

In the Land of Invisible Women: A Female Doctor's Journey in the Saudi Kingdom

By Qanta Ahmed

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"In this stunningly written book, a Western trained Muslim doctor brings alive what it means for a woman to live in the Saudi Kingdom. I've rarely experienced so vividly the shunning and shaming, racism and anti-Semitism, but the surprise is how Dr. Ahmed also finds tenderness at the tattered edges of extremism, and a life-changing pilgrimage back to her Muslim faith." - Gail Sheehy

The decisions that change your life are often the most impulsive ones.

Unexpectedly denied a visa to remain in the United States, Qanta Ahmed, a young British Muslim doctor, becomes an outcast in motion. On a whim, she accepts an exciting position in Saudi Arabia. This is not just a new job; this is a chance at adventure in an exotic land she thinks she understands, a place she hopes she will belong.

What she discovers is vastly different. The Kingdom is a world apart, a land of unparralled contrast. She finds rejection and scorn in the places she believed would most embrace her, but also humor, honesty, loyalty and love.

And for Qanta, more than anything, it is a land of opportunity. A place where she discovers what it takes for one woman to recreate herself in the land of invisible women.

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In the Land of Invisible Women: A Female Doctor's Journey in the Saudi Kingdom By Qanta Ahmed Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
This memoir is a journey into a complex world readers will find fascinating and at times repugnant. After being denied a visa to remain in the U.S., British-born Ahmed, a Muslim woman of Pakistani origin, takes advantage of an opportunity, before 9/11, to practice medicine in Saudi Arabia. She discovers her new environment is defined by schizophrenic contrasts that create an absurd clamorous clash of modern and medieval.... It never became less arresting to behold. Ahmed's introduction to her new environment is shocking. Her first patient is an elderly Bedouin woman. Though naked on the operating table, she still is required by custom to have her face concealed with a veil under which numerous hoses snake their way to hissing machines. Everyday life is laced with bizarre situations created by the rabid puritanical orthodoxy that among other requirements forbids women to wear seat belts because it results in their breasts being more defined, and oppresses Saudi men as much as women by its archaic rules. At times the narrative is burdened with Ahmed's descriptions of the physical characteristics of individuals and the luxurious adornments of their homes but this minor flaw is easily overlooked in exchange for the intimate introduction to a world most readers will never know. *(Sept.)*
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From Booklist
Denied visa renewal in America, British-born Pakistani physician Ahmed, 31, leaves New York for a job in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, where she celebrates her Muslim faith on an exciting Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca even as she encounters rabid oppression from the state-sanctioned religious extremist police. She is licensed to operate ICU machines in the emergency ward, but as a woman, she is forbidden to drive, and she must veil every inch of herself. Her witty insider-outsider commentary as a Muslim and feminist, both reverent and highly critical, provides rare insight into the upper-class Saudi scene today, including the roles of women and men in romance, weddings, parenting, divorce, work, and friendship. After 9/11, she is shocked at the widespread anti-Americanism. The details of consumerism, complete with Western brand names, get a bit tiresome, but they are central to this honest memoir about connections and conflicts, and especially the clamorous clash of “modern and medieval, . . . Cadillac and camel.” --Hazel Rochman

Review
""Despite the restrictive customs of Saudi's religious rule, Ahmed found a vibrancy that left her hopeful. 'Saudi is much more heterogeneous than one would expect,' she says. 'Muslims themselves feel fairly lost in a country so caricatured and vilified for its severe austerity and Wahhabi theocracy, but it's also the cradle of Islam and the site of the Hajj-a symbol of what Islam could be."" - ***Kirkus***

"Ahmed still beautifully asserts her arguments and confronts the anti-Semitism, the sexism, and the anti-western attitudes she experienced... *In the Land of Invisible Women* gave me a lot to think about, and just not about the complexities of Saudi Arabia but also my country's, the U.S.A., interactions within the Middle East. " - ***Adventures in Reading***

"Ahmed was saddened, distressed, and taken aback by her colleagues' excitement in reaction to the 9/11 attacks. Her friends talked about how America "deserved" this tragedy because of its support of Israel. " - ***ForeWord***

"Denied visa renewal in America, British-born Pakistani physician Ahmed, 31, leaves New York for a job

in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, where she celebrates her Muslim faith on an exciting Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca... After 9/11, she is shocked at the widespread anti-Americanism. The details of consumerism, complete with Western brand names .... are central to this honest memoir about connections and conflicts, and especially the clamorous clash of "modern and medieval, . . . Cadillac and camel."" - ***Booklist***

"A female doctor provides a uniquely revealing look at the hidden world of Saudi Arabian women.

Denied a renewal of her visa in the United States, British-born, American-educated pulmonologist Ahmed accepted a position at a hospital in Riyadh. On rounds, the male residents she supervised would interrupt her, and female residents (what few there were) would cluster silently at the back of the group. All female doctors were required to be completely veiled. In surgeries, sons would supervise unconscious mothers, not to ensure the quality of their medical care, but to ensure that no parts of their faces were revealed by slipping veils. With such evidence around her, Ahmed began to think of these women as the wretched of the Earth. "I wouldn't be corrected in my simplistic views," she writes, "until much later, when I had befriended more Saudi women." When she did, she learned that the lives of these women under veils were no less complex and rich for being largely unseen. At her first party, she was astounded by the elegance and confidence exuded by professional women who had struggled immensely to achieve their positions. She began to understand how respect and love for women were expressed in her adopted society. Despite the strict monitoring of their clothing and behavior and the edicts against showing even the smallest scrap of skin in public, the Saudi women she met were neither so silent nor so helpless as their formless presence suggested. However, her friends were wealthy and educated; the vast impoverished majority could not even afford to visit doctors, let alone become one. Though never ceasing to be dismayed by the uglier aspects of regressive Saudi orthodoxy, Ahmed also found her own Muslim faith deepened and her conception of Islam broadened by her sojourn there. If she never learned to love the veil, she at least learned to understand it.

A big-hearted examination of the extreme contradictions in a society very different-yet not so different-from our own.

" - ***Kirkus***

"*In the Land of Invisible Women* is a must read for everyone. Why? People must find out how Dr. Ahmed dared to cope with radical Islamic fundamentalism. Rather than misery and despair, her story is one of brightness and optimism for Saudi women. But equally vital, it is a tale of expectation, a hope that brave Saudi men, who dare read her story, might have a jolt of conscience over unjustified cowardly feelings they hold toward women." - ***Blog Critics***

"This book is a well -written and fascinating insider's look into life in Saudi Arabia and the challenges that women and sometimes even men must face in their daily lives." - ***Bookopolis***

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Anna Gann:

Have you spare time for the day? What do you do when you have a lot more or little spare time? That's why, you can choose the suitable activity to get spend your time. Any person spent their particular spare time to take a walk, shopping, or went to the Mall. How about open or maybe read a book titled In the Land of Invisible Women: A Female Doctor's Journey in the Saudi Kingdom? Maybe it is for being best activity for you. You realize beside you can spend your time together with your favorite's book, you can smarter than

before. Do you agree with its opinion or you have various other opinion?

Carlos Quirk:

In this 21st hundred years, people become competitive in each way. By being competitive now, people have do something to make all of them survives, being in the middle of the actual crowded place and notice through surrounding. One thing that sometimes many people have underestimated the idea for a while is reading. Sure, by reading a publication your ability to survive improve then having chance to remain than other is high. For you personally who want to start reading the book, we give you this particular In the Land of Invisible Women: A Female Doctor's Journey in the Saudi Kingdom book as beginner and daily reading guide. Why, because this book is more than just a book.

Francis King:

The book untitled In the Land of Invisible Women: A Female Doctor's Journey in the Saudi Kingdom contain a lot of information on the idea. The writer explains your ex idea with easy way. The language is very straightforward all the people, so do not really worry, you can easy to read this. The book was written by famous author. The author brings you in the new time of literary works. It is possible to read this book because you can keep reading your smart phone, or product, so you can read the book in anywhere and anytime. If you want to buy the e-book, you can start their official web-site as well as order it. Have a nice go through.

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