

*They took my father three days ago,
a week before my tenth birthday.*

About the Book

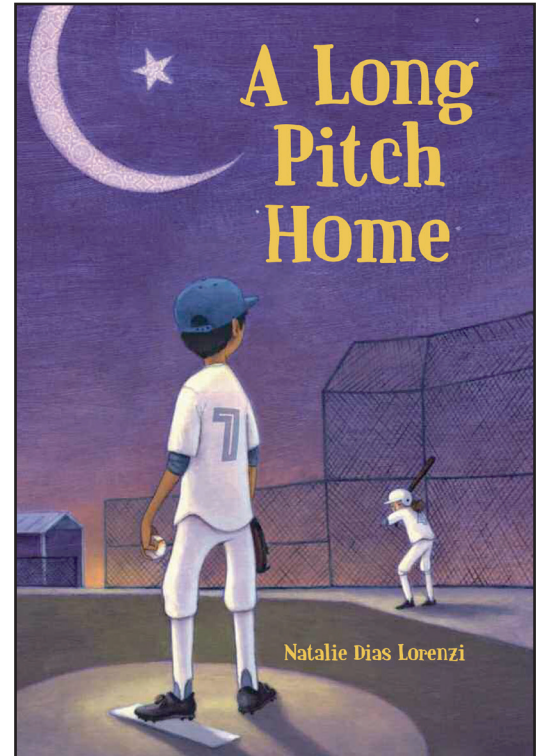
Ten-year-old cricket star Bilal loves living in Karachi, surrounded by relatives. But one day his father doesn't come home from work. When he reappears, he sends their family to live with Hassan Uncle and Noor Auntie all the way in America—but Baba stays behind in Pakistan. No one knows when or if he will be able to join them.

What's more, *nobody plays cricket* in America. While Bilal tries to keep up with his cousin Jalaal by joining a baseball league and practicing his English, he secretly hopes that if he proves himself on the field, his father will be able to see him play. But playing baseball means being one of the team. And for a boy who's new to America, that's not as easy as it looks.

An endearing, contemporary novel about family, friends, and new beginnings.

"[A] sensitive look at the cultural merging that accompanies immigration."—*Publisher's Weekly*

"A warm, sensitive, realistic portrait of a Muslim boy adjusting to contemporary America."—*Kirkus Reviews*



978-1-58089-713-6 HC
978-1-58089-826-3 PB

About the Author



Natalie Dias Lorenzi is a teacher, specializing in English as a second language. She has taught in Japan and Italy and now teaches in a Washington, DC, district where 85% of the students are immigrants. Natalie is the author of the IRA Intermediate Fiction Honor book *Flying the Dragon*. She also writes curriculum guides to new books for writers and publishers.

About Karachi and Virginia

- This book begins around dinnertime at Bilal's family home in Karachi. How is this dinner like or unlike meals you eat at home? Have you eaten some of the foods described in this chapter?
- What are some things that Bilal finds surprising about his new home in America? Have you ever visited or moved to a new place and been surprised by something?
- Bilal is learning English, and sometimes comes across a word or phrase he doesn't know. What does he do when this happens? What do you do when you don't know a word?
- How does Bilal feel about being separated from his father? What are some things he does to stay in touch with his father and feel closer to him?
- At Thanksgiving, Bilal thinks that his favorite Pakistani dessert ". . . tastes more special [in America] somehow." Why is that? Do you have a food that reminds you of someplace else the way *jalebi* reminds Bilal of Karachi?

About Baseball and Cricket

- Name some differences and similarities Bilal notices between baseball and cricket. Do you think it would be easier or harder for him to learn a completely different sport like soccer or basketball? Why or why not?
- Bilal idolizes Omar Khan, a famous cricket player. Do you have a favorite athlete? Why do you admire them?
- What are some superstitions that baseball players practice? What do you think of these superstitions? What does Bilal think of them?
- Why do Bilal's teammates not want Jordan on the team? How would you feel if you were in Jordan's shoes?
- Why are Bilal's teammates so angry with him when he pitches into the stands during the big game?

About Friends and Family

- How do Bilal's other friends feel about his friendship with Jordan? Have you ever felt like you had to choose between your friends? How do you think Jordan feels about the way Bilal's friends treat her?
- "When you feel alone, it is better to feel alone together," (p. 105). Do you agree? Why or why not?
- At the pizza parlor, Bilal has to explain *halal* to his teammates. How does he feel about this? Have you ever had to explain something about your diet or your family's culture to someone else?
- How does Noor Auntie feel about Olivia and Jalaal? Why? Have you ever felt like you had to decide between your family and your friends?
- Where is Jordan's dad? How does Jordan feel about her dad's deployment?
- Over Thanksgiving, Bilal thinks about how "American" his little sister Hira is becoming. What are some of the details he notices? Why do you think Hira is becoming "more American" than Bilal? How does Hira feel about this?
- In chapter seventeen, we learn several important details about Baba's disappearance and Bilal's friend Mudassar. How does Bilal feel now that he knows this information? Why didn't Baba tell him until now?