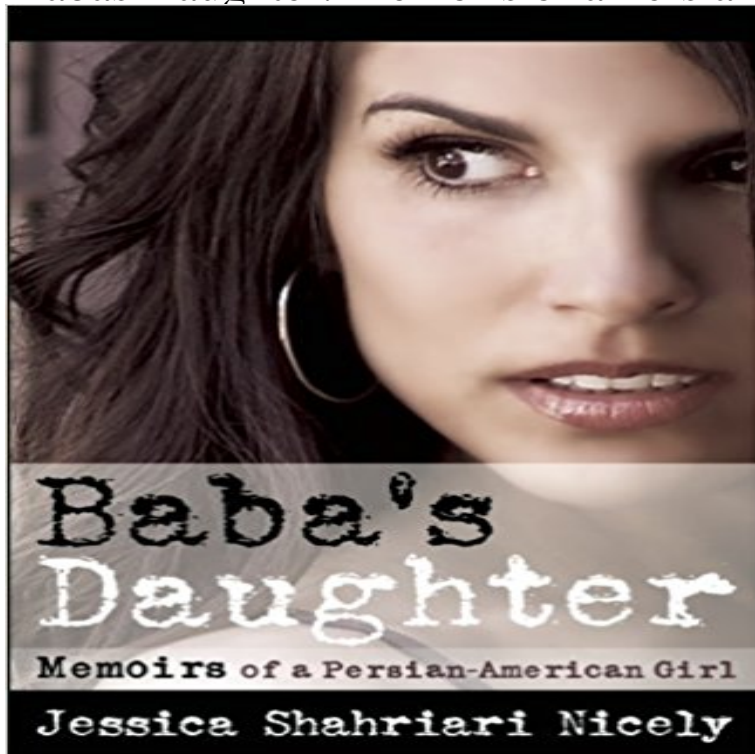


Babas Daughter: Memoirs of a Persian-American Girl



In 1997, Jessica Shahriari Nicely stepped onstage in the Miss USA pageant and projected poise and confidence to the world. This image, however, masked the pain and anguish of growing up in a turbulent home ruled by an alcoholic, abusive father. Even early on, Jessica knew that life with her Iranian father who ran a nightclub was not typical, nor was it normal for her mother, a stripper, to run off and abandon her family. And yet normalcy was something this girl yearned for, something that spurred her to create a detailed vision for her future. In a matter-of-fact tone, Jessica now tells the story of her life. She begins by recounting a childhood marked by loss and punctuated by physical violence, emotional abuse, and shocking neglect. She dodges bags of rice, recoils from kicks to the body, and somehow catches a kitchen table hurled her way. All the while, help from the outside world is disappointing at best. Yet, as her story continues, you'll read about how she formed relationships with caring extended family members and friends, and how these provided a sense of stability and hope. You'll also learn how she developed the fortitude and incredible spirit to not only endure the incredible suffering in her home but to emerge a happy, productive adult who is not afraid to pursue her dreams and to help others do so as well. In her father or Daddy, as she calls him, the author portrays the complexity that is found in all human beings. She recalls loving memories of a man who was giving and protective in nature, as well as episodes of terror at the hands of someone prone to bouts of rage and unpredictable violence, with a capacity to incite severe anxiety and downright fear in his family. As Jessica finally escapes the clutches of her father and grows into adulthood, she begins living life on her own terms. In time, she also forms a new relationship with her father and, ultimately, is able to forgive him. She comes to better

understand his struggles to assimilate into a new culture and to overcome an addiction, and she fully recognizes the disappointments, shame, and failure he faced time and again during his life. While her new sympathetic view does not erase the pain he inflicted upon her, she finds freedom and peace from letting go of the past. At its core, this is a story of resilience. Shahriari Nicely defies the odds by graduating from university, competing in the Miss USA pageant, and helping hundreds of abused and neglected children through important volunteer work and her own nonprofit organization, Winged Hope. The book offers encouragement, especially, to anyone currently living with abuse, reminding them of their own inner strength to persevere even through dire circumstances and move forward to create and live out their own vision of a normal, happy life. Jessica Shahriari Nicely lives with her husband and two children in Arizona.

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