

Booklist

Advanced Review – Uncorrected Proof

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★ **The Winter Thief.**

White, Jenny (Author)

Mar 2010. 384 p. Norton, hardcover, \$24.95. (9780393070170).

The nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire, in the throes of political upheaval, again provides the vividly realized background for this third mystery featuring Special Prosecutor Kamil Pasha. White demonstrates her in-depth knowledge of Turkish history in a deftly plotted and clever tale of intrigue, duplicity, and violence. The disappearance of illegal firearms, an explosion, a bank heist, and a deadly fire are just the beginning of a case that demands all of Kamil's personal and professional resources. When Vahid, the scheming and sadistic head of the secret police, discovers the presence of Armenian communists in the area, his actions lead to a bloody massacre and near war. As Kamil and the police attempt to squelch rumors of rebellion and expose the true criminals, threats carried out on his family and against his livelihood render this case personal and deeply upsetting. The tension between self-preservation and ethical behavior (White masterfully forces her fully fleshed characters to make moral decisions in seemingly impossible circumstances) drives the story, but the presence of a depraved yet compelling villain and the immediacy of the setting (veiled women, bad hospitals, faulty weaponry, poor roads, noise, heat, danger) also contribute to what is White's best book to date. A must-read for fans of Katie Hickman's *The Aviary Gate* (2008) and Jane Johnson's *The Tenth Gift* (2008).

— *Jen Baker*