



## Sand

*Paul Majkut*

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SAND explores the sexual and religious roots of jihadist terrorism. It is a snapshot album of Saudi Arabia in the late 1980s, when contemporary jihadism sprouted in the sands of the Kingdom. It is a novel that is more than the sum of its parts, more than its plot: a mystery centered on a delusional, religious-police detective investigating trouble at a five-star hotel in Riyadh. Graphic descriptions expose the sexual mania that motivates self-justified intolerance and violence resulting from a repressive society. Written by an American journalist who covered the Middle East at the time, SAND is a realistic story of characters, events, and an ideology so extreme that its telling is at times surreal. Neither Saudis nor their highly-paid foreign workers -- Americans, British, Canadian, Filipino, Pakistani, and others -- are spared. SAND describes a place where misogyny, predatory sexual opportunism, heterosexual and homosexual, religious terrorism, rape, stoning, and greed are the norm.

A possible threat to the wife of an American oil magnate brings an incognito investigator from the Institute for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice to the InterHo hotel. At the Institute, he is secretly involved with a jihadist brotherhood that includes Osama bin Laden.

## Sand Details

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Author : Paul Majkut

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Genre :

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## From Reader Review Sand for online ebook

### Gabby says

This is the first novel I've read that has Osama bin Laden and his friends as characters. One of them, a magazine censor, is a sex-obsessed central character. Wonderful insights into the dangers of fundamentalist thinking. There are some pretty violent scenes, just a few, but shocking.

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### Madison says

Official disclosure: I got this book for free through Goodreads First Reads. Thanks!  
(Disclaimer part 2: A 3 star rating from me isn't bad; it's actually pretty good. I just read too much to hand out 4s and 5s everywhere.)

*Sand* is...bizarre. Experimental. Weird to read on the subway every morning. It takes a lot of time and patience to wade through over 450 pages of layers on layers of coincidence, allegory, surrealism. It's full of all kinds of crazy: strict religious law, rape, murder, sexual perversions, shocking violence, normal violence. None of the characters is particularly likeable but they're fascinating nonetheless and I think that's kind of the point. I can't say whether I'd recommend *Sand* to anyone I know because I think it needs a specific kind of reading mindset to pull through the book's "IDGAF, let the reader keep up if they really want it" attitude. I'll be keeping it around for future me though.

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### Ashley Bounoura says

So I won this book in a Goodreads giveaway, which was awesome because...free books! I had a hard time getting into it at first, probably because most of the characters are relatively unlikable in one way or another. But as I read on I found myself being pulled in by the intrigue of the plot, and actually found myself sympathizing and even relating to some of the characters, which really made me think. I loved the character of "the Author". He was very a interesting and somewhat ambiguous character. He was at the same time a random character observing the other characters, the person through whose eyes we see everyone, but also the person that is creating the plot, sometimes without his own knowledge. I liked that there were sometimes very surreal scenes, right in the middle of really down-to-earth, everyday descriptions of life in Riyadh. I think this element gave this book that extra something that engages the reader and makes them think, which is something I really appreciate in a book. I love something that will give me something to mull over even when I am done reading it. To begin with I don't know much about life in Saudi Arabia at this point, so it was really interesting for me to see what it is like from someone who has been there. I know quite a bit about the holy sites and those things that we all hear about on the media, but this was a great insight into life in the city of Riyadh. The one thing that concerns me is the picture painted of Muslims- which in such a repressive society as this one is probably quite an accurate picture, but doesn't represent at all the mainstream way of thinking of most moderate Muslims. It just worries me that someone who is reading this that knows nothing about Muslim mainstream culture or belief will take the stringent Wahhabism and extremism as the norm, which it certainly is not... But all in all I really enjoyed reading this book, and would love to read more by this author!

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### **Tammy says**

Beautifully written novel! I found myself emphasizing and sympathizing with characters I would normally loathe. Sand is definitely not a light or forgettable read.

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### **Jean says**

This is the second novel I read by this author. One reviewer for the other novel said that Majkut writes the way he wants and doesn't care what others say and I think that's true. His novels are very experimental and well crafted. This one really gets into what Saudi Arabia is like. Fascinating story told from the inside.

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### **Sue says**

Majkut used alternating narratives in another novel I read. It's called Asterion. But in this novel the appearance of the writer as a character is much more interesting because the character writes the story as he goes along and runs into all sorts of corrupt expats living in Saudi Arabia and local religious crackpots.

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### **Finny says**

This book was intriguing from the first page. I have never been to the part of the world the book is set in, yet 'Sand' provides a vivid impression of what it might be like to live there. The imagery in this book is intense. Even when I felt ambivalent about certain characters, I was still interested in them and they felt fully realized as people. I felt like I could taste the sand in the title by the end!

If you have always been interested in this area, and you enjoy beautiful settings and good characters, I would recommend this book.

My copy was a gift from Goodreads First Reads.

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### **Francis says**

The women in this novel come in two flavors. Bad or very bad. And the same is true of the men. This is what the writer wanted and it works as a novel but is a little depressing and dark. No humor here.

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### **Rachel Parrott says**

“Sand” is a beautiful written novel of life in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia in the 1980’s as East meets West, as secular meets fundamentalism, as reality meets fantasy. There is much darkness here but moments of light in this dynamic and exotic time and place.

My copy was a gift from Goodreads First Reads.

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### **Jazz says**

A gripping story told with artistry. East and West meet in Arabia and the meeting of Moslem fanatics and American and other foreign opportunists is an explosive combination. The story just keeps pounding away at falsehoods and hypocrisy. The novel is sometimes symbolic and surreal, but sometimes it is realistic. Majkut gives insights into 21st century, urban Saudi Arabia the way T. E. Lawrence did for desert rebels a century ago.

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### **Adam says**

The story of such a fierce and uncompromising religious characters is awesome! It was kinda philosophical at times but kept me reading to the end.

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### **Ted Frank says**

Majkut writes about really yucky characters who you would think couldn't exist. The weird sexually nutty characters in this book are as sad as they are repulsive. A good read.

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