

GLIMMERING REFLECTIONS INTO MY SPECIAL FRIENDS' LIVES



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Preface

This book is based on the life stories of three competent heroines who gracefully matured from girlhood to womanhood, tackling all the life's hurdles in the best possible ways, while making others laugh and cutting jokes, which is why people are so drawn to them. How I know them so well and how can I give them this assesment: all these answers lie in the pages that follow. Please follow through the pages and get to know such quirky and interesting ladies. I wish you a happy reading, dear reader.

- Rosina S Khan

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Introduction

I want to introduce my friends, Shompa, Shirin and Shapla about whom I am going to talk a great deal in this book. Shompa is plump, fair complexioned, short and extremely dedicated to every part of her life. On the other hand, Shirin is shorter with bright skin and a pretty sweet face. Shapla is less fair but a favorite beauty queen among the guys. Now how did I come to know them? We were classmates in an Engineering University. I always believed in having special friends because in high school it was the body language and the first few words they spoke I knew if they were going to be my special friends. It didn't take me long then to find out and it didn't take me long now. I spotted Shompa, Shirin and Shapla as my special friends. In fact, I am really so grateful that God blessed me with such special friends during those years and years after.

Shompa now lives in Australia with her family. Now and then I connect to her and skype or chat with her on facebook, whichever way it works. During her years in Australia, she had learnt to drive which was a very scary experience for her at the start. Once she got used to driving, she sold the old car and bought a new one. She found work, where she made dozens of Aussie colleagues as her close friends. She has a very good husband, who was once her close boyfriend. They have now a three year old daughter. On her first pregnancy, she had miscarriage and she was

rather upset about it. Her second pregnancy was a quiet secret and everything turned out well and therefore, her now three year old daughter, Stephanie. On the other hand, she has an ailing mother who had breast cancer years earlier and the sideeffects of her treatment caused impairment of the movement of her legs. One of Shompa's reasons to go to Australia was that there was free treatment for the elderly and she wanted to take advantage of that. Her father passed away only a year after my own Dad. Although I know heart attack was the cause of my father's passing but she doesn't seem to know why and how God took away her dad's life because he passed away when he was healthy and on a visit to his original home place, and Shompa and her mom got the tragic news while in the city. She has an elder brother who rarely keeps in touch with her family and more about this later.

Shirin is the quiet one with all the goodnesses radiating out from her. She currently lives with her husband in Canada. Although I rarely connect to her nowadays, I know she is on the lookout for self-growth either by going for higher studies or landing on a dream job. She likes to cook for her husband, a skill she acquired over the years after university. She is on good terms with her hubby, who likes to photograph her every now and then, some of which she posts on facebook, and I view them in awe.

Shapla lives with her family in London. She has two children and is happy. She is great with her family members and has mastered her life with witful dexterity. She has shifted places within London several times probably because her husband's job was kind of transferrable. By now they are all settled, nice and cosy.

As I talk about their current status, am I really looking at them or rather their reflections?

Days at the Engineering University

The university I was to attend for a good number of years looked towering, exhibiting its red and white painted bricks. The space was kind of small with a garrage at the front and as it was a blooming one, it stayed that way for a good number of years when it was high time to shift to a wider campus. And it actually did so in reality. The initial campus was also flanked by green trees, and our class was on the top most floor accomodating around 50 students. As years went by, this number reduced due to dropouts or failing students who had to get readmission in the same year and semester and therefore, fell behind. Our class was hugely spaced and there were both blackboards and white boards. It was upto the teachers to choose the one they preferred for teaching.

Day 1 I was at the university, I was busy spotting out who were going to be my ideal special classmates I am to spend through out the years. One girl (Shapla) first started talking to me and I knew that she was one of those I was looking for. Our class was divided into sections of about 25 students who attended labs at separate times. Well, there was a bunch of us talking at the canteen, and Shapla said it was time for her to attend a lab and that I wasn't in her section. So all those who were in the other group stayed behind and I had the opportunity to look at a smaller group of girls. Of course, it was a co-educational university but in our time then,

girls liked to form groups and stay together. Of course there were other rare girls who liked talking and working with boys. But myself being raised in a family of three sisters (and also a little brother), I felt comfortable and being myself surrounded with girls. So I was in the smaller group and there, I immediately pointed out my other best friends. What I saw in a best friend was not only goodness but special skills and talents that would be complementary with me and we can help each other all through our journey through out the years at the university and beyond.

I am not embarrassed to say that I was very ambitious and my entire target was to be at the top of the class. For this I figured out that I needed to keep my classmates happy and let me happily work my way upwards in the class. So whenever there were class assignments in any course, I helped my classmates all through with solutions whichever were within my capacity. Others were truly inspired and they also volunteered to provide solutions for the next round of assignments. It was a happy and smooth go through.

During my first semester at the university, I worked really hard and God blessed me with good grades. The second semester was also a good go-through. As I waded through the semesters, I made constantly good results, and it was Shirin

who pointed out to me that the gals and guys in our class were truly inspired by my performance and I instilled the eagerness among them to outdo as well. Their first semester was not so good; so, that had great consequences on their final GPA but on the other hand I held a prestigious GPA, and I was immensely happy because in reality all along I was not competing with others but only with myself. But I was glad indeed I had motivated my classmates to perform well too academically.

My friendship with Shompa and Shirin grew when we were in lab groups working on electronic circuitry or programming. We waded through our years helping each other. While Shompa was good at building electronic circuitry and digital logic design experiments, I was good at programming and documentation. So we complemented each other beautifully as a group. Sometimes I even stayed at their homes overnights to complete or work through group assignments and this activity became more dominant when Shompa and I were working on our thesis in the final year on microprocessor-based smart UPS system. While my friendship with Shapla blossomed to greater extents through the fun activities she came up with and when I joined these.

I am joyous to assert that we were the first batch in the university in Computer Science and Engineering department and soon, a second batch had taken space in

the university in every department after one year had elapsed. So the first batch in our department brought out their creativities in them and held a reception function for the newcomers. Guys and gals from our batch presented the occasion, cut jokes, sang on the guitar and played games with the newcomers and gave them newbie crests and gifts. We also rounded up the occasion by distributing cake, snacks and gifts. Of course, for this event to occur we had contributed a small share financially. And it ended up so well!! Soon the second batch was welcoming the third btach and the process crawled on till date.

While during this time I was always into books and studying, Shompa found an outlet and opportunity for romance. She started becoming friendlier and friendlier with her top floor's tenant's son. I remember the day she made it all known to us that she had a boyfriend simply by delivering chocolates over our laps. The whisper from one to another became a well-known fact. We all congratulated her. Soon she was tracked walking and spending times with her boyfriend in several parts of the city. I can say she chose her perfect soulmate.

While Shompa already found her partner, Shirin and Shapla were still dreaming. I think Shapla was more romantic because when we had to go on windy days to the university, I remember Shapla saying one of those days, "On a windy day like

today, I simply feel like getting married!”. And we all had bursted out into contagious laughter.

Our Work Lives

As per my ambition, I made it at the top of the class and immediately got the offer of the job as a Lecturer in the same university. How about my friends Shompa, Shirin and Shapla? They got career jobs in the field of teaching as well: Shompa as a teacher of Computer Studies in a school, Shirin in a Computer Center, Shapla in a kids' school teaching computer stuff. I think among the three, Shapla was the most restless, always changing jobs from one to another in several parts of the city. I read somewhere in the internet that those who change jobs frequently also change their significant other frequently. But this was not the case with Shapla as years later when she got married until now, she had a steady happy family; however as I mentioned earlier, they changed places within London frequently, and I mentioned the reason for this as well.

Shompa instantly got friends as elderly teachers as well as the younger ones. She is so outgoing and lively that she never fails to impress anyone. Shirin had to learn how to teach in the hard way, receiving a lot of criticisms but the wonderful thing about it all is that she made it at the end.

I was kind of out of touch with them when I went to Germany for higher studies. By the time I came and rejoined my job, it was time for Shompa to leave for

Australia with her ailing mom. Her uncle supported her in every way; so back then she got all the help she needed, and I am so proud of her that she took such a giant leap. She was still estranged from her blood brother. She said she will come back in three months' time and get married to her boyfriend and take him back with her. She simply said that was the way it best worked for her. So I left it upto her and did not question her anymore regarding that and wished her all the very best.

Their marriages

She did come back after 3 months, and it was then I received a call from her. She invited me both to her wedding and reception and although I gave her phone numbers of our close friends (which she said she had lost them), she could not reach anyone else which I found out later. Her venues for the occasions were in two different Chinese restaurants. One was nearer my home and the other was a little further. The first one was easy to track, and it was lighted up with glowing on and off tiny colored bulbs. I really appreciated the decorations, and the courtesies of help boys. The other venue on the second day was a little hard to trace because all the street and shop lights were off and I figured out there was no electricity in this place. I thought being alone in the car was not safe here, and so I instructed the chauffeur to leave the place and return home. At that very moment, as if by miracle of some good fortune, all lights clicked back and I could trace the restaurant on the other side of the road, neatly decorated with brightly glowing lights. I said earlier Shompa couldn't invite anybody else among our friends because when I attended both the venues of her occasions, I found that I was the only one among her classmates. This brave girl left her ailing mom abroad with her uncle, came here with her cousin in order to get married to her beloved boyfriend, at the same time fighting with all her might against her brother, who knowing all her plans, tried to foil them but in vain. There are big definite family problems around her, and plus

she has the responsibility to look after her ailing mother. But she manages them all so well, and inspite of all that, I never fail to see a smiling face or share a belly-breaking laugh with her whenever I connect with her.

How about Shirin? A year earlier she got married to what seemed like the perfect prince of her life. So handsome, so jolly and so friendly!! Of course she didn't get to invite me to her marriage ceremony because she confirmed later that she was so busy, and she got married in five days' time, and also when she rang our land phone she didn't get the connection. I have to admit our family was not using cell phones then but soon enough when problems like these started brewing up, each member of our family got a cell phone (lol!!). I didn't physically see her husband until Shirin's younger brother's marriage ceremony and boy, was Shirin's husband any less of a prince? He was so darn handsome. But alas, a few months down the road, they started having problems and had no alternative but to break up with a divorce. This pained my heart to death. I couldn't believe it that my special friend lost her prince charming. It was not easy for her but she beared it all and moved on. She even switched to a higher paying reputable job and was in there maintaining and managing the company's websites and also several databases' information and other delegated tasks until a real prince charming gave his heart to her, married her and took her with him to Canada where they settled down.

As for Shapla, although she was the most romantic among the three, she was the one to marry the latest. An Australian friend, I came to know later, paired her up with a bald guy who lived in Australia. He came to the country and therefore, their union and marriage. She kept joking all the time with us about her husband's bald head. But she was in luck; he was the perfect soulmate for her, helping her financially through his reputable job, and with household chores to looking after their children. And when they made shifts of places in London, he was always at her side helping with organizing furniture, unloading baggages, and even with cooking.

Dear reader, by now you are probably curious to know about my own matrimonial status. You will be surprised to know that several guys passed by my life but somehow they never proved out to be the best suitor. So I remained single, never married. But I didn't give up yet, and I am still on the lookout for that special someone so that we can love each other unconditionally for life. I am also on the lookout for a new job (having 15 years' work experience already), which is a decent one and is a right fit for me, and is an uplifting, motivating and inspiring one for me where I not only expand, grow and empower myself but also share and contribute my valuable and enriching expertise.

Our fun days

Inspite of the fact what Shompa was going through during her marriage ceremonies, I did not fail to enjoy her events. There was Chinese food and I took lots of photographs with her and was video taped along with her.

These days were not only the fun days I shared with her. If I go back as far as the university days, our small group of four to five girls would ping on an idea for fun activities (most of the ideas were Shapla's of course). Some of these that I recall now are as follows:

- Watching cinema in cinema halla

Yeah, we actually went to cinema halls 15 minutes later than when the cinema began and came out 15 minutes earlier before they ended in order to avoid the rush of crowds in and out for fear of getting lost or even possibly running into a stampede. It was Shapla's witful way of thinking to avoid mishaps. They were usually huge halls and we chose seats at the back most because they were very near the exit door. In times of recess, hawkers would come with drinks and snacks, and we shared and bought some of these and passed the break times enjoyably. And while the cinema went on, we enjoyed every moment as well because there were popular interesting stories in them.

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