



Love Is Like Water and Other Stories (Arab American Writing)

Samia Serageldin

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Like the author of this remarkable collection of thirteen linked stories, the protagonist, Nadia, was born and raised in Egypt, educated in England, and immigrated to the United States. Samia Serageldin draws her characters out with subtlety and control, moving from the narrator's grandmother's garden house in Cairo to the suburbs of North Carolina, yielding powerful portraits of cultural dislocation, faith, and multigenerational conflicts. As the narratives shift in time and place, they unfold through memory. In "The Zawiya," Nadia reflects on the change in women's space from the coiffeur's salon to a religious pulpit as she revisits a childhood ritual. In the title story, Nadia offers a vivid sketch of her grandmother Nanou, "a force of nature" who, as an early widow, single-handedly raised six children and ran the household. At a time when few women experienced such independence, Nanou had a potent influence on the young narrator. Told with compassion and clarity, Serageldin's stories reveal one woman's exploration of identity, finding it in both the sweeping backdrop of Egyptian history and the quotidian exchanges with friends and family.

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