One of KASHMIRA SHETH’S earliest memories is of her aunt’s wedding. Kashmira was four years old and she still cherishes the memory of the festivities in her grandparents’ house. Since then she has attended many weddings but, unlike Sona, has never successfully stolen a groom’s shoes. She is the author of many acclaimed books, including MY DARMA WEARS A SARI, MONSOON AFTERNOON, and TIGER IN MY SOUP. Sheth teaches at Pine Manor College, in their Solstice MFA in Creative Writing Program. She lives in Wisconsin.

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Sona has been given an important job for her big sister’s wedding: she has to steal the groom’s shoes. She’s never attended a wedding before, so she’s unfamiliar with this Indian tradition— as well as many of the other magical experiences that will occur before and during the special event. But with the assistance of her know-it-all cousin Vishal, Sona finds a way to steal the shoes and get a very special reward.

If Sona can steal the groom’s shoes, she’ll win the wedding game. What will her reward be?
M Y G R A N D P A R E N T S A N D M Y C O U S I N
have come from India for my sister Nisha-ben’s wedding. There is so much to do. Even I have a job!
“Sona,” my grandmother says. “Will you be in charge of stealing the groom’s shoes?”

“Why would I do that, Dadima?” I ask.

“It’s a tradition for the bride’s sister,” she tells me. “It’s a way for our families to get to know each other.”

“I already know Anil-ji,” I say, “and what will I do with his shoes, anyway?”

My cousin Vishal sprinkles a handful of petals on my head. “It’s like a fun game,” he says. “You figure out a way to steal his shoes and then he has to bargain with you to get them back.”

I shoo him away.

“Anil’s brother will be guarding his shoes,” Nisha-ben says. “You’ll have to trick Jitu.”

“I’ll do it!” I say. But I’m not sure.
I've only met Jitu once. I hope I recognize him. “Will Anil-ji and Jitu be here to get their hands painted?”

“Only girls apply mehndi,” Vishal snorts. “Don’t you know anything?”
I stay quiet.
“Did Anil-ji get a white horse to ride?” Vishal asks.
“Of course,” Nisha-ben replies.
“A horse!” I gasp. “Do you get to ride one too, Nisha-ben?”
“Only the groom does, na?” Vishal gallops around the room. “That’s how he gets to the wedding.”

Even though Vishal is younger than me, he thinks he knows everything. He’s been to lots of weddings, but this is my first one. It’s not fair.