

Aditi

loves to dance

Gill Winn



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Chapter 1

Aditi meets Pradeep

‘Aditi. Go upstairs and change your clothes.’

‘I don’t want to change. I like my jeans and tee shirt Auntie Yasmin.’ Aditi is sitting on the sofa reading a book.

‘Aditi! You cannot wear jeans and t-shirt for visitors! Put your new sari on. Pradeep and his parents are coming soon.’

‘Mmm...’

‘Aditi, you are not listening!’ Auntie is angry now. She turns to Aditi’s father. Ravi is watching the Saturday sport on the television.

‘Ravi, tell Aditi to wear her sari. I want her to look pretty.’

Aditi’s father winks at his daughter. ‘Aditi looks very pretty to me,’ he smiles.

Auntie is upset. ‘I try to help Aditi to meet nice young men but she’s not the same as her sisters,’ she sighs.

‘You help us all,’ Ravi told her firmly. ‘You are the mother to my four girls Yasmin.’ Ravi looks sad. He remembers the death of his dear wife Aruna. ‘We are grateful to you Auntie Yasmin.’ He pats her on the arm.

Aditi puts her book on the sofa. She jumps up. She puts

her arms round Aunty Yasmin and she hugs her.

I'm sorry Aunty. I want to finish my book before the visitors come. I like wearing jeans but I can change my clothes for you. What do you want me to wear?'



Aunty gives a little smile. She loves Aditi and her sisters very much. You wear those jeans and a t-shirt all the time. They are not very pretty. 'I like the pink sari. Men like pink'.

Aditi sighs. 'All my friends wear jeans and I like to wear casual clothes. I don't want Pradeep to like me very much. It's not a good idea. I'm going to University soon. I don't want to marry for a long time.'

‘I don’t want you to marry now Aditi but if you go away to London University, it’s better if you are engaged first.’

Aditi’s father interrupts, ‘Aditi, put the sari on my dear. You are a modern girl. I don’t want you to marry if you don’t want to marry. Aunty doesn’t like jeans for visitors. She wants you to meet nice young men before you go to University. I like to see you in a sari too. When you wear a sari you look like your mother.’

‘Alright father I’m going to put the pink sari on,’ Aditi says but she whispers in his ear. ‘I don’t want to get engaged.’

Her father nods. He pats the arm of his youngest daughter. ‘Aunty is quite happy if you are friendly and you look pretty.’

Aditi goes upstairs to change her clothes.

Yasmin speaks to Ravi. ‘You spoil that girl. She can find a good husband now but after University I’m not sure. The young girls get the best men.’

Ravi laughs. ‘She’s only eighteen. She’s going to University for three years. I don’t think twenty-one is too old to marry a nice man.’

Half an hour later Pradeep and his parents arrive. Pradeep is short and very fat. His mother tells him what to say.

‘Say, hallo to Yasmin, Pradeep,’ she says to her son.

‘Hallo, Yasmin’, Pradeep says, in a dull, slow voice. His mother says, ‘Say good afternoon to Ravi my son.’

‘Good afternoon Ravi,’ Pradeep says in his slow voice.

‘Good afternoon,’ Ravi says, ‘Do you remember me?’

‘Yes, of course he remembers you.’ The young man’s mother says. ‘Pradeep! Tell Ravi you remember him.’

‘I remember you Ravi,’ Pradeep says.

Pradeep’s mother smiles at Aditi. ‘You are a beautiful young woman my dear.’ Aditi is wearing the sari. She tries to smile. Pradeep’s mother pushes him. ‘Tell Aditi she...’

Aunty Yasmin says quickly, ‘Aditi, why don’t you take Pradeep into the garden? It’s sunny and you can show him the fish.’ Aditi smiles but she doesn’t want to smile. She is polite because she does not want to upset her father and Aunty. She walks into the garden. Pradeep’s mother gives him a little push and he follows Aditi.

Chapter 2

Aditi and Pradeep do not want to marry

‘Do you like fish?’ Aditi asks Pradeep.

‘I don’t eat meat or fish.’ Pradeep says with a slow, voice.

Aditi laughs. ‘The fish are not to eat but they are lovely to watch.’ She goes to the pond and points to the fish. ‘See how pretty they are when they swim through the water. Look how they open and shut their mouths. We keep food for them. Do you want to throw food in the pond? Our visitors usually like to feed the fish.’

‘No thanks. You feed the fish.’ Pradeep sits down on the bench near the pond. Aditi drops tiny bits of food slowly into the water and she laughs when the fish jump to catch the food. She sits down on a stone near the pond.

‘Are you going to college, Pradeep?’ Aditi asks.

‘No, Aditi. I am going to work in my father’s business. My mother says I must marry before I start work.’

‘Do you want to marry?’ Aditi asks him.

He looks nervous. ‘I think I do but...’

‘What’s the matter? I’m not going to tell your mother.’

‘I’m sorry Aditi but I don’t want to marry you... ’

‘Don’t worry Pradeep. I don’t want to marry you.’ Aditi says.

Pradeep smiles. 'I'm glad you don't want to marry me. I like a girl from school but my mother doesn't like her.'

'She's not our religion?' Aditi asks. She feels friendly now because Pradeep doesn't want to marry her. She feels sorry for Pradeep. 'She is not Hindu?' Aditi asks again.

'Oh yes. Damini is from our community but she is very modern. She says I mustn't listen to my mother so much and if she marries me, she wants to live in our own house and not with mother and father.'

Aditi thinks Damini is sensible. She says. 'Perhaps, your father can help. Can you talk to him?' Pradeep's father is a gentle, quiet man and he seems very kind. Pradeep smiles.

'Yes, father says I must meet all the girls mother wants me to marry. He says I must tell mother I do not want to marry them. After I say 'no' to all the girls he thinks I can marry Damini. Pradeep laughs. 'Do you understand? My mother wants me to marry. She might think it is better for me to marry Damini if I do not like the other girls. She wants grandchildren very much.'

Aditi laughs. 'I think your father is right. You must tell your mother you do not like me and I will tell Aunty that I don't want to marry you.'

Pradeep smiles. 'Thank you. That's a good idea.'

Aditi stands up. 'Aunty is calling us Pradeep. We can eat now and we can enjoy lots of the lovely food she is cooking. You can watch football with my father.'

Pradeep smiles, 'Are you sure I can watch the sport? I love football.'

'You can watch the football Pradeep. My father likes football too. I can say I want to read a book.'

Aditi giggled. 'When you go home, tell your mother Aditi is boring.'

Chapter 3

Isha does not want to meet Aditi

When Pradeep and his parents go home, Aditi talks to Aunty. 'I do not want to marry Pradeep,' she says.

'Are you sure Aditi?' Aunty says. 'They are a good family and his father has a lot of money.'

'Aunty! I cannot marry him because he is rich.' Aditi is shocked.

'You can still love your husband if he is rich Aditi.'

'No, Aunty. I'm not going to marry someone for money. I want to love my husband. I don't care if he is rich or poor.'

Aunty sighs, 'I understand. You are very young.'

Every week-end of the summer holiday Aunty asks different young men and their parents to come to the house to meet Aditi. Every time Aditi says she does not want to see them again.

Soon it is time to go to University. Next week Aditi is going to London to stay with her father's brother and his wife. Aditi is going to live with them when she studies at London University. One evening Aunty says, 'I want you to help me clean the house Aditi. On Saturday Isha and his parents are coming to meet you.'

Aditi is cross. 'Oh no! Aunty. I want to go out on Saturday to buy things for University and I have dance practice.'

'Isha is very nice. You can go to town on Friday to shop,' Aunty Yasmin says firmly. 'You can miss dance practice'.

'No Aunty. I do not want to meet Isha. I'm going to shop on Saturday.'

'Ravi!' Aunty Yasmin says. 'Tell Aditi she must meet Isha on Saturday.'

'No, father. It's too late. I'm going to University on Monday.'

Ravi looks unhappy. He hates Aunty and Aditi to quarrel.

'Aunty, you must tell Isha's parents that Aditi is going out on Saturday. Perhaps they can come next summer?'

He turns to Aditi and he tells her, 'I know Isha's parents. They are from Uganda. Your mother and I were in school with his parents. They are very nice.'

Aunty is not happy but she phones Isha's parents. When she comes back she feels better. 'It's alright. Isha's parents are very friendly. Isha does not want to come.'

'Perhaps they can come next summer,' Ravi says.

'No! Isha's mother says they may come to see you Ravi but Isha wants to choose his own wife. He does not want to meet Aditi. He does not want his parents to arrange a marriage. Isha thinks girls in our community only care about

money and good looks.'

Aditi is annoyed. Isha does not know her. She does not want to marry someone for money. She wants to choose but she is polite to men who come to the house. Aunty sees on her face that Aditi was cross.

'Don't worry about him Aditi,' Aunty says. 'My friends at the Temple can tell me about other men who want to meet you. You can meet them when you come home next summer. I am sure they are nicer than Isha.' Aunty sniffs.

Aditi sighs. She wants Aunty to stop looking for young men to meet her.

Her father winks at her. 'It's a long time to next summer,' he whispers to Aditi. 'Don't think about it. You are going to London University on Monday.'

Chapter 4

Aditi goes to University

Aunty Sara and Uncle Narvin are very kind to Aditi. They live in South London. Aditi has a big bedroom. It is comfortable.

Aditi is a student at Imperial College, London University. She is studying science. There are a lot of men in her class and only a few women. Everyone is very friendly.

On the first morning a girl from Birmingham talks to Aditi and they have lunch together. Aditi likes Molly a lot and soon the girls are good friends.

Aditi is happy in College. She works very hard. She is clever. The teachers think she is a very good scientist. She does not go out with boys like other girls in her class.

She is good friends with Tony and she talks about science with him. When the Easter holiday comes he visits Leicester and he goes to Aditi's home. Her father likes Tony but Aunty does not. She is afraid Aditi likes Tony too much.

The year passes quickly.

Now it is the summer term. In ten weeks Aditi and Molly finish their first year in University. Today the girls are queuing for lunch. Tony comes in with his friend. His friend is an older

student and he has a degree already. He is studying for a PhD now.

Tony likes Aditi very much. He stands next to her and he starts talking. Aditi does not know the name of Tony's friend. She can see he is from her community because he is wearing the beads round his wrist. Aditi thinks Tony's friend has a very nice smile. He is good looking too. Tony says. 'Is your father going to find you a husband Aditi?'

She laughs. 'Everyone wants to know about my father choosing my husband,' she says. 'At the moment my father wants me to study and pass my exams. I want to choose my own husband but I might marry someone my father wants me to meet.'

'Tony's friend speaks. He smiles at Aditi. 'Yes, British people always ask me about 'arranged marriages'. I told Tony we do not all have arranged marriages some of the modern men and women choose partners themselves.'

Aditi agrees with Tony's friend. He is very good-looking.

Tony says, 'Sometimes when I want a girlfriend I think you are lucky if your parents find you a girl. But I'm not sure. Sometimes, I think it is better if I choose my own girlfriend.'

Tony's friend likes Aditi. She looks very pretty today. She is wearing beads around her neck and he knows she is from

his community. He says, 'I think it is awful for young men to go with parents to see if a woman wants to marry him. The young women in our community only want someone handsome or rich,' he says.

'Who are you?' Aditi asks. She does not like this handsome man now. She remembers those words.

Aditi has a shock when Molly says. 'This is Isha, Aditi. He is studying for a PhD. His parents live in London but they came from Uganda many years ago, like your people.'

Molly turns to Isha. She says, 'You don't have to worry Isha. You don't need your parents to find a wife because lots of women like you. You are very handsome.'



Isha laughs. 'Thank-you Molly.'

Aditi feels awful. The handsome stranger is Isha. She remembers Isha. He is the young man who did not want to meet her. Her father says his parents are nice but Aditi does not like Isha. He is rude about women from her community.

Aditi buys lunch. She carries it to the table in the cafeteria and Molly follows her.

'Isn't Isha gorgeous?' Molly asks.

'He's ok!'

'He's really handsome - look at his thick black hair and he has beautiful eyes.'

Aditi looks back. Isha is staring at her. 'I don't think he's handsome,' she says to Molly.

'Well, he's very clever,' Molly says.

The young men come to the table. 'Can we join you?' Tony asks.

'Sure,' Molly pats the chair. 'Come and sit next to me Isha.'

Isha looks a lot at Aditi. While Tony talks to Molly, Isha speaks to Aditi. 'Do you live in Leicester, Aditi?' he asks.

Aditi thinks, 'He knows who I am.'

'Yes.'

'Is your father Ravi? Did he come from Uganda?'

'Yes.'

'My mother asked me to go to your house I think?'

'Yes and I don't want to marry a man because he is handsome. And I don't want to marry a man for money. I want my husband to be interesting and kind.' She stands up.

'I must go now,' she says.

'Tony and Isha want us to go for a walk,' Molly says to Aditi before she leaves the table. 'Let's go for a walk.'

'I'm sorry. I have work to do Molly, I must go,' Aditi says. She smiles at Molly but she does not look at Isha and she hurries away.

Chapter 5

Tony asks Aditi to go to the College dance

The first year at University goes very quickly. Aditi likes College and she likes London. It is time for the end of the year dance in two weeks. All the girls are talking about it. When she goes to lunch one day Aditi sees Isha. She looks away but he comes to speak to her.

‘Aditi are you going to the dance? I want a partner. I hope you can come with me?’ He smiles at her.

Aditi feels her heart jump when Isha looks at her with his lovely smile. Then she remembers she does not like him. She says, ‘I’m sorry I can’t. I’m going to the dance with someone else.’ She turns away quickly.

Isha pulls her arm but he does not hurt her. He frowns. ‘Why don’t you like me Aditi?’ he asks.

‘I don’t like men who think women only want someone handsome or rich,’ Aditi tells him.

‘You are still upset about last summer? I am really sorry. I am angry with myself. I hope your family ask me to come this summer I...’

‘No, they are not going to ask you. I want to choose my husband. My father is not going to make me marry and I

don't want to meet you in my home.'

Isha nods. 'I understand', he says politely. He does not smile. 'Of course you can choose. I am sorry you don't like me. Good luck Aditi, I'm sure plenty of men want to go to the dance with you. He turns and walks away.

Aditi feels awful. She watches him walk quickly down the corridor. 'Why am I rude to Isha when I like him?' she thinks.

The next day Aditi is glad when Tony asks her to go to the dance with him. Aditi loves dancing. Molly is going to the dance with Silvio, her new Spanish boyfriend.

The night of the dance soon comes. Aunty Yasmin telephones. She wants to talk about the holiday, 'Your father is coming to fetch you next week. He is happy you are coming home Aditi.'

'I can leave college on Thursday afternoon,' Aditi says.

'Lots of young men want to meet you this summer holiday Aditi. Can I ask them to come to the house?' Aunty asks.

'Yes, it is fun to meet new people. It is kind of you to ask them to come and meet me Aunty.'

'Oh good. You are growing up Aditi. I want you to meet some nice young men. You can have fun in the holiday. You can buy new clothes.'

'Yes, but I must go now Aunty. I am going to the dance.'

'Yes, Aditi. Good-bye. We can talk on Thursday.'

Aditi puts the phone down. She thinks, 'Perhaps I can meet someone I like at home.' Aditi is lonely. Lots of the girls in University have boyfriends. She thinks perhaps she can meet someone she likes at home in the holiday.

Chapter 6

Aditi goes to the dance

The door bell rings. Aditi goes to the door in her beautiful red dress. Tony whistles, 'Wow! You look great!' he says.

'You look handsome too, Tony. You look different in a suit.'

They are early at the dance. They talk to Molly and Silvio.

Suddenly, Isha comes into the room with a beautiful blonde woman. She is wearing a very expensive white silk dress. It fits very tightly to her attractive figure. Molly pulls Aditi's arm.



‘Look, Aditi. Isha is with the blonde American woman from the history class. Her name’s Dolly. They say she’s very rich.’

Tony says, ‘I like Dolly and I know Isha likes her a lot.’

Aditi feels ill. She isn’t enjoying the dance. She is not happy because Isha is with Dolly. She wants to go back to her flat but she doesn’t want to spoil the dance for Tony.

‘Are you ok Aditi?’ Tony’s voice is very kind.

‘I have a bit of a headache,’ she says.

‘Oh dear. I will get you some paracetamol and some water. You sit down.’ Tony walks away and Aditi sits down.

Molly and Silvio dance and soon Isha and Dolly dance too. When the music stops Isha and Dolly are near Aditi and Tony. Tony calls Isha. ‘Are you enjoying the dance?’ he asks.

‘Very much,’ Isha says. ‘You know Dolly don’t you Tony?’

‘Yes, of course. Dolly, this is my partner Aditi,’ Tony says.

‘Hallo Aditi,’ Dolly smiles. She is very friendly. ‘Don’t you like dancing Aditi?’ she asks.

‘Yes, I love dancing but I have a headache.’

‘What a pity I hope it goes soon.’ Dolly seems kind. ‘Isha says you are a scientist, Aditi.’

‘That’s right. Aditi is a very good scientist.’ Tony says to Dolly. ‘Do you want to dance, Aditi?’ Tony asks.

‘Yes, I feel better now.’ Aditi gets up quickly. She wants to

get away from Dolly and Isha. Aditi does not like to see Dolly holding Isha's arm. Dolly smiles up at Isha's face.

When the dance finishes Tony takes Aditi home. He tries to kiss her but she moves away and she opens the door of her Uncle's house. 'Thank you for taking me to the dance. But, I must go now. I'm tired.' Tony nods. He looks a little upset. Aditi is sorry but it is no good. She must not go out with him again. She doesn't want to hurt him. He is nice but lots of girls like him. It is better if he looks for a different girl.

Chapter 7

The first year at University is over

Today is the last day of Aditi's first year in University. She is talking to Molly. They are eating lunch in the cafeteria.

'You must come to visit me in the holiday,' Molly says.

'Yes, I want to but you must come to see me too, Molly. I know my father and my Aunty like to have visitors.'

Molly says, 'You come to me in July. I can come to see you in August.'

'Ok Molly. If you come on the 20th August we have a celebration in our community centre. I am dancing traditional Indian dances with some friends,' Aditi says.

'Great! I love all sorts of dancing. I want you to teach me Indian dancing next year Aditi.'

The girls are sitting near the door of the café. Tony and Isha come into the café for a cup of tea. They walk towards the girls but Isha sees Aditi. He stops and he goes away quickly. Aditi is sorry because she really likes Isha now. She wants to show him she is friendly but it is too late. She can see Isha does not like her.

Molly asks Tony, 'Where is Isha going?'

'He's going to the library. He needs a book for the holiday.'

‘I’m going to speak to him. I want him to help me with some mathematics I don’t understand.’ Molly jumps up and hurries away to the library.

Tony smiles, ‘Isha helps everyone with mathematics. He is so kind.’ Tony puts his hand on Aditi’s hand. ‘Can I come to see you in the holidays?’ He asks.

‘No Tony. It’s not a good idea.’

‘You don’t think I’m attractive?’

‘You are very nice Tony but I’m sorry, I like someone else very much.’

‘Someone I know?’ he asks.

‘It is someone from my community.’ Aditi tells him. He nods his head. He thinks Aditi likes a boy from her home town. He does not think Aditi likes Isha because she always leaves the table if he comes near and Isha runs away if he sees Aditi. Tony thinks Aditi likes someone from Leicester. He says, ‘I suppose you don’t want to marry someone from outside your faith Aditi.’

‘I might marry someone outside my community if he cares about the same things and if he believes in God.’

‘I did not know you liked a man from Leicester. I hope you have a happy summer holiday Aditi.’

‘The man I like doesn’t know I love him. He is kind and

interesting but lots of people like him. I don't think he wants to marry me.

'He must want you. Lots of men like you.' Tony says.

Aditi laughs, 'Thank you Tony. You are very nice too. I know lots of girls fancy you. I must go now. My father is coming to fetch me this afternoon.'

Aditi leaves the cafeteria. She sees Ann go to speak to Tony. Ann is very nice. Soon Tony and Ann are laughing and talking together. Aditi is glad. Perhaps Ann will be Tony's new girlfriend.

Chapter 8

The long summer holiday

Aditi is very happy to go home. There are many people who love her in Leicester and her family has a party because Aditi is home from University. Aditi's sisters and their families and lots of friends come to see her.

In July, Aditi goes to visit Molly. They have a lovely time and they talk about University. Molly and Silvio are engaged and they have a big party the night before Aditi goes home. Lots of University friends come to the party. Aditi is surprised when after nine o'clock Isha walks into the room. Her heart jumps. She hopes he is friendly.

Many young men ask Aditi to dance but she says she wants to watch. She hopes Isha will come to talk to her. Suddenly, the music stops. Molly and Silvio tell everyone they are going to marry next year and they want all their friends at the party to come to the wedding. Everyone laughs and claps.

'Hallo Aditi,' says Isha's quiet, deep voice. 'You look lovely tonight.' Aditi feels her face is hot. She smiles at Isha.

'Thank-you Isha,' she says. She doesn't know what to say next. She wants to tell Isha she likes him and she wants to

say she is sorry for not going to the dance with him.

‘Shall we sit down Aditi?’ Isha asks politely.

‘Yes’. Her voice is a whisper. ‘What is the matter with me?’ she thinks. ‘Why can’t I talk to him. I feel like a silly schoolgirl.’

Isha talks to Aditi about science. He asks if she wants to help him with some research work next year when she is in the University. Aditi and Isha talk a long time about the work.’ Aditi likes to talk about science but she is sorry Isha only wants to talk about science.

‘Hallo you two. Do you like my ring?’ Molly shows them both her engagement ring.

Aditi holds her friend’s hand to look at the ring. ‘It’ beautiful Molly,’ she says.

‘A lovely ring for a lovely young woman,’ Isha tells her. Molly smiles. ‘Thanks Isha.’

‘I’m going to Leicester soon to see Aditi dance.’ Molly says to Isha before she goes to speak to other friends.

When Molly goes away he says. ‘Why is Molly coming to Leicester? Aditi tells him about the celebration in her Community Centre where she is dancing in August.

‘When is it?’ Isha asks. ‘My parents are going to Leicester soon. If it is the same time, I can come to see you dance.’

Aditi feels shy. ‘It’s not very interesting for you,’ she says.

‘Why not? I love Indian classical dancing. My mother was a very good dancer. Now it is the younger women who dance but she likes to watch and so do I.’

Aditi says. ‘The celebration is on Saturday 20th August.’

Isha leans near her. The music is loud. He says, ‘Aditi I want to come and see you dance, if you don’t mind?’

‘Of course you can come. Anyone can come. I cannot stop you.’ Aditi says and she looks quickly away from him.

Isha touches Aditi’s arm. ‘You can stop me,’ he says. ‘I will not come if you want me to stay away, Aditi.’ He looks straight into Aditi’s eyes. He waits for Aditi to answer.

‘I am happy if you want to come to Leicester to see the dancing,’ she says quickly.

‘I’m glad because I want to come, to see you,’ Isha says.

Now Aditi doesn’t know what to say. Isha stands up. ‘I must leave. I have to drive back to London tonight because I have my parents’ car. Good-bye Aditi.’

‘Drive carefully,’ she says.

Aditi feels happy. Perhaps, Isha really likes her. He wants to come to Leicester to see her dance. She is glad they are friends now.

Aditi goes home to Leicester the next day. She enjoys the days of her holidays. She practises dancing every day. She

wants to show Isha she is a good dancer. One day Aunty asks Aditi if she wants a new dress. Usually Aditi does not like buying dresses. Now, Aunty is surprised. Aditi says, 'I want a new dress very much Aunty. A dress I can wear for the dancing at the community centre in August.'

Chapter 9

Aditi dances at the Community Centre

It is the day of the celebration. In the morning Aditi goes to the Community Centre to help decorate the hall. The women put flowers and coloured ribbons around the room. It looks beautiful. The young women practise the dance.

At lunchtime Molly telephones. 'I'm sorry Aditi but I can't come to Leicester today. Mum is not very well. She needs me at home.' Aditi tells Molly not to worry because she can come to different celebrations. She is sorry Molly can't come but she can come next year.

Aditi is excited because Isha is coming to see her dance. Aditi has a beautiful new sari. It is red and saffron with beautiful gold embroidery around the blouse and a soft saffron colour scarf.

The dancing starts at seven in the evening. There are lots of different dances. Aditi is dancing in four dances and she has to change her clothes. She cannot see the audience. She listens to the music and she dances with her friends but she does not know if Isha is there. The women change their clothes in a small room behind the musicians.



Aditi is dressed for the last dance. She is the star. The story is about a young woman who loves a god but he leaves her and she is very sad. Aditi has a few minutes to rest before the dance. She gets up and peeps round the door to look at the audience. Aditi feels very happy when she sees Isha. Suddenly, she notices the young woman next to him. It is Dolly! Dolly is with him! Dolly is laughing and smiling at Isha. Aditi feels sick. 'How silly I am,' she thinks. 'Isha loves Dolly not me. He is kind to me but Dolly is always with him.'

Now the music starts. Aditi has to dance. When she starts

dancing she forgets everyone in the room. She is the sad young woman in the story.

At the end of the dance Aditi falls to the floor with her head in her hands. There is not a sound in the room. Everyone feels sad for the beautiful young dancer. Many people are crying. Then there is loud clapping. All the dancers stand up and leave the room together.

After the dance Aditi asks her friend Rada to fetch her father. Ravi comes to the room where the dancers are. 'Aditi you are a wonderful dancer,' he says to his daughter. 'I think your mother is back here when you dance.' Ravi gives Aditi a hug. 'Are you coming to eat?' he asks. 'They are putting lots of food on the tables.'

'Father,' she whispers. 'Please take me home. I don't feel very well.'

'Are you sure?' he asks. 'You are going to miss the fun.'

'Yes, yes. I want to go home. I am very tired.'

'Of course!' Ravi says.

When she is home Aditi runs upstairs. She is glad to be home. She lies down on her bed and she cries in her pillow. Ten minutes later, her father calls.

'Aditi, come and have a cup of tea,' he says. She opens her bedroom door quickly and shouts downstairs. 'I am

coming father. I want to wash first.' She doesn't want her father to know she is crying. Aditi splashes cold water on her face. The door bell rings. Aditi giggles. She feels a little better now. Some of the sadness has gone away with the tears. She hears her father open the front door. 'Aunty has forgotten her key again,' Aditi says to herself.

She sits on her bed. Aditi thinks. 'I'm not going to marry if I cannot marry Isha. I can help other people. I can do good things for the world if I'm a scientist.' She stands up. She must go downstairs now and have tea with her father.

Before she is half-way downstairs her father comes out of the front room. He is smiling. 'Aditi' he says, 'We have visitors. Come and talk to them.'

Chapter 10

Everyone is happy

When Aditi goes into the room she sees Aunty with three people. One of them is Isha!

‘My dear, this is Ravinder my old friend from Uganda,’ her father says ‘and this is his wife Sarita.’ A very attractive older woman in modern clothes smiles at Aditi. Ravi says, ‘Sarita says you know her son Isha. He is at University with you?’ Aditi nods. She doesn’t look at Isha.

‘What lovely dancing my dear,’ Isha’s mother says. ‘You are like your mother.’

Isha’s father says, ‘We have photographs of your mother and father when they were your age Aditi. We must give them to you.’ Isha does not speak and Aditi does not look at him.

‘Shall we let these young people talk?’ Aditi’s father says.

‘Do you want to stay and talk to me?’ Isha asks Aditi.

‘Aunty Yasmin says. Yes, Aditi can stay and talk to you.’

‘Aditi?’ Isha asks. Everyone looks at Aditi.

‘Yes, of course,’ Aditi says quickly. She does not want everyone to look at her. ‘Isha and I talk about science for hours,’ she laughs. She doesn’t feel like laughing. She wants

to forget about Isha and Dolly. She hopes Isha will leave quickly.

In a few minutes Isha's parents go with Ravi and Aunt Yasmin to the sitting room to have some food. Isha steps towards Aditi but she moves away from him. He stays very still and talks. 'What is the matter Aditi? Why are you running away from me all the time?'

'Where is Dolly?' she asks him.

Suddenly, he understands. 'Aditi, you think Dolly is special to me?' he asks with surprise. Aditi waits. She clenches her fists.

Isha says. 'Dolly is special of course and she is a good friend. Dolly's parents live in the house next door to us in London. She is going to marry my brother next year.'

Aditi shakes her head. 'So you and...'

'No. We are not engaged. You, are the special one. I want to marry you, Aditi. Do you think you can love me?'

Now Aditi is not sure what to say. She is so happy inside. Of course she wants to marry Isha but perhaps she must wait until he speaks to her father.

Isha guesses her thoughts. He goes to her and puts his arm round her. 'We are a modern couple Aditi. You say you want to choose and I want you to choose me.'

Aditi doesn't speak for a minute.

'I choose you,' Isha says. 'Tell me quickly if you want to marry me.' He knows what Aditi wants to say. She has not moved away from his arm.



'If you say "yes" Isha tells her, 'I can talk to your father. Now, it's for us to choose. Do you want me to speak to your father? Do you like me?'

Aditi laughs. 'Of course, I like you.' She moves away from him. 'I like to talk about science with you,' she says. Isha looks disappointed.

Aditi giggles and she moves further away. 'I'm teasing. I want to marry you. I think it's good we both like to study

science. It's good if we enjoy the same things.'

'You are so beautiful Aditi.' He says. He moves towards her. She laughs and runs to the door. She is only a little bit modern about love. She wants him to speak to her father first. She is so happy she does not know how lovely she looks.

'Speak to father, Isha,' Aditi says. 'If he agrees, I can marry you. But I cannot marry a man my father does not like.' Isha looks a little worried.

Aditi giggles. She knows her father wants her to choose but Aditi wants Isha to ask her father if she can marry. She says, 'Come on Isha. Aunty has lovely food ready. I'm hungry.'

They go to the next room. Aditi helps Aunty give food to the guests. Later, Isha goes into the garden with Aditi's father and his parents. When they come back to the house Ravi says, 'Well Aditi. What can I say to this young man? He wants to marry you very much. I cannot say "yes" because I always say you can choose. Do you want to marry Isha?'

Everyone looks at Aditi. 'Yes', she says. 'Yes, father I do.'

Everyone is very happy. Aunty Yasmin kisses Aditi and Isha's mother kisses her too. Isha's mother whispers to her, 'My son looks very happy.'

Aditi's father is smiling. He says to Isha's parents, 'You must come to our house tomorrow and we can talk about the wedding.'

Aditi stands near Isha. She feels shy. He understands. He says, 'I think we must go now but we can come tomorrow.' His parents agree but before he leaves Isha puts a piece of paper in Aditi's hand.

When they leave Aditi reads the paper. It says, 'Tomorrow is our day Aditi. It must be a special day for you and me. I am coming to fetch you at 11.00 o'clock.'

Aditi asks her father if she can go. Ravi laughs.

'Why are you asking me Aditi? You are a modern couple. Isha says he can look after you and he wants to go out with you before you marry. If you want to marry him I think you must go. Perhaps, you are not sure about Isha? Do you want to meet one of the young men Aunty knows?'

'No, no father. I want to go out with Isha tomorrow.'

'Good. I trust you both. You go out and enjoy yourself.' Ravi beams. His daughter looks very happy. He says, 'Now Aunty and I can plan the wedding. I have no more daughters to worry about. All of you are with very nice young men.'

ADITI

by Gill Winn

Illustrations: Genji

Aditi's father Ravi is a widower. His wife died after they came to Britain from Uganda.

Aditi meets Isha in college. At first she doesn't like him. Tony is Aditi's friend.

One day Aditi dances in her community centre in Leicester. Isha and his parents are there...

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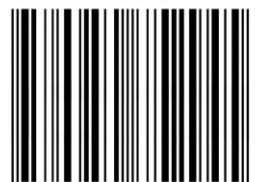
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