

**SHAZIA OMAR****Like a Diamond in the Sky**

Fiction Mistry

200 pp.

Origin: Bangladesh

**ABOUT THE STORY:** At twenty-one, Deen is dismayed by the poverty around him and trapped in negativity. Alienated from family and society, heroin is his drug of choice. Deen and his partner in crime, AJ, ride high on acid and amphetamines, philosophize in the university canteen, party in a politician's posh pad and contemplate God at a roadside tea stall. AJ has been able to get ahead in life as the henchman of a smuggler in precious stones. Against a background of jet set parties, robberies and trips on LSD, singing *Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds* and *Heroin*, the two get entangled in the manoeuvres of the corrupt police of Dhaka, who pursue small-fry pushers but protect traffickers. A simple noir with a classic construction: the tormented

love for a girl, the boss's pistol and a haul of diamonds are all the ingredients of a novel of that genre, but the setting is unusual. As they pass through the squalid and poor alleys or the tree-lined drives of luxury residences by motor rickshaw, accompanied by the classics of international pop and local Hindi hits, the two protagonists are on the path to a surprising and unpredictable ending.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Shazia Omar is 29 years old and grew up in Dhaka. She graduated in Psychology in New Hampshire and worked as a financial analyst for Lehman Brothers in New York. Caught up in the tragedy of 9/11, after an incredible escape from the collapse of the skyscraper where her office was, she decided it was time for a new life. After taking a master's degree in social psychology in London, she trained in a rehabilitation centre for heroin-addicts in Bombay, using this experience as background material for this novel, her first. She is currently living in Bangladesh with her family and is responsible for communication with an agency of the World Bank active in development in shanty towns.

**PRESS REVIEWS:**

"A magnificent first novel and one hopes and prays that Omar is already well into the throes of her next offering." *Dawn.com*

"It is hard to write about a new nation which has already slipped into the quagmire of poverty and denial through drugs. For that reason and the many instances of razor sharp writing, besides its being a very good account of the wasteful nature of the drugs way of life, the book makes a good and racy read." *Businessweek*

"This is one of those rare books which evoke the sense of smell, the perfumes and intoxicants." *Businessweek*

"For most part, this book reads like a film script." *SAWNET, The South Asian Women's Network*

**FOCUS ON:**

- The most popular literary genre set for the first time in Bangladesh, one of the most poor countries in the world.
- Rights sold for publication in Arabic.