



Unimagined: A Muslim Boy Meets the West

Imran Ahmad

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Imran Ahmad remembers his childhood in a series of vivid snapshots: outrage as deserved victory is snatched away from him in the Karachi Bonnie Baby contest; being tricked out of his collection of Tarzan bubblegum cards by a junior con artist; the heady taste of success in the Metropolitan Police schools quiz; joy at passing the entrance exam to the local grammar school; and shock at experiencing racist abuse from pupils, neighbors, and strangers. After moving to London from Karachi at age two, Imran's response to his strange new surroundings is to engage in an eternal quest to become the quintessential English gentleman: tie perfectly knotted, shirt pristinely ironed, hair neatly combed. Like most boys, he also has a parallel obsession with cars and girls: he yearns to go driving off into the distance in a Jaguar XJS and encountering danger, adventure, and a vivacious brunette. This is a lighthearted and amusing look at the results of East meeting West inside the head of a precocious and headstrong boy.

At age one, Pakistan-born Imran Ahmad moved to London and grew up torn between his Islamic identity and his desire to embrace the West. In this endearing memoir, Imran recalls his childhood in a series of vivid snapshots: outrage as deserved victory is snatched away from him in the Karachi Bonnie Baby contest by third world corruption and injustice; bitterness as he is tricked out of his collection of Tarzan bubble-gum cards by junior con artists; the heady taste of success in the Metropolitan Police schools quiz; joy at passing the entrance exam to the local grammar school; uncertainty as he seeks to become a doctor; bewilderment as he tries to learn about women at university; and shock at experiencing racism in its many forms. As he grows, Imran stumbles though life encountering colorful characters, philosophical dilemmas, and theological threats. Will he really be "left behind" if he doesn't embrace Jesus Christ as his personal saviour? Will he be sent to Hell for having coffee with girls (especially non-Muslim ones)? Is there a correlation between studying and passing exams, or is it entirely the will of God? Is it okay to be Western and Muslim, or are the two irreconcilable? And what about America, that alluring land of many contradictions? Eventually Imran embarks on a determined quest to become the quintessential English gentleman: tie perfectly knotted, shirt pristinely ironed, hair neatly combed. Like most boys, he has a parallel obsession with cars and girls: he yearns to drive off into the distance in a Jaguar XJS and encounter danger, adventure—and a vivacious young woman (preferably brunette, but any kind considered). Today Imran continues to write on his website <http://www.unimagined.org> and his blog <http://www.unimagined.typepad.com>. A book of the year pick by both *The Guardian* and *The Independent*, this is a deliciously funny and painfully insightful look at a life lived between two worlds.

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