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Red Hen Press

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The Weight of Ghosts

A MEMOIR BY

Laila Halaby

The Weight of Ghosts is a lyrical memoir by an author struggling with the death of her older son and sifting through the details of her life.

The Weight of Ghosts is a circling of grief following the death of the author's older son when he was 21, a horror that was compounded by her younger son's drug use, the country's slow eruption as it dealt with its own brokenness, and reckoning the author had to do regarding her own story. *The Weight of Ghosts* is a lyrical reclaiming and an insistence by the author that she own the rights to her story, which is American flavored with an unreleasing elsewhere. *The Weight of Ghosts* is an immigrant story and a love story. While it is raw and honest and tragic, it is also a hopeful, funny, and original telling that demonstrates the strength of the human spirit, while offering a vocabulary for these most unmanageable human experiences.

ADVANCE PRAISE

"Equal parts devastating and life-affirming, Laila Halaby's memoir offers wisdom and truth for everyone who has ever moved through a difficult time and shredded a skin to adapt. There are many layers to this story, all tied together by the clear, poetic language that is as musical as the birdsong that accompanies Halaby on her healing walks around Tucson. *The Weight of Ghosts* is a brave and remarkable achievement."

—**Alice Elliott Dark**, author of *Fellowship Point* and *In the Gloaming*

"Beautiful and heartbreaking."

—**Randa Jarrar**, author of *Love Is An Ex-Country*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Laila Halaby is the author of two novels, *Once in a Promised Land* (*Washington Post* top 100 works of fiction for 2007; Barnes and Noble Discover Great New Writers) and *West of the Jordan* (PEN Beyond Margins award winner), as well as two collections of poetry, *why an author writes to a guy holding a fish* and *my name on his tongue*. Laila has two master's degrees (UCLA and LMU), was a Fulbright recipient, and currently lives in Tucson, Arizona where she works as a counselor, museum educator, and creative writing teacher.



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FROM THE WEIGHT OF GHOSTS

I wanted details that would wrap me in the safety of science, not the horror of what had happened. As if that would change anything.

I drove to the gym and screamed with the windows up.

Is it possible to bruise your vocal cords by screaming for many minutes while driving? Does the force of your scream intensify with the speed of your vehicle?

At the last shady stretch before the parking lot, a dove walked slowly into the road. I didn't slow or stop because it's a bird and they always fly up at the last minute.

He had his hands in the air.

I looked into the rearview mirror and saw a burst of feathers.

I controlled my horror until I parked.



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