

*Bookforum*

Spring 2002

'*A Camel for the Son* and *Ramadan Moon*, By Fazal Sheikh'

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Sheikh, who has devoted his career to photographing refugees, focuses on the plight of Somali women in these companion volumes, which he has written, designed, and produced. *A Camel for the Son* – at birth in Somalia, males get camels, females zilch – opens with an incredible panorama of a huge Somali refugee camp in Kenya and proceeds to tell the stories of a number of Somali women, many of whom were victims of rape and torture. These sad sagas are accompanied by Sheikh's straightforward, emotionally compelling portraits, most which were taken in a tent that functions as a makeshift studio a la Penn. *Ramadan Moon* is more concise and in many ways more powerful. Close-up portraits of a Somali asylum seeker living temporarily in the Netherlands alternate with her first-person narration of how her family's once-pleasant life in Mogadishu turned into a living hell. As prelude and coda to her story, near-abstract pictures of leaves and the moonlit night sky are combined with poetic excerpts from the Koran. It could be corny, but instead it's dead-on heartrending.