



The Girl Who Fell to Earth: A Memoir

By Sophia Al-Maria

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Award-winning filmmaker and writer Sophia Al-Maria's *The Girl Who Fell to Earth* is a funny and wry coming-of-age memoir about growing up in between American and Gulf Arab cultures. With poignancy and humor, Al-Maria shares the struggles of being raised by an American mother and Bedouin father while shuttling between homes in the Pacific Northwest and the Middle East. Part family saga and part personal quest, *The Girl Who Fell to Earth* traces Al-Maria's journey to make a place for herself in two different worlds.

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Editorial Review

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The writer was born in Seattle to an American farm girl and a Bedouin father, and he soon returned to Qatar, where he started a second family. As a young teen, Sophia is on the classic quest to find her father (and herself), and her wry, eloquent narrative does a great job of blending the viewpoints of the 12-year-old then and the adult writer now, while the intersection of contemporary cultures explodes the comfortable stereotypes, old and new. The girl is shocked by backward Bedouin traditions and deep sexual segregation, but she also remembers her American school segregation of jocks, geeks, and freaks, and very clearly by race, and she discovers that love in a culture of arranged marriage and sexual oppression can be “far more complex than anything on MTV.” As the action moves from the Nile delta to Cairo, her commentary gets it exactly right, and without a heavy message. The day was so full of these “exotic” people doing, well, “normal” stuff. Families like hers had the “nouveau” part without the “riche.” Great for reading aloud. -- Hazel Rochman

From the Back Cover

When Sophia Al-Maria's mother sends her away from rainy Washington State to stay with her husband's desert-dwelling Bedouin family in Qatar, she intends it to be a sort of teenage cultural boot camp. What her mother doesn't know is that there are some things about growing up that are universal. In Qatar, Sophia is faced with a new world she'd only imagined as a child. She sets out to find her freedom, even in the most unlikely of places.

Both family saga and coming-of-age story, *The Girl Who Fell to Earth* takes readers from the green valleys of the Pacific Northwest to the dunes of the Arabian Gulf and on to the sprawling chaos of Cairo. Struggling to adapt to her nomadic lifestyle, Sophia is haunted by the feeling that she is perpetually in exile: hovering somewhere between two families, two cultures, and two worlds. She must make a place for herself—a complex journey that includes finding young love in the Arabian Gulf, rebellion in Cairo, and, finally, self-discovery in the mountains of Sinai.

The Girl Who Fell to Earth heralds the arrival of an electric new talent and takes us on the most personal of quests: the voyage home.

About the Author

Sophia Al-Maria is an artist, writer, and filmmaker. She studied comparative literature at the American University in Cairo, and aural and visual cultures at Goldsmiths, University of London. Her work has been exhibited at the Gwangju Biennale, the New Museum in New York, and the Architectural Association in London. Her writing has appeared in *Harper's*, *Five Dials*, *Triple Canopy*, and *Bidoun*.

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