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LimpingOnCloud9.com

Memoir
Prologue and Excerpt



LIMPING ON CLOUD 9

Prologue and Excerpt From Chapter One: The American

A Novel

by

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EXCERPT FROM LIMPING ON CLOUD 9 - CHAPTER ONE: THE AMERICAN

PROLOGUE

Hi. I'm Hammad, a short, slight, ridiculously lucky kid-at-heart who believes becoming disabled was the greatest gift I'd ever received. Without my limitations, I would have never been driven to live limitlessly. The childhood accident that gifted me my useless left hand, frail left arm, and partially paralyzed left foot may have broken the mold of who I was meant to be, but it created the space for me to become who I am; and who I am is someone who loves his life. In the 54 years since I became a card-carrying member of the physically challenged, I've limped across six continents and 48 of America's 50 states.

My travels have taught me every heartbeat on the planet has moments that define who they are. While countless life lessons have helped to mold me, the ones here have helped me grow far beyond my slight frame. Some are tragic, while others range from the strange and fantastic to comedic. However, all of the life lessons I've learned have shared one truth; if I can limp my way into the life I live, anybody can achieve anything.

I limped to my Tiger Bike, a faded blue, \$5 relic with a roaring tiger on its seat that I bought from an old man's garage on 77th and Robinson street. Before I mounted my beast, I looked for a patch of mud to twist my left shoe into to help my lifeless left foot stick to the bike pedal. Unfortunately, the sun had choked the morning mud into dust, so Mother Nature offered no remedies to enhance my level of normalcy. I mounted my tiger, pushed off with my able side, and then wobbled to catch my balance as I unknowingly peddled away from the last pick-up game of my innocence.

A sea of locals parted the sidewalk as I flew past. I thought they cleared a path for me because they feared the roaring tiger on my seat and not because they saw a disabled kid on a bike wobbling toward them at dangerously high speeds. I enjoyed my victory ride down some side roads unknown as I lackadaisically made my way home.

Just as I turned onto a familiar street, a boisterous mound of sweat burst out of his house with a gun attached to his ignorant hand. "Freeze, yous shit-stained terrorist son-of-a bitch. You took my people hostage," the man yelled. I pumped my brakes as I tried to skid to a super-cool, Fonzie stop, but the laws of gravity had other plans.

I lost my balance and collapsed onto the sidewalk with my bike planted on my freshly scraped body. As I looked up, I caught my first glimpse of the armed moron, who sported an unkempt beard, and the breath married to Budweiser. 'Don't shoot. I'm American, I said. "American? The Hell yous are, he replied. "Now, get off my property." I eyed my body's position as a few broken spokes spun out of control on my bike's front tire. "I'm not on your property, sir. I'm on the sidewalk." The man growled as I slowly snaked my tangled body out from under my fallen ride and then stood up to face the barrel of his gun. "Not talking about my yard," he said. "I'm talking 'bout The U.S. of Sand-Nigger Killin' A. This here country is my property, and I want you the Hell off of it!" I was wrong. Drunk Uncle Sam wasn't married to Budweiser; he exchanged his vows with Michelob. I knew the difference because I shared my bedroom with my 22-year-old Pakistan cousin who inhaled more Michelob than oxygen.

The man pointed his gun between my chocolate eyes as he stepped into me. He was close. I could see trickles of sweat moistening his trigger finger as his hand shook ever-so-slightly. His eyes were filled with pain and uncertainty, as if he knew this moment would be mutually defining.