

Once, there was a thriving community of Jews in Iraq.

Now it's gone.

Louise is going back in time to find out what happened.

Louise is not the only Jewish kid at her school, but she *is* the only one whose parents were refugees from Iraq. Louise wants to know why they left, but nobody will tell her. Then she finds a magical abaya, a cloak which allows her to travel back in time to her mother's childhood in Baghdad. There, Louise explores the bustling souk, the open-air synagogue, the mighty Tigris River, and the thriving community of Iraqi Jews. At first, she can't see why anyone would want to walk away from this life. But soon, Louise comes to realize that her family here is in danger. And maybe she is, too . . .

*This book is dedicated to
my family, past and present,
and to the people of Iraq,*

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THE CLOAK FROM BAGHDAD

A GRAPHIC NOVEL



CAROL ISAACS

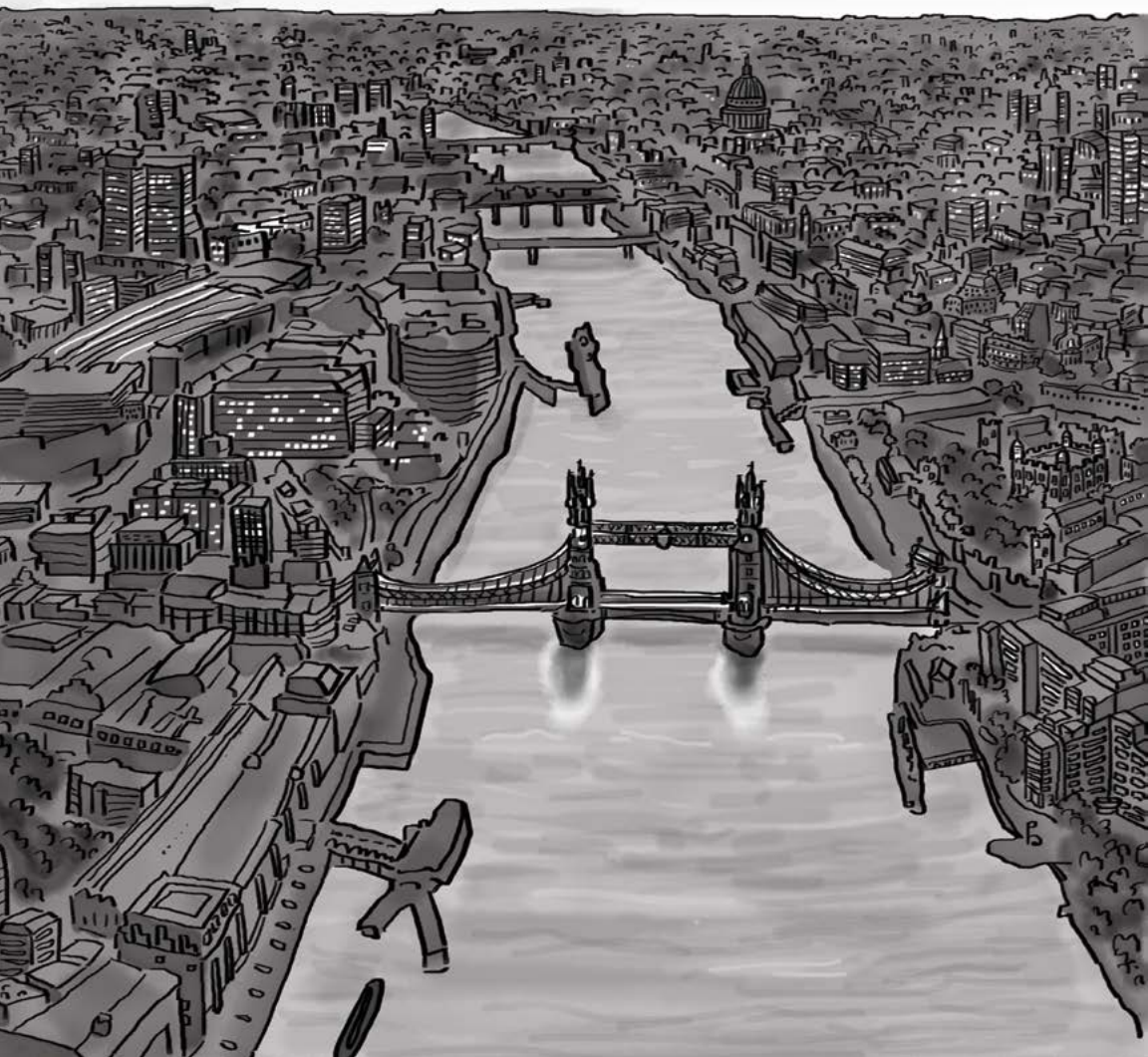
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My name is Louise and I grew up in London in the 1970s, when everything was in black and white.

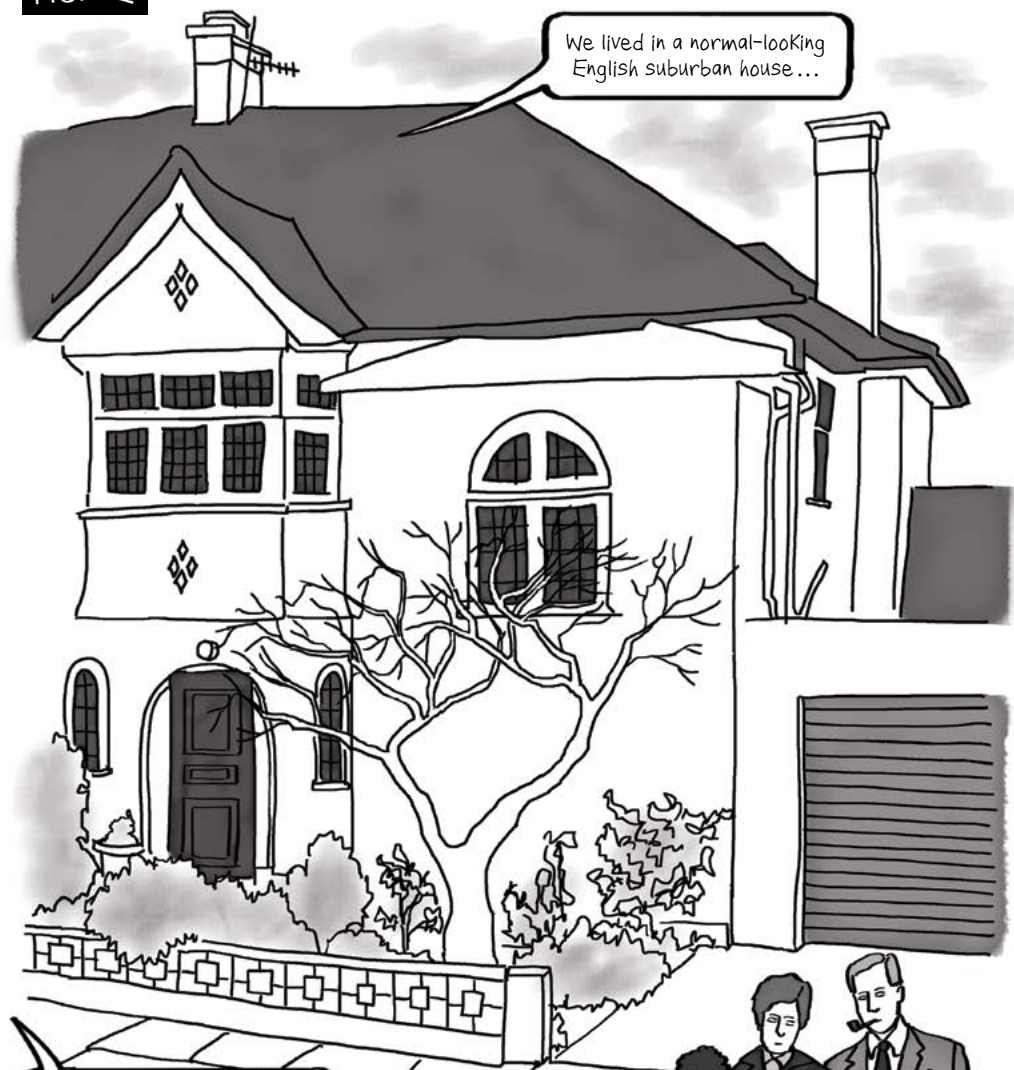
Just kidding!

But looking back on it, that's what it felt like sometimes...



HOME

We lived in a normal-looking English suburban house...



That's me in the family group with my mom, dad, and younger sister, Ruth.

We look like a regular British family, don't we? Well, my sister and I were born in the UK, but my parents weren't. They were born in Baghdad, Iraq.

And yes, we are Jewish. But at school no one really believed me...



I thought Jews came from
Russia and Germany.

And Poland.

Yeah, not from Iraq!

You can't be Jewish—
you look more like an Arab!

Your skin is
darker than mine.
Is it olive?

I love your curly hair though!

Can I touch it?

There were about 1,200
students at my school...

... 30 of whom
were Jewish...

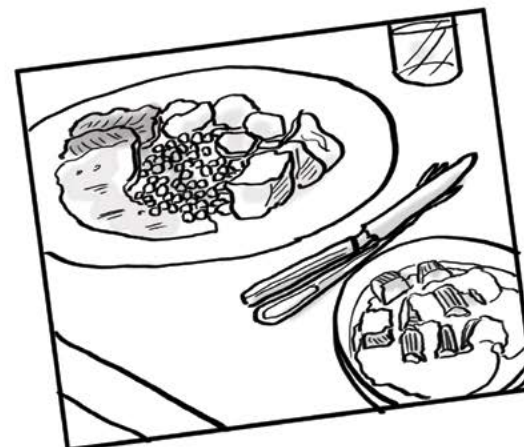
... and I was the only one
whose family did not
come from Europe.



DIFFERENT

I was different in other ways too. I lived in two worlds: the one inside our family home and the one outside, at school.

For example, at home our food was Iraqi-Jewish. We ate dishes like kubba (meat dumplings), t'beet (slow-cooked chicken in rice), and m'hasha (stuffed vine leaves).



While at school we had things like roast beef and potatoes, followed by rhubarb and custard. The custard was usually cold and lumpy. So gross!

Mom and Dad spoke Arabic at home but only English when we were outside the house. I'm not sure why. Maybe they didn't want to stick out? Anyway, because they spoke English with an accent, sometimes I mispronounced words in class.





THE GRANDMOTHER

When I was a baby, my grandmother came from Iraq to live with us. Actually, she was the last of our family to leave Baghdad.



But I'm not sure why she needed to leave. No one will tell me.

I loved my grandmother. She called me Lulu.



