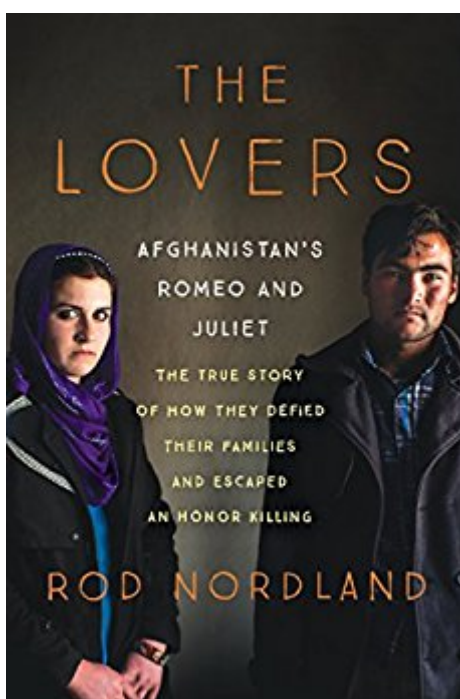


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The Lovers: Afghanistan's Romeo And Juliet, The True Story Of How They Defied Their Families And Escaped An Honor Killing



Synopsis

A riveting, real-life equivalent of *The Kite Runner*—an astonishingly powerful and profoundly moving story of a young couple willing to risk everything for love that puts a human face on the ongoing debate about women's rights in the Muslim world. Zakia and Ali were from different tribes, but they grew up on neighboring farms in the hinterlands of Afghanistan. By the time they were young teenagers, Zakia, strikingly beautiful and fiercely opinionated, and Ali, shy and tender, had fallen in love. Defying their families, sectarian differences, cultural conventions, and Afghan civil and Islamic law, they ran away together only to live under constant threat from Zakia's large and vengeful family, who have vowed to kill her to restore the family's honor. They are still in hiding. Despite a decade of American good intentions, women in Afghanistan are still subjected to some of the worst human rights violations in the world. Rod Nordland, then the Kabul bureau chief of the *New York Times*, had watched these abuses unfold for years when he came upon Zakia and Ali, and has not only chronicled their plight, but has also shepherded them from danger. *The Lovers* will do for women's rights generally what Malala's story did for women's education. It is an astonishing story about self-determination and the meaning of love that illustrates, as no policy book could, the limits of Western influence on fundamentalist Islamic culture and, at the same time, the need for change.

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Customer Reviews

I began this book early in the evening, and couldn't put it down until well after midnight, until my kindle battery finally died. The story of this romance reads like a thriller, rendered with a wealth of detail that makes it compelling, vivid and immediate. This is the story of a forbidden love match in a society where marriages are carefully arranged by families. It reveals a world in which women are the property of fathers, husbands, and brothers, who answer the women's desire of individual autonomy with the "honor" killings reserved for women who have transgressed this patriarchal code. It reveals the obstacles faced not just by one Afghan woman, but all Afghan women, and any Afghans who do not conform to a male-dominated tribal society that has proven fertile kindling for extremism. As Nordland peels away the layers of this world, recounting romantic Afghan poetry, folk tales, and social attitudes, he reveals an awakening struggle against coercive "cultural" practices that eclipse any new laws put into place to prevent such things as the marriage of child brides to older men, stonings of women who speak to a man surreptitiously by cell phone--and the punishment of errant couples like these lovers. The author offers up some very interesting less-reported nuggets of history. Such as his conclusion, after many years of reporting in Afghanistan, that the Afghan mujahideen's resistance to Communism was fueled in great part by the Soviet attempt to elevate the status of women. In his view: "At its heart the jihad was not a response to Communism, it was holy war against feminism. In the narrow worldview of Afghanistan's jihadis, Communism and feminism were synonymous.

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