



**Deniz Ohde, *Streulicht***

**Bound, 284 pages, 22 €**

**Suhrkamp**

You are the ELITE, the teacher in the small German town says to new high school students from time to time. And yet the student Deniz, who prefers to go by a German name outside of her family, cannot shake off the suspicion that she is not one of them. Nor is her mother from an Anatolian village by the sea, nor her drinking, chain-smoking father, nor her neglected grandfather who lives in the basement.

The first-person narrator, alias Deniz Ohde, describes the place of her childhood with extraordinary precision: Her mother, who cultivated but subordinated herself because she never felt at home in Germany; her father, who works in a factory, hoards special offers at stores, and puts the family under pressure with motionless but smoldering violence; her treacherously false cheap clothes; her lonely meals at the living room table; her smoky hair; and the reality of moronic American reality TV shows. She just as accurately records the lives of her best friends from supposedly good families, whose provincialism and limited worldview seem to her like the ultimate security and unattainable prosperity.

One could almost cry out in indignation when Deniz kneels before latently xenophobic teachers and switches to night school; one wants to shake her out of her humility in the face of rejecting, insecure adults who don't want to recognize her strengths. So one is all the more happy when her will to survive kicks in, when she fights her way back to high school and later moves to a university town.

An incredibly adroitly written debut novel by a young writer with a "migration background" who is in no way inferior to successful French authors such as Édouard Louis and Marion Messina in terms of social significance. I have seldom read a better book about the struggle to belong.

Katharina von Uslar