



From Baghdad to Brooklyn: Growing Up in a Jewish-Arabic Family in Midcentury America

Jack Marshall

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“[Marshall] understands that the neighborhoods and cities that no longer exist can be conjured by memory and reanimated by art.”—*San Francisco Chronicle*

“Born in Brooklyn of Arabic/Jewish heritage, Marshall may represent the keynote, most critical multicultural mixture of our time.”—Naomi Shihab Nye, *Hungry Mind Review*

Inspired by the posthumous discovery of letters written by his father but never mailed, Jack Marshall’s memoir is both a moving story of a writer’s artistic coming-of-age and a lush, lyrical recollection of a childhood spent in Brooklyn’s Arabic-speaking Jewish community. Born in 1936 to an Iraqi father and Syrian mother who had immigrated to the United States, Marshall grew up in the hardworking Sephardic community—enveloped in an extended family that spoke little English, no Yiddish, and whose way of life owed more to their Middle Eastern homelands than to European Jewish traditions.

As the sights, sounds, and tastes of midcentury New York leap off the page, Marshall beautifully evokes the magic of youth and discovery. From playing “running bases” in the Brooklyn streets to making egg creams at Coney Island, from his mother’s rich kibbeh and baklava to the vast world revealed in the books of the New York Public Library, from the pleasures of music to the mysteries contained under a microscope, Marshall’s story is as enduring as it is original. And before he sets sail for Africa as a seaman on a Norwegian freighter, Marshall has, through his negotiation of language, culture, family strife, and issues of education, faith, and politics, shined a light upon the possibilities of our collective future.

A critically acclaimed poet, **Jack Marshall** has received a PEN Center USA West Award, two Bay Area Book Reviewers awards, and was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award. He lives in the San Francisco Bay Area.

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