



That Thing We Call a Heart

Sheba Karim

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Shabnam Qureshi is a funny, imaginative Pakistani-American teen attending a tony private school in suburban New Jersey. When her feisty best friend, Farah, starts wearing the headscarf without even consulting her, it begins to unravel their friendship. After telling a huge lie about a tragedy that happened to her family during the Partition of India in 1947, Shabnam is ready for high school to end. She faces a summer of boredom and regret, but she has a plan: Get through the summer. Get to college. Don't look back. Begin anew.

Everything changes when she meets Jamie, who scores her a job at his aunt's pie shack, and meets her there every afternoon. Shabnam begins to see Jamie and herself like the rose and the nightingale of classic Urdu poetry, which, according to her father, is the ultimate language of desire. Jamie finds Shabnam fascinating—her curls, her culture, her awkwardness. Shabnam finds herself falling in love, but Farah finds Jamie worrying.

With Farah's help, Shabnam uncovers the truth about Jamie, about herself, and what really happened during Partition. As she rebuilds her friendship with Farah and grows closer to her parents, Shabnam learns powerful lessons about the importance of love, in all of its forms.

Featuring complex, Muslim-American characters who defy conventional stereotypes and set against a backdrop of Radiohead's music and the evocative metaphors of Urdu poetry, THAT THING WE CALL A HEART is a honest, moving story of a young woman's explorations of first love, sexuality, desire, self-worth, her relationship with her parents, the value of friendship, and what it means to be true.

That Thing We Call a Heart Details

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From Reader Review That Thing We Call a Heart for online ebook

Shenwei says

loved the friendship and family dynamics explored in this book, and also the incorporation of Urdu poetry. was not a fan of the romance but that was kind of hinted at in the description so it is what it is. wished there was more about Farah bc she seems like such an interesting person

Caitlin Christensen says

This was one of those books that builds up slowly and gets under your skin. It's about discovering the layers of history that make up each of our history. Shabnam is an independent (read: stubborn) Pakistani-American teenager trying to navigate high school without making too many waves. But when her best friend starts wearing the headscarf out of the blue it makes her feel as though her entire life isn't what she thought it was. Throw a handsome college boy visiting from out of town, a pie shack, Urdu poetry, and a HUGE lie about a major world tragedy and you've got a recipe for a seriously interesting summer.

I like how frank this novel was - Shabnam is very self-centered (aren't we all in high school?) and she makes a lot of dumb choices. She jumps into things without fully thinking them through and gets very caught up in what other people think of her. She's embarrassed to be seen with her Uncle because he wears traditional clothing and she doesn't want to be judged when people see them together. But then she starts dating someone who is obsessed with her heritage - he wants to hear all the Urdu poetry she learns from her dad, and is intensely interested in hearing about partition and how it "affected" her family. What's a girl going to do but lie and make up a compelling story about how her family was hit hard during partition?

Throughout the novel Shabnam discovers so much about herself, her history, her family, and her friends, and it's that journey of self-discovery that makes this such a compelling read.

Favorite quote:

"I'm too Muslim for the non-Muslims, but not Muslim enough for the Muslims... but then I think, why does it matter what they think of me? I refuse to spend my life proving myself... I'm going to wear a headscarf and I'm going to pray and fast and I'm going to smoke ganja and I'm going to get into Harvard Medical School."

Erika says

This review and more can be found on Living for the Books

I was really excited about this book mainly because a lot of the books I read are really lacking in diversity. I really wanted to love this book and there were some parts that I did, but the main character kind of killed some of my enjoyment.

I was not really a fan of Shabnam throughout the book, until maybe the very end, but even then I still didn't really like her as a character. She was selfish and way too obsessed with a boy that she barely knew. **She**

falls in love with Jaime in a very short amount of time and that really put me off from the romance. She was also a terrible best friend and at least she acknowledges this to an extent. The first thing she says to Farah when they start talking again is that she's in love. Not "I'm sorry I abandoned you" or even "how are you?". I really enjoyed the fact that Farah voiced my same thoughts when they talked about their falling out.

Shabnam also took it upon herself to **scrutinize her parents marriage/romance/sex life and I just found this weird.** She had been "in love" for maybe a month so what gave her the authority to say that they weren't happy or in a loving marriage? It seems that she was comparing her relationship with Jaime to her parents', but those aren't really two comparable relationships. I didn't like her father as a character, he just didn't seem to work very well and I guess that was the point, but honestly I didn't really see the point of him behaving that way.

Thankfully, Shabnam didn't ruin the book for me. I absolutely loved Farah and honestly wished that she was the main character. **I thought that her self discovery and journey to figure out where she fit in as a Muslim was so much more interesting than Jaime and Shabnam's relationship.** She was a badass feminist and so much of what she said was so important.

I also enjoyed the incorporation of poetry throughout the book. It was interesting and unique, especially because I had never encountered that type of poetry before. I also enjoyed the difference between Shabnam and Farah's experiences as Muslims. **They both have such a different relationship with their own culture and I thought that portraying that was really important**, especially Farah's experience.

The book showed a lot of promise, especially with the side characters. I think that it's something important for people to read, even if it might not have the best main character.

**I received this book from the publisher in exchange for an honest review. Thank you!*

Allison says

Really loved this! Great dynamic between Farah and Shabnam.

Longer RTC.

Prabh? says

this was such an important story and EVERYONE should read it. (especially if you are Indian or Pakistani)

idek but the romance fell so frikking flat since summer flings = so not my thing

at this point in time review probably never gonna come wow

Emily May says

*“My arms are hairy, too,” I said. “Except I epilate them.”
As she wrinkled her forehead, I realized too late that could be construed as an insult.
“Do you always lead like that?” she asked.
“Beginnings aren’t my strong point,” I admitted.*

From the very first page, I had a feeling I was going to love That Thing We Call a Heart. Shabnam's narrative voice snared me right away with her snark and humour, and it went on to become a really great book about **friendship, Islam and Urdu poetry**. It also managed to surprise me, which doesn't happen too often in YA Contemporary anymore.

This is an ownvoices story about a Pakistani-American teenager and explores the diversity among Muslims. We see the difference between Shabnam, her mother, her best friend Farah, and Farah's devout mother. Karim shows how there is no one way to be Muslim, especially in today's world, and especially for women. Farah is a strong-willed, punk-loving feminist who wears a hijab and is proud of it. She describes herself as:

I’m too Muslim for the non-Muslims, but not Muslim enough for the Muslims.

Shabnam is actually quite uncomfortable when Farah firsts starts wearing the headscarf, and she is not sure if she even considers herself Muslim. She defies conventional Islam, though many of her family are more conservative and traditional. Non-Muslim readers would do well to pay attention: Islam covers a diverse group of people who all have different beliefs and behaviours. Some are extremely pious, others not so much. Some Muslim women very feminist, others not.

What really surprised me about That Thing We Call a Heart is that I thought I knew what I was getting into: another cute contemporary romance, but with a Muslim protagonist. **Oh, how wrong I was.** It wasn't what I was expecting, and that was great. It's actually about the importance of friendship, in this case between Muslim teenage girls, and about poetry. It contains honest (and funny) discussions about all the hairy smelliness of being a teenager.

It's also a seriously sarcastic **takedown of racism, cultural stereotypes, Islamophobia, and ignorance.** Some of the humour is pretty dark:

Right before lunch, a freshman I’d never seen before stopped me and said, “Hey, man, sorry about your uncle getting gassed.”

“No one got gassed during Partition,” I told him. “You’re thinking of a different genocide.”

Also, **Farah is a queen of awesome:**

*Ashish asked, “I don’t understand why the Muslims don’t tell the terrorists to stop?”
For Farah, this was some kind of breaking point, the end of nice.
She clapped her hand over her mouth. “Oh. My. God. You are so right! Hold on—” She took out her phone and pretended to dial. “Hello, Terrorists? Hi! Can you please stop blowing stuff up, it’s becoming a real drag. You will stop? No more beheadings, no more suicide bombs?
Awesome, thanks! What? Can I stop US hegemony? Sure, no problem, I’ll make sure it’s over by tomorrow. All right, later! Holy shit, Ashish, thanks to you I just saved the world.”*

I loved her so so much. So much.

Just to warn you, though: if you were offended by the content/quotes from the recent The Black Witch scandal, I don't recommend reading this book. Shabnam is a complex, messy teenager and, as such, she does some really unlikeable things. Some of her comments could be construed as racist, fatphobic - *I'd gained at least a pound in less than two days, not what you wanted to happen when you were about to start college. Between breaking up and the freshman fifteen, I'd be a water buffalo by May.* - or just bad taste. But, as she says:

"I'm not your miracle, I'm just a regular screwed-up teenage girl"

Maybe this doesn't count for something for others, but it does for me. I thought she was a **sympathetic, realistic character** and I can't wait to see what characters this author creates in the future. That Thing We Call a Heart was just a hilarious, smart and charming novel.

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Sarah says

(I received an advance copy of this book for free. Thanks to HarperCollins and Edelweiss.)

*"Tell him, I thought. What do you have to lose?
My pride, for one. And that thing we call a heart."*

This was a YA contemporary story about a Pakistani-American girl called Shabnam, who had a summer romance.

Shabnam was an okay character, although I didn't like the way she made up a story about her great-uncle and his experiences during Partition. I also thought it was a little silly of her to let something like a headscarf come between her and her best friend, surely she should have just accepted her friend for who she was regardless of whether she was Muslim or wore a hijab?

The storyline in this was about Shabnam meeting a boy called Jamie over the summer before going to university, and falling in love. There was some Urdu poetry involved, and a storyline about how Shabnam had fallen out with her best friend because she chose to wear a hijab, but mostly it was about Shabnam falling for Jamie, and Jamie not telling her that he loved her back. I did appreciate the friendship between Shabnam and Farah when it was back on though, and it was interesting to read a book with a Pakistani-American main character.

The ending to this was alright, although it wasn't exactly a happily ever after.

Suraj Kumar says

'That thing we call a heart' is a sensational book about love, friendship, family, politics, history and above all, it is a book about growing up in today's world. With so many events taking place and so many different ideas around us, growing up with a sound mind is a real challenge for teenagers these days. To further complicate the things, let there be a fusion of different cultures (which is there even in own world).

Our protagonist is a young Muslim girl, Shabnam, belonging to the first American generation. The book covers a brief time span consisting of her summer break after she graduates from high school and is getting ready for her college. While the world is dealing with issues of global concern, Shabnam has problems of her own.

She has hooked up with a racist guy. She has also told a lie about a tragedy that happened to her uncle during the Partition of India-Pakistan, in her history class. Her best friend, Farah has started wearing hijab and they are sort of drifting apart. And then there are the incompatibility issues between her parents. Life is not easy for Shabnam.

But one day she meets a handsome boy called Jamie, who gets her a summer job. They meet daily and soon something, which Shabnam thinks is beautiful, starts developing between them. At the same time, she also discovers the realm of Urdu poetry. Shabnam couldn't have hoped for a better summer. But is she ready to step into a new world? Is she ready to experience the sweet-bitter reality of this world? She must know what exactly is 'that thing we call a heart'.

***My Verdict**

I was not very eager to pick up this book and kept on choosing other books over this one. I expected this book to be a typical teenage romance full of clichés. But boy, was I wrong. This book turned out to be so different and better from what I expected it to be. If anything, there are no clichés in this romance. Sure, the central plot concerns falling in love and stuff like that. But the way the whole story is built around that plot is simply remarkable.

It was quite refreshing for me to read this book. There are so many interesting characters in this book. I like how perfectly imperfect Shabnam is. And then there is Farah who wears hijab and breaks all the stereotypes. She is undoubtedly my favourite character. Shabnam's father is another fascinating character, who is fun to read about.

I really enjoyed reading this book. I didn't want this book to end. In fact, it kept me mesmerised even after I had finished it. But it was a bit difficult to get into the story initially- especially in the first chapter, where the author throws a lot of characters into your face just like that. But then it becomes very engrossing.

I admire the author for having touched upon so many things. But certain things felt disoriented (not out of place though) in the whole structure of the story. Like this homosexuality thing was not needed at all. Even the partition story didn't contribute to the main plot in anyway (but it did contribute in the development of Shabnam's character). Further, it seemed to me that the author was promoting Urdu poetry in a way through the characters.

But these are all things that can be ignored. I loved how Shaba Karim has portrayed the world. She has painted a world that is exactly like the real world. The only thing that I didn't like in the book is how Shabnam's parents' relationship starts improving after her father reads that book on relationships. It is not that easy. Had she left it the way it was, I would have been happier. But that doesn't stop me from declaring that this book is a favourite read of 2018, so far. Recommended.

My Rating: **** (4/5)

Lauren ? (YABookers) says

Disclaimer: I received a free copy via Edelweiss for review purposes.

Shabnam is a Pakistani-American teen, just finishing up high school when her friendship with her feisty BFF Farah begins to unravel when Farah starts to wear a headscarf without consulting Shabnam. Shabnam starts to make some kind of bad decisions - from kissing the most racist boy in school to telling a huge lie about her family and the partition of India. The end of her school year is really starting to suck; but now Shabnam needs to get through the summer before college. Things start looking up when she meets the charming and romantic Jamie who gets her a job at his Aunt's pie shack for the summer. Shabnam starts discovering her first love, Urdu poetry, and begins to repair her friendship with Farah - and with Farah's help, Shabnam discovers the truth about Jamie, and in turn, learns about the important of friendship and love in all it's forms.

I really loved *That Thing We Call A Heart*. It deals with so many issues but it's done so seamlessly. It's about love and friendship, heartbreak, family, Urdu poetry, and forgotten history. Not to mention the characters are so well developed. I loved our protagonist Shabnam, and I especially loved Farah - our badass, hijab wearing, feminist BFF.

Whilst romance is pretty big chunk of the book, *That Thing We Call A Heart* is definitely a book that explores love between friends and family. I loved her friendship with Farah. At times, Shabnam is a bad friend - she's selfish, and not exactly a good listener. When her best friend Farah starts wearing a headscarf, Shabnam is not exactly understanding; subconsciously, she starts to distance herself from Farah. I absolutely adored Farah - she's empowering, feminist, funny, feisty and I would absolutely read a book dedicated solely to her. Thankfully, as the book progresses, Shabnam develops and repairs her relationship with Farah and realises how selfish she was being.

Additionally, I adored her relationship with her parents. I loved her affectionate and caring mother, and I even enjoyed her passionate, yet lazy, father. I especially loved how Shabnam and her father connected over their love of Urdu poetry - it was definitely a lovely addition. I'm a sucker for loving and supporting familial relationships so this book is everything I look for in contemporary YA.

And last but not least, there's lots of talk of what it's like to be a contemporary Muslim girl, defying conventional stereotypes, what's it's like to be a hijab-wearing Muslim girl and how that doesn't necessarily = good Muslim girl.

"I'm too Muslim for the non-Muslims, but not Muslim enough for the Muslims. And the weird thing is, I realized I've been trying to prove to people that I'm cool, that yeah, I don't drink and whatever but I'm smart and funny and extremely un-oppressed, but I wonder, at the end of the day, will they secretly think a girl in hijab can never be that cool simply because she wears

hijab? But then I think, why does it matter what they think of me? I refuse to spend my life proving myself, not to the Muslims, not to the non-Muslims. I'm going to wear a headscarf and I'm going to pray and fast and I'm going to smoke ganja and I'm going to get into Harvard Medical School."

There's also discussions on the Partition of India and the Bosnian Genocide, two often forgotten parts of history.

This book is a real gem. It tackles so many important relevant issues and I think its messages about love and identity will resonate with a lot of readers.

Cait • A Page with a View says

Publication date: May 9, 2017

If you're only reading a few books this spring, make sure this is one of them. The whole thing is so well done!!

This was a coming-of-age story that takes place during Shabnam Qureshia's last summer before college. When Shabnam's best friend Farah starts wearing hijab they begin to drift apart. Shabnam hates all of the attention where everything is now focused on Islam, so she doesn't always support her friend in public. Farah "worried that if she was too rude or sarcastic [people] might walk away with a bad impression of a religion that already had enough negative press. But this also meant she had to suppress her natural impulses, and it made her less fun."

Farah fashions her headscarf into Princess Leia buns, wears a scarf with raised fists, has a totally unique sense of style, and is just unapologetically herself. She's an amazingly inspirational feminist and I'd love to have a whole other book with her rants:

"I'm too Muslim for the non-Muslims, but not Muslim enough for the Muslims... but then I think, why does it matter what they think of me? I refuse to spend my life proving myself... I'm going to wear a headscarf and I'm going to pray and fast and I'm going to smoke ganja and I'm going to get into Harvard Medical School."

"Rapunzel, my ass. I've got barbed wire and a moat around this tower."

"That's why guys get away with being shitheads, because their baseline is so goddamn low, even lower if they're cute. Oh, you'd never date rape me? Awesome! Oh, you actually listened to something I said without talking over me? You're such a great guy!"

At the start of the story Shabnam is embarrassed to be seen with her great-uncle who wears a black vest & shalwar kameez and has a long beard. While she's avoiding being seen with him at the mall she meets a random cute guy. Those two end up spending the summer working at a pie stand and Shabnam falls in love super fast like a Bollywood movie. (I wasn't that into the romance, but luckily it's NOT the cliche summer

YA love story at all).

Shabnam's socially awkward mathematician father has a deep love for Urdu poetry and they grow closer throughout the story by discussing it. I adored her father and all of the other scenes of ordinary moments like the Bosnian men playing cards in the donut shop. (PS I neeeeed a donut shop like that to be near me).

This story really is about different types of love -- friendship, families, and romantic. All of the discussion of Sufi poets & love was SO well done, too. I think I might have been so enthusiastically into this story because it involved several topics I really care about (I've spent a lot of time studying the Bosnian genocide, Partition, and Sufi poets, so that was a solid blend for me). Those discussions were really powerful and so, so important. But at the same time I think this story is just straight up relatable no matter what!! If you know nothing about those topics, this would be an amazing place to start.

The writing is really strong and gives Shabnam's narration a totally genuine and lovable tone. It was refreshing to see such casual & open discussions about love, sex, how people say ignorant things, body odor, religion, etc because it made all of the characters totally realistic. And the book feels like a character study, which actually worked really well because characters themselves are what make this book so utterly charming and powerful. I had to stop reading halfway through and preorder a finished copy because I was so into this story!

Thank you to the publisher for sending me an ARC. These quotes were taken from an ARC and are subject to change upon publication.

Hayatun Nafysa says

Overdue review of this book: This book is about Shabnam, a Pakistani girl who's born and raised in the US. This book starts with her relationship with her feisty Muslimah best friend, Farah, strained, and as the story goes, we get to see Shabnam's romance, which we get to pluck morale lesson from, and how Shabnam mends her friendship.

This book is wonderful because it talks about Islam, Sufism, and Urdu poetry, which the last two I didn't know much about until I read this book (I find both beautiful, by the way, and would love to get into them more!). Part of the reasons why it's wonderful is also because I **STRONGLY RELATE** to not just Shabnam, but Farah too, as a Muslimah.

Farah and I have similar views, including that of herself as a Muslimah, how Islam perceives women, and feminism. *"I'm too Muslim for the non-Muslims, but not Muslim enough for the Muslims"*. And from what I infer, Shabnam, despite having Muslim parents, is not too practicing because you can see that she worries about people's judgments and even display fears, if she ever displays her Islamic roots, which I can relate to as well having lived in a Western country, where Islamophobia is sometimes institutionalized. I learn from this book that ultimately no two Muslims are the same, and even if you choose to dress like a goth with your Hijab, even if you choose to drink alcohol, or smoke weed, you're still a Muslim, and that it should be your private business with God.

Shabnam is also so unapologetically a teenager, and that is perfectly captured and written in this book. She longs for a new beginning after high school ends, she lives her life as a teenager, she explores her prospect of summer romance and sexuality, she thinks her parents can be uncool sometimes but later we also get to see

how things work themselves around and how her relationship with her parents get to be closer over the summer.

To sum up, this book is a very refreshing read. For non-muslim readers, it might enlighten you to the different kinds of Muslims there are, and more than just a story about teenage's first love, it explores the importance of friendship and family.

4 out of 5 stars.

Lisa says

I enjoyed this one! It was a quick read that boiled down to: growing up. Shabnam is a wonderfully flawed character. I appreciated getting a closer look at Pakistani culture and Muslim background. A contemporary to add to your TBR for sure.

Karla Mae (Reads and Thoughts) says

ARC Kindly provided by HarperTeen thru Edelweiss

It is rare to find a book with a Muslim lead-character. So I always get excited whenever I encounter one and read it. The Thing We Call a Heart might be the 3rd Muslim book that I've read and I'm happy and excited to be given a copy for a review. *wink*

"I had a simple plan. Get through the summer. Go to Penn. Begin anew. Don't look back."

Just like it is being rare to find a book with a Muslim lead-character it is also rare for me to find a book that I consider to be totally character-driven and reading The Thing We Call a Heart is one of those rare times.

Shabnam is a complex character. I had a hard time gauging who she really is I begin the story. She's awkward, self-conscious but intelligent. She came off self-centered for me on most parts of the book and she frustrates the crap out of me most of the time as well but I still liked her – she's flawed and she's real.

Farah is Shabnam's best friend and I like her just as much as I like Shabnam. They did have a bit of a fall-out in the beginning of the story after Farah started wearing a hijab without telling Shabnam but they did manage to work things out between them.

Of course, a love interest paved its way as well into the story into the form of a non-Muslim boy who's very interested into the Muslim culture named Jamie. I never actually liked Jamie. I'm skeptical about his character from the beginning but it seems to fade whenever he makes or feel Shabnam special but nonetheless all throughout the story, I never liked him.

To say I'm surprised how Shabnam and Jamie's story went is a complete understatement. I'm not going to go into details on what happened between these two but for me, the right thing happened because it opened a lot more for Shabnam.

It never gets old learning about the Muslim culture and history. I enjoyed reading about Urdu Poetry and learning about The Partition.

I love how different the Shabnam I met at the beginning of the story to the Shabnam on the last page of this book. Overall, this story is all about growing up. Figuring what you wanted in life and trying to understand life itself.

“Though sorrow is life destroying, we cannot escape it, as we have a heart.”

For more reviews, please feel free to visit Reads and Thoughts

Haniya (Voracious Bookling) says

New Edit: I might delete this review cause I'm sick of all the comments! No offence to anyone! ? I have become so scared to post my opinions now! :(

New Edit: My mention about Prophet's Balls wasn't accurate! I'm so sorry! Farah and Shabnam just say jokingly a hadith (which doesn't exist btw) about Prophet telling to kick someone in the balls if they hurt your bestie. Thanks to Abeer for pointing out the mistake! :) So sorry I interpreted these lines wrongly. I was just so overwhelmed by Farah's character.

P.S: Other than this part, I still strongly standby with my whole review!

Original Post: <http://booknauthors.blogspot.com/2017...> (Along with shots of problematic pages)

NOTE: THIS IS A NEGATIVE REVIEW OF THIS BOOK AND DO NOT LEAVE ANY HATE COMMENTS PLEASE IF YOU REALLY LIKED THIS BOOK! THIS IS MY OPINION AND I HAVE A RIGHT TO SHARE MY VIEWS.

This book revolves around Shabnam, a Muslim girl whose mom is a practising Muslim and idk what her dad is, he's either an atheist or a Muslim. She has a best friend, Farah, whose a kind-ish practising Muslim. And then we have the cutest character, Chotay Dada, who faced great struggles during the migration of Pakistanis!

Now on to what I found problematic, the first thing is that I'm a Muslim and whenever I see wrong kind-ish stuff in books revolving around Muslims, it triggers me. Shabnam is a Muslim but her life isn't totally Muslim like, it's like she kisses random guys, lets guys touch her and has no issues whatsoever with losing her virginity (Its prohibited in Islam to date guys or kiss them or loose your virginity without nikkah). Her friend Farah wears Hijab, prays and fasts (which I loved) but she does drugs like ummm what?!!? There was not a single proper Muslim character other than Chotay Dada. His character is legit so good! Her father is so confusing, one time he goes like Qur'an should be changed as people are evolving and the other time he's like Allah is the best (Dude you're an adult you have a daughter, stop being confused and choose what you want to follow). There's also a usage of fabricated hadith and the denial of a Hadith by Farah! It's okay if Farah is a feminist but she can't deny what has been said by our prophet (SAW) as she's herself a Muslim. Her relationship with the white boy was also questionable making the book totally non Muslim. It would have been great if the guy was a Muslim!

Please I don't want any hate comments! This is just my opinion and I had to share it! The writing skills of the

author is amazing but I just couldn't get my head around the plot! It's totally your choice if you want to read it! You might love it but it might be triggering for some Muslims!

Jen Ryland says

Loved this one so much!

Ah, that amazing feeling when you start a book and just click instantly with the narrator. I fell so in love with Shabnam's curious, snarky, sometimes politically incorrect take on life.

This book takes place during the end of Shabnam's senior year and the summer between high school and college. Shabnam's stuck at home with her parents, forced to escort her visiting great-uncle to the Apple store for fun. When she's offered a job at a pie shack, she jumps at it, and develops a crush on her cute co-worker, a college student.

Shabnam is Muslim and a first generation Pakistani-American. She's puzzled by her parents' marriage (ha-who isn't?) finding it hard to reconcile her mathematician father's detached absentmindedness with his preoccupation with Urdu ghazals (a structured yet ardent love poem). When she's called on in class when the class is discovering the Partition of India in 1947 (creating two separate nations, India and Pakistan) she impulsively makes up a huge lie about her family's experiences at the time.

Shabnam has also drifted apart from her former best friend, Farah. When Farah started wearing hijab, Shabnam didn't understand how her fiercely independent, feminist friend could adopt what she saw as an oppressive custom. The story follows Shabnam's romance with Jamie and traces the ups and downs of her relationship with Farah.

I just love books like this, books that teach me about a culture I'm not familiar with, but also remind me that we all have so much in common -- embarrassing parents, friendship troubles, dreams and insecurities about love.

Highly recommend this to readers who love irreverent narrators and coming of age stories, and interesting portrayals of female friendship.

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The FTC would like you to know that the publisher provided me a free advance copy of this book, that free books can be enjoyable or not, and other readers may disagree with my opinion.
