



## Oceans of Sand: Book One of the Sand Traveler Duology

**Jessica Flory**

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In Jessica Flory's novel *Oceans of Sand*, teenagers travel across a desert world plagued by famine to save their people.

Zadock is the most powerful shaker his age. He's able to control the sands that his people live on. His father trains him to take over as the leader of the ruling council of To'Rahn, the plateau on which they live.

Norah is the only person on the plateau who possesses no sand gift. She is able to navigate the sands by the stars in the sky, but she longs to do more to help her people. War looms over To'Rahn as resources become more scarce; Zadock and Norah are sent on a quest to find a mythical moonstone that might restore balance.

The mythology behind the world's magical system is intriguing: sand can be manipulated for building, fighting, and healing. And the moonstone in the eye of a large statue is believed to be a gift from the goddess and the source of the people's magic. The statue's other socket is empty, and the missing stone is thought to be the possible cause of the famine.

Much of the story rests on the idea that love weakens one's sand gifts. Marriages are arranged, and children are often separated from their parents at birth so that there is less risk of love interfering with power. This emotional restraint results in difficulties around some characterizations, though Zadock and Norah's secret love for one another helps to flesh them out. The conflict between what they feel and the pressure that they face to conform drives the book's tension.

*Oceans of Sand* is an inventive fantasy novel in which young lovers challenge all that they know about their world in an attempt to save it.

CATHERINE THURESON (July / August 2023)

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