ForeWord Reviews

GENERAL

My Waltzing Egypt
Aabeid Salama
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In the US, religious freedom is an inherent right. Though religious intolerance manifests itself in acts of bullying and violence far too often throughout the world, resulting in the deaths of countless people, the US may still be the safest nation for individuals seeking relief from persecution. Those who have never been accepted in their homeland will find refuge here in America.

This is the message behind Aabeid Salama's debut novel, *My Waltzing Egypt*, the story of Kareem Mikhaeel, a Coptic Christian man, and his Muslim-born wife, as they suffer under Islamic law. Trapped in a society that will not condone their relationship, they must keep themselves sequestered and avoid Egypt's domestic intelligence agency. Pursued as they are by a radical terrorist group and always in fear of exposure, for this couple even the routine activities of daily life are dangerous endeavors.

With a realistic look behind the scenes, Salama allows the uninitiated American to see what happens when the love between a man and a woman dares to defy established tradition. In a realm in which custom or belief is enforced by the state, where passion between a Copt and a Muslim is a crime, the meaning of the word "safe" is truly a matter of life and death. Unrelenting trepidation permeates every page of this attention-grabbing book.

The novel explores several themes, including perceptions of God, definitions of a higher power, and how a personal comprehension of these concepts is frequently based on cultural and written indoctrination. While the general concept of "holy" or "sacred" may be widely understood, individual and particular definitions of these words can differ greatly. The meaning of family ties and national loyalty are addressed in subtle and not-so-subtle scenarios that will make the reader question the value of remaining faithful to what one does not believe in. The significance of idealism is also brought into play in this disturbing, often violent, masterpiece.

Aabeid Salama is an Egyptian-American whose parents emigrated from Egypt to the US in the late 1960s. He lives on the east coast, now at work on his second novel.

My Waltzing Egypt is a gripping adventure that will appeal to readers of religious

intrigue fiction as well as romantics who devour stories of star-crossed lovers. A twenty-first-century tragedy waiting to happen, this heartrending novel is a Romeo and Juliet affair with more than a few surprises in the plot. Sophisticated in his approach to his subject, yet capable of portraying down-to-earth characters, Salama is clearly a rising talent on the literary scene.

Julia Ann Charpentier