

Padma Sherni

Dil Pickle Dilemma

(Dil means Love)

PART I of III

What's Your Rorschach?

Interview Style

By Piale Roy

Second Edition

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**Part One: Padma Sherni What's Your Rorschach?
by Piale Roy (aka Padma Sherni)**

Female: reading a book and then the phone rings...

Female on the phone with a guy: "So nice to hear from you! Oh, you have to go, alright, have fun with your new art project, maybe I'll try to attend some time!"...

Female: Wondering if she should still be reading her book...and picks up a journal and pen instead...

Female as the Narrator: "Chapter 1"

So I, Padma Sherni, had another good idea earlier tonight and within a second the lampshade on my nightstand fell and directed my gaze to the overcrowded bookshelf. My metaphorical halo of friends, family, and community, as well as my own lessons learned, protects me when I curiously explore life and the one light many lamps philosophy. I was reading a beautiful book of poetry that I randomly discovered on the bookshelf: "The World is Beautiful – A Collection" by Rabindranth Tagore which makes me smile and laugh to think of so many different perspectives about life....

Phone rings: "I'm ready to start my interview for my college assignment now, if you're free?"

Female: Hi, I am! Ask away...

Student interviewer: Where were you born? Where are you from?

Padma Sherni: I was born in the USA. My parents are from India. What do you suppose my Rorschach personality would be like? I have diverse family and friends from all over the world and from all walks of life that not even an open inkblot test of artwork could surmise or capture the whole of my characteristics or influences.

Interviewer: What was college like for you?

Padma Sherni: I think back to my college days when I used to imbibe cappuccino mocha ice coffee swirled with ice cream scoops and tried to study notes on flashcards especially for my course on Logic. A good friend from Australia, who I used to spend time with at the coffee shop, wanted to make sure when he saw my flash cards that I was not cheating. I was offended. Although he was also a student, he had never seen anyone study with flashcards before. Due to other priorities, I avoided studying too much for this class. However, later, my brother gifted me an entire book about how to be more logical; ha ha. So, although I never got a good grade in that math class for

logic I still recall what a tautology is and made my point that I was in fact, not cheating. More importantly I was getting myself “edumacated” about love and friendships and that balance of independence and inter-dependence every college student goes through as they evolve from their life with their parents to their own way of being. And to answer my dad’s question, the other time I really was in the library and that building really does stay open late. Fortunately I did not have to answer that question again later as I may have possibly been in a conundrum as to how to explain my whereabouts. That balance of personal involvement and independence and attachment to family or societal obligations and relationship expectations is often a struggle in emerging adulthood, especially for women of any descent.

Student Interviewer: Have you always lived in New England?

Padma Sherni:

I went to college in Delaware although I was born and brought up in the area of Boston, Massachusetts. I had lived in Massachusetts until 1995 and only moved from Boston to Delaware because of my Dad's job when I was approximately 18 years old. I went reluctantly because I

love Boston: the skyline, the restaurants, the diversity, the walking trails, and the sailboats on the Charles River.

If I had stayed in Boston the scholarship I was offered for a school of physical therapy would have resolved my financial dilemma at least for the first year, as I strived for my independence.

However, the college tuition was more affordable in Delaware and my parents wanted me to stay closer to my new “home”, so I was required to apply at the last minute, to a university closer to them.

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Fortunately for them, I was accepted just before orientation and classes started. If I was smarter I should have thought to mess up the application process, but I did not think of this brilliant idea until just this second 18 years too late.

My mother probably just wanted to be hawk eyes at me for my whereabouts and so after I was accepted, I had to go to De-la-where? And eventually my mother's job was literally down the street from my dorm room. My mother's employment location, at the time, then presented one more challenge on the journey to my freedom and independence

as a strong willed Indian-American female growing up in the USA.

I somehow managed to get through life and school during the last few college years with some help from friends in a similar boat.

Student Interviewer: What place did you like better? What were you studying?

Padma Sherni: As I had mentioned, I had never wanted to leave Boston and that was at the time the toughest decision of my life. I used go for runs around campus just to figure out how or when I was going to get back to my hometown or if I should stay where I was. I was the only one famished at 8am after a run and calling any of my friends to see if they wanted to get breakfast yet in the cafeteria. "Padma Sherni we're still sleeping. You go." Thank goodness for the all you can eat buffet and yet miraculously I still had good metabolism to maintain a strong core because I used to dance all the time.

At the end of my first year although I was achieving just what I wanted to, I struggled with my decision to continue to pursue a physical therapy course of study.

Interviewer: How did your parents or others react to that?

Padma Sherni: Others felt this indecision was not good enough and demanded that I go home to refocus my energy and efforts. I said "No. Watch and wait. I will figure this out." At the end of my second year I was achieving just what I wanted yet others felt this was still not enough and demanded that I go home. I said "No.". Then my provisions of money for on campus housing ran out and I marched over to the local community center and got a job to work at an after school program. I paid my own residence bill and found out that I loved that feeling of financial freedom, independence and self-reliance. This was very important to me as a woman continuing to grow into my adulthood. Someone I dated during my first year must have understood this need, as I reflect with sarcasm, once when we went out for dinner. He would conveniently forget his wallet, and I would end up paying for both of us. Consequently this meeting did not evolve significantly. Ha ha. Then again, I had been brainwashed about gender roles in the way many people are still in a tug of war about this, and therefore, my friends both male and female were critical of that incident. I now look at that dinner with empowerment and yet have

personal rules and expectations for dating etiquette which I will not divulge yet.

Interviewer: Do you feel you have an east west mixed approach to that sort of thing? You know, dating?

Padma Sherni: As an Indian-American, the sometimes conflicting guidance and advice from at least two cultures have been both confusing and amusing. The summer before high school I signed up for basketball camp. I love basketball even though I'm not all that talented in the hoop sport. I had only ever played in the challenging level of athletics, for the first time in my life, in 8th grade gym class. I learned how to play well, however. Still, I was mortified to then realize that I would be the *only* girl attending a supposedly coed summer camp the year after.

Interviewer: Laughing, please go on...

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I was among approximately 15 guys I mostly didn't know. I was also the only brown person. My dad reminded me that I had a level head and encouraged me and reassured me that I would be just fine to get through the sports opportunity. So, after years of hearing the mantra, "Don't talk to boys. Go study." the rules had suddenly changed and yet not really. It is a fine balance that many

females growing up can identify with. (I was not really sure I wanted this opportunity because I already had a very specific daydream to pursue of a guy I had a crush on from Boston. He was not on the basketball team in any school district, but I liked him anyways. I decided to keep myself busy until I got to see him again.

So, I went to the basketball camp, just to see what would happen. During three-on-three scrimmages the guys would sometimes stop and politely hand me the ball. I eventually asked them to pass me the ball without knocking me over. This was pretty funny when I think about it now. They would devour donuts and soda during the breaks and I was in the midst of trying to figure if I was supposed to wear more make-up or not. From my perspective, there was no helpful person to really get advice from who had been through a similar life experience yet, in the whole history of the United States of America!

Anyways, I got through camp and then made the freshman basketball team in high school. My mother didn't understand that attending practices was not optional though. "Study! No boys. Study!" she recommended with emphasis. I protested, "But mom! Dad said that I have a level head and...." Then mom would double check for

corroboration with my Dad, with a strong warning in her tone of voice "AY!!!! Shuncho??!!" and consequently inquired, "What on earth was this impractical idea for a girl her age?" Consequently, my basketball career ended. I'm embellishing slightly but you get the point. This is not too far off from what actually happened.

Interviewer: Alright, so now are you going to share more about your dating philosophy? Laughing...

Okay, now after reflecting upon some of my earlier days and first year of college, I'm ready to tell you about my personal preferences about dating etiquette. Let's start with a side note about paying the bill. Please don't stress me out with the fancy everything and restaurant and all that the first time around because I'll have my jazz hands up and crossed in front of me the entire time. (I learned excellent defense and offense from basketball camp.) Just let's go and meet up somewhere, maybe for coffee, where I can or you can run screaming in the opposite direction if needed after politely backing away after an hour or so if all is not going so well. However, all bells and whistles if this is for real the next time after and this will be your responsibility as my partner who has asked to spend time with me to treat. Then, I like taking turns leading and

following and sharing in the responsibility of treats there on after if you're genuine. (This is what I have figured out from high school to first to second year of college or so until now with increasingly earned privileges.) If you have anything other than genuine intentions towards me, you will have me, my sisters and brothers, my surrogate sisters and brothers, and a whole bunch of other people I don't even know who are already intruding into my life, because I am a female who is brown, who will then have a new agenda of trying to identify you for some type of consequence. I am not responsible for what happens to you after that.

I learned a lot my second year in ways you wouldn't have expected by spending more time getting to know other students everywhere, and this was so much fun! And I was smart enough to choose the dorm with the walk in closet. And an antique piano. And no boys as residents in this building. The college residence was pristine and lovely.

Interviewer: How was that experience?

That was the best decision of my life at that time. Of course, as President of the student government for the women's dorm, I made sure there were opportunities to have socials among other events and let people enjoy their

free life in good company as they chose. Staying in the residence hall cost a lot of money. The job I had was good but did not pay enough to meet my living costs on campus. I eventually ran out of funds from the after school program I worked at for the community center. So, when the
8 employment had ended, I had to go home.

During this transition time, I then decided at the end of my second year of college, that I no longer wanted to be a physical therapist and I dropped my major. I was tired of looking at cells. “When are we going to get to muscles?!” I thought. To make my decision and to volunteer time in community service, I helped the elderly who had multiple sclerosis in an aqua-size therapy program. I got into the pool even though I still couldn't really swim because I wanted to help them out and learn. Plus, I thought the idea was a good one, not only for them, but also to make sure that I could at least float in water.

Interviewer: Now how did your parents react?

Padma Sherni: My parents were very concerned when I told them about changing my major. When I had a vague idea of subjects that interested me more, like: the whole person in the context of their socio-ecological environment comprised of inter-dependent systems, I thought, “Yes, I’ll

change my major.” My parents’ overprotective reaction was less confident at the time, “What on earth are you talking about?!” “Will you still be a type of doctor in the medical field?” “What kind of job will you get?” So again I had to strive harder for my goals regardless of whether or not others’ understood. I knew after observing toddlers trying to problem solve with their still growing vocabulary and motor skills that there was something a lot more important to me than just mitosis and meiosis alone or the citric acid cycle or krebs cycle.

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My parents just wanted to make sure that after all their sacrifice to offer their children more opportunities to reach their dreams, that taking an atypical route would still ensure success. For my parents and fortunately for me, the definition of success included that we were happy, resilient, and able to support ourselves and others. They never barked orders except in loving convincing ways and this goes back and forth in a way that only someone like me could truly discern for others as to what is a literal disciplinary consequence to testing limits, versus a reprimand. The corroboration with one another regarding a need for a consequence usually began with the reference to each other: “Ay! Shuncho?” followed by some metaphorical figure of speech in a Shakespearean level of

an Indian language that was way over my head. For many years all I needed to comprehend was the tone that I was definitely in trouble for something, (that as usual, most likely, was not my fault.).

After three more years of college studies after my sophomore year, I had two undergraduate degrees in a field different than what I had started in. Most people did not expect this as I had taken a temporary part-time hiatus to go home after my funds ran out which precipitated my shift in plans. My Mom was an employee at the University in a Biology laboratory so that was how I afforded to attend college. There was no old money or advice to get from other members of our families because no one else had ever gone through any of the school or health or employment systems in America before our own immediate family. I had learned that it wasn't until changes in immigration policy in approximately 1965 that an influx wave of Asians arrived in the United States, but not too many before then. I had also heard stories from my parents' friends that in the late 60s and early 70s people got so lonely when they first arrived in the U.S. that they would call the phone number to the weather line just to have the sound of a friendly human voice.

Interviewer: so you got through college, and what was next?

Padma Sherni: As soon as I graduated from college, I wanted my own apartment. My parents said "NO WAY Jose." Okay, they didn't really say that last part, but they did say "NA." So, I wrote out a logical reason, in a three page essay, that was actually very sound and rational (given references to my earlier course on logic) as to why I should be allowed to move out and get my own place (all the while cursing why I didn't study harder with flash cards in that logic math class.) I only partly won my debate. I may be an atypical but nicely argumentative Indian-American with a big heart. Interpret my malady however you will. (Smile.)

My parents must have been preparing me for what certain types of love relationship arguing styles are like in response to my announcement that I wanted to move out into my own apartment. They said to me at first seemingly reasonable and rationale, "Okay let's discuss." We gathered at the kitchen table and within one minute they would say, "We have decided this is not a good idea...(pause)...This was a good discussion." And then they would adjourn! This was obviously non democratic oppression and a violation

of my women's rights! (I had learned something about this during my second year of college.)

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So, with female friends who sympathized and empathized I planned my escape. I got a job (this methodology seemed to be the formula that worked best for my life goals) and it broke my heart but I self-reflecting a lot and ultimately decided that I wasn't doing anything wrong. I left. I signed a lease and I called to tell my parents that I had and that we could meet for dinner at home if they wanted to talk more. All chaos broke loose after that. I was smart enough at least to have friends that were boys too at the time if I needed protection either from bad guys or my parents at that point. Plus I still had to find out who "dharu" was apparently. Although I had met a lot of people I still didn't know "dharu" but my friends educated me in the way that good friends would for families like ours who have no prior generation to ask for advice or depend on for support and therefore often act as surrogate family but not literally. I was not all the friendly with dharu at first, as I discovered, this was actually just another word for alcohol and not a real person. Other than that, I cannot tell you how many times people have verified my last name this year and how exactly it is pronounced. Meter fail on the accent comprehension apparently, regarding my name as Padma

Sherni. (My name, by the way evolved out of the word for Lotus and then consequently my temperament at times as I was described to be like a female tigress. Therefore, the name Padma Sherni is what everyone began to refer to me as and I accepted my moniker.)

Interviewer: How did your parents react with all that?

Well for TEN YEARS my parents would not let me forget that I had moved out on my own. Everyone was mad at me when I left. I did not even know what I was looking for other than I wanted everyone (my parents and all of society “brown town and friends” as well as “non-brown town and friends”) to stop demanding of me and telling me what to do and to stop making me feel like I had to meet all their expectations for who they thought I should be. The year or two prior to this I was realizing this and I ran SO hard to find myself I ended up right back where MY PARENTS started (in India) and met a lot of cool people where we discussed matters with a lot important personnel around about the difference between individualistic and collectivist thinking. This included the Prime Minister and Vice President of India at that time in 1999. I also learned that no matter how late you are running, even according to Indian Standard Time, you should never run on the grounds

of important personnel because there are a lot of security people with arms around who are really not there to hug you. I continued with life and work and friends when I returned to the USA and was happy to make new friends and continue progressing with life.

Interviewer: Really?

Padma Sherni: Then there was the horse trainer. I was single in my early twenties and as usual my friends or colleagues would try their hand at matchmaking for me. My co-worker set me up on a blind date. She told me my date was tall, dark, and handsome, of Indian descent, possibly from the West, and therefore maybe from the West Indies, and most likely well off. I already gathered something was off with her understanding of geography but I let it go. She didn't understand what part of India would make me "a hindi" or not. "Padma Sherni, what type of hindi are you?" (She had meant to say Hindu). So she tried to motivate me to meet with this guy who I might have so much in common with being from the west, (the U.S. being considered "the West"). I had my hesitations because I had never been on a blind date before, but I was feeling adventurous. I decided to be tough though. I only agreed to

meet this guy on my turf: the donut and coffee shop where I usually got my cappuccino mocha ice coffees.

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First I noticed he had a beard. I did NOT like facial hair, so I was disappointed. He had a baseball cap. I was not into baseball at that time. (Remember, I am a basketball girl). He was somewhat too opinionated because he already had a preset idea that we were going to have dinner together, whereas I had only agreed to coffee. I had not yet honed my debate skills enough, for lack of opportunity with prior decision making experiences. I was somewhat concerned about being polite, but I really wanted coffee and donuts, plus the cashier behind the counter there was nice. I started talking to the cashier and learned that he was European but of Middle-Eastern descent and he was happy to learn that I was of Indian descent because he loved Bollywood music videos.

The horse-trainer guy seemed so upset at the idea that I did not want to spend more time with him than just coffee, that I would have been okay to have someone else present who was understanding. The cashier looked at me sympathetically. I was still learning about the horse trainer guy and decided I was in fact going to have to have dinner so I agreed to give him a chance and have dinner with him.

Then of course I proceeded to grill politely. I demanded to know where exactly he wanted to go. (I got better at this standard procedure with other people later.) He suggested a restaurant whose name I did not recognize, but I had an idea of the location. I at least knew the road and told him I would go in my own car. He was so frustrated with me. We were still deciding as he got up and started to walk with me outside when I realized he was shorter than me. I was so frustrated with my friend who set up the date in the first place.

Side note: Why do most heterosexual women and men prefer to have the man be taller than the woman? Is that because of traditional gender roles of the expectation of the woman being able to lean on a man and have his support? Personally I was still exploring the concept of the equal.

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Anyways, horse trainer guy wanted to drive even though I had my own car but I was more comfortable with him driving his own car and me driving mine. Plus he had a pick-up truck and I just thought that was impractical for any future family as I thought, way ahead of myself.

Unfortunately, I ended up going with him to the restaurant in his pick-up truck. I had never been in a pickup

truck and figured I should at least know what that kind of vehicle was like. My only other concern was what music station he might select and whether or not we would clash with our preferences. We decided not to listen to the radio and it was awkwardly silent for twelve minutes as we drove to our destination.

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At the restaurant, as soon as he started to tell me what I should eat or not from the menu, I knew immediately the “relationship” was over. I learned more about him though while we waited for food about his life as a horse trainer (and yet his human interaction had no emotional sense which I thought was weird, therefore he probably was not a very good horse trainer because he did not understand how I was feeling, and I deduced he might not be very good with people or animals. I did not like this idea at all. He already had a preset idea of how his date was going to be but he was not in the present moment.) I learned that although he was of Indian descent he was actually from Dubai and he was telling me about horse races. I think he was rich, but I did not care about his financial status. I told him I knew about dog tracks but I did not think they were very compassionate. I was somewhat more curious about Dubai but had no immediate plans of going there, at the time. I got through dinner and he was

driving me back to my car when he suggested that we go check out his apartment, which was more than half an hour away. I realized with a change of environment I was still not going to like this horse trainer because he was not aware of my feelings. He tried to entice me with the idea that we could have something to drink there. Thank goodness I already knew about dharu from my friends. Well, I was not thirsty and I did not like the guy and was still trying to be polite. Also, I did not really drink much so I was not enticed. I was reprimanding myself for not driving my own car as I had wanted to and as I had planned. As we approached a traffic light, the horse trainer guy tried to lean toward me to make a move to kiss me and both he and I were shocked that I was willing to open the car door to jump out of a moving vehicle to avoid this. I think that was when I yelled at him and gave him a lecture and demanded to go back to the donut and coffee shop immediately and enforced the fact that I had no interest in going to his apartment or anywhere else. I think I said thank you for dinner and closed the door to the horse trainer guy. The cashier at the shop smiled sympathetically as he looked at my face to get a read on whether all went well or not on my date. I shook my head disappointed and he shrugged, told me not to worry and offered more coffee,

sympathetically. I thanked him and then I was happy to be back in my own car, my own music, and heading back to my own home with a reminder to myself that in the future I should avoid blind dates.

Interviewer: And yet, you chose to travel via Dubai more recently and had mentioned that you loved the beautiful structures and the music also. You've travelled abroad at different times in different contexts...Was it tough to go back to Boston or did you want to stay where you were?

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Padma Sherni: There was a diversity hurricane that spun through many of our lives during many efforts of relationship starts and ends and I continued to hear the stories of my family and friends and their loves and dreams as well as losses and unexpected unrealized wishes. That was a tough and confusing time for a lot of people especially with everyone moving around so much for work or school so that impacted relationships too. Hearts be gettin' stolen and broken every other day like an indecisive revolving door. Who wouldn't understand drama?

Percussion.

As everyone who has known me well in my life will tell you I was still pining for my Boston crush whether or

not I was aware of this myself. I applied to only two graduate schools for further studies. I really wanted to learn more and I really wanted a good match of an environment for a new experience to understand systems that make people feel better. I was accepted into both schools and decided upon the Boston area.

I had heard by then in my personal exploration of culture and faith that there is an Elephant God of wisdom and obstacle removals as one representation of the One light many lamps. My jaw hit the ground running when I stood in front of the student services building of one of the schools, facing an elephant representation and I was so thankful even though the school was not affiliated in particular with an Elephant God. So, that was one reason for choosing that particular school, or perhaps the school chose me, and I was hopeful of good luck, to earn my way to some knowledge and wisdom.

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Getting to Boston at the time was a metaphor for my life because that was where I felt I would thrive. The move back from Delaware to Massachusetts was during the summer before my graduate coursework had started. My Mom had asked my Dad to drive me to Boston for graduate school. So he did. Literally. He dropped me off at my

friend's place and then left and drove all the way back to Delaware. I love my Dad. He is awesome and a good advisor and offers loads of encouragement. However the transportation role was usually my Mom's department so the instructions were followed quite literally much to both my Mom's and my amazement.

The travel to Massachusetts was actually quite inconvenient for me as someone else had heard we were going and also needed a ride because they had no other means of transport. So, I had to take less of my belongings in order to accommodate this stranger who was the friend of a friend of an "athiyo" or avatar somewhere. I had nothing more than a suitcase of clothes that filled half a trunk and then my desk parts that I still assemble with two pieces left over on the side. I didn't have room for anything else due to this inconvenience and my parents always helping support everyone else and helping me to understand that it was important to help others.

When I got to Boston, I didn't have a car so I walked and took the bus or the T (train/metro/subway) that took 1.5hrs each way even though I wasn't that far from where I was trying to get to. I had never been on public transportation of any kind on my own other than a school

bus because I had only ever gone to public school far away from the main city. I didn't know where anything was on the map and was so overwhelmed with so many changes at once that I cried. My friend's response to this emotional outburst was frustrated exasperation and to yell at me. I would later remind her that she had the privilege of attending private school and always took the T to commute because she lived closer to the city and that although she was also of Indian descent she didn't understand me or how I felt. At least some friends and I escaped to Cape Cod that weekend but then they abandoned me that first weekend for other priorities. This included my friend who lectured me because she is in fact like one of my many surrogate sisters who I can't really live without in spite of my complaints and protests because there are too many others who might understand me even less.

THEN, I had the worst allergic reaction that had ever erupted. (This was all within 1 week of returning to Boston after a number of years.). I called another friend, this time, the Boston crush from my daydream, and said something to the effect of, cue the melody: "...Hello you fool, I love you..." (Roxette, 1991 "Joyride" music lyrics).
- Actually no that's just my stream of consciousness running away without me. Actually what I stated was more

along the lines of "Hi. I'm in Boston. I didn't have time to tell you yet but I moved back and I just started school. I'm having a severe allergic reaction and I don't know where anything or anyone is. Where are you? Please come get me. Knowing that hopefully he would show up. My friend asked, surprised, "You're in Boston? You moved back?! I'm in the middle of class. Wait, this sounds... Serious. Okay. I'll be there." He arrived and my heart felt so much better, plus he still looked really handsome, and then the first thing he says to me after not having seen me in years: "Wow. You look terrible." "Thanks a lot, I'm in the midst of an allergic reaction, remember?" He smiled. He sang to me while we waited for my medicine in the pharmacy parking lot. Even though I knew my allergic reaction would heal in a day or so, I felt a lot better with him nearby. I hope we get to spend more time together in the future.

Later I would go for walks in the neighborhood with another friend and had one foot in Delaware still and another in Boston. In the summer my friend looked at my toes that I had happily painted something sweet and brick red when she announced "That is a fire me (euphemism) red, Padma Sherni." I was so offended and protested. "Well don't be offended. That's what that is," she said matter-of-factly about MY toes. I was definitely upset. My other

friend in Delaware made me feel better. He laughed and joked with me "If you guys keep up with this you'll eventually re-invent the nail polish color wheel charts!" Truer words had not been previously spoken.

Interviewer: Where else have you been? Did you tell anyone about your travels?

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Padma Sherni: After two years of coursework, I went to see the koala bears in person in Australia for real to escape. The cable car had awesome people travelling over Taronga zoo. They shouted out "Hey look at all the humans!" My grandfather, GKM, who lived in India and I would write letters back and forth and send postcards to share the latest reflections of life. He loved that I had chosen to learn by exploring for myself in person other places to help my mind grow. He was a scientist but every morning, he would garden flowers and vegetables and when I would go to India he would wake me up super early in the morning to go for a walk together and talk about life. When he had lost most of his hearing, he still used his hearing aid because he wanted to hear all my love stories to make sure I was living my life freely (unlike what my parents seemed to understand at the time). I remember having to shout out at the top of my lungs the details in the middle of the park

where we had stopped to rest because he didn't hear me the first time. "I HAVE A BOYFRIEND!" Who knows what that looked like to anyone who didn't know me or that this older gentleman was my beloved grandfather. I asked my Dadu ("grandfather") to not to tell my parents yet. He agreed. The next day he reported back to me "But your mother seems to know and like this person." Then, I exclaimed, "Dadu! Did you tell someone something you were not supposed to?!" No. He had asked my mother similar questions and figured it out for himself. Phew. He was really smart. My Dida ("grandmother") Latika was even smarter though. She had been hoping for quite some time that I would eventually learn how to talk with my Boston crush and to learn how to "fish and cook": "Bhetki macher bhaja" and "Eeleesh mach until then". Bhetki mach is a type of fish that has only a few bones whereas Eeleesh mach is a type of fish that has a lot of bones and is difficult to eat. The preparation is usually West Bengali, Indian style, either fried or in light watery curry sauce: "jhol".

Interviewer: So when did just being who you are start to make sense?

I tried to start to make sense of the world at some point before or after basketball camp through my college and graduate school years and beyond in an ongoing effort. I had learned to love both my own diverse cultural background and other diverse cultures because in many ways we are more similar than not. People are so interesting and glamorous in their own way just like anthropologists. I am pretty sure there was a grand misunderstanding somewhere that fed into what I would just like to say was the start of many dating disasters that ran simultaneous and parallel to many matchmaking disasters that coincided with many weddings of friends.

Those who were of West Bengal, Indian descent or Desi (from “desh” from “the land” of India) of any kind will tell you these relationship drama details with embellishment and em-PHA-sis, in sweet way and confident opinionated manner of speaking. Then the drama that has unfolded is retold through historical and modern interpretations at those wedding events or even the annual cultural conference of the eastern peoples in the western hemisphere. At weddings and cultural events, and the dramatic interpretations of these incidents, no typical drama network has anything they could compete with in comparison to our colloquial wannabe Bollywood style of

dramatic descriptions of people and the world around us. You must concede this. At weddings, people will steal shoes, “athiyo” and extended family will bribe, others will barricade, your own friends and family will not let you sleep on your own wedding night! This is customary people, just customary. Some family, will, as is tradition in one side of my family (just let any future suitors be forewarned) find a good hiding place and plot and wait for hours in the room of the bride and groom to jump out at them at some rather inopportune or very hopefully fortuitous moment later that night and tell everyone what they did or never really did see. Ha ha! Last time this happened NO ONE WOULD TELL ME because I always empathize for anyone who does not have informed consent or the privacy policy. Of course my efforts would spoil the plans of good humored mischief, and yes I usually do try to foil those plans with equal enthusiasm and send a warning. "GET A PHONE NUMBER to evacuate! CALL THE family support switchboard - TELL THEM TO CHANGE ROOMS! GO GO GO NOW!" There is no point. They never gave me the correct information to work with to begin with. This may be partly why I am still single or am hoping for more time with my Boston crush. I am not disclosing my fiancé hopes or engagement status plans yet.

As far as anyone else is concerned, I subconsciously foil my own other dates because I value my dreams and my crush.

I'm hoping someone with the collective support of well-wishers, something good happens. I learned what a hook shot was in 8th grade basketball camp but I think it is possible that someone else might hopefully have better technique.

Interviewer: Thank you so much!

Padma Sherni: Thank you...

Interviewer: And Twenty –two Years Later: 2017? What is life like?

I, Padma Sherni, just celebrated my fortieth birthday in Spring of 2017. I was born in 1977 in Massachusetts. Now, what updates can I share with you? For starters, I've learned not to foil my own dates anymore. This came after the realization that my Boston crush had in fact just settled into a friendship with me and a date with someone else. Unfortunately, I went into rebound mode (I'm still a basketball girl, remember?). I then learned the tough lesson of no response from a would-be good catch of

a guy that rightly was not interested in my desperate email with too many run on sentences.

Now for the task of a self-defined make over. I spent the last year being barraged by other people's opinions about what to do with my life as I got closer to completing a Ph.D. Some people gave me unsolicited advice about what to do with my medium length hair multiple times a day: "put it in a bun", "leave it down", "get highlights", "shorten it", and while at the salon: "shorter! Shorter!" until they gave up as I stubbornly kept it the same style: long layers with angles around the face. I thoroughly enjoyed my winter hibernation also. I indulged in whatever I wanted to eat and whenever I wanted to sleep and only occasionally kept up with gym workouts because I just needed to rest after the prior season's workaholic lifestyle. I had signed up for two graduate courses, an internship, a part time evening receptionist job, while working on my dissertation proposal.

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Also during the winter, I restarted guitar lessons for 5 weeks while I waited anxiously for university review and approval of my dissertation proposal. Once that passed, I got busy with my research project almost immediately. While my family travelled for a visit to India, I stayed

home and the kitchen became my second office space for piles and piles of survey paperwork organizing for outreach to approximately 800 people in order to get a hopeful 20% response rate. I'll let you know what happens with the research later.

I talked with a guy for a few weeks, that I met online, during the winter also. And you guessed it: foiled plans for meeting in the spring. He randomly texted me by mistake when he got a new phone number. After a few civil and friendly explanations we said our goodbye's again. This happened a second time with a different guy in the spring and now my summer is totally free.

It's just as well. I have to finish my Ph.D. and as soon as I do, move out of my parents' house. I know, I know, that's a deal breaker for most people to date someone still in graduate school and especially while living at home, but it was a welcome time to study while avoiding a serious relationship.

The second major change is that with a little bit of salary, I've learned to enjoy shopping and a nail polish collection. This began when I missed my flight shopping at an airport cart in Florida. With nothing else to do for fourteen more hours, I spent money at a different cart on a

\$10 t-shirt and \$17 nail polish and promptly went to a hotel which was an additional expense I hadn't planned for.

Anyways, with all of these lessons learned, I'm approaching summer with a steadfast goal to keep my priorities on track: Get in shape, make progress on the PhD, get a full time job, and move out. I've been applying to jobs in both local places and further, in cities like Philadelphia and New York. I hope something works out soon.

In the meantime, I have started a bookclub, and when people actually sign up, I have the opportunity to try different restaurants and cafes while meeting new people who want to discuss a good read over a meal.

I still have wavy black hair and brown eyes. After the Florida mishap and the past several years, I now aspire to add balance to an economical fashion sense. With a better budget from my job given my educational expenses and business ventures. I've learned to be practical even though in actuality I have expensive taste. After experience working for difference research organizations, I have started my own company, so I can plan to be more available to a future growing family and various interdependent relationships. Along the way, I often seek

out mentorship from others to continue life learning and sometimes give advice to others who request my counsel as well.

When I write more again, stories of life experiences and relationships may be included in future vignettes of people to describe accomplishments of people of multicultural backgrounds as well as the obstacles they had to overcome in order to get to where, they are today. I am still understanding the wide range of single life, dating and marriage plans that people have, children, and career endeavors. Some people are still exploring, while others have had love marriages, semi-arranged marriages, and arranged marriages...

So although in my younger years I prioritized finding the right relationship I've learned that I needed to respect my own set of activities and priorities first and gradually the right relationship then becomes part of my life as well. That's where I stand today. My boston crush, is still one of my really good friends that I have shared a lot of fun experiences with. This is a story itself, because we helped each other find other love interests unexpectedly...

For now, however, I should go. My phone is ringing with the indication of a new text message and I am

looking forward to talking with a new guy...However, I find that I am happiest simply being myself and living my life freely. Hope all of you are well and finding what makes you happy with respect to others as well. I also hope you continue to build towards meeting your dreams and aspirations. I know that I am.

Interviewer: Thank you so much!...

Next day, the Phone rings...

Padma Sherni answers the phone:

Cooper: Hi, what are you up to?

Padma Sherni: Oh, it's just you. I thought it was going to be a guy and instead it's just one of my female friends.

Cooper: laughter. Are you free? Let's go to the coffee shop. No horse trainers or anything.

Padma Sherni: laughter. Actually, I'll make coffee or tea here instead. Just come over.

Cooper: Okay.

Padma Sherni: I need a baked good. Let's go to the coffee shop from here.

Cooper: Alright. Let's go.

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At the coffee shop of Padma Sherni:

Padma Sherni: I was just thinking how awesome it would be if I was ever on a date with an international actor!

Cooper: Why would you think that you would be on a date with an international actor?

Padma Sherni: What sort of question is that?

Cooper: okay okay – like who?

Padma Sherni: Like...Shriyadita C. London

Friend: roaring laughter – you're never going to get a date with Shriyadita C. London.

Padma Sherni: I'm just saying...anything can happen if you dream of it...

Cooper: laughing... okay okay... where would you go?

Padma Sherni: well...

Cooper: oh look!

Both see international actor getting coffee at the counter

Padma Sherni: wow...

Cooper: ask him out...right now.

Padma Sherni: are you crazy? Okay.

Cooper: roaring laughter

Padma Sherni: I'll pretend we're friends that haven't seen each other for a long time... or I'll simply run into him and

we'll drop our things and then our eyes will meet and we'll gaze romantically at each other...

Cooper: Don't make him spill his coffee and you'd better hurry up because he's leaving...

Padma Sherni: I can't, I'm not ready... I have to prepare!

Cooper: he just left. oh! He forgot his book!

Padma Sherni: runs to pick it up.

Cooper: go go go!

Padma Sherni: Excuse me! You forgot your book! And here's my business card if you ever forget anything else -

Shriyadita C. London: laughs

Padma Sherni: actually I'm an aspiring writer...maybe if you get a chance to read my stuff that would be awesome.

Hope you have a nice day.

Shriyadita C. London: thank you and smiles...and leaves

Padma Sherni to Friend: he's really nice

Cooper: laughter. Well, I have to go now also but that was fun.

Padma Sherni: Okay, talk with you later.

Padma Sherni goes home and her phone rings...

Journal Entry:

Coffee Toffee Table Talk: What Do You Think ?

1. Do magnets work in space? With current technology, can you track an object that goes into a black hole? Can we safely send garbage out to the black holes in space or to the sun without potentially causing a second Big Bang?

2. Who gets to choose the music or radio station in the car – the driver or the passenger? What if the passenger chooses music that is distracting to the driver? What if the passenger is made to feel devalued in an imbalance of power because they cannot control the driving or the music? How much time is it reasonable to experience this?

3. How do women in India drive a bicycle wearing a sari? That amazes me. How do women in America drive a bicycle wearing only a bikini? That also amazes me. Either way, both women should wear helmets.

5. When and why did women start dieting? When and why did women start exercising? When and why did women stop wearing corsets and when did women start wearing modern tighter outfit gear?

6. Why do people go on a cruise to swim in a pool on a boat while they are in the middle of the ocean? That is true,

but when did people expend so much energy getting off the boat, only to reconsider this as a luxury?

PART II

Raja Tharasa and the Band

2nd Edition

By Piale Roy

Raja Tharasa and his friends and love interest are a fun, talented and educated, group of people. These fictional vignettes are a humorous look at some of their life events getting to know each other.

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Raja Tharasa & The Band written by Piale Roy,
Edited 11/17/17

A Fictional Story

Chapter One:

Nancy: So, our “Best Star”, Raja Tharasa, How was your performance at the theater last weekend? And your band performances?

Raja Tharasa: Sold out, fortunately. We did a version of “Romeo & Juliet” where instead of both dying at the end they date privately without family and friend intrusion and live happily ever after. The costumes and set design were done really well. A talent recruiter was in the audience and offered a contract for work if I’m willing to move from Boston to New York.

Chom-Chom: That’s fantastic. I want to visit you backstage at least once to be done up by the makeup artists for fun. Are you taking the talent recruiter up on the offer?

Raja Tharasa: I am. And I hope you'll visit me *takes Chom-Chom's hand and recites or sings a few lines from a song from the play...*

Chom-Chom: *laughs*

Norendar: I don't appreciate you holding my girlfriend's hand.

Nancy and Sundar : laughing nervously.

Raja Tharasa: Take it easy, man.

Norendar: You're always singing to people and now you're holding her hand. That's enough.

Chom-Chom: laughs. I've known him almost my whole life don't worry.

Raja Tharasa: No problem.

Nancy: Excuse me, I think we should just transition to dessert. Sundar will you please help me get the cake?

Sundar: Sure. *Starts laughing.*

Raja Tharasa: I'll help also
Raja Tharasa also excuses himself with Nancy and Sundar to get the cake.

Norendar to Chom-Chom: Why did you have to hold his hand?

Chom-Chom: Please stop overreacting. He's my friend and we're just having fun.

Raja Tharasa turns to Sundar: What's with that guy? Is she even happy with him?

Sundar: laughing. Don't worry. He's a science guy, very serious. Not sure how long this one will last.

1 year later.

*Chom-Chom is single again. She wears a nice dress and is looking forward to meeting friends, Chom-Chom, and ("extras") in Boston. They play Caramol at an apartment before heading out to billiards and dancing at **a club (or restaurant)** with drinks to celebrate her 30th birthday.*

5 years later.

She is spending some time thinking while walking alongside a park bench. Her job has run out of funding and she is leaving Massachusetts to work and study more in Delaware after dating sporadically and not finding the right guy where she is. In 2012 she is 35 years old and attended a lovely wedding of her Chinese-American friend Lisette to her Greek-American boyfriend George. In 2013, Chom-Chom is 36 years old and has attended many more events

of friends. She is beginning to wonder if she'll ever meet the right guy and upon trying online dating discovers that someone has already placed a profile for her. Her friends suggest to go out to a comedy night and Chom-Chom agrees... her friend Dawn McCallister and Dawn's husband suggest to go to one at a university event in Delaware when she learns of a comedian visiting town the following weekend.

During the week: Dawn McCallister and Chom-Chom meet at a local Delaware park to go for a walk. Dawn is already waiting when Chom-Chom arrives.

People playing basketball...

Chom-Chom talking with her friend: who are they?

Dawn McCallister: just local guys from the office building there. They have been playing weekly for the past month and I noticed them and thought the eye candy was worth inviting you over to the park for. Smiles.

Chom-Chom: Thank you. Smiles

Dawn McCallister: So I heard that one of them is a detective and maybe given your unknown ad poster situation, maybe you could talk to him...?

Chom-Chom: That's a great idea... I'll write to him.

Dawn McCallister: just go introduce yourself when they take a break! He's right there.

Chom-Chom: okay... hesitating...

Dawn McCallister: I'll go with you!

Chom-Chom: Okay...

Dawn McCallister: Excuse me! My friend here saw you and wanted to be introduced if you have a few minutes?

Detective Vikram: smiles, sure...

Dawn-McCallister: This is my friend Chom-Chom. Someone has posted an ad in the paper for marriage and she has started to receive several emails from suitors.

Detective Vikram: so, what's the problem?

Chom-Chom: I don't know who posted the ad!

Detective Vikram: Let me read the ad....Slender 40 something female... (stops) You're not slender

Chom-Chom: jaw drops – well you're observant.

Dawn McCallister: to Chom-Chom let's go

Detective Vikram: Sorry, I meant to say you're more built. Smiles.

Chom-Chom: what does that mean?

Detective Vikram: sorry, you're okay. Smiles

Detective Vikram: (continues reading...) "Academic. Pleasant personality. Requires a professional male to be her husband. Preferably Tall and Serious Going Personality"

Chom-Chom: Well?

Detective: laughs. How many suitors do you have?

Chom-Chom: You can't be serious.

Detective Vikram: Okay, are you single?

Chom-Chom: Sort of. I'm in between relationships.

Detective Vikram: laughs

Chom-Chom: I have a brilliant idea! YOU should interview the suitors.

Detective Vikram: laughs. Are you seriously contemplating paying me to do this?

Chom-Chom: yes.

Detective Vikram: Sends a text message. Okay, I'll need an assistant. I think you should help me interview them also. (Smiles)

Chom-Chom: yes! I'll pretend I'm the sister or friend of the female they would like to meet!

Detective: laughs. Why don't you just date them or request the agency to take the ad down and post a real ad for yourself. Wait - I just got a text message from the ad agency – the request is legitimate and came from your parents. Laughs.

Chom-Chom: no way...

Detective Vikram: yes way...

Chom-Chom: well then, I suppose I should have guessed as much. I'm wary about dating total strangers though.

Detective Vikram: It's the new wave online dating and newspaper ads. Oh wait. Another text message. Laughs. Your parents just invited me over for dinner. Apparently they knew someone's uncle who has a son interning at the newspaper agency who found out from his friend's sister

that an inquiry was made about the origin of the ad posting and your parents want to make sure there's no trouble.
laughs

Chom-Chom: jaw drops. Typical Indian-American family. Ummm... I have a brilliant idea! I'll bring you over as my new boyfriend and tell them I called the ad agency to call off the detective. And YOU can convince them not to post any ads for me anymore. Problem solved.

Dawn McCallister: laughing. Hooray.

During the week, Chom-Chom explores more information about the comedy show they have planned to go to. She thinks the comedian looks just like Detective Vikram but thinks it's too much of a coincidence. She tells Dawn McCallister. Dawn laughs and says well, we're going to the comedy show regardless of whether or not the Detective shows up at your house for dinner. Then you can find out for sure who the guy is.

The weekend arrives and although Chom-Chom is really looking forward to the event she is not feeling well, has a ton of unfinished work and has to cancel going to the show... she begs to reschedule for the winter holiday show instead. Her parents will conveniently be away and her work will be complete and she will have more time to sort through this mystery.

Dawn McCallister: okay, but we're making these plans to go eventually...

Then, Raja Tharasa calls Chom-Chom one day from New York and have a conversation about how busy life has gotten. They reminisce about being away from Boston area and decide to get some of their friends together in New York and attend a gallery art show and music performance.

Chapter Two

Friends (Nancy and Sundar, Bhim and sister Misty) from Boston get in *the car* and start singing along to bollywood music, including Bengali Indian traditional folk music to visit Raja Tharasa in New York and then also ask Chom-Chom to visit New York from Delaware.

Chapter Three:

The friends go to a local gallery where some items are on display...before a music show starts...

Raja Tharasa: Have you seen the pottery exhibit?

Chom-Chom: yes! I submitted a piece there.

Raja Tharasa: Really? Which one? Since when do you do pottery?

They walk over to the pottery exhibit...

Chom-Chom: This one.

Raja Tharasa: wow. What *is* that?

Chom-Chom: It's pottery.

Raja Tharasa: No, really.

Chom-Chom: Okay, is it that obvious? I couldn't decide between an ashtray and a vase, so it's a combination

Raja Tharasa: That is... (laughs) fantastic. *Sees Songeeta...* Wow, who is that?

Chom-Chom: I think that's the singer. *A little bit disappointed that Raja Tharasa has noticed the singer.*

An announcement is made that Songeeta will start performing. The music starts. Raja Tharasa wants to get to know the singer. Others in the audience include Jeff and Misty...

Jeff: Hi, I'm Jeff are you by any chance, going to the event at the museum event next weekend?

Misty: hi I'm Misty...I'm actually trying to get out of class to go to a multicultural fusion dance show which includes hip hop, bhangra, in NYC but I'm not even sure if I'm allowed to go, even though I'm over 21 and all.

Jeff: Oh...*disappointed and confused*. Why wouldn't you be allowed to go?

Misty: My older sister practically had to be engaged in order to get to last year's event because it is out of state. The bus and train are cheap. I'm just using the excuse that I'm staying at my cousin's place and have to take a standardized test the next morning. Not trying to elope to get married or something, just trying to have some fun.

Jeff: Well, I have a car and I'm allowed to go. Smiles...

Misty: That's because *you're* a guy.

Jeff: We should go. Who are your cousins? Maybe I know them?

Misty: No offense, but why on earth would you know my cousins?

Jeff: Even though, I'm White, I have some Indian family members, actually, for your information.

If your parents are hesitant about letting you go, what are they concerned about?

Misty: Too much alcohol at the parties and getting distracted from school with boys.

Jeff: Laughs. I think that's typical for most parents.

Misty: I don't even drink. I want to be a DJ or a media journalist when I "grow up" and that is not as routine as a science job like they have which they would say is more "reliable". But although I'm Asian I'm not good in math.

Jeff: That's because you don't go to class from what you told me earlier.

Misty: laughs. Okay, just trying to defy stereotypes. Recently, I was the only Indian in the math class and the teaching assistant was a really smart 16 year old prodigy from India. He kept choosing me to answer the questions because he assumed I would know the answers, being Indian-American and all. At least, that is what I think happened.

Jeff: Maybe he liked you.

Misty: That's totally inappropriate.

Jeff: Okay maybe it's what you said.

Misty: Well...let me know if you want to go.

Jeff: I have cousins also there that might want to go, so maybe I'll meet up with you there.

Misty: Sounds like a plan. Smiles. Let me ask some friends. That sounds fun and really nice. I'm from the Boston area by the way.

Jeff: Really, what a coincidence, so am I!

Singer performs some songs... Raja Tharasa talks to the singer after the show.

Raja Tharasa: Hi, great show.

Singer: thank you!

Raja Tharasa: I'd love to collaborate with you on some music. I have a band also.

Singer: interesting. Let's exchange contact info then.

They exchange contact information and Raja Tharasa is happy.

Valerie Valeeni, a friend of Raja Tharasa also is at the show: she invites him to her cooking class the next day.

Valerie Valeeni: hi, I thought that was you. Macking on the singer I see.

Raja Tharasa: laughs, just thought I'd try to collaborate on some music with her if possible.

Valerie Valeeni: sure, sure, whatever – hope it all works out. I am running a cooking class tomorrow- maybe you should stop by and invite her also. And I have some paperwork from one of our projects to give to you also.

Raja Tharasa: okay I'll try...

Later on, Raja Tharasa calls the singer: It was great to meet you and attend your show. I wanted to know if you'd like to spend the afternoon together? My friend asked me to stop by her cooking class to pick up something, but then we can get coffee/tea, and perhaps check out a music studio together if you're interested?

Singer: Sounds good.

Chom-Chom has been talking with Jeff and Misty and friends say goodbye temporarily and Chom-Chom explains she has to head back to Delaware.

Chapter Five

In a kitchen the next day...

Valerie Valeeni, the Instructor: We are making an individual tandoori chicken pizza. The instructions are on your tables and I will guide you throughout the process if you need help. Course evaluations will be passed out at the end so please don't leave right away.

Walking over to Raja Tharasa, Valerie Valeeni: So I'm trying to cook more instead of ordering from the diner all the time. I have to maintain my figure but you all can motivate yourselves however you want for the love of good nutritious food.

Raja Tharasa: So what have you been up to since I last saw you?

Valerie Valeeni: more of the usual, fashion shows, events, and Sunday coffee with friends at the diner
I should introduce you to some people...The cooking is just a hobby. Okay, I need to get back to the class.

Raja Tharasa: Sure thing

Valerie Valeeni: I also happen to have talked with Songeeta, the singer. I think you two should meet again and get to know each other.

Raja Tharasa: Smiles. Interesting. Laughs. Okay, I'm interested. And in fact I brought her with me. She's over there by the ad board.

Valerie Valeeni: do you want to join me for the class?

Raja Tharasa: we'll stay for awhile...but go ahead with your class and if we leave early I'll catch up with you later...

Valerie Valeeni: okay...

Valerie Valeeni, Instructor: says dramatically and

humorously tossing ingredients around...after marinating the chicken in yogurt and tandoori spices, cook that on the stove for 30 minutes. Then sprinkle some cornmeal on the pizza stone or flat pan, on a premade naan bread or flat bread, use some garden vegetable pasta sauce on the dough, sprinkle mozzarella cheese or any shredded cheese blend you like. Add the chicken pieces. Sautee some zucchini and squash on the side in some butter, salt, and pepper.

Sejal and Sarbajit: are attending the class. mumbles to herself: You'd think she was an expert or something. tossing ingredients and trying to tell other attendees how to make their pizza (humorously). then tries to be like the instructor when she is talking with Sarbajit and accidentally tosses her food onto others' plates and then fixes the situation humorously when others have gone to get more ingredients at the main counter.

Sheel and Somandra are also attending the class: Sheel is trying to avoid Detective Vikram and who he saw at the park. Sheel wants to act in a stage performance with Raja Tharasa and his band but got in trouble for hounding him too many times. He is so happy to see Raja Tharasa at the cooking class but maintains his distance.

Singer: So how do you know Valerie?

Raja Tharasa: Valerie Valeeni works as an international actress on projects including me.

Singer: I thought she looked familiar. Anyways, let's go to the studio and see what music we can come up with...

Chapter Six:

Chom-Chom goes to get manicures and henna and gets advice from Shukru. She meets with friends there.

Pinky Patel: applying henna to a customer's hands...

Pinky Patel: check out the Diwali celebration when you get a chance

Chom-Chom: sounds good...

Chom-Chom: I feel like I need music and fun events in my life again. I'm busy studying but there are guys I want to talk with!

Pinky Patel: You've been spending a lot of time in grad school, although I heard what happened with the online dating ad posting – that's pretty funny...

Shukru: laughs. How was your visit to New York?, she asks Chom-Chom

Chom-Chom: Good. I was talking with a guitarist Bhanu and I think a singer named Songeeta is interested in Raja Tharasa. However, Raja Tharasa is busy with work and travels sometimes as an international diplomat. When he is back in the USA he is busy as an international actor who also works on projects in New York, and of course elsewhere. I am happy for him but I miss spending time with him sometimes for some reason. I wonder what is going to happen with him and Songeeta.

Projapatty: Chom-Chom, You seem interested in different guys. Maybe you need to fill your time with the things that you like to do more often, especially outside of relationship matters because you never know how things are going to turn out.

Chom-Chom: I'm not too worried. I'm just in transition and am looking for jobs so my priority has been about that. Raja Tharasa is someone I care about with a lot of affection. I'm genuinely happy for him when things are going well for him. I just want to spend some time in a different environment or with him sometimes.

Pinky Patel: I think you're just tired of studying all the time after having gone to a few fun events. Get your work done, then have fun and I agree, don't worry.

Shukru: What do you think about that guy Balraj Balreddy? He's a business man in NYC that sometimes does some comedy presentations. I think he's dating a few people.

Pinky Patel: I know him! Fun person to spend time with.

Chom-Chom: he sounds interesting.

Projapatty: An art or comedy show sounds like something fun to attend. Shukru, what do you think? What have you been up to lately?

Shukru: I started guitar lessons

Chom-Chom: That's so great! I can only play four chords. Will you play something?

Shukru: Okay, you two can sing. (guitar playing...and singing)

Phone call from Sabriya

Sabriya: hi Chom-Chom- where are you?

Chom-Chom: Hi Sabriya. I'm spending time with Shukru and Pujoli...

Sabriya: I'm with Deepthi headed to a yoga class. We're down the street and are stopping by before then...I'm

exhausted from my work week as a doctor at the new location so I'm trying to get rejuvenated with some good energy. That's Deepthi's suggestion because she has been taking some ayurvedic medicine classes also.

Chom-Chom: interesting! okay sounds good, see you soon. Sabriya and Deepthi are visiting.

Projapatty and Shukru: happy with the news. Great! Guitar and singing continues when Sabriya arrives.

Sabriya: hi everyone, so we're back from organizing a mobile medical van visit to older adult apartment housing units for health screenings and community based support for chronic health issues.

Deepthi: We had speakers and partnered with local organizations, we got sponsors and the event turned out really well.

Projapatty: that's a great idea!

Sabriya: What are you all up to?

Shukru: The usual, talking about work, guys, etc.

Sabriya: Well, I think we shouldn't worry too much. We all work so hard. Let's just enjoy the music.

Pujoli: I agree. Let's just have some music now.

Sings another song.

Diwali event announcement is read by **Deepthi** at the store: this looks interesting,

does anyone want to go?

"Sure, sounds fun" says **Pinky Patel, Shukru, Chom-Chom, Projapatty and Sabriya...**

Chapter Seven:

Diwali celebration dance event the next weekend...at any

club or restaurant or stage. Traditional Indian Folk dance is mixed with Indian modern dances. Several people are in attendance.

Chapter Eight

Raja Tharasa telling his guy friends DJ Ajay and Puneet, *that he heard several people are interested in Chom-Chom while he was spending time with Songeeta.*

Guitarist Bhanu: So, I play on this basketball team weekly and I heard she's been talking with a detective to figure out who posted a marital ad for her. It turned out to be a friend or family member.

DJ Ajay: Mystery resolved. Hooray.

Puneet: That's hilarious and typical for Indian or Indian-American women and men to go through...

Chapter Nine:

After Raja Tharasa leaves...Gossiping continues...

DJ Ajay: Speaking of Raja Tharasa, he has been away from friends and family for awhile due to a hectic work schedule. He met another actress colleague during his travels and that got him thinking about where he wants to live and work in the next year few years. They filmed a movie in which they look like they are married.

Puneet: I agree his travel schedule has been busy. I hope he stays around but I understand he may have other priorities also. Work wise I told him a girl named Sejal has also been in town after she lived in a few places and wants to know if she can work on the musical and has auditioned. I have said: “not at this time” however now we are aware she is in town if needed. She is busy working on an a cappella medley anyways for a Diwali program with her friend Dil Hoshan.

DJ Ajay: oh okay. Meanwhile, Chom-Chom’s graduate studies progressed to a research proposal for her PhD, so she has spent more time in Delaware than in New York or Boston lately. Raja Tharasa has been planning a proposal for someone because he is starting to get ready to settle down. The proposal is to be a song presentation...He’s still trying to figure out who to live with also. He practiced a proposal scene for an art project with Songeeta when an engagement ring got stuck temporarily on her. Now they are living together.

Puneet: *Laughs.* Oh no ! What now?

DJ Ajay: after that mishap, Songeeta and Raja Tharasa started to live together, date and even sometimes work together which is fine because Chom-Chom who seemed interested is primarily just a good friend. They are both okay with this decision for now, given her graduate school priorities and his schedule. She still visits him sometimes when possible but is waiting to get to know Songeeta better. Raja Tharasa and his Band and art projects are quite

popular and so are Songeeta's projects. They are amicable with Chom-Chom who is busy with life and I heard she is working on her own art projects like a play called "Bijoux Chandon"...which is to commemorate her relationship to Raja Tharasa since their childhood.

Puneet: Sounds good! I think he cares for Chom-Chom tremendously but they have more of an affectionate relationship of friendship anyways. I think he has romantic interest in Songeeta.

Chapter Ten

Chom-Chom and friends attend a comedy show and discover with Dawn McCallister that Balraj Balreddy the comedian is in fact Detective Vikram. He invites them to get tea/coffee...and they are at the tea shop for awhile.

Chapter Eleven

Setting: walkway or aisle outside the tea shop

Boishak: Hi Raina

Raina: Hi Boishak

Boishak: I bought you your favorite.

Raina: and what would that be?

Boishak: a sweet, Gajorer halua obviously.

Raina: thank you. And Samosas?

Boishak: Samosas also. Can we talk about music and singing practice for band tryouts? I need someone to replace me for some songs because my photography hobby is starting to get busy. I have to take pictures for a fashion show while simultaneously my band is supposed to be playing. Can you help me out?

Raina: Sure, sounds fun. I don't have much more than amateur singing experience but, I'll try if you can you coach me.

Boishak. I have time to coach you but I have to develop my photos this afternoon at my studio. Why don't you stop by?

Raina: Okay, but I have to write an algorithm for social justice in the world, so I won't be free until Friday.

Boishak: That's fine. I have a photography session until 3pm and then I want to bring my portfolio to the tea shop to see if they will feature some of the photos to sell.

Raina: I can complete my research before then and meet you there. We can walk over to a studio for music practice afterwards.

Chapter Twelve. Setting: the tea shop.

Surya: excuse me, may I have a chocolate chip walnut cookie

Server 2 (Dharoon): Hi, I'm Dharoon. Aren't you Surya, the restaurant and art reviewer?

Surya: yes, I am. How are you?

Server 2 (Dharoon): nervous now and excited. Would you like to try a coconut raspberry cream macaroon? Or Butterscotch oatmeal cookie along with the chocolate chip walnut cookie?

Surya: that all sounds very interesting. Yes.

Surya: may I also have one banana walnut bread and red velvet cupcake please

Server 2 (Dharoon): surprised, Sure, and anything more to drink?

Surya: yes please, one cup of masala chai and one cup of earl grey. He starts jotting down some notes:

Chocolate Chip Cookie: Chocolatey Decadence with unexpected every kind of pinache with a dash and a verve of some delicate kind of sweet nothing other than the best of the world sweet and saltiness that keep competing for balance in my mouth.

Coconut Raspberry Cream Macaroon: Delicious. Makes me want to swim in jam and coconut flakes. On a cruise ship.

Butterscotch Oatmeal Cookie: Makes me want to hopscotch to funky town with candycorn

Banana Walnut Bread: Typical.

And Red Velvet Cupcake: super duper

Server 2 (Dharoon) to Server 1 (Shondheybala): We have a restaurant or café critique occurring. This is exciting. Maybe we'll get an article in the paper.

Another customer, Chandra walks in with a sketch pad, camera, and a fashion magazine

Surya: (reading a newspaper or magazine)

Server 1 (Shondheybala): Hi, I'm Shondheybala, what can I get for you?

Chandra: (to the server at the table as she takes out her sketch book) Hi Shondheybala, May I have one order of darjeeling tea please and what cd are you playing today?

Surya: (looks up)

Server 1 (Shondheybala): yes, one tea coming right up, for? What name can I put on the order?

Chandra: Chandra. Thank you.

Server 1 (Shondheybala): the CD is a recording from my band Green Sugar. title track "Sailboats". The band includes my friends Songeeta, Boishak and a new singer: Raina.

Server 1 (Shondheybala): We started writing new music just last week for that track.

Chandra: I like the percussion and wind chimes

Server 1 (Shondheybala): thank you. What are you working on?

Chandra: new designs for a fashion show. We'll be here tomorrow night. A music band will perform while a few people walk the aisle in fashionable outfits. There will also be a dance scene with folk outfits for garba or dandia-raas if there is space. I'm thinking of asking Pinky Patel and some her friends to do those dances.

Then there will be a classical dress and performance by a Bharatnatyam dancer as well.

Server 1 (Shondheybala): Cool. I heard that we were singing for the fashion show and that the actress Valerie Valeeni and others including some guys Puneet, and Ajay are going to be in the show.

Chandra: Yes! I'm looking forward to the collaboration. I wanted to stop by this venue and check it out and enjoy the café goods. Thanks for the tea and will catch up with you more later. goes to a table with her tea and starts sketching

Server 1 (Shondheybala): Yes of course. Talk to you later!

Lyrics playing in the background with music (music needed) for "Sailboats" by Green Sugar (The Band)

Blue waves ebb and flow

Not sure when I'll get to go

Be with a true love you know

*That is the way of chasing sails
Maybe speed boats miss the romance tales
Distant shores, know no more
About what was better than before
Perhaps without much more thought
Letting go of what love was not
Is a better way than to pass the day
When blue waves ebb and flow
Getting us to where we need to go
Salty fragrance makes the seagulls dance
Course planning directors take a chance
Getting closer to horizons they advance
Among waters and sails then blue becomes green
then drawing curtains changing scene
When blue waves ebb and flow
Reaching the place we were intended to go*

Chapter 13: Art studio

Boishak and Raina see Raja Tharasa and Songeeta and wave hello. Raja Tharasa and Songeeta wave to them also.

Boishak (to Raina): Okay, let's practice scales

Raina: (sings a few notes off scale)

Boishak: Let's try that again

Raina: (sings a few notes correctly and improved)

Boishak: Better! (but worried)

Raina: I think I'm just stressed from my paper due date

Boishak: what are you writing about?

Raina: I have an opinion paper that the economy should be thought of as fluid and dynamic instead of static and concrete, so that people more often consider sustainable use of resources across time for basic human needs.

Boishak: Any particular resource?

Raina: One idea is to have more access to clean water via irrigation systems from the ocean to dry lands or from the mountain tops, and piping to wells with equalizing pressure gauges to have better control over when access can be achieved and possibly used for bottling and selling water. Perhaps more apple plantations can be used for juice factories to be bottled and sold elsewhere also. There could be a collaboration for those who make bottles from recycled plastics and sold jointly with the providers of water or juice.

Chapter 14: Still at the Music Studio

Boishak: That sound really interesting. Cool. Okay, let's try another scale – oh hey, Raja Tharasa with Songeeta are walking over to us. Songeeta is in our band! Let's collaborate.

Raina: oh, that's fortuitous!

Boishak: try to sing the scale again

Raina: (improved)

Boishak: great.

Songeeta: Hi guys, what are you working on?

Boishak: Please meet Raina, she's the singer I mentioned would be joining our band. She is spending some time away from graduate studies to help us for the upcoming fashion show performance!

Songeeta: great! Good to meet you. What are you studying?

Raina: A hodge podge of social issues from clean water supplies to a paper including the need for early education and teacher training to improve the quality of supports for young minds.

Raja Tharasa: interesting. You should meet my friend Chom Chom. She's studying public health and education policy issues also. She was planning to attend the fashion show we are performing for, but I think fashion show organizer Chandra has asked her to be the speaker or host of the show.

Songeeta: Great idea. And People always talk about the fact that teachers aren't paid enough

Raina: True. And sure, I'd love to meet your friend. The teacher training programs can lead to more qualified teachers with higher degrees that can then demand a better standard for salary and pay. That leads to individuals who will recognize and know standards for teaching materials, educational toys, and curriculum that fosters healthy and happy infants and toddlers ready for other areas of their life.

Boishak: That is really important. Do they have a music program at your center?

Raina: They had a music teacher but that program needs to be brought back. The existing staff still sing songs together with the children: Something to think about for sure.

Songeeta: I'd love to work on a music program for kids in the schools. Maybe the members of our band can work on something

Boishak: That's an excellent idea but for now, let's show you what we've been working on.

Raina: I realize my voice was kind of rough at the start (unsure)

Boishak: That's Okay. You just started and I'll give you the music sheets to practice with.

Songeeta: You'll be fine with some encouragement and Raja Tharasa has agreed to be our keyboard player and newest member of our band.

Boishak: Hooray: That makes us a group with lead singer: Songeeta, backup singer: Raina instead of myself, keyboard player Raja Tharasa, Guitarist Bhanu...and our usual drummer.

Chapter 15: Setting: the tea shop

Surya to Chandra: What are you sketching? Those designs look amazing.

Chandra: Oh, thank you. I'm just adding a few color mixes and color contrast matches for the fashion show outfits.

Surya: Is that by any chance for next week's show?

Chandra: yes, I should have had this done by now, but just working out some perfectionist perspectives. Where did you hear about the show?

Surya: In the paper here that I write restaurant critiques for. I am also going because I am critiquing some aspects of the fashion show event. I am also waiting for the photography exhibit so I can critique that. I am a critical person for many events this week.

Chandra: ha ha ha. (laughing) I got that.

Surya: very serious. Those are good designs.

Chandra: Thank you. You'll have to wait for the rest. This is just from a poster we had for some advertising.

Surya: And last minute perfectionist perspectives?

Chandra: laughing thank you for understanding. The photographer is Boishak, one of the servers here and you may have seen other members of the band performing for the show at this tea shop also.

Surya: Very interesting! I'd like to write a review if that's okay to attend?

Chandra: Yes, of course! The more the merrier.

There's a fashion show here in the evening that we are playing music for so we're happy that you're joining us.

Chapter 16:

Chom-Chom: and now the multicultural fashion show. Proceeds will support children's welfare...

(Intended to be colorful festive dance sequence of a few minutes...)

PART III

Chom Chom/Padma Sherni: well that was fantastic

Raja Tharasa: what was?

Padma Sherni: the sandwich, do you want one?

Raja Tharasa: oh, no thanks, how was the show, the event you went to?

Padma Sherni: really good

Raja Tharasa: and?

Padma Sherni: don't worry, I like a guy, however we need to rehearse the Bijoux chandon storyline now that you have finally realized, only I can glamourously play the part.

Raja Tharasa: sighs, alright, then?

Padma Sherni: I propose that you that you accept my proposal to do another holiday dance party. We'll feature my photo with you and even though it's like from 1995, maybe no one will know the difference. We'll explain it's really our prop from the event until we can re-enact it.

Raja Tharasa: who are we going to be?

Padma Sherni: Raja Tharasa and Padma Sherni

Raja Tharasa: why do you have to say you're Padma Sherni

Padma Sherni: because I'm glamorous and fiesty and was then as well. okay?

Raja Tharasa: Okay.

Padma Sherni: thank you for your cooperation. This

resolves that fact that I've been on a date with an international actor as you were then and are now.

Raja Tharasa: Alrighty...

Padma Sherni: if we have to make a soap opera we'll do a dance and music compilation show and I'll be the real Bijoux Chandon and obviously utilize whatever make up I need to get through the ordeal, and you will be referred to as Shriyadita C. London, who has someone else trying to stand in for him when he has to leave to get a coffee or whatever...Sound good? Alright... here we go... The public event celebrated.... in 1995 however I'll try to fit into a white dress again or any type of gown...

Raja Tharasa: In real life will you please wear the Indian style outfit that I thought you looked nice in?

Padma Sherni: a compliment for moi? thank you.

Raja Tharasa: Just in case anyone asks any questions...

Padma Sherni: we're pretend dating...

Raja Tharasa: maybe we should make this more authentic...and holds Padma Sherni's hand,

Padma Sherni: jaw drops

Raja Tharasa: will you please accept this samosa that I got for you?

Padma Sherni: yes!

Raja Tharasa: *smiles...*

To his friends in the band, please play some fun music for our dance party with our friends and invite whomever is respectful!

Padma Sherni: thank you Raja Tharasa...now I can dress up...

Note from the writer:
Hope you enjoyed the story!

actress friend: Waaaait!, sorry to intrude, however, I just overheard your entire conversation and sounds like you need a dress, and pronto! I happen to know great places to get dresses, and if you're interested, here's my business card.

I've actually worked with your friend here in the past, and ...

actor friend playing Raja Tharasa I thought you looked familiar...

Piale Roy: I saw my friend here disguised as Shriyadita C. London and am just bantering with him...

actress friend: lovely, so then... if you'd like to try on some outfits, we'll wait out here...

..., "This doesn't quite fit! it needs to get altered!, Dil Pickle!"... "Does anyone have a safety pin?"...

while trying on dresses, people start to arrive at the practice session...eventually... there will be a spring time event in May 2020 or 2021, for wine tasting.

After the practice event, Padma Sherni (also referred to as Chom Chom) goes home and opens a journal, "next chapter...now that grad school is over, and my friends have paired up with love interests, I can prepare to get back out there, career, and academics all set, new friends, old friends, and time for some fun."... spending time with DJs.

...

The corporate business filing are almost complete and I'm wondering if leadership will consider the new storyboards or not.

Are you going to bring the previous photographers and models from the fashion show to fund raise? (they may ask...) Perhaps, however, elections are coming up, and anything can happen. I've been working on creative content all this time, and have established the business in my

name...

Now Valerie Valeeni is talking to people trying to figure out if either of us should run for President of a local advisory board for an affiliated company that could present the works. It's controversial because everyone expected Songeeta to run for President, but of course, I'm in the way from their perspective rather than considering this a collaborative approach. There is so much politics involved and the age old dilemma of whether or not it's who you know or what you know.

After some time I've reflected on why this artistry has resulted from the nuances of friendships and romanticism. You see there's been some drama...

Way back a few years ago, my parents tried to send me on a semi-arranged date with a guy by inviting him over for

lunch. I was perplexed...my mother cooked a bunch of indian food and left the lentils in the pressure cooker too long and it wasn't anything bad but it still hit the ceiling and we only got extra time for clean up of the dripping ceiling because he was still in his car trying to find his shoes which he drove without. It wasn't even a flintstones moment...just a few years ago...Lol...

I'm sure other people can empathize. I used to visit friends during Thanksgiving. During one encounter we enjoyed a variety of cuisine and devoured most of a delicious cooked turkey of course. As a friendly gesture, the family invited a semi-arranged visitor for the daughter, not realizing they were vegetarian. While the rest of us were distracted by a football game, with impassioned shouts of "throw the ball!", "toss the ball!", suddenly, we heard, "toss the carcass! toss the carcass!" Lol. only a slight creative embellishment here...

While travelling in India, my friend who I now acknowledge cared about trying to find me a nice guy introduced me to a relative's family member who, like me was from the USA. I was at a remote location that still used dial up internet connection but saw a nice message about a dog that pissed when he got excited to see him. I had plenty of time to think of a response because then we had lode shading and lost the connection completely...I was stressed about the etiquette expectations because we had a mutual acquaintance. still hopeful to be a successful matchmaker, my friend invited me over to a family gathering at which the now skeptical interest prodded me about why I hadn't responded to his email. I genuinely couldn't respond, and said very matter of factly that there wasn't a good internet connection, which sounded like a total excuse, Lol...so I changed the subject, "what do you do for work", he said he worked on mutual funds, a term that was foreign to me, so I

looked at him skeptically as to whether or not that was a real thing. to make matters worse, the matchmaker's fiance, set me up with one of their other friends and we were all at the same buck and doe party and I've never seen as competitive a musical chairs event for either of them to sit next to me and in total awe I tried politely to stifle my giggles, but when the person across from you is trying to do the same thing, it results in needing to take a piss. I'm not the dog, and I was just overwhelmed and excused myself to the ladies room and of course the matchmaker was waiting for me, and I was so flustered that I just ended up crying from the stress, Lol. Five years later, I found the email, and thought I ought to respond nicely as a friendly gesture, given our mutual acquaintance and all, just see where he was in life, and I'm guessing he has respectfully just continued to live his life, Lol.

More details later... with love, Padma Sherni

Wait! I wanted to tell you that I finally figured out my dilemna, which is that regardless of what goes on in life, I must remain a constant to myself and strategize how work, in home, and out of the home, contributes to wellness both for myself and others. This is an important activity with a changing set of priorities given the context of the time and as always, life and it's dilemmas are best resolved with a good sense of humor.

~ Thank you for your support, Piale Roy, Ph.D.

Thank you for your support!