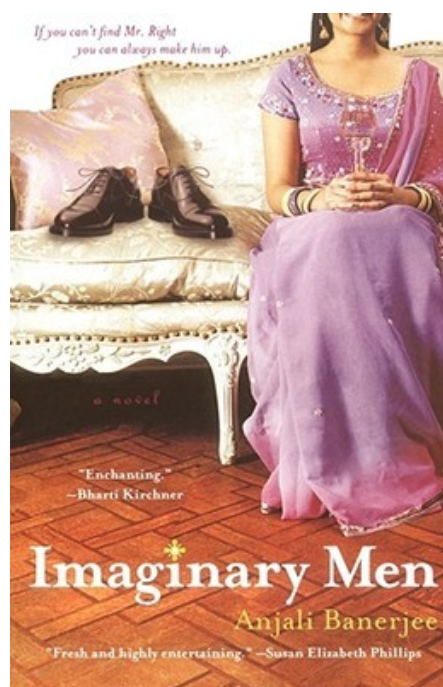




Imaginary Men

Anjali Banerjee

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This charming novel about a Bengali-American matchmaker in San Francisco who creates an imaginary fiancé in order to satisfy her marriage-minded traditional parents offers a fresh variation on the timeless theme of a young woman's quest for true love.

It seemed like a good idea at the time.

Lina Ray has a knack for pairing up perfect couples as a professional matchmaker in San Francisco, but her well-meaning, highly traditional Indian family wants *her* to get married. When her Auntie Kiki introduces Lina to the bachelor from hell at her sister's wedding in India, Lina panics and blurts out, "I'm engaged!" Because what's the harm in a little lie?

Who's sari now?

Lina scrambles to find a real fiancé because Auntie Kiki will be coming to America soon to approve the match. But date after disastrous date gets her no closer to her prince -- until an actual prince arrives on her doorstep. Lina hasn't been able to stop fantasizing about traditional but dashing Raja Prasad since she met him in India. In fact, her imaginary fiancé has begun to resemble him! Now Raja is in San Francisco and wants Lina to find a suitable bride for his brother. Though they live oceans apart, Lina longs to bridge the gap. But when her fantastic fib catches up with her, life is suddenly like a Bollywood flick gone horribly wrong. Lina may have an over-developed fantasy life, but she certainly never imagined things would turn out like this!

Imaginary Men Details

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From Reader Review Imaginary Men for online ebook

Lisa says

Big dumb fun. I read this last night in 3 hours, not sure why I put it on reserve at the library; it must have been in a Jane Austen tribute list or something. It was predictable, but lovable. The main character is a matchmaker in San Francisco, originally from India. After the wedding of her sister, she dreams up the perfect fiancé...a prince, and is mortified when she can't come clean to her family and they expect to meet him. Of course she ends up with a prince, really...but it's not a plot spoiler, because COME ON, you knew she would anyhow.

I'm not sure why I liked this book as much as I did. But I did. Oh well, at least I wasn't angry staying up late until midnight reading it!

Nisha says

I picked this book up, loving the premise. An American Desi woman who feels pressured to get married after her younger sister gets married (almost) the traditional way. At 29, her extended family try to introduce her to suitable matches - to which American raised Lina was much too independent to handle. So she lies, starting with the creation of a fiancé who is absolutely to die for, IF he existed. She even manages to name him 'Raja' after an sexy (but supposedly a traditional Indian) stranger she meets during the wedding. Now, Lina has to find herself the perfect man to make her lies truth, but on the way, her own past and her values make her question what she really wants.

The good things include this light-hearted story (very chick-lit, but why else would I pick it up), comedy, and fun characters. I especially liked the gay friend, Harry Kumar, though I wished he made more of an appearance. Lina's sisters were also nicely described, if not a little flat in development. Raja was also exciting as the sexy stranger who wants to know more about Lina.

But, as a Indian woman raised completely in America, I couldn't understand a lot of things about Lina. Ok, I can understand her to an extent. But not as Ms. Banerjee tries to portray her. Lina does not speak her mother-tongue so feels no real connection with India. So when she does go to India, her view is one a tourist, often complaining about the inconveniences or describing the cultural absurdities. This is fine, until I remember that Lina is 30. For a woman of 30, she speaks as if she was an angsty teenager rebelling against the walls of her culture. Which is even a bigger contradiction, since her family isn't orthodox and are open American culture. They don't follow the caste system and don't require her to stay with the family, as unmarried Indian women are expected to do. They don't even mind her finding someone who isn't Bengali. Now, tell me, where is that wall?

Clearly, I feel like Ms. Banerjee fails to create an accurate picture of American desi lifestyle.

Also, as many Desi chick lits, the romance part falls flat. Raja was created nicely, until he became a cardboard cutout - wasting the potential character development about bridging 2 cultures. Actually, there was no real romance, just a prince who would make Lina's fairy tale ending come true.

I can recommend it as one of the better books of the genre, but it is mediocre in delivery.

Karina says

Cute multi-cultural chick lit that any forward-thinking woman can relate to. It also has a bit of Elizabeth/Darcy flavoring thrown in as well...and real princes :).

aarthi says

This book is terrible. Don't waste a moment of your life reading it. I got the idea from others that it would be amusing to see what desi chick lit is, but having dipped a millimeter of my toe into it, I ran away screaming. It's the brown equivalent of shuffling.

shruti says

Most people think chick lit is bad writing but this is just badly-written chick lit. Plot points are introduced randomly, characters are never fully fleshed out...I can handle strange chick lit premises but they need to be well-written. I hate to pan someone's writing because I don't know if I could do better, but this was really hard to read.

Anna-Lisa says

This was an awesome tomance novel in Bollywood style!

I loved the funny and so realistic characters and the fact that this wasn't a love story with kitsch. It was cute, a fast read and touching. It was a book which made me sigh in the end. :)

Dorothy says

An excellent combination of cross cultural travels and comedy. I was touched by the innocent and loving side of the lead. She tries to find Mr Right for herself and for her family while keeping one foot in America and one in India.

Ajoque says

The writing was a bit too elementary for me. And it's not a good book to read after having just finished The Tea Rose. I don't want to give it an unfair review but it was hard to grow attached to any of the characters. The entire time I kept thinking of how detached I felt from the characters and the plot. Even when she tries to be creative with her story telling she still falls short. Jumping from one situation to the next and concluding chapters or paragraphs with no resolutions. I had a feeling that something was amiss for the entirety of the novel... Then there were all those Hindi words that were italicized; which I thought was because she'd have a glossary in the back for, but it was just for emphasis and grew tiresome after a while.

I will, however, give her credit for her description of places and events in India.

Rucha says

There were some things I appreciated about this book, and some things I didn't. Let's start out with the positive-I could relate to the character as a single Desi woman raised in the U.S. who comes from a middle-class, well-to-do family, feeling the pressures of marriage brought on by culture and patriarchy. I also call my parents ma and baba, feel a close connection to India although as an Indian-American at times feel lost and strange in a country I was born in, and love living in my own apartment with hard wood floors, in a west coast city.

I am glad that Banerjee also created a female, Desi character who was open about her sexuality and did not shy away from being explicit about Lina's fantasies and desires, especially when the book got a little saucy when Lina took a shower in Raja's hotel room shower. I also like that the author gave Lina a gay best friend, especially since homosexuality has been a taboo topic to discuss among Indians & Indian-Americans, until recently.

Okay, the not so good things- The book isn't written very well, which makes it a quick read. It does have its moments, when the words form vivid sentences that you can easily imagine. Overall though at times when I was reading the book I felt like Banerjee was trying too hard to create analogies or descriptions, it seemed forced, and didn't come out organically.

Also, the whole imaginary man idea got old. Although I appreciate that the author was trying to establish Lina as unable to get over a fiance who in her mind was still the ideal to which she measured every man against, there were moments in the storyline when the imaginary man could have been left out.

The story is a little over-the-top for me. Creating fiances, meeting a prince who pursues and chases, holding the prince on a pedestal, hanging off every word he says, it's all so Disney. There were times when I was irritated that Lina didn't have a spine and went along with whatever Raja said and did. It seemed to be all about him, getting to know him, trying to figure him out, scanning his hotel room for clues into his personality, talking to his mom about his childhood. What about her? What about her past, her childhood? It was too much.

I can see this book being turned into a chick flick, easily. Maybe that was what Banerjee was attempting.

Jen says

I learned that I too can write a mediocre chick lit novel because all you need to get one published is:

- gutsy, accomplished, strong-minded protagonists and a dimwitted, medieval-minded, antifeminist supporting cast
- an obstacle that, even if I keep describing it as impossible, is really not an obstacle just a mere wall 6 inches from the floor that the protagonist is too lazy to step over

- a really really really good-looking (and obvious) love interest
 - to really get my book published, i should include something "exotic" like Indian culture and describe it as stereotypically as possible with words like "spicy" and "sweat"
 - accessible language; and by accessible, i mean sixth grade slang and sentence structure
-

Manisha says

Rubbish, I felt nothing for the main characters and the story is so out dated: if Lina doesn't want to get married then why doesn't she just come out straight with it, she already lives away from her parents, she isn't a virgin and is supposedly an independent woman so why does she need to invent a fiance to please her parents? This is chick lit with no soul what so ever. Avoid.

Book Concierge says

Lina Ray is a professional matchmaker in the San Francisco bay area who has yet to make her own match. When at her sister's wedding in India, her Aunt Kiki insists on arranging a marriage. To save herself from "the bachelor from hell" she blurts out "I'm engaged!" Before she knows it she has invented a gorgeous, rich man, and now Aunt Kiki is headed to California to check him out and confirm the match. Lina has just two months to meet and get engaged to her dream prince!

Okay, this is chick-lit, with a cultural nuance. The characters are thinly drawn caricatures, and the plot is what you'd expect from the description. It's a fast, fun read, but there isn't much substance here. Sometimes a girl just needs a little mind candy; it did satisfy several challenges for me, and it's one more book off the TBR mountain.

Katjusa says

I bought this because Amazon suggested it as a related book I might enjoy. Over and over, I found myself having to reread passages because my mind had wandered. Superficial characters, predictable plot. It has a few cute moments and good observations but overall "Imaginary Men" comes off as clueless fluff.

Vicki says

Lina makes a living by pairing up the perfect couples to be married. After losing her fiance in an accident, Lina prefers to continue being the Matchmaker instead of looking for love again. While in India for her sister's wedding she creates a little "white lie" that she is engaged to avoid marital pressures from her family. Little did she know how the lie could spiral into a big misunderstanding. Along the way, she meets Raja. Could he be the perfect man for Lina? Romantic and funny. A quick read to start off the new year!

Carol says

This book gets 2.5 stars from me because it was a quick and easy read, which we all need sometimes. But really?..... Superficial characters and a predictable plot; the writing was a bit elementary for my taste.

Lina is a matchmaker who lives in San Francisco, but who is Indian by birth and whose traditional parents still live in India. Two years ago her fiancé died, and Lina has never gotten over him, and never got back into the dating scene. At Lina's sister's wedding, in India, Lina is faced with matchmaking parents. Foolishly, she makes up a fiancé who doesn't exist (except as a person she met that evening about whom she is now fantasizing).

Her dead fiancé follows her around and talks to her – and she talks back.

I really don't like books where a stumbling protagonist just makes things worse by piling lies upon lies. A simple lie to get her through the evening has her subsequently establishing a whole persona about her fictional fiancé – having a friend send her postcards from around the world, for instance. Don't they know it will only be worse in the end? I have no patience for this type of story.

It isn't a bad story – it just isn't memorable. I recommend it for your easy beach reading.
