

Julie



Kishore
Take Two

CAROL JACKSON

JULIE & KISHORE: TAKE TWO

By

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DEDICATION



I would like to give thanks to my beloved husband, and our two wonderful children who are rapidly growing into fabulous young adults, for their continued support.

CAROL JACKSON

AUTHOR'S NOTE



Explanations of historical events and a vocabulary can be found at
the end of this book.

TABLE OF CONTENTS



Chapter One	9
Chapter Two	19
Chapter Three	26
Chapter Four	31
Chapter Five	34
Chapter Six	52
Chapter Seven	57
Chapter Eight	64
Chapter Nine	73
Chapter Ten	83
Chapter Eleven	86
Chapter Twelve	105
Chapter Thirteen	110
Chapter Fourteen	117
Epilogue	119
Historical Explanations	125
Vocabulary	128
About the Author	133

CAROL JACKSON

INTRODUCTION



"No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite."

~Nelson Mandela - Long Walk to Freedom

Julie & Kishore - Take Two continues to follow Julie & Kishore's journey in life and love as an inter-racial couple. This is a fictional story.

CAROL JACKSON

CHAPTER ONE



The Hindi word for emotion is *bhavana*

"Ladies and gentlemen, we are approaching Auckland, New Zealand, please fasten your seat belts as we prepare for our descent."

A feeling of relief washed over me as the captain announced those reassuring words, home! I was finally home! Reaching on either side of me I found both sides of the buckle, clicked the seat belt together and pulled the strap tight against my waist. I then took a moment to reflect on the last month, which may seem like a long time but with all that had happened to me it actually felt like I had been away for years.

As the plane neared the runway and tilted slightly to prepare for landing, I found I was nervously folding and unfolding my hands. Of course I was thrilled to be home but the feeling I had was more than that. Why I was so anxious?

Mum and Dad had always supported my relationship with Kishore, so I knew I was being silly. I guess sitting on this plane for hours and hours on our long journey from India, (with a short stop-over in Singapore) to New Zealand had given me too much time to think.

Images flashed through my head of Mum yelling at me, saying I was a disgraceful daughter and the sight of Dad's furrowed brow, with him muttering that I had brought shame on our family.

I thought back to the phone call I had made from Kishore's family home in New Delhi to tell my parents my colossal surprise - that I had decided to get married in India.

From the moment I had said yes to Kishore's unexpected request, which was instigated by his Mum, everything had happened at lighting speed. This began with my Mother-in-law and

I buying a magnificent red and gold bridal sari and ending with a Pundit (Priest) pronouncing us as husband and wife.

It had been extremely hard to get married without any of my family or friends with me, but I knew in my heart that Mum and Dad supported me, so why did I now have such niggling doubts? Maybe I was just weary from our incredible whirlwind wedding. How I wished I could vanish my fears away with a snap of my fingers or I thought stifling a giggle, possibly a magical - Samantha from *Bewitched* - twitch of my nose.

The plane landed safely and coasted towards the terminal, and when the unfasten seat belt sign flashed on, I reached down to release the buckle. In the process, I caught sight of my hands. The henna that had been delicately applied with beautiful, intricate designs the night before my wedding was now a rich, deep burgundy colour.

What was it the mendhi (henna) artist, Japoni, had said? 'Julie, the darker the colour of henna, the greater the love will be that the groom and his family will give to the bride.' She had further explained that the design would last about two weeks, depending on how many times I washed my hands.

Another wave of emotions surged through me and a smile played on my lips as I reminded myself that it was only two days ago that I had hugged farewell to my new in-laws, the people I had met just three weeks earlier.

We had left my husband's country of birth as newlyweds, and arrived in my country of birth as Mr and Mrs Patel. I turned to look at my new husband who was sitting next to me but all I could see was the back of his head, ever anxious he was peering out of the window at the tarmac while we waited along with the other passengers to be told we could exit the plane. He had an inbuilt antenna that sensed when I was looking at him; he turned to face me and as our eyes met he smiled. The effect he had on me was always the same - my heart melted like butter left sitting in the warm sun. It was sad to think that our lavish Indian wedding that had been hurriedly organised but expertly executed, was now just a memory.

Glancing over Kishore's shoulder, I looked out through the window of the plane. The sun was shining and I felt happy and excited to be back in Auckland. For the first time in my life I had

missed the beginning of a New Zealand summer, our traditional Kiwi Christmas and the heralding in of the New Year with my family. I was eagerly anticipating spending the rest of the long warm months ahead with them.

Finally we departed the plane, breezed through customs, and gathered our luggage. As we emerged through the arrival gates our eyes quickly searched the crowd for my Mum and Dad who had promised to collect us from the airport. And there they were! It was heartwarming to finally see their welcoming familiar faces. Mum and I ran into one another's arms in an emotional reunion. I felt the warmth of her comforting arms around me and truly felt I had come home. She pulled away from me, held my hands and looked me up and down. She was seeing, for the first time, her baby girl as a married woman. Her wide smile spread across her face from ear to ear.

I turned to my Dad, who wrapped his arms around me in a tight bear hug; he smelt familiar, safe and comforting. Kishore hugged his Mother-in-law but my Dad was not a man-hugger, no matter who it was. Still, he extended his hand to Kishore in acknowledgement of his new son-in-law, and mumbled a gruff, "Hmmm... welcome to the family son."

Outside the airport, we shielded our eyes from the glaring sun as the humidity smothered us like a blanket. After the men arranged our suitcases in the boot of the car, Dad sat in the driver's seat with Mum next to him and Kishore and I were in the back.

I had been silly thinking my parents would be angry, but a little bit of apprehension still tingled through my body, I couldn't hold back my emotions any longer. I blurted out "We are really married Mum and Dad, really married! Oh, it was such a wonderful day..." And once the floodgates were opened - the words flowed from my mouth like a dam bursting. The rest of the way home I regaled them with the whole story of our trip to New Delhi, meeting and staying with Kishore's family, and of course our unexpected, unplanned Indian wedding. Kishore unsuccessfully tried to interrupt me a few times to correct a detail or an incident, but I was on a roll. The poor man didn't stand a chance.

* * * *

We reached home, and after opening the front door, Jasper, our fourteen year old faithful, family golden Labrador, barreled into us

with an enthusiastic welcome - despite his age. I bent down to cuddle him as his tail swished rapidly backwards and forwards, he licked my face - a warm reminder that I had returned.

Kishore and I dragged my suitcase into my bedroom. He still officially lived in a dingy boarding house with three other men, which is why he had left his luggage in Dad's car. It was intended I would drop him back there later that day, but as we entered my room we were in for a surprise.

My comfy single bed that I had slept in for most of my life was gone, and in its place was a brand new double bed, neatly made up with an amber coloured fluffy bedspread. It was a wonderful gesture. I turned to find Mum standing behind me.

"Well," she said, shrugging her shoulders, "You would have needed one sooner or later, let this be Dad's and my wedding present to you both."

"Awww, thanks Mum."

Kishore chimed in "Yes, thank you."

Mum smiled at both of us, "Julie, Kishore, your Dad and I would like to talk to you both, could you join us in the dining room in a few minutes?"

Looking at me rather baffled, Kishore replied, "Yes, Mrs Harrison."

Even though I called my in-laws, Mummyji and Daddyji, (the ji is added as a sign of holding a person in high regard), Kishore could not bring himself to call my parents Mum and Dad. He had great respect for his elders and was far too shy to use anything other than Mr and Mrs, and he definitely would not call them by their first names, Helen and Peter.

Ten minutes later after freshening up we walked into the dining room while Mum boiled the kettle for tea. Dad sat across from us at the table, and once we all had a cup in front of us, Mum gave Dad a nudge. He looked up from his cup at me, then his eyes slid to Kishore, then back to me, he gave a little cough.

"Julie love... oh, and you too, Kishore, your Mum and I thought if you wanted to move Kishore's stuff in here for a while, that will be alright."

Dad had taken us aback, but as it came from him, it was an offer we really couldn't refuse. And so it was decided, we would stay with them while we saved for a deposit for our own home. Kishore

and I had previously decided that we would find ourselves a small flat to rent, and after seeing the new bed I had presumed we would be taking it with us. We came to the conclusion that Mum and Dad had other ideas.

In India, the seven of us: Kishore's Mum and Dad, his brother Sunil, his sisters Ranjini and Saras, Kishore and myself, all stayed quite comfortably and at ease - albeit overcrowded - in their small one bedroom flat. We were now somehow nervous living alone with my parents in their spacious three bedroom home.

While Dad and my husband went back to the car to retrieve Kishore's luggage, my next task was to make a telephone call. I walked over to the kitchen bench where the phone sat and pressed the buttons for the number I had known off-by-heart since I was a little girl.

"Louise! Guess who?"

Without hesitation, she replied, "Julie! You're back... I'll be right over."

My childhood best friend, Louise Cole, had always been by my side as we grew up, and had supported my relationship with Kishore. She lived just a few streets away, and within what seemed like just a few seconds she was at the front door. She did actually get into her car and drive over, it had been a long time since we rode our bicycles to each other's houses.

Kishore gave a friendly 'hi' to Louise and then wisely disappeared into *our* bedroom, taking the telephone extension with him. He was keen to ring his Aunt Bhamini, his Dad's eldest sister, who had moved to New Zealand with her husband, Harilal, in 1956. They settled and raised three children in West Auckland, in fact not far from Mum and Dads house. When Kishore was a young adult she had helped him to immigrate. Now, he wanted to let them both know we were home, and convey messages from his parents.

Besides, he knew the first thing Louise and I would be talking about was our wedding; he'd heard the story before, and of course he *was* there! He also knew he would be hearing, and telling, the story many more times over the coming days. Anyway, Louise and I were hanging out for some real girl talk.

My best friend and I got ourselves comfortable in the living room, but before I could begin my tale, I handed her a paper carry

bag. She peered inside then pulled out my gift, a lilac Indian cotton shirt. She put it on right away, pulling it over the top of her tee-shirt. After hugs and thanks, I told her about my wedding. As I spoke, I watched her facial expressions change with each twist and turn of my story.

Finally, when I had run out of words and my tale was over, it was her turn to surprise me. I had been so engrossed in my own saga, I hadn't noticed Louise had something on her mind, and that her head had been bobbing up and down like a balloon blown too big and would soon burst.

"You wouldn't believe the gossip I have to tell you... Kerry's pregnant," she blurted.

My mouth changed to a circle in surprise. Well, this *was* karma. Kerry had been the one '*friend*' (or maybe the only one to say) who asked me if the only reason I became engaged to Kishore was because *I* was pregnant.

"Who's the Father?"

"Well, that's the thing, she doesn't know! She says it's either one of the boys she flats with or some guy from her work. Anyway, she says she doesn't care and is going back home to live with her Mum and raise the baby alone."

I was in shock but secretly I was not surprised.

* * * *

Louise left, and all at once Kishore and I felt completely drained, we were overtired, jetlagged, and our body clocks were all mixed up. We stifled yawns but forced ourselves to stay awake until evening, knowing we had to get our minds and bodies adjusted back to New Zealand time.

Darkness fell and when we thought it was a reasonable hour for us to go to sleep we cuddled under the sheets of our new bed. As we sunk into the soft mattress, we couldn't even find the energy to say goodnight to one another. In a snap, we both fell into a deep slumber.

Morning dawned and we woke refreshed from our sleep. We headed to the kitchen to prepare a breakfast of Weetbix with milk and Vogels toast spread with Marmite. After a month in India what else would a good Kiwi girl want for breakfast! Kishore was compelled to eat it as I had been raving on about good old Kiwi food since we were in India. We left soon after, eager to drive over

to the boarding house to collect Kishore's car and his meagre belongings. His furniture all belonged to his landlord so the only things we put into our cars were his clothes and personal items.

My husband had officially moved in with his new wife. He was glad to see the back of that place.

* * * *

The next morning I kissed my new hubby goodbye as he headed back to McAllister and Co where he worked as an accountant. Before going to India I was working at O.S.W. (Office Supply Warehouse). My job meant I had to visit various offices, take stock of their current stationery and office supplies, and order their requirements. I received a commission for any additional sales I made. This is how Kishore and I met. After about six months of watching me from afar on the days I came to his workplace, he finally found the courage to woo me by giving me a flower, which I might add, he had stealthily plucked from right under my nose from a vase that sat on the cafeteria lunch table. His gesture led (thanks to Linda's persuasion who acted as a go-between) to our first date. Linda was also an accountant at McAllister and Co, and second in charge of the firm; the only person higher than her was the boss, Mr McAllister himself.

But today I decided not to go to work. There were two important missions I had chosen to accept. With the sound of the opening music from *Mission Impossible* playing in my head, I took a deep breath as I picked up the phone and dialed the number I knew so well. After being put through to my boss at O.S.W. I told him politely that I wasn't coming back. He was surprised but I think he understood.

The second phone call was to the old vet clinic where I worked as soon as I left school. I had started but did not complete my vet nurse training. Speaking directly to the head veterinarian, Dr Steve Abbott, I asked him if he knew of any vet clinics with positions available.

I never finished my training to become a fully qualified vet nurse due to experiencing itchy feet because I believed that life had something else in store for me. What it was I didn't know, although at the time I felt I had no choice but to leave. After reluctantly handing in my notice at my dream job at Dr Abbott's clinic, I had taken the job at O.S.W. as a kind of fill-in position

until I could figure out what my next path in life was. To my surprise, I found my path was on course as I, 'lo' & behold', met a man that turned out to be my soul mate, Kishore Patel.

I was gob smacked when Dr Abbott told me on the phone that they had missed me - he felt I had a natural empathy with animals and he was more than happy to take me back. He flattered me further by saying he would support me while I finished my vet nursing qualifications.

I was ecstatic! I didn't even care that I would again be working with Mrs T (aptly named after Mr T from *The A Team*), a buxom woman who was the senior nurse and matriarch of the clinic. She had a scarily stern demeanour but everyone knew deep down her heart was made of gold. I am sure she knew her nickname but she never let on. She ran the clinic with as much efficiency as a naval captain ran his ship. With a song of joy in my heart, I promptly returned the next day to the clinic to my first love. It was as though I had never left. It quickly cemented what I categorically knew, this was my career and where I belonged.

A few days later, Mrs Pearson further cemented this feeling by warmly greeting me when she arrived at the clinic with her cat for his checkup. The dear elderly lady was struggling to hold a carry cage containing her large, fluffy, ginger moggy called Marmalade. She immediately remembered me and as I took the cage from her she expressed how excited she was that I was back at the clinic. Mrs Pearson practically insisted that I be present in the examination room while Dr Abbott gave her feline companion his checkup. I looked on while the vet poked and prodded a very grumpy Marmalade and wondered why I had ever left veterinary nursing when this was obviously my forte.

All those months, and with all that had happened, it was a true mystery to me how my life had gone full circle. Had I really left the career I loved because of cupid's intentions – had it been for the sole reason of meeting and falling in love and marrying Kishore?

* * * *

The next weekend, Kishore and I were sitting on the couch in the lounge room with seven envelopes glaring at us from the coffee table. Yes, I had just collected seven packets bursting with photos from the chemist. Seven rolls of film had been developed, all of

which were taken at our wedding, one hundred and sixty eight photos. I had not yet thought about the other rolls of film still waiting to be processed that we took of our trip before our wedding.

My husband and I had made a pact to not look at the wedding photos until we were together.

“Go on honey, you look first,” Kishore encouraged. Feeling strangely like I was about to jump from the highest diving board into a swimming pool very far below, I reached with shaking hands for the first envelope.

I had seen my reflection just once on my wedding day while dressed in my bridal sari, and that was only in a small portrait sized mirror. This was a huge moment for me, well, for both of us. How would I look? Me - a red haired, freckle faced girl with non-Indian features, wearing a stunning, glittering red and gold bridal sari complete with a bhindi and golden jewellery - I was desperate to know.

Apprehensively, I opened the first envelope. I pulled out the pile and looked down. The first photo revealed itself to me and my jaw dropped. Could that be us?

I stared at a photo of Kishore and myself, the bride and groom, sitting as the stars of the show on a makeshift stage. This is where our guests had greeted us to give their congratulations. I turned to the next photo and the next, one by one I scrutinised each picture. I passed them to Kishore once I had digested every detail.

The envelopes were out of sequence and the photos were kind of amateurish because Kishore's university friend Ravi had taken them. Even so, it didn't matter; Kishore and I were in awe, were the stunning people smiling in these photos really us?

Finishing the first envelope, I picked up the next set and after carefully examining each image I grabbed another envelope. We were totally immersed, ‘oohing’ and ‘aahing’ over every photo. By the time we were half-way through the fifth set, the photos were scattered across the coffee table like a colourful mural; our wedding day frozen in time before our eyes.

We, the bride and groom, posing with guests, Kishore's arrival on his horse, me walking up the aisle, the guests eating, dancing, and, of course, the actual wedding ceremony. Me? How could that beautiful woman be me? I was absolutely dumbfounded.

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