

Someone to Run With by David Grossman.
Bloomsbury, 2003.

David Grossman's latest book is set in present-day Jerusalem, but the backdrop of a city and a citizenry oppressed by terrorism and uncertainty, while present in this wonderful novel, never really intrudes on the action itself.

At a time when positive stories seem to emerge all too rarely from Israel, Grossman has written a love story full of hope, drama and some wonderfully drawn characters.

The book is set around a phenomenon of which only the most regular visitors to Israel would be aware - the large number of young people, some only in their early teens, caught up in the drug scene or intentional runaways, eking out a living as street performers, often with connections to the criminal underworld.

In this setting we encounter an heroic young woman, a courageous young man, and a Labrador called Dinka. *Someone to Run With* tells the dramatic story of how the three are brought together and the dramas and incidents that take place before their union occurs.

Though Grossman weaves an almost magical aura about his characters they remain very human and highly empathetic. His achievement is to have created a tale that lives with the reader long after the book has been finished, and which in my view is far and away his best novel to date.

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