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Yalla habibi

poems in ʕarabeezi.

For Immediate Release:

Los Angeles, CA— From Lebanese-American poet, writer and visual artist **Nadia Alamah** arrives *Yalla Habibi*, a chapbook of poems centered around a personal exploration of Arab American identity.

Arabic for "Hurry Up, Love," *Yalla Habibi* explores this concept through thoughtful meditations on family, living cognitive dissonance created by dual-cultural elements, social commentary and more. By invoking images of home through her own illustrations, the combination of poetry and art creates an immersive, vivified experience for the reader. A notable approach Alamah takes to recognize the duality of this experience is to write in "ʕarabeezi," the Arabic word for Arabish—a mixture of English and Arabic. A whimsical glossary is included to help those understand the meaning of these words while simultaneously providing some inside jokes for Arabic speakers to enjoy.

Nadia's Commentary on *Yalla Habibi*: "Given our media's general portrayal of events in the Middle East, there can be a perceived veil of mystery surrounding the everyday life of Arabs. So if we may not know Arab Americans first hand, it becomes harder to see this group I belong to as also part of our American culture, where many of my friends and I deal with our families and societal expectations as we figure out who we are. I intended for this chapbook to be positive and speculative, to paint a picture of this side of me that my friends and community may not have seen as I grew up around them— and by extension, for it to be one of many possible windows in which some may come to understand the nuanced experience of growing up Arab American. But above all, I hope to inspire as I have been inspired by my supportive family, friends and community."

Initial Reception: Alamah initially debuted this collection as the poetic feature at the Two Idiots Peddling Poetry weekly open mic, located at the Ugly Mug in Orange, CA, in April. She has since performed these poems with an audience-interactive focus at special events, like A Country Called Syria's cultural storytelling event heritage: she, and as a special guest at monthly events like Shaken Vanity's Art Block Party.

Who is Nadia Alamah? An emerging writer, artist and poet born and raised in Michigan, Alamah lived her formative years in Flint. Prior to relocating to the Inland Empire in 2016, she has focused on the creation of community-centric arts projects and workshops, including arts and cultural festival Ladyfest Flint, weekly meetup space Must Art Mondays, and nomadic community space Flint Bedouin Tent. Alamah is an energetic, creative, collaborative force, so look out for her as she makes her contributions to the SoCal arts and poetry communities!

Additional Commentary About *Yalla Habibi*:

From OC Poet **Lady Narrator/ Dania Alkhoul**: "In a time when we're finally finding the platform to embrace our wholeness unfiltered, it's such a delicious experience to relish in Nadia Alamah's debut poetry chapbook, *Yalla Habibi*. If you grew up as an Arab in America, blessed enough to cling on to the balancing beam of identities, this is a book you'll surely enjoy. There's so much nostalgia and relevance that transcends borders and makes you both proud of your heritage but yearn for home. On top of all this, the artwork specially crafted by Nadia herself, throughout the book, are so raw and evoke this beautiful feeling of relevance. *Yalla Habibi* is definitely worth a read and it only excites me for what more this artist can develop!"

From poet and university professor **Mouminat Damer**: "At first the chapbook looked simple and that's what I liked about it. Then after reading the first few lines, I was instantly smiling because of how familiar the words were (arabeezi). I've never seen that vernacular used in poems before and it instantly transported me to a good place in my memories: home, family, familiarity. I think the chapbook doesn't only reach out to Arab-Americans but also has the power to go beyond that. It really opens a door to a different world for those who have never heard/seen/met with this type of culture. I'd encourage anyone to read it and it continuously impresses me!"

Contact **Nadia Alamah** for interview consideration, to make copies of the book available at your local bookstore or library, or to have her perform interactive poetry at your next event.