

# NOURA'S DREAM

DIRECTED BY HINDE BOUJEMAA





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92 MIN / TUNISIA - BELGIUM - FRANCE - QATAR / 2019

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A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a pink long-sleeved shirt, is shown from the chest up. She is looking upwards and to the left with a hopeful or longing expression. Her hands are gripping a horizontal metal bar, possibly part of a window or a gate. The background is blurred, showing vertical bars and warm, reddish-orange light, suggesting an indoor setting like a laundry or a prison.

## SYNOPSIS

An independent woman, Noura is raising her three children alone, working in a hospital laundry to make ends meet. While her husband Jamel is back in jail, she meets Lassad, the love of her life. Forced to hide their relationship – if it were discovered, they would face 5 years in prison – Noura petitions for divorce but just days before it is granted, the lovers' dream of a life together is threatened by Jamel's imminent release.



# DIRECTOR'S NOTE

## ORIGINS

A woman in a pink velour tracksuit hurries across the road in front of me. The determined gleam in her eyes catches me. It's Noura. Instinctively, I decide to follow her, to tell her story. Noura has three children. She is in love with Lassad, whom she has met while her husband Jamel is in prison. Because she is not divorced, she and Lassad risk imprisonment for adultery.

## WHY?

In the Arab world, we sing about love. From Om Kalthoum to Berber songs, women and men sing of love: its griefs and jealousies, its joys and hopes and romance. But when it comes to the embodiment of this love, the enactment of desire, taboo raises its head and love becomes a sin. *Noura's Dream* gives shape to something that strikes me as nonsensical.

The film also offers the portrait of a damaged section of society vulnerable to a sometimes corrupt police force that can shatter the most beautiful and dazzling of human possibilities: love.

This is particularly the case amongst the underprivileged, where tainted connections between police and gangsters allow brutality to prevail over humanity, violence to grow commonplace and notions of understanding, honesty and justice hide themselves away in order to escape punishment.

## HOW?

In the film, Noura simultaneously embodies mother and lover, a unity the collective unconscious in the Middle East, and sometimes in the West, strives to separate into whore and asexual mother – something that explains in part the violent rejection of adulterous women.

Lassad, the illegitimate lover finds himself powerless when confronted with Jamel's return to the family home. His love for Noura makes his character a witness, leading some viewers to take another look at her "crime" and others, based on the fact that it is men who, whatever anyone says, are in thrall to the power of emotions above all else.

He also strikes a blow against a bigoted macho morality by loving a woman who is married, adulterous and ultimately free in her mind.

Initially appearing calm, Jamel gradually reveals his unreasonable behaviour, to the point of believing he can restore his virility by destroying that of his adversary in order to punish his wife.

Noura's three children embody everyday life: homework, arguments between brothers and sisters, violent scenes between their parents... They return the mother/lover to the most pragmatic level of her reality.

Their life outside is more suggested than shown; the film remains focused on the world of the family and its quest for stability.

The different, conflicting elements of a society in the throes of being rebuilt (prohibitions, lies, honour and vengeance) give the film the tone and the form of a psychological thriller.

As a director, I wanted to tell the story of characters who bring to the screen the complexity of their lived experience, their struggles and their passions, to give the film a universal significance.

For this is a film that cries out for and demands simple and unquestionable values: each and every human being's right to love and to liberty.

- HINDE BOUJEMAA



## DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

Hinde Boujemaa is a half-Tunisian half-Belgian director. She began her career working as technician before following her passion by directing her first feature-length documentary *It Was Better Tomorrow*, which screened in Official Selection at the Venice Film Festival in 2012. She is involved as director in a variety of campaigns in support of the fight against the discrimination and inequality faced by women worldwide. In 2015 she directed her short fiction ...and *Romeo Married Juliet*.

*Noura's Dream*, Boujemaa's feature fiction debut, will have its world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival and will screen in the New Directors selection at the San Sebastian International Film Festival.





## HEND SABRI BIOGRAPHY

Actress, model and producer, Hend Sabri began her film career in 1994, appearing in Tunisian films including *The Silences of the Palace* and *The Season of Men* both directed by Moufida Tlati and Nouri Bouzid's *Clay Dolls*.

She has been the recipient of numerous awards, notably from the Carthage International Film Festival in 1994, the Best Actress Award from the Union of Egyptian Journalists in 2005 and the Faten Hamama Excellence Award at the Cairo International Film Festival in 2017.

Hend Sabri served as a jury member at the Marrakech International Film Festival in 2005, and the Abu Dhabi Film Festival in 2009. In 2019, she sat on the jury of the Luigi De Laurentiis Award at the 76th Venice Film Festival.

*Noura's Dream* marks the internationally celebrated Arab actress's return to Tunisian cinema.

## LOTFI ABDELLI BIOGRAPHY

Lotfi Abdelli trained as a dancer at the music conservatory in Tunis, studying under Anne-Marie Sellami.

His cinema career began in 1998 with Nidhal Chatta's *No Man's Love*, after which followed a number of collaborations with Tunisian director Nouri Bouzid, notably *Clay Dolls* (2002) and *Making Of* (2006), for which he received the Best Actor prizes at both Tribeca and the Carthage Film Festival.

In 2015 Lotfi Abdelli was awarded the Best Actor in a Comedy prize for his role in the TV series 'Bolice'; in December that year he won Best Actor at the Dubai International Film Festival for his performance in *Chbabek El Jenna* by Fares Nanna.

# CAST

Hend Sabri NOURA  
Lofli Abdelli JAMEL  
Hakim Boumsaoudi LASSAD  
Imen Cherif YOSR  
Saif Dhrif MAHMOUD  
Jamel Sassi HAMADI

# CREW

Written & Directed by HINDE BOUEMAA  
Director of Photography MARTIN RIT  
Producer IMED MARZOUK  
Co-Producers SAMUEL TILMAN,  
TATJANA KOZAR,  
MARIE BESSON,  
FRANÇOIS D'ARTEMARE  
Sound Designer MARIE PAULUS  
Production Designer RAUF HELIOUI  
Costume Designer SALAH BARKA  
Editor NICOLAS RUMPL  
Sound Editor JULIEN MIZAC  
Production Company PROPAGANDA  
PRODUCTIONS  
Co-Production Companies EKLETIK PRODUCTIONS  
LES FILMS DE L'APRÈS-MIDI

