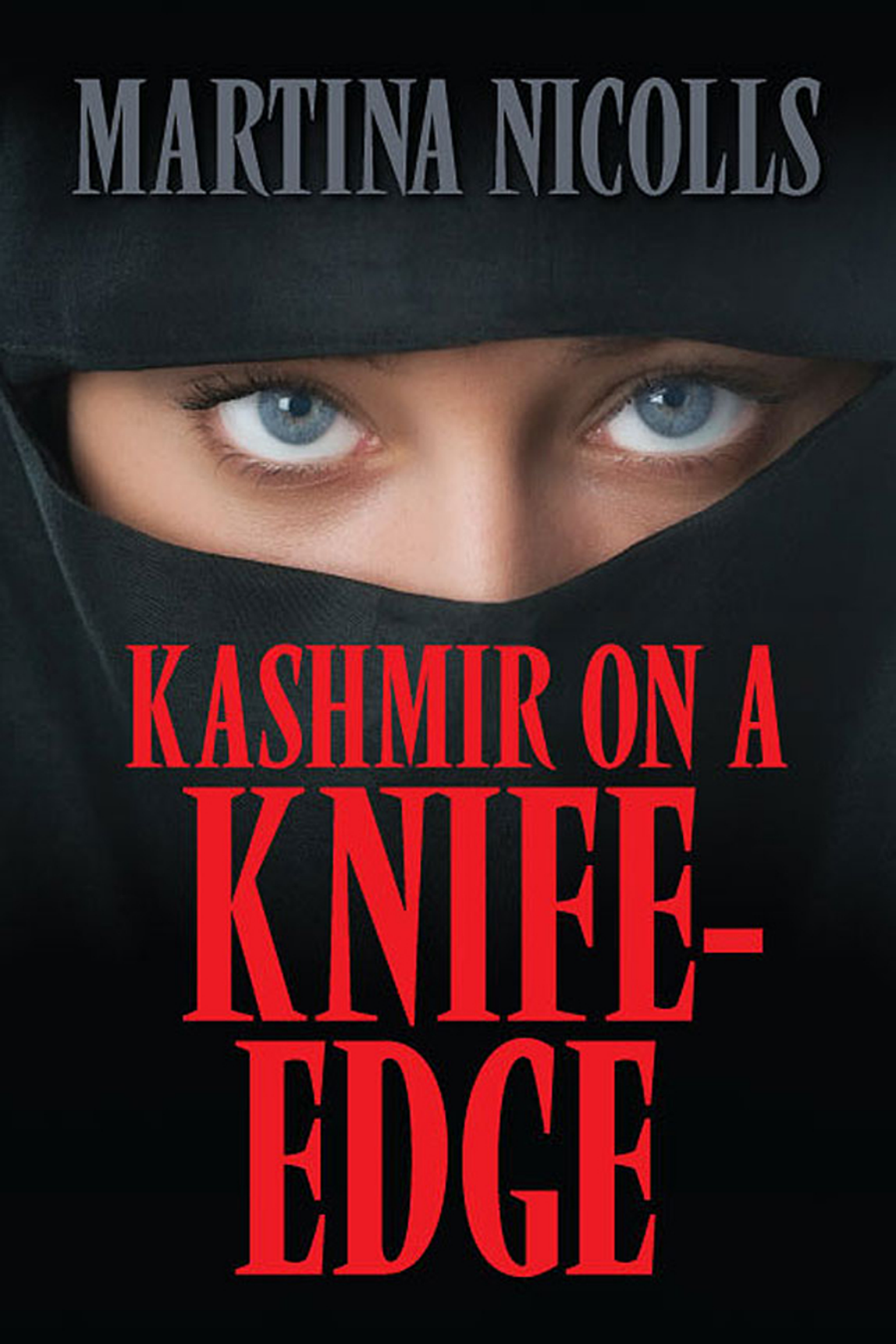


MARTINA NICOLLS



KASHMIR ON A
KNIFE-
EDGE

**KASHMIR
ON A
KNIFE-EDGE**

**BY
MARTINA NICOLLS**



STRATEGIC BOOK GROUP

Copyright © 2010

All rights reserved – Martina Nicolls

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, or by any information storage retrieval system, without the permission, in writing, from the publisher.

Strategic Book Group
P.O. Box 333
Durham CT 06422
www.StrategicBookClub.com

ISBN: 978-1-61204-677-8

Printed in the United States of America

Book Design: Bonita S. Watson

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

**FOR THE PEOPLE OF KASHMIR: JEWELS IN AN
EXQUISITE LAND.**

**FOR MY FAMILY, FRIENDS AND FANS ACROSS THE
GLOBE WHO WANTED TO READ THIS NOVEL BEFORE
IT BEGAN, I THANK YOU FOR YOUR ENCOURAGEMENT
AND SUPPORT.**

CONTENTS

PART I - MARCH 2002

Chapter 1	Impending Doom	1
Chapter 2	The Journey.	4
Chapter 3	Muzaffarabad	14
Chapter 4	A Confluence of Rivers.	18
Chapter 5	The Minister's Plan.	23
Chapter 6	The First Morning.	28
Chapter 7	Gadi's Secret.	35
Chapter 8	Tea and Vodka.	38
Chapter 9	Jorja Sees Imran	42
Chapter 10	Operation Anaconda	54
Chapter 11	Shaking	57
Chapter 12	Pins and Needles.	63
Chapter 13	Letter to a Lover	67
Chapter 14	The Complexity of Complexions	71
Chapter 15	A Godsend.	76
Chapter 16	Unrest	79
Chapter 17	Couplings	82
Chapter 18	A Knife-Edge	90

Chapter 19	The Photographer	94
Chapter 20	Stairway to Heaven	101
Chapter 21	A Date With Destiny	104
Chapter 22	The Intrusion	107
Chapter 23	A Surprise Package	112
Chapter 24	A Lesson on Latrines	116
Chapter 25	A Weekend in Islamabad	121
Chapter 26	The Church Bombing	124
Chapter 27	An American in Pakistani Clothes	130
Chapter 28	Do Not Worry	139
Chapter 29	Pakistan Day	144
Chapter 30	Melody Queen	149
Chapter 31	The Internet Café	156
Chapter 32	The Thrill of the Tailor's Tape	163
Chapter 33	Another Tremor	167
Chapter 34	Purdah	169
Chapter 35	Naked	174
Chapter 36	The Dinner Party	177
Chapter 37	The Old Hag	182

PART II – APRIL 2002

Chapter 38	Why the Poor Stay Poor and Why Osama is Still Hiding	190
Chapter 39	A Visit to the Doctor	198
Chapter 40	Mother and Son	206
Chapter 41	Spermatization	211
Chapter 42	Loneliness	219
Chapter 43	Literacy and Cows	225
Chapter 44	Arranged Marriages	231
Chapter 45	Marriage Proposals	239
Chapter 46	As You Wish	246
Chapter 47	A Tale of Two Houses	249
Chapter 48	White Skin, Pink Skin	253
Chapter 49	Osama's Eyes	256
Chapter 50	Temporary Prisoner	264

Chapter 51	Terrorism and Taliban	274
Chapter 52	The Death of Reason.	280
Chapter 53	A Stab in the Heart	283
Chapter 54	How Many?.	289
Chapter 55	Shareef’s Company.	294
Chapter 56	In Control	298
Chapter 57	The Referendum Question	301
Chapter 58	The Road Home	310

PART III – MAY 2002

Chapter 59	A Win and a Loss for Pakistan	316
Chapter 60	Increasing Tensions.	321
Chapter 61	Preparing for War	324
Chapter 62	Hopes Rise	330
Author’s Notes	334

PART ONE

MARCH 2002

CHAPTER 1

IMPENDING DOOM

Tragedy was surely on its way. Beauty attracted it and death confirmed it. Jorja Himmermann had entered Muzaffarabad, the jewel and capital of Pakistan-administered Azad Kashmir, a city between two volatile conflicts. Pakistan bordered Afghanistan to the north, India to the east, Iran to the west, and the Arabian Sea to the south. In the northeast was the disputed territory of Kashmir. Pakistan and India's dispute over Kashmir had escalated and the American war against terror was at a climax in Afghanistan.

It was 2002, the International Year of the Mountain. The Pir Panjal Range of the Himalaya spread across northern Pakistan and Kashmir. The Kashmir dispute had raged since Pakistan's and India's independence from the British in 1947. Each country claimed it as a part of their territory. A rebellion during Independence, or Partition, led to the establishment of the Line

of Control—a cease-fire line—that bisected the area. To the east of the line was the valley of Kashmir, Jammu and Ladakh administered by India. To the west was Azad Kashmir, which had its own government, although administered by Pakistan. Azad Kashmir was Pakistan’s “Jugular Vein”—strangulation by India would be certain death.

From the Sangam Hotel, Jorja’s line of sight moved from the mountain peak behind Muzaffarabad to the sprawl of the city and the river flowing through it. Two rivers—the Neelum and the Jhelum—converged below her balcony, clashing fiercely to form white surface spume that masked their turbidity. They were the lifeblood of Pakistan and Kashmir. The Jhelum River, a tributary of India’s grand Indus River was Pakistan’s and Kashmir’s main water source, critical to their existence. This was, the Kashmiri’s believed, the real reason for the relentless conflict between Pakistan and India. If India seized Azad Kashmir and cut off its river, Pakistan would be doomed. India held both Azad Kashmir and Pakistan by the throat. One squeeze would prove fatal.

After the series of terror attacks by four hijacked aircraft on the United States on September 11, 2001, the American government declared “War on Terrorism” and vowed it would hunt down al-Qaeda’s leader Osama bin Laden and depose the Taliban—the protectors of terrorism. The alleged mastermind behind the attacks that killed 2,976 people in New York City, Shanksville in Pennsylvania, and the Pentagon near Washington, D.C. was last known to be living in the mountainous border regions between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Foreign assistance workers in Kashmir were evacuated. Three months later, the Indian Parliament was attacked, purportedly by Pakistani insurgents. Indian and Pakistani defense forces were at their highest state of alert since their last war in 1971.

Six months after 9/11, foreign workers had not returned, delaying the progress of Kashmiri’s education assistance by the World Bank. Jorja Himmermann was deployed to Kashmir to audit the donor’s funding support and to assess the impact of the interruption. It was to be a brief visit: two days.

“Fear the river,” the hotel manager said quietly. “It has taken the lives of many Kashmiris because of its rocky bottom and its swiftness. It can freeze a body or pound it to death in a matter of minutes.” Riyad Dilawar placed her suitcase beside the closet and opened the curtains.

“What is the name of the mountain?”

“I know of no name. It is not important because it is far away. The only thing to fear is the river. You must not go near it, especially where it joins the big river. I heard of your problem on the way here. I am sorry. You are safe now. It is my promise that the hotel staff will keep you safe. There are no bad people here, so please do not be afraid.”

Jorja stared at the river. The turbulent river reflected the lives of the Kashmiris, yet it knew no political bounds. It had a sense of direction and cut its own path to freedom.

“We cannot protect you against Allah’s will and the moon,” he continued.

“The moon?”

“Sometimes there is a bad moon rising.”

Jorja faced the manager. “Trouble?”

“Yes. Nature is not judgmental.”

Riyad left Jorja to contemplate her fears. It was nature that killed her husband. It was two years since his death in a white-water rafting accident. The river was swollen, the weather was inclement, and he was under-prepared. Her therapy was work. It was only recently that she had begun dating again. Her hopes were that a three-month relationship with Denny Mazzola, who lived in Canberra—her home city in Australia—would evolve and strengthen, despite her fear of commitment.

Work made her fearless in the face of extraordinary danger. Her focus on equality and justice for all, particularly the children of the world, spurred her forward. But it did not prepare her for what happened on the way to Kashmir.

Buy the B&N ePub version at:-

<http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/kashmir-on-a-knife-edge-martina-nicolls/1102804451?ean=2940012891044>

Buy the Kindle version at:-

<http://www.amazon.com/Kashmir-on-a-Knife-Edge-ebook/dp/B0053QGLXG/ref>