante.

Prosa eccellente e un intreccio molto interessante, di pari passo con l'ambientazione assai particolare.

Necessaria la lettura dei precedenti, ma non lascia mai delusi.

Le varie storie si amalgamano in modo coerente e la conclusione arriva al momento giusto.

Un autore assai interessante di cui proporre sicuramente altre opere.

Come sempre un grazie all'ottima traduttrice Chiara Reali.

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## **Joanna says**

Great premise--noir cyberpunk alt history!

Not so great execution. It just goes ... nowhere.

All style and no substance, alas. Though you do find out some of the whys and wherefores in this one. And Hani gets a lot more facetime. She's charming.

I hear there might be more Ashraf Bey books in the pipeline ... not sure if I will read them or not.

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## **Lauren says**

Am 100% willing to say that I did not entirely understand the ending. Also, as with the other two books in the series, too many ellipses.

I think maybe I didn't care enough about who Ashraf's parents were to carry me through the series.

Better than OK, but not by that much - just not enough there to fully pull me into the story and keep me there.

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## **Pioden says**

Third Arabesk

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## **Mike Franklin says**

The third and final book in Grimwood's Arabesk trilogy, continues the story of Ashraf Bey, a reluctant detective in a near future alternate North Africa. This is science fiction meets Raymond Chandler meets alternate history meets a touch of cyberpunk. A strange mix but one I find compelling. However, although still enjoyable, this has proved to be my least favourite of the three; easier to follow but it never quite attains the pace and tension of the others.

Grimwood's writing is, as ever, sharp and gritty and his characters are well drawn though he allowed Zara, a strong character from the previous books, to slide into an unsympathetic and rather whiny minor character in this one which was a shame. However in compensation this time the young Hani is brought forward to prominence and the passages from her perspective were a real joy to read.

The cyber aspects of the cyberpunk is much reduced this time around but the punk aspects are still very much in evidence with Grimwood unfailingly capturing the atmosphere of the dirty underbelly of society without actually wallowing in it.

A good but not brilliant conclusion to the generally excellent Arabesk trilogy.

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### **Ruth says**

c2003: FWFTB: 2003: Yes, well. This may be a book that I need to read again in the future to really savour the elegance of the writing. This first read was fairly demented with trying to keep up with the main protagonists movements, the background concerning his mother and how these actions have influenced the future that I am reading about in the very next chapter. Phew. I am not sure that did actually keep up with all the whys and wherefores. I think I understood the ending....but I'm not sure. Perhaps that is what the author was aiming for but it always leaving me a little miffed. I agree with Entertainment Weekly's comments ie 'literary page-turner ' but can't agree with the Guardian's opinion of being 'SF at its most inventive'. Any how, recommended to the normal crew that have already embarked on the Arabesk journey. *"Their black uniform wasn't one Raf recognised but whatever force they represented it seemed to require them to wear steel-capped eighteen-rivet boots cut from shiny leather. Always a bad sign."*

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### **Andy says**

This is the ending of the trilogy, though its less engaging or involving than the first two. The ending is rather disappointing and unclear. Still though, worth reading if you have read the previous two.

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### **Neil Pearson says**

The weakest of the three, but still a fun alternate future whodunnit. Plus we get a bit more on the history of who and what ashraf is.

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### **Lawrence says**

As I have come to expect from Grimwood, this was a thrilling read. He jumps from one thread to another quite easily. Or, rather, the author jumps, and the reader easily follows. His usual trick of hiding motivations of the various characters features heavily in this one - maybe a little too heavily for my tastes. In fact, the pieces of the puzzle are left out a little too long, then even at the end don't they still don't fit together quite right.

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### **Dean Simons says**

Good story, good conclusion to the trilogy. Many questions answered, some left dangling. The only problem I had was it didn't quite compete with the previous instalments in the trilogy.

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## **Zaxs Yacs says**

In a world where secrets kill, an ex-cop discovers he's got the biggest secret of all...

Set in a 21st-century Ottoman Empire, Jon Courtenay Grimwood's acclaimed Arabesk series is a noir action-thriller with an exotic twist. Here an ex-cop with nothing to lose finds himself on the trail of a man he doesn't believe in: \*his father.

\*Ashraf Bey has been a lot of things—and most of them illegal. Now, having resigned as El Iskandryia's Chief of Detectives, he's taking stock of his life and there's not much: a mistress he's never made love to, a niece everyone thinks is mentally incompetent, and a credit card bill rising towards infinity. With a revolt breaking out across North Africa, the world seems to be racing Raf straight to hell. The last thing he needs is a father he's never known. But when the old Emir's security chief requests that Raf come out of retirement to investigate an assassination attempt on His Excellency, that's exactly what Raf gets. Now, disguised as an itinerant laborer, Raf goes underground to discover a man—and a past—he never knew...and won't survive again.

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## **Bettie? says**

**'Dig' said the fox.**

Ooops - here I am diving in willy-nilly because Connie Willis's time slip is not suiting (can't win 'em all)

only to find that this is 3rd in a series about an alternative modern day Tunisia. Sheesh.

Like the Gurkas when they unsheath their Khukuris they must draw blood, once a book is swooped upon I must go with it for good or ill (or yawn).

NB I've been to Tunisia and loved it - hunted around for Carthage but I must of read the map wrong.

LATER - Dut-Doo!

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## **Matty says**

The Arabesk trilogy takes you for a suspense mystery joyride with a bit of cyberpunk thrown in for good measure. I wouldn't recommend this books as an intro to Jon Courtenay Grimwood's work, but his fans will definitely get a lot of entertainment out of this cliffhanger. ~mwb

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## **Michael Battaglia says**

And its one more time for our mysterious man with mysterious abilities and a mysterious past to go along with all that mystery! So far in the life of Ashray Bey we've seen him solve a murder and become Chief of Detectives, become Governor of the city of El Iskandryia without having solved a murder and then once the murders were solved give up pretty much every job to become a bum who lives with a woman who wants to be his girlfriend but won't because of reasons while he slowly runs out of money even though he's rich. Or she is. Or the nine year old child he's raising is. Boy, it sounds like someone's life could use a distraction or two.

Fortunately that vaguely mysterious past decides to come in handy when his reputed father the Emir of Tunis almost gets assassinated via technique straight out of a James Bond movie. He's been told all along its his real dad but since his mother was a trouble causing do gooder (or something of the sort) that knew how to have a good time, it was entirely his father was someone else. It hardly matters because the Emir wants his help anyway despite his track record being . . . not real solid (its high profile but you could probably make a case he's more lucky than smart). Which means Ashraf has to go undercover. Without telling anyone. So cue the little kid getting into the act!

My biggest complaint about this series so far has been how goshdarn opaque the plotting seems at times, tangled like a snake orgy and at times just as slow moving in its revelations. As with the last book the premise should be fairly clear cut, with the "someone wants to kill the Emir and needs to be stopped before they do" premise one that would presumably nicely dovetail with the politics of its alternate history. But it . . . doesn't quite go that way. The Emir has two other sons that would both like his job and then there's odd man out Ashraf and from there things start to get murky.

What helps is that the actual reading of the book is as entertaining as ever. Ashraf is both smart and dense, although in this book his niece Hani almost steals the show. She's been a highlight in the other two books, a fiendishly smart child with very little in the way of social skills (or at least worse than most little kids) but pretty good with computers and survival. With Ashraf undercover and sidelined for a good chunk of the book, she gets center stage and the book is the better for it. Grimwood writes a surprisingly effective child,



by turns sentimental and standoffish the way that kids are, moody and friendly and not very good at fitting in with people she doesn't know. Her characterization balances out Ashraf's sometimes lack of presence and his confusion at her antics does go a long way toward mitigating how oblique the plot can be.

He also intersperses the actual plot with flashback scenes of Bey's mother's life before she had him, her travails and hijinks, which wind up being a long version of "How I Maybe Met the Man Who Might Be Your Father". It was nice to see but it didn't feel as relevant as the flashbacks to Zara's dad's war-crimey past did in the second book.

Evne with all the setup though when the actual plot starts to climax it all starts to congeal into a slight mess when a lot of important action seems to take place off screen, leaving the reader feeling with the constant sense they've missed something important and having to play catch-up or just triggering rounds of confusion as it becomes unclear what everyone is doing and why. Soldiers are chasing people, Hani is with another kid trying to escape, Ashraf is popping up randomly also trying not to get killed . . . and then suddenly its over and there's a wedding. Yay? A lot of stuff seems to happen that we're not privy to (including the resolution of Zara and Ashraf's non-romance . . . she's barely a presence in this book) and if not for the decent action sequences and Hani's charm it would be a bit of a perplexing read. I know I read and maybe don't catch everything but I kept skimming back thinking I had let some important detail flash by me and . . . either I need a refresher course in basic reading or they're well hidden.

Its an interesting series, all told, one that was an entertaining read but never seemed to live up to its promises . . . an alternate history with a solid diversion point it never really made the case that it was a radically different world and despite flirting with a wider view, it never fully delved into the broader alliances and conflicts. It also seemingly wanted to be a Chanderlesque mystery series at time and while Grimwood's prose could be up to the task he never had a really strong character in Ashraf Bey to communicate any kind of worldview beyond wanting to stay out of trouble. Even the "fox" in his head and his ill-defined combat abilities were kind of just . . . there. It winds up being a bunch of elements of stories that I like that somehow failed to fuse into an amalgamation that was more than the sum of its parts. I'd read about the continuing adventures of his niece, though, so make of that what you will.

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### **Jason Landau says**

Third book in the series. It is set in an alter reality North Africa where the Ottoman and German Empires never fell. Strangely though Russia is nonetheless soviet. A good mystery noir with a bit of cyberpunk (think Neuromancer bio upgrades) thrown in. I shot through the whole series because I thought the premise was great. Sometimes a confusing read because of the multiple story-lines but worth it nonetheless.

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### **Nicholas Whyte says**

<http://nhw.livejournal.com/155337.html>[return][return]The third in Grimwood's Ashraf Bey trilogy, set in an early 21st century North Africa where the Ottoman and German Empires never fell (though Russia is nonetheless soviet) and which is otherwise not very different from our own time-line (to the extent of having the same computer operating systems). Apart from the alternate history aspect, other sf elements include the hero's electronic alter ego and the fact that Tunis is under international sanctions for unauthorised genetic manipulation experiments. I like this series as much for the sultry, sensual prose as for the intricate plot and

striking characterisations. This one didn't disappoint. However now that Ashraf Bey has reached a certain point in his political career I hope his creator will move on to other things - as long as they are as enjoyable as this.

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