



I Am a Bacha Posh: My Life as a Woman Living as a Man in Afghanistan

Ukmina Manoori

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A 2015 Amelia Bloomer List Selection

"You will be a son, my daughter." With these stunning words Ukmina learned that she was to spend her childhood as a boy.

In Afghanistan there is a widespread practice of girls dressing as boys to play the role of a son. These children are called *bacha posh*: literally "girls dressed as boys." This practice offers families the freedom to allow their child to shop and work—and in some cases, it saves them from the disgrace of not having a male heir. But in adolescence, religion restores the natural law. The girls must marry, give birth, and give up their freedom.

Ukmina decided to confront social and family pressure and keep her menswear. This brave choice paved the way for an extraordinary destiny: she wages war against the Soviets, assists the mujaheddin and ultimately commands the respect of all whom she encounters. She eventually becomes one of the elected council members of her province.

But freedom always has a price. For "Ukmina warrior" that price was her life as a woman. This is a stunning and brave memoir about a little known practice that will challenge your perceptions about gender and the courage it takes to live your life to the fullest.

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