

In this beautifully crafted memoir, a young half-Muslim, half-Christian woman travels to India to connect with a tiny Jewish community and unlock her family's secret history.

THE GIRL FROM FOREIGN

A Search for Shipwrecked Ancestors, Forgotten Histories, and a Sense of Home

Sadia Shepard

"A deeply moving journey across boundaries that most others find uncrossable, and into depths of human meaning that are rarely plumbed. An important and timely book."

- James Carroll, Author of *Constantine's Sword: The Church and the Jews - A History*

Sadia Shepard grew up outside of Boston, Massachusetts in a household full of stories and storytellers where cultures intertwined; her father, a white Protestant from Colorado and her mother, a Muslim from Pakistan. One day, when Sadia was thirteen years old, she learned that there was one story she had never been told. Nana, her beloved maternal grandmother, was not a Muslim like the rest of her Pakistani family—in fact, she had begun her life as Rachel Jacobs, a member of a tiny Jewish community in India that believes it is descended from one of the lost tribes of Israel, shipwrecked in India over two thousand years ago.

Before her grandmother died, Sadia promised her that she would return to her birthplace to learn about the life and the faith that she had left behind. Armed with a suitcase of camera equipment, Sadia arrives in Bombay, where she finds herself struggling to document the Bene Israel's unique traditions and make sense of her complicated cultural legacy. In the course of her remarkable journey she unearths long-buried family secrets, learns that love is sometimes found in unusual places, and is forced her to examine what it means both to lose and to seek a homeland. Weaving together the story of her grandparents' secret marriage—and the haunting legacy of Partition—with an evocative account of a little-known Jewish community in transition, *The Girl from Foreign* is a poetic and affecting depiction of a young woman's attempt to come to terms with her family's past and to begin to mould her own future. It is an unforgettable story of lost histories, shrouded identities, forbidden love, and above all, eye-opening self-discovery.

Sadia Shepard is a documentary filmmaker and writer who lives in New York City. She graduated from Wesleyan University in 1997, from the Stanford University Documentary Film Program in 2000, and was a Fulbright Scholar to India in 2001. This is her first book.

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