

shabanu

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a sequel to shabanu

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1 - Shabanu

After my father let go from hugging me and crying I did not know what to say to him. Now I have a million things to tell him, if only that day could be repeated. I thought I would never see the day he would cry. Well, I guess I was wrong. I still remember that day like it was yesterday.

It was two nights before my wedding. I am to marry Rahim-Sahib. I could not sleep at all. I was thinking about what the other wives would think of me. Would their children play pranks on me? The more my brain worked, the better I felt for some reason. Was I supposed to marry him now? Should I run away? If he wants me to be happy, can't he see I am not ready for marriage?

On the night before the wedding, they start to paint my hands and feet with henna, it felts cold and funny at first, but then I got used to it and it soothed my hands and feet. The stories told by the older women started to get boring because I had heard them all before when my sister was married so I left. My mother understood and she did not mind, but the other women did not. I do not know why, but they kept screaming for me to come back. I didn't. So what if they thought I needed to hear all this. I wanted to go to sleep because I had a big day coming.

Dressing and putting on jewelry for the wedding took about two hours! The wedding was beautiful, but for some reason it went by very fast- faster than my sister Phulan's. It was probably the snakes that one of Rahim-Sahibs wife's sons put at the back of the alter. It was a terrible prank and it scared many of the guests. I had to hide my amusement as it was quite.

After the wedding I was to meet the wives and their children. Rahim-Sahib's first wife is Alam. She is 55 and has two children. Her daughter is named Wafa. They could not find a suitor for her until she was 19. Unfortunately the groom thought she was too old for him, even though he himself was twenty five! Her

son's name is Labib and he is 18 years old and going to be married in five months.

The second wife is named Amal, and she is 49 years old. She also has two children. Her daughter acts like she is the devil's daughter. The little brat's name is Warda and she is nine years old. Her brother's name is Isam who is four years old and he is inseparable from his sister.

The third wife is 25 years old and her name is Farha. She also has only one daughter, Zahra, who is nine years old. At first I thought she was an angel and wanted to have a girl just like her. Of all the wives I hoped that Farha and I could be friends as she is the closest to my age. Farha also has a son named Zuhair who is eight years old.

Ten months passed and it was going well until I was 6 months pregnant. Then everything went wrong! I had been teaching Isam and his sister Warda how to do math. They were amused by all the things that you need to know when you live in the desert like crafting pots, how to ride horses, counting Rupees, and all about camels. I guess my mind was on other things and they stopped coming to me. Perhaps they thought I would not like them any more once my baby came.

My mind was on other things, mostly I was thinking about what to name the baby when it came. I made a list of names that I hoped we could name the baby:

GIRL'S BOY'S

Azhar (flower), Hamam (generous)

Amira (princess), Faqih (wise)

Husna (beauty), Murad (aim)

Surooq (sun-rise), Ayman (lucky)

Ibtisam (smile), Haidar (lion)

Ibtihaj (happiness), Muntasir (winner)

Jawhara (gem) Labib (wise)

After I thought of all the names, I ask Rahyim-Sahib if I could get a scribe to write them on paper and teach me how to read and write. I told him it would be a good bargain because I would then teach his other children how to read and write. He agreed, and I began lessons right away. It only took about a month to learn how to read then another month to learn how to write. It was quite fun, and took up much of my spare time.

A month later it was almost my fifteenth birthday, and my sister, father, mother, my sister's daughter and her husband were coming to celebrate. They were coming not only for my birthday but for a baby shower! We put the two celebrations together so they wouldn't have to come twice. I told them the best names if it was a girl or a boy and they were: Husna if it was a girl and Hamam if it was a boy. In that month we celebrated a day before my birthday because I was going to have a child very soon. The next

day was my actual birthday and they were born! I had fraternal twins.

When the twins were three years old, my husband died. We were alone, just the three of us. I had no reason to stay with Rahim's other wives and they were happy to see us go. We took only what we needed and left forever not knowing where we were going. I felt like we were stuck in a sandstorm not knowing where we were or where to go. I wrote to my mother and father about this tragic accident and told them that Rahim was murdered by his brother. My dead husband's brother had become quite crazy and I knew that I must get away or suffer the same fate as Rahim. I also told them I was going to stay with my aunt Sharma and cousin Fatima down south. I was afraid that I would be followed to my parent's home and put them in danger. My parents knew where I was, so it would be OK- so I thought.

When the three of us got to Sharma's they were happy to see me in such short notice. They remembered that they said I could come any time. I told them what happened and they said nothing. In a week or so my father came to get me for some odd reason. I asked, "What is the matter?" He replied, "You are in great danger if you stay here. They have already burned down our house, killed the other of Rahim-Sahib's wives and Wafa. Luckily, they spared the younger children and they are hidden at a camp 19 miles away". After that I was very afraid for them and I was afraid for myself too.

Before I went to the spot where the children were, I spent the night at a camp nine miles away from where they were staying. I stayed up by the fire and started to talk with a boy my age named Ziaul-Haq. I found out that we had a lot in common. He was not married and had no children, but he was great with Husna and Hamam. I told him that I was Rahim-Sahib's fourth wife before he died. The next day we went to the site that I told him about and the other children were there safe and sound asleep. I examined their faces and it looked as if they had cried themselves to sleep the night before. Zahra was the first to see me and her face lit up like a rose.

In the Spring I married Ziaul-Haq. He agreed to take in all of Rahim-Sahib's children and raise them as our own. We hope to live happily ever after. I think I have finally found the right path for my life.

BY: MOLLY JOY DAVOL

Shabanu-who is 14, wife of Rahim-Sahib and main character

Rahim-Sahib-Shabanu's husband. Has four wives

Ahlam- first wife and is 55 years old

Amal-second wife and is 49 years old

Farha-third wife and is 25 years old

Wafa-twenty year old daughter of Ahlam

Warda-nine year old daughter of Amal

Zahra-nine year old daughter of Farha

Labib-son of Ahlam and is 18 years old

Zuhair-son Farha and is 8 years old.

Isam-son of Amal and four years old

Ziaul-haq- Shabanu's friend who is 18 years old at

the end of the book

When fate comes to Shabanu will she be ready and will she take the right path?