

## The Full Moon Bride

### Excerpt

### Chapter 1

Like most second-generation Indian-Americans, I'd dismissed arranged marriage as a ridiculous and antiquated custom. Tying oneself to a man one hardly knew, and pledging life-long love and fidelity on top of that?

"For a modern woman it's nothing short of insanity," I'd mocked many a time.

But after reaching adulthood and realizing that everybody in my big South Indian Telugu family was married in that fashion and looked utterly content, except for my uncle Srinath, whose wife was suspected of being a hermaphrodite, the concept didn't seem so absurd. I figured I'd even give arranged marriage a try. That is, if I could find a man to marry me—and it was a huge *if*.

So far, I'd acquired an Ivy League education and moderate success as a big-city attorney, but I'd come up empty in the marriage department, perhaps because I'd distanced myself from the madness of the dating scene.

If it weren't for the fact that I really and truly wanted to get married, I wouldn't have ventured into the old-fashioned Indian form of torment called bride viewing. Fortunately it wasn't as bad as it was in India, where girls were often put on display and expected to tolerate their potential in-laws' scrutiny like cows at a cattle auction.

Here in the U.S. it was just a matter of boy meeting girl and family meeting family in an informal setting. There was generally no undue pressure exerted on either party to marry. But convention required them to be polite and respectful of each other. However, the system was biased in our male-worshipping culture. The respect shown by the girl and her parents to the boy and his family often bordered on sycophantic.

At the moment, standing before the oval mirror in my elegant bedroom with its honey oak and pastel furnishings, I gave myself a once over. In spite of the clever use of cosmetics, the face staring back at me seemed rather plain—ordinary nose, full mouth, curious eyes fringed by dark lashes, tweezed eyebrows. Nothing beyond plain Miss Soorya Giri.

Being the potential bride in yet another bride viewing was hardly pleasant. The mild fluttering in my tummy was gradually escalating into an anxiety attack at the thought of meeting

one more eligible man.

With a damp palm pressed against my belly, I waited for my bachelor and his family to arrive. I stood in my bride viewing finery—the whole nine yards—or in this case, six. The sari happened to be six diaphanous yards of silk—soft, glossy, South Indian silk.

My suitor and his family were coming all the way from Kansas City, making the occasion all the more unnerving. Looking outside the picture window, I contemplated if I should make a quick and silent escape into the backyard.