



DIMITRI NASRALLAH'S *HOTLINE* HIS MOST INTIMATE WORK YET

Canadian publication date February 28, 2022, with worldwide French publication in 2023

November 25, 2021: Véhicule Press is pleased to kick off 2022 with *Hotline*, Dimitri Nasrallah's fourth novel, a vivid elegy to Montreal in the 1980s and his most intimate offering to date. In the nearly two decades since his award-winning debut, Nasrallah has become known as a writer consistently ahead of the curve in broaching the problems facing society, exploring the fate of refugees as early as 2011's *Niko*, before turning his attention to authoritarianism in 2018's *The Bleeds*, as numerous countries began to see the tenets of democratic rule slide away. *The Globe & Mail* praised the former for its "superb powers of description", while *Le Journal de Montréal* hailed the latter as "a political novel so well executed that it forces real reflection on the power and meaning of democracy".

A novel about connections and longing

With *Hotline*, Nasrallah turns his attention to the city he calls home and the systemic barriers that keep its new arrivals at the margins of society. *Hotline* is an endearing portrait of struggle and perseverance that raises issues that are still alarmingly relevant today.

At its centre is Muna Heddad, who arrives in Montreal in 1986 with hopes of working as a French teacher after escaping Lebanon's civil war. Only she finds that no one trusts her to teach the language. The only job Muna can get is at a weight-loss centre. All day, she takes calls from people phoning a hotline who are responding to ads seen in magazines or on TV. These strangers all have so much to say once someone shows interest—marriages gone bad, ailing parents, isolation, personal inadequacies. Even as her new life faces invisible barriers at every turn, on the phone Muna is privy to the city's deepest secrets.

For Nasrallah, the story was inspired by personal circumstances. "In Muna Heddad, I see something of my mother's story when we first arrived in Montreal in the 80s. A French teacher by training, she also couldn't find work in education as a newly arrived immigrant, and she had to resort to working at a weight-loss centre, selling boxed food to make ends meet. From today's vantage point, this episode in her life speaks to me in ways that were not evident in childhood."

Hotline's publisher Véhicule Press has already sold world French rights to Nasrallah's long-standing French-language publisher La Peuplade. Daniel Grenier's translation will come out not only in Quebec, but also France, Belgium and Switzerland.

About the author

Dimitri Nasrallah was born in Lebanon in 1977, two years into the country's civil war. After leaving Lebanon in 1982, he lived in Kuwait, Greece, and Dubai before arriving in Canada in 1988. His books have garnered nominations for CBC Canada Reads, the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award, and the Grand Prix du Livre de Montréal, and won the Hugh MacLennan Prize for Fiction and the McAuslan First Book Prize. As editor for Esplanade Books, he has brought out celebrated works such as Kaie Kellough's Scotiabank Giller Prize-nominated *Dominoes at the Crossroads*, as well as *Swallowed*, a reissue of Réjean Ducharme's 1966 Québécois classic *L'Avalée des avalés* in a new translation by Madeleine Stratford.

ISBN: 978-155065-594-0 \$21.95
5½x7½ | French flaps | 275 pages

For reading copies, bookings, and interview requests please contact:

Jennifer Varkonyi at jvarkonyi@vehiculepress.com