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When the Twin Towers are hit on September 11, 2001, Mohammed's success as a stockbroker in a tiny Middle Eastern country quickly escalates, encouraging his love to debauch women while fighting off traditional marriage, incessant social corruption and Western hegemony, all in a closed wealthy Muslim country, until he soon realizes that his promiscuous life erodes and corrodes his sanity.

He eventually meets a younger bisexual woman who he thinks might be worthy of marriage. However, that changes when she takes him farther in a downward spiral of self-analysis and destruction.

By the summer of 2008, when worldwide financial markets are about to correct, Mohammed ultimately senses his own spirituality being stolen by the very individuals he has confronted and the society he has loved to hate. The story is a satire yet a serious social critique depicting many critical points which have (mis)shaped Kuwait, leading Mohammed to point out the absurdities of the personalities and situations he finds himself in.

Inshallah, Habibi Details

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Lee says

I have recommended this book to people I know, with the disclaimer that the summary provided is not a good representation of what I found the story to be about. I read it as a narrative of the playboy lifestyle of a divorced Kuwaiti man who is trying to mask his pain and loneliness by acting out against the cultural norms and attempting to rationalize his doing so by questioning their validity. It provides a rare insight into a corner of the world most American's know extremely little about, while at times also leading the reader to question what they think they know about their own country. I was surprised to find it both more stimulating and relatable than I would have assumed. The minimal introduction to the language is especially interesting and fairly well explained. The journey evokes emotion through exploring universal voids and desires which trigger the reader's own self-introspection. I found myself unexpectedly relating personally to certain sections; to be doing so from a character in a world and situation so unlike my own was astonishing and is a credit to the author's ability. Most of the secondary characters are notably likeable and despite loving to hate the main character, the reader longs to understand more of the causes and consequences for his self-destruction. The range of emotion elicited ultimately ending with pity and a desire to save was surprising and rare in a novel. The crudeness of some of the adult content is over the top at times and some topics, often explored for only one chapter, drag and feel unrelated to the story; thus the 4. Overall an easy, quick read different enough from most mainstream fiction to feel deeper, more interesting, and leaves the reader wanting a greater understanding of the subjects explored.

Despite the ambiguous ending it was an exciting adventure, a beautiful experience, and I look forward to future contributions by Haitham.

Fatima AlHashimi says

There's no story here. Just self absorbed, self righteous ramblings. The reviews & back cover really attracted me, I kept waiting for the shift in the story, but nothing really happens (at all in this book). Not a pleasant read either. It's filled with metaphor after metaphor and horrible pretentious dialog.

Sara says

The idea is there but poorly conveyed.

Paulette says

This is a difficult read. I intend that as a compliment. The writing is excellent. He provokes at every turn. It is not light reading.

I enjoy the style of writing he uses. His words flow much like a wild mountain river. Bouncing, bubbling, rushing, speeding up then slowing, and sometimes nearly still. When an author can capture a character's voice and make them seem real, that is when reading is at it's greatest for me. He takes the reader into

Mohammed's world simply by immersing us in it. I found myself intrigued and desiring to learn more of both the character, as well as the culture he lives in. How did he get to where he was when the book started? What had he faced and experienced that caused him to be where he found himself? The same could be asked about the culture around him (my own culture as well). How did it become like it is? What is driving it still?

Yesim Insel says

To be able to internalise a country which has become your home temporarily or perhaps permanently, it is vital to read books written by their own mankind. This statement is easy to follow if you are living in Europe, US, even in Africa... Being a recent Kuwait resident, I finally ran across Haitham Alsarraf's books. I must confess, all books written by him jolted me. Inshallah, *Habibi* was the first one I read.

Every author wants all the characters created by them to be popular and beloved. Well, almost every writer... In "*Inshallah, Habibi*", Haitham was very brave to create a main character, Mohammed, who is almost unlovable, repulsive, yet very philosophical in his own way. I was captivated by his amusing and poetic verbalism, not to forget spicy and witty expressions. There were times when I burst into laughter. Then there were times I wanted to slap the character. Like it or not, these stories are from real life. This book is predicating the untold.

After I finished the book, I immediately wanted to read a sequence when Mohammed is older, perhaps wiser. If Haitham Alsarraf would read this sentence, he would probably nod and say "*Inshallah, Habibi*".

Read it. You will learn to handle it.

Joshie Nicole says

Inshallah, Habibi is a story about a young Kuwaiti bachelor who flouts the status quo by questioning accepted norms and living an alternative lifestyle. Mohammed, the protagonist, challenges those around him to see things from a different, more Westernized perspective. He critiques traditional Kuwaiti values, explaining their inherent hypocrisy, provoking those around him. Mohammed works as a stock broker, and he details the way Kuwait's extreme wealth has corrupted the population by sewing apathy and ennui in Kuwaiti nationals.

The author tries to be provocative by returning time and again to Mohammed's sexual exploits. However, the scenes are not believable. Not only is Mohammed an extremely skilled lover, but his effect on women is quite dramatic. The reader is supposed to believe that by asking philosophical questions of his therapist, Mohammed has convinced her to let her guard down, open up to him with her problems, and ultimately sleep with him after a single conversation. In another one of his exploits, we are meant to believe that by chatting with a lesbian in a chat room, he has caused her to question her sexuality and her commitment to her long-time partner. In one telling quote, Mohammed states, "You need to be naturally penetrated to know the difference between clitoral orgasm and G-spot ones." If the author wants the reader to believe that Mohammed is open-minded, forward thinking, and sexually liberated, this does not help his case. In general, the writing throughout the book is overwrought, the metaphors are obvious and trite, and the dialogue is hard to believe. Simplifying some of the writing would improve the flow and would make this book more readable.

My biggest problem with this book is that it is rife with insulting assumptions about women. Women who show any sort of assertiveness or those who push back against Mohammed's questions are disregarded with some quip about their horniness or their menstrual cycles. All of the women in the story are reduced to insulting monikers such as "The Shrink", "The Ditz", and "The Secret Admirer". In perhaps one of the most telling quotes from the novel, Mohammed makes clear his position on equal rights for women: "I believe that women should fight for their equal rights because I have been tired of hearing women complain and nag about not having any. I would love to see women take over some of the more strenuous male positions like the ministerial and diplomatic posts, as they will relax and give some relief to men as caretakers or breadwinners." The novel posits itself as a satire, so I can only hope that the aforementioned scenes and the opinions about women are written in a satirical fashion, forcing the reader to contend with outdated and offensive beliefs by reading them as they are plainly written. As they say, Inshallah.

Finally, having lived in Kuwait for two years myself (though I do not profess to be an expert by any means), one asset of this book is how it exposes Kuwaiti culture. From the mistreatment of domestic help, to the black market for alcohol and drugs, to the discarded cars on the side of the road, the traffic, the excessive capitalism, the corruption of the government, the Wasta, the devastating lack of sexual education resulting in illegal abortions and unprotected anal sex, the repression of sexuality and sexual identity, the shisha / coffee habits, the lack of accountability in the workplace for Kuwaitis, on and on and on: this novel nailed it. The author is enlightened and aware of both the problems in Kuwaiti culture as well as its endearing features. My favourite parts of this book were the scenes that described the nuances of living in this Gulf Country.

Shukran - Thank you very much to Haitham Alsarraf for providing me with a free copy of his ebook!

Erol says

WOW...Haitham Alsarraf's new book starts off describing all of Middle East with just two words: Inshallah and Habibi. The first two paragraphs sets off the first peel of an onion that will reduce you to tears of laughter and thinking:

"Inshallah, habibi."

This is the reply I get in Arabic from my floor manager. I request a three-day vacation and all I get back is inshallah, habibi. Not just any inshallah, either. It is the third and most ridiculous one. One being the true religious term, God-willing, which is said with the most seriousness. The second means a careless and ambiguous maybe. This third one, though, is the most potent.

It is the least sincere, given without direct eye contact, combed onto a nonchalant smirk and hand-gestured with dramatic, semi-pleading palms. It means there is no way in hell you will get what you request. It is just wishful thinking. Take your pathetic pleading somewhere else. Leave my sight.

Maria Purvis says

My perspective of the storyline:

I found Mohammed dishearten with society as a whole. So much corruption. So much hypocrisy. In his own

way he strives to make a change. He provokes/challenges his friends, family and acquaintances to open their way of thinking. Or perhaps he thrives on pushing those mental/emotional buttons. His favorite escape from the mundane is releasing/relishing his primal needs with any of his collection of lovers. He loves the idea of romance, but not the commitment. He hates to be vulnerable, always in control. But, when he eventually does open up, it's his vulnerability that got to me.

Alaina says

Won in first reads

It's okay

Thamia says

Excellent read. Hilarious, truthful, and sad. Witty perception of the society. Verbalizing what a very few want to acknowledge.
