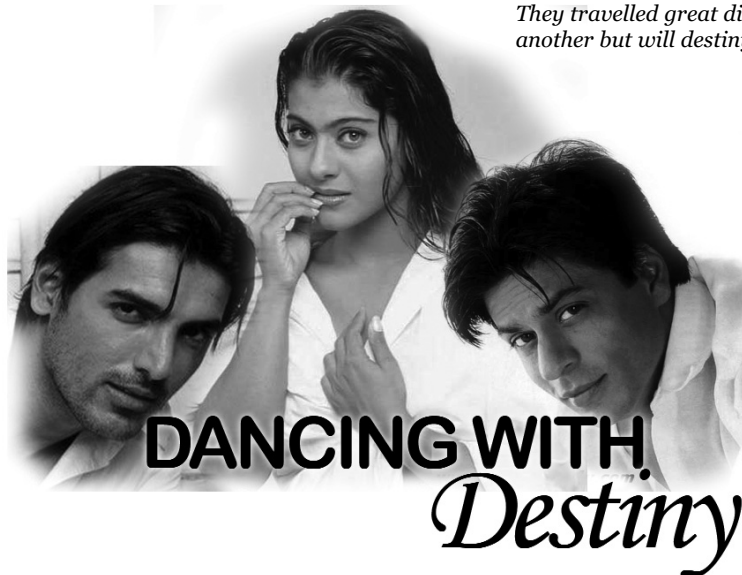


They travelled great distances to be together, broke through barriers to love one another but will destiny force them apart?



DANCING WITH *Destiny*

Prologue

Anna boarded the shuttle bus feeling excited at the thought of going back to her family. It had been seven years since she had left to pursue tertiary education in England. Now a fresh graduate, she and her two best friends had agreed to come back to India at the same time. They had decided to settle down with their parents again and see where life took them, now that they could work as professionals. Looking back at the plane as the bus started to push its way forward, she bid farewell to the days of solitude; she would soon be with the ones she loved. The shuttle bus carried her to the main airport building where she got off and eagerly searched for the exit. Following a large crowd Anna walked out into the warm air savouring the feeling of being back on home soil.

She looked around hoping to find the passenger bus she had booked tickets for; the one that would take her into the main city where she would meet her father.

"Excuse me?" The guard at the exit looked up at the beautiful woman standing in front of him looking lost.

"Yes?" He enquired gallantly.

"I was looking for this bus" Anna said showing the man her ticket. He lost interest - that bus was for the rich men and women heading into town. Poor men like his type had no chance with women of such class.

"It's right up there" He pointed. She tried to look past the crowd but gave up eventually knowing she had no hope of seeing above all the tall men. She had not reached such a great height in her youth. Pushing her way through the crowd, Anna finally saw a large bus with the number 605 writ-

ten on the side - this was it!

As she sat, dwelling in the sights around her she thought about her best friends, had they reached home yet? She was so excited to see them both.

Jai had left India to pursue a career and further education in photography. He was always the artistic one out of the three. Raj on the other hand was drawn to America where he attended College and was now a doctor. All three had maintained a fair level of contact while away from each other but it was never like the old times. She had missed everyone and couldn't wait to see them. They were men now, and it would be different, she thought to herself. How had they changed? Had either dared to grow a beard? A moustache? She couldn't help laughing to herself.

She remembered back to when they were seventeen and had first decided to go their own way to discover life. It had been so sad, but in order to be happy they all had to do it. She continued reminiscing, this time right back to when they were about either or nine.

"No Anna will be my wife" Jai argued. They were playing a game they often played - houses and families.

"How? I am the oldest and I get Anna" Raj pulled at her arm. Jai joined in and pulled from the other end. It was like tug-a-war and she was trapped in the middle.

"Okay okay, look! I can be both your wife" She said taking her arms out of their clutches.

"How? Jai had asked grumpily

"Because I love you both and we can

share" Anna had replied stubbornly.

She snapped back into reality and realised she was silently laughing. How naive they had been to think she could have been both their wife. But they were children and they had shared everything, so why not that? She had often been the peace maker between the two boys during their fights and wondered if they had grown more mature now. Would she still have to break then a part? Explain what is right and wrong? Not that she knew herself what was entirely correct, but they had both listened to her advice as children.

The bus took her from the Airport to the main city where her father had arrived to take her home. She was shocked to see the changes in him. He wasn't the man she had left

behind.

"Papa!" She ran to him and gave him a big hug. He was smaller than she had remembered. Even the city and everything else in it seemed smaller to her.

The car ride was extremely nerve wracking. There was a celebration at Anna's house that night. Raj and Jai's families were both coming and everyone was celebrating their arrival. How was Mama? What do they all look like? What will they think of me? Have I changed? Have they changed? So many questions were running through her head as she imagined each of them in her head. She remained silent and

her father didn't ask anything from her. They would have ample time to talk later.

"Anna, get out of the car Beti"

"Oh we're already here!" Anna called out in shock.

She had been so caught up in her reverie that she hadn't noticed the car pulling up in front of their two storey house. She looked out the window and stared at the building in front of her, even it seemed smaller.

"Your mother cooked up a storm for you, all week it's been a party here" Papa said getting out of the car.

"I can't wait! I miss Mama's food so much" Take away and frozen meals became a whole lot unpleasant after the first year of living entirely off them.

This was it she thought as she closed the gap between her and the front steps, how

A novel

By
**Shanali
Edirisinghe**



nice it was to be home! So many memories were attached to these walls and floors and finally she could be with the people who shared them with her. She reached the front door and inhaled the warm air, letting her lungs fill to the brim with its goodness. After spending so many years in a colder country, this was certainly a change.

to be continued

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