



The Burning Veil

Jean Grant

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Shortly before 9/11, Dr. Sarah Moss must decide whether to marry Ibrahim. His mother hates and fears her as does his brother, an Islamist hardliner. Sarah aims to live with integrity. Can she—dare she—in Saudi Arabia? In crisp, candid prose, former Middle East journalist Jean Grant presents a picture of the controversial kingdom and of the expatriates and nationals who either embrace or confront their destiny.

Reviews

I read *The Burning Veil* in two sittings, compelled to swallow pages as quickly as possible, even as I longed to linger—and often did—over richly-rendered details about day to day life in Saudi Arabia. Jean Grant's contemporary love story about cultural collision vying against our shared human longing for connection left me deeply moved, and at times, deeply melancholy, as religious fundamentalism gains strength in the U.S. and around the world. A powerful and important first novel." —A. Manette Ansay, author of *Good Things I Wish You* and *Vinegar Hill*

"Elegant and insightful, *The Burning Veil* takes the reader on a fascinating journey behind the closed doors of Saudi Arabian life, showing Arabs and expats as they struggle to come to terms with their differences. Jean Grant's novel is a delightful find." —Zoe Ferraris, author of *Finding Nouf*.

"The author manages not to force an agenda, relaying the intricacies of family life in two distinct cultures with immediacy and humor." — *Publishers Weekly*

Keywords

Arabic, expatriate, Khobar, abaya, culture shock, Saudi women, Islam, veil, Mecca, hydrologist, Aramco, culture clash, prayers

Extract:

Beyond the city limits, they drove in a monotony of buff-colored sand with only the pipeline, rusted oil barrels, and a few derelict trucks to break the emptiness. What came next was worse: the salt flats. She had imagined caravans curving around dunes, falcons winging overhead, and the sands puffing and swirling. She doubted now that the oasis would be as she had hoped, a tiny lake with a fringe of palm trees. Qatif had been a trading center since the third millennium B.C., a link between the civilizations of Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley. Before the advent of Islam, Zoroastrians, Jews and Christians lived there. And before them, the inhabitants followed the cult of Ishtar, the goddess of love and war. Archeologists thought a sculpture of her seated on a golden lion was hidden nearby. "Apparently Ishtar had a fondness for men," Ibrahim said.

"Like me for you," Sarah said lightly. "Maybe they'll excavate."

"I doubt it. A few years ago, British archeologists tried to get permission to dig, but the women objected."

"An odd thing to protest."

"Not at all. It is *their* place."

"So who won?"

"The women. The archeologists grumbled about our ways, but there was nothing for them to do but to pack up and fly off."

"To more tolerant realms?" She rested her hand on his knee. "And the women?"

"Still there. Mother goes all the time."

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Sandra Yunker:

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Mary Ransom:

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Robin Adams:

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