

## The Cult of Romance

By Sarah Ayoub

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### Blurb:

When your bestie is marrying a guy she barely knows, can you save her from the cult before it's too late?

Natalie is living proof that love is a scam.

She's traumatised by her parents' failed marriage and overwhelmed by her grandmother's expectations of good Lebanese girls — marriage, motherhood and exceptional tabouli-making skills.

When her best friend decides to get hitched to a guy in the motherland, Nat's not exactly thrilled by the mammoth task before her: juggling cultural traditions, extra bridesmaid dresses and super-judgemental relatives.

And to top it off there's the annoyingly good-looking best man and his constant need to mansplain all of the things.

Natalie is in for the trip of her life. But can she save her friend from the cult of romance, without falling in love herself?



### Lamont Review:

Natalie and Janet are two Lebanese-Australian girls who have been friends for years. They share the same dreams and ambitions, and are planning on running their own business together.

They have strong thoughts about how they see their lives playing out, and have no interest in romance and marriage. At least that's what Natalie thinks!

Natalie lives with her Dad and her grandmother, who acts as a quasi-mother to Natalie after her parent's marriage failed. She is expected to be a good Lebanese girl and act in a way that will not bring shame to their family and culture. But Natalie also has to try and balance living her life as a teenager in Australia with the expectations of her family traditions, and it's quite the juggling act.

She is fierce and is determined to live life as she wants, and getting married - with all the demands and expectations the comes with it - is not on her radar.

When Janet returns from a recent trip to Lebanon, and seems distant, Natalie knows something is up. What has changed with her? When the truth comes out and Janet says she is getting married, Natalie feels betrayed. How can Janet do this to them and the dreams that they had? Natalie is convinced that Janet doesn't know what she is doing, and is determined to save her from her fate.

With the wedding set to take place in Lebanon, Natalie reluctantly travels there with Janet to prepare. As bridesmaid, there are thing to plan and organise, and this includes having to do things with the good looking, but annoying, best man George. Can Natalie accept Janet's decision, and resist falling into the romance cult herself?

This is a wonderful story of family, family expectation, friendship, cultural traditions and letting go, and will be enjoyed by all those 14 and older.

Reviewed by Sam