



Revenge

Tasrma Naslin

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Forced into exile for her fictional examinations of Islam and its faults, living with the possibility of a fatwa against her becoming a reality, Taslima Nasrin continues to explore her chosen topics in her writings. One might think that she would find it difficult to create a fictional life for a heroine that's more fraught with dangerous decisions than her own, but one would be wrong.

Revenge is Jhumur's tale, a story of a young Bangladeshi woman who thought she'd married the man of her dreams. She's an educated, modern woman with both male and female friends and expects her intended to accept her lifestyle and support it. Instead, she's forced into cultural slavery once she marries Haroon and moves into his family's house. Readers familiar with the behavior of possessive, jealous, and abusive males will recognize Haroon as one of those males. Jhumur is stumped by Haroon's behavior, until she tries to tell him she's pregnant six weeks after their marriage. He ignores her until she pesters him into admitting that he believes the child she carries isn't his, and that she pressed him into marrying her to cover up a supposed affair. A shocked Jhumur tries in vain to convince him otherwise. After he forces her to do something she'd never have done on her own, Jhumur decides that she'll do something equally shocking, and thus regain her self-esteem and prior lifestyle.

Western readers familiar with the movie *She-Devil* will recognize similar elements in Nasrin's novel: jealousy, infidelity, weak personal characters, and more. Turning the tables is the focal point of both the film and this book, and in both cases, characters who thought they'd won something realize their prizes are empty.

Anyone who's seen a few movies made in Bollywood will see many of the same threads running through *Revenge*. Perhaps the multiple deities of the Hindu faith inform Nasrin's novel as they do many Indian films; tales of jealousy, love, and revenge aren't unknown in that genre. Such a foundation certainly makes for involving reading and unexpected twists, and Nasrin has plenty of both in this novel. *Revenge* is an adult novel for adult tastes; readers seeking a change from the American version of romantic foibles should be pleasantly surprised by this novel.

J. G. STINSON (September / October 2010)

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