

# BOOK CLUB in a bag

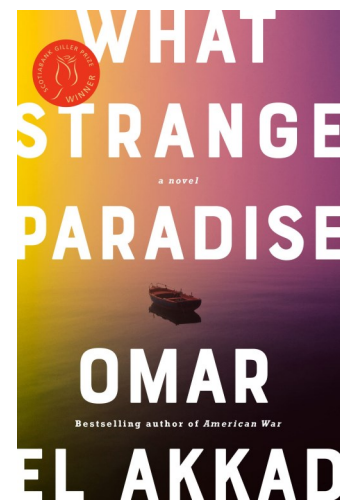


## What Strange Paradise

Omar El Akkad

### Discussion Questions

1. What did you think of the format of the book? Did you like how the author employed multiple narrators and told the story in two different timelines?
2. Discuss the character of Quiet Uncle. Do you think he was going to come back?
3. The After part of the book takes place on an island that is not named. What did you think of the setting? Do you wish we had been given more details about where and what this place was?
4. Discuss the unlikely friendship between Amir and Vänna.
5. On the boat, Maher says “You thought away was enough. But it’s not. It never is” (124) suggesting that the migrants will be unsuccessful in their efforts to find a better life. What do you think of this statement?
6. Even though Vänna and Amir don’t share a language or a culture, Vänna is determined to keep him safe, risking her own safety in the process. What do you think her motivations for this are?
7. Consider the secondary characters from the boat. Which one was your favourite? Who do you wish we could have learned more about?
8. Midway through the book, we begin to see the story through Colonel Kethros’ perspective. What did you think of this character?
9. Consider the following quote from page 230-231: “You are the temporary object of their fraudulent outrage, their fraudulent grief. They will march the streets on your behalf, they will write to politicians on your behalf, they will cry on your behalf, but you are to them in the end nothing but a hook on which to hang the best possible image of themselves. Today you are the only boy in the world and tomorrow it will be as though you never existed.”
10. What did you think of the ending? Were you satisfied?



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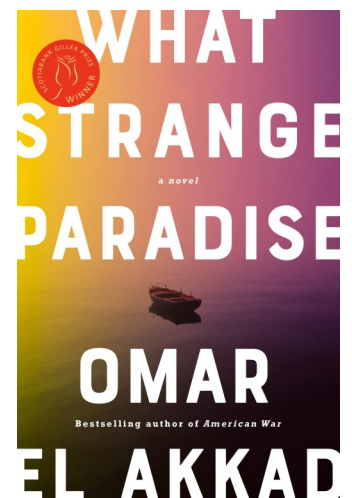
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## About the Author

Omar El Akkad is an author and a journalist. He has reported from Afghanistan, Guantánamo Bay, and many other locations around the world. His work earned Canada's National Newspaper Award for Investigative Journalism and the Goff Penny Award for young journalists. His writing has appeared in *The Guardian*, *Le Monde*, *Guerinica*, *GQ*, and many other newspapers and magazines. His debut novel, *American War*, is an international best-seller and has been translated into thirteen languages. It won the Pacific Northwest Booksellers Association Award, the Oregon Book Award for fiction, and the Kobo Emerging Writer Prize, and has been nominated for more than ten other awards. It was listed as one of the best books of the year by *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *GQ*, *NPR*, and *Esquire*, and was selected by the BBC as one of 100 Novels That Shaped Our World.

Via Penguin Random House (<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/authors/2140267/omar-el-akkad/>)



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