



## David and Ameena

### Ami Rao

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Meatballs, free jazz, and subway singers? This is a fine romance. A fanciful courtship flourishes between two artistic loners in *David and Ameena*, whose leads deal with connections, synchronicity, and cultural differences.

David and Ameena are first-generation immigrants. He is a Lithuanian Jew, she is Pakistani-via-Manchester and Muslim. They form a winning combination of contrasts. In New York, they're free to unpack their family and cultural baggage, and to explore their true passions: for him, music, and for her, visual art.

David and Ameena are drawn together by a series of shared, synchronous miracles. Raised to succeed, both struggle with the pressures of assimilation and the impossibility of fitting in; they both toil in the marketing mines of Manhattan, finding time to appreciate art in spare moments. In each other, they find muses, sparking each other's curiosity and chutzpah. They also contend with deep prejudices and assumptions about one another, but these beliefs are a small obstacle.

Here, New York is detailed in rich terms that range from the romantic to the ridiculous. From local customs, like giving the intersection instead of an address of a meeting place, to urban legends, like the accidental death of a starlet during a romantic rendezvous, New York is alive. The city's role in the romance is satisfying.

While the chapters glimpse into the experiences that influenced David and Ameena, their behavior in the present is most fascinating. In New York, the novel insists, you can be anything or anyone. The ultra-modern architecture and culture of ambition are a powerful contrast to the couple's ferocious grip on their pasts.

In the end, New York is as breathtaking as the easy, sophisticated storytelling that brings David and Ameena together under the cool shadows of Madison Avenue's fairy tale spires.

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