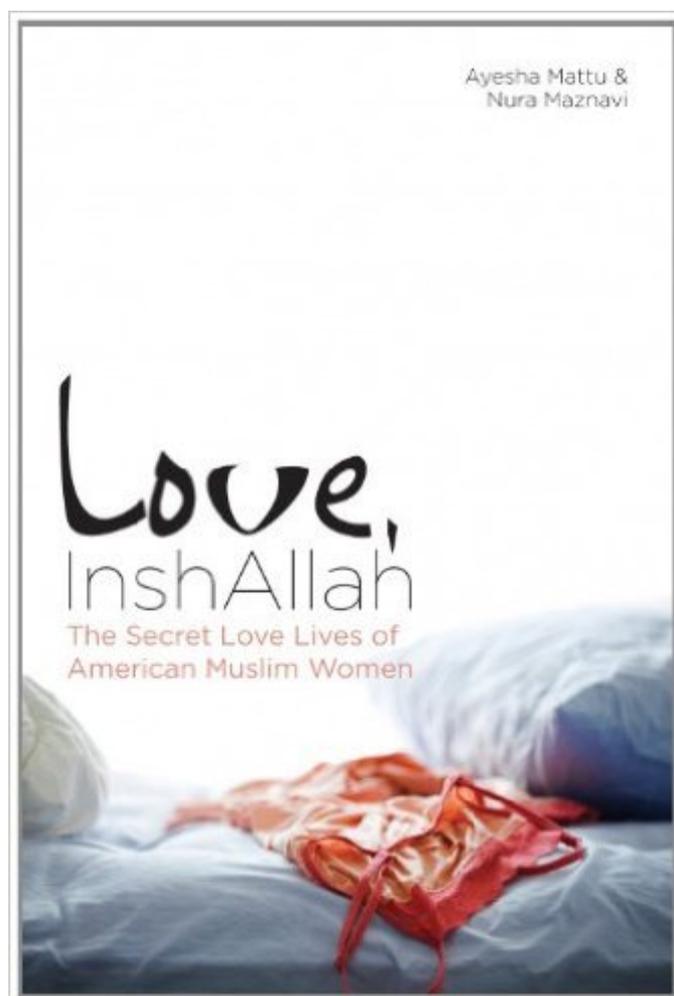


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Love, InshAllah: The Secret Love Lives Of American Muslim Women



Synopsis

Romance, dating, sex and - Muslim women? In this groundbreaking collection, 25 American Muslim writers sweep aside stereotypes to share their search for love openly for the first time, showing just how varied the search for love can be--from singles' events and online dating, to college flirtations and arranged marriages, all with a uniquely Muslim twist. These stories are filled with passion and hope, loss and longing: A quintessential blonde California girl travels abroad to escape suffocating responsibilities at home, only to fall in love with a handsome Brazilian stranger she may never see again. An orthodox African-American woman must face her growing attraction to her female friend. A young girl defies her South Asian parents' cultural expectations with an interracial relationship. And a Southern woman agrees to consider an arranged marriage, with surprising results. These compelling stories of love and romance create an irresistible balance of heart-warming and tantalizing, always revealing and deeply relatable.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

(This review was originally published on my blog *A Muslimah Writes*) With the very conscious agenda to dismantle stereotypes and perceptions about Muslim women and love, *Love InshAllah* gives a glimpse into the richness, plurality, and self-actualization inherent within American Muslim women's love lives. It holds the enormous potential to astonish both Muslim and non-Muslim audiences, albeit for different reasons. This post is one Muslim woman's reaction to reading about her fellow Muslimahs' love lives in this remarkably candid, courageous, and soul-stirring

collection. Love, InshAllah, at first, brought me face-to-face with a glaring prejudice I have unconsciously created about what for me is fair game for love stories. When Bollywood started to produce movies that involved more explicit love scenes, I remember my best friend, the least prejudiced person I know, saying "Aurgh, I don't want to see that!" I chuckled: "So, what, it's okay if white people do that onscreen?" She tried to explain what she felt: "No, but that's brown people. That's us!" Thanks to the media's disproportionate portrayal of what particular acts should look like or whom they should involve, having intimacy is being acted out by people of "our kind" can be temporarily disorienting for even the least ideologically prudish Indo-Pakistani Muslim ladies like myself. I confess that, on some level, that's what I was feeling when I read Love, InshAllah. It's one thing to know, abstractly, that those stories are out there. Before reading this collection, I did know about gay Muslimahs, about the niqabis who have multiple sexual partners, about Muslim children having to live dual lives because they could not conform to their parents' standards.

As a non-Muslim American, who likes to be generally worldly and culturally sensitive, I was drawn to this book because I love love. Love is one of the most universal human experiences; it is powerful enough to breakdown boundaries and unify people of all different backgrounds. With this book, I was ready to be charmed by some love stories and to be enlightened about the Muslim-American experience. Instead, I should've prepared myself to be disappointed. Before I purchased the book, I downloaded the Kindle sample and was immediately drawn into the first story, "Leap of Faith." It is what I think of as a traditional Muslim love story, one in which the marriage is arranged and love doesn't necessarily come before marriage. An arranged marriage may seem very foreign to non-Muslim and non-Indian Americans, but, as this story depicts, love can prevail. This young woman's heartwarming story makes you believe that love can appear anywhere, even in arranged marriages; you just need to take that leap of faith. This first story prompted me to purchase the entire book of some two dozen stories. Unfortunately, not all of the stories are as good as the first one. In fact, many are not good at all. Despite the fact that the editors sought diversity, the stories all seemed to meld together for me after awhile. Most of them are very forgettable and not particularly well-written. A few stories aren't about love at all, but rather lust. Other stories end abruptly, leaving you feeling unresolved and shortchanged.

Book Review: Love, InshAllah
The Secret Love Lives of American Muslim Women
Though Islam is growing in America, one bumps up constantly against ubiquitous incompatibilities between Islam and Western culture. Nowhere is this incompatibility more prominent than in an American Muslim

woman's search for a mate. The stories in this book reveal the problematic position of American Muslim women who would like to get married. They must either make compromises, or take a hard line with respect to their religion, further limiting their chances for finding a mate in a society that is still composed of mostly non-Muslim residents. Some of these writers have shaved the edges off Islamic teachings, even to the extent of doing haram behavior, knowingly, deliberately. The instinct to find a mate and establish a family often takes precedence over familial and religious dictates regarding how to do so. Islamic customs, which relied heavily on community relationships, now operate in an anemic facsimile of their original effectiveness. American customs for dating, sex and marriage, are not officially available to these women. To make matters worse, Muslim communities in the United States are composed of people from varying cultural and linguistic traditions. American Muslim women sit between a rock and a hard place; even men tiptoe across a loose tightrope when courting them. When the Abrahamic religions were being codified, the human life span was much shorter. Young people did not have to navigate a prolonged period (named adolescence) between childhood and adulthood. Mating occurred at physical maturation. These days, physical maturation plays second fiddle to religious mores that were not written for adolescence or homosexuality.

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