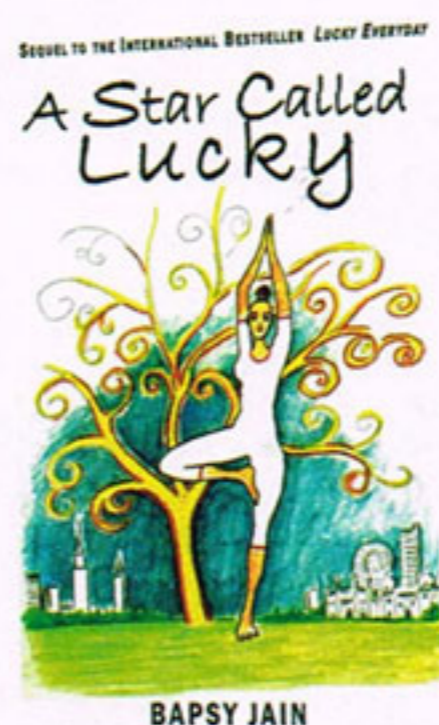


LUCK OR SOMETHING LIKE IT

A Star Called Lucky by Bapsy Jain is a quick, enjoyable read that takes you through a journey that's both adventurous and spiritual.



A STAR CALLED LUCKY

Author: Bapsy Jain
 Publisher: VOOK and
 MZI Global, New York.
 Price: ₹815

“Not a word of what you're working on, understand? What I have just told you is of the highest level of national security. If you leak a word of this—you'll end up in some place that'll make Guantanamo look like a Carnival Cruise.”

Lucky Boyce was leading a normal life in the big city—if you can call teaching Yoga to prison inmates, raising a baby as a single mother and working on a proposal for an education programme for the state department of corrections that—when she unwittingly finds herself in the middle of another adventure, or misadventure, again. Three years after a series of unusual events saw her shifting base from Mumbai to New York, life will come full circle for Lucky as she finds herself negotiating the crowded lanes of the chaotic city that was once her home, looking for a Tibetan doctor who prefers not to be found to unlock the secret of a mysterious magic mushroom that may hold the key to life-long good health. At stake are the ambitions and hedonistic agendas of her boss and Global Wellness Council head Clevis Coleman, her cosy New York world with her son, Sean and boyfriend, Amay, but more importantly, her life.

Part mystery, part thriller, part spiritual and philosophical exploration, Bapsy Jain's *A Star Called Lucky* takes us back to the world of the spirited, plucky character she first introduced the world to in *Lucky Everyday*. This new chapter of Lucky's life is just as dramatic as her first, if not more, and finds her confronting questions about good and bad, right and wrong, and the meaning of life itself.

Though the situations she's trapped in are far from normal, the everyday dilemmas she confronts are very relatable, as she tries to juggle work with raising a child as a single mother or negotiates the contours of her relationship with Amay: he's nice, loving, supportive—almost perfect—but is that what Lucky wants? Her innate intelligence and intuition help navigate her through tricky situations, but this time, does Lucky have more on her plate than she can handle?

This east-meets-west drama has all the necessary elements of a compelling, engaging story. Jain takes us into Lucky's world, helps us visualise her journey as she moves through cities and countries in her quest for the Tibetan doctor. The book has liberal nuggets

of knowledge—about the territorial conflict in China, its tenuous relationship with Tibet, the mysterious world of hackers, probability theories—that help make the ride more enjoyable and informative.

The book is written from a perspective that will cater to both global and Indian sensibilities. It is, for the most part, based in USA but Bapsy's—and Lucky's—Indian origin and the identity that lends is aptly present in the book, even in the knowing description of Mumbai, from the sea-facing promenades to the crowded gullies of Zaveri Bazaar.

Jain's launch into the book is spectacular—a set of five short stories, under the section titled *Players*, introduces us to the primary characters in the novel, though we don't know it yet. As the book progresses, we will find ourselves connecting fragments of information to the characters described in the short stories that will help us decipher who's who. More than that, these add a certain depth to the characterisation that helps the reader understand what each one's roots are, what made them who they are today.

These stories also display Jain's writing ability better than the rest of the book. It is in these stories that, free of the constraints of a linear plot where something always needs to happen, Jain comes into her own as a writer. Well-written, self-contained just as short stories, this part of the book was my favourite. If the first few pages of the book are a make-or-break for a reader, these definitely got my attention.

The book represents a blend of two kinds of worlds that combine to form one where the capitalist West needs the spirituality, mysticism and natural medicine techniques that the so-called Orient represents. Through Lucky's character, we are shown a world where for success—however you choose to define it—you need intelligence but also intuition. It's that what Lucky brings to the table that her sets the protagonist apart from those she is working for, and it's that intuition, and her need to connect with people, that helps her find her way.

Pick this up for a quick, enjoyable read that also prompts you to do some soul-searching.

— SOUMYA RAO