

FABULOUS FORTY

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Date of Publication: February-2025



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Cover: xulian

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ISBN : 978-984-99790-3-9

Published by Iftekhar Amin

Shobdoshoily, 38/4, banglabazar dhaka-1100

Online distributor : www.rokomari.com/shobdoshoily

Call for order: 16297

Price: 300 tk

\$: 15

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I am dedicating this book to all women, especially two of my best friends. They are amazing women. I really appreciate them from the core of my heart. A special thanks to Geraldine Thomas for editing my book.

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Some wrinkles under the eyes, some straight and, catchable line on the forehead, and some fine lines by the side of the reddish cheeks; some silver-coloured greys peeping out and sending "a hello" to say that I am over 40 that makes me think for a moment how far I have come and what I have done and what I have got investing my life in. Sitting quietly, I started to do the equation of life that could give me some level of satisfaction, but it actually did not.

Women in this age group are not considered as young or old, and they have mostly a family or married life for at least 15 -20 years. They don't realise how many years they have spent looking after one or two children or fulfilling the family members' expectations. However, at the corner of my heart, the wishes of a teenager wave me to set out and find a way to express them and live a little life. But the harsh, stereotyped, and patriarchal society doesn't allow me to feel like a person with a heart of 16 years old.

How much can I keep myself busy with house chores-cooking, cleaning, shopping, caring for children, and being a full-time professional? I have no answer to this question. I love my job because, in a little form, I am supporting young adults who need help to build their life.

As I sat in my cosy living room, sipping my evening tea and flipping through an old photo album, my thoughts drifted to my own teenage years. Memories flooded my mind – the dreams I had, the desires that burned within my young heart.

Lost in nostalgia, I couldn't help but feel a sudden connection to the wishes of a 16-year-old girl who was hiding within me. Perhaps I caught a glimpse of my younger self in that girl's hopes and dreams. Maybe it was the innocence of youth or the unbridled passion for life that resonated so deeply within me.

I wished to travel the world, to explore new cultures and experience life beyond the confines of my small town, struck a chord with mine. I remembered my own longing for adventure, the thrill of the unknown calling out to me from distant lands. Fortunately, I had the opportunity to see the world.

But it wasn't just the desire for adventure that stirred my soul. My wish for acceptance, to be seen and valued for who I truly was, touched something deep within my heart. I recalled the struggles of my own teenage years, the journey to self-discovery, and the importance of finding acceptance – both from others and from within.

As I closed my eyes, I realized that despite the years that had passed, the essence of those wishes – the yearning for adventure, for acceptance, for a life filled with purpose and meaning – still burned brightly within me. In that moment, I made a silent vow to honour those wishes, to embrace the spirit of my younger self, and to live life with the same passion and determination that I once held dear!

And as the evening sun cast its warm glow upon my face, I couldn't help but smile, knowing that no matter how old I grew, the dreams of a 16-year-old girl would forever be a part of who I was. While maintaining a household and looking after children, I never realized that my life had become friendless, and my friends were occupied with their baggage, too. Sometimes, they check on me, but I can't make time to have a dump time with them. Nevertheless, I miss myself, lost in the darkness of harsh reality. I am an over -40 woman, and I am not allowed to have the heart of a 16-year-old girl because this is how it has been practiced in the family or society where all the rules are only for girls. In each phase of life, a girl has to behave in a certain way that has been expected. When a girl is in her teenage, she has to follow the orders and guidelines from her parents, and she has very little space to express herself.

The most common disease for women over 40 is Nostalgia! With reason or without reason, I just set off to the mountain of my memories; the old wounds start to burn like a volcano! Keep on remembering the rainbow-like childhood memories, youthful endless energy, and the golden days of school, college, and university. Moreover, on the day of meeting him, there were untold and unfinished stories of love. I was being impulsive under the wretched rain!

I had lost my existence for some moments in love and the taste of denial and betrayal, and I received a pocket of pain. I bestowed a full blue sky on him as I never wished to! Every memory just lined up as a military procession that I can't turn away!Parading the memories makes me

laugh or cry, takes me to the land of wonders, and gives me the light and purpose of life to carry on. I seldomly think about myself, and I have to undertake sole responsibilities for the family. However, I have some supporting characters in my home, but with my instruction, they cannot move a leaf.

Spending almost half their lives, women over 40, feel incredibly needy. I think they have become more vulnerable emotionally, seeking love and desiring intimacy; no, wait, not for physical intimacy but emotional intimacy and the adorable presence of someone who can hold hands and listen to them for hours. Naturally, women are the talkers; they usually talk 4,000 words minimum in a day or a maximum of 10,000 in a day. Therefore, it's a biological build for a woman. Sadly, men or husbands never understand their wives, girlfriends, or partners when it comes to listening to them.

Entering the phase of life beyond forty marks a significant juncture for women, characterized by a myriad of physical and emotional changes. While these changes are natural and inevitable, they often come with unique challenges and require adequate support systems. Understanding the holistic needs of women in this age group is crucial for fostering their well-being and empowerment. It delves into the physical and emotional transformations experienced by women over forty and discusses the support mechanisms essential for navigating this transformative period.

I think, as women age, they undergo various physical changes influenced by hormonal shifts, metabolism alterations, and lifestyle factors. Menopause, typically

occurring in the late forties or early fifties, marks the cessation of menstrual cycles and entails a cascade of physiological alterations. However, pre-menopause changes begin immediately after hitting 40. Hormonal fluctuations during perimenopause can lead to symptoms such as hot flashes, night sweats, vaginal dryness, and changes in libido, impacting women's physical comfort and quality of life. Moreover, the gradual decline in estrogenic levels increases the risk of osteoporosis, cardiovascular diseases, and weight gain, necessitating proactive health management strategies such as regular exercise, balanced nutrition, and preventive healthcare screenings.

Additionally, alongside physical transitions, women over forty often grapple with profound emotional changes that stem from various life circumstances and internal shifts. The realization of aging and mortality may evoke feelings of existential introspection, prompting women to re-evaluate their priorities, goals, and relationships. Empty nest syndrome, as children leave home to pursue their own paths, can trigger a sense of loss and identity redefinition for mothers. Moreover, midlife crises may manifest as a desire for self-discovery, career reassessment, or relationship re-evaluation, reflecting a quest for fulfilment and authenticity.

Recognizing the multifaceted challenges faced by women over forty, it is imperative to establish robust support systems catering to their diverse needs. Firstly, access to comprehensive healthcare services tailored to the unique health concerns of middle-aged women is essential. This includes menopausal management programs, mental health screenings, and preventive

interventions targeting age-related conditions. Healthcare providers should adopt a patient-centred approach, offering personalized guidance and empathetic support to address women's physical and emotional well-being comprehensively.

Moreover, fostering a supportive social network plays a pivotal role in mitigating the sense of isolation and vulnerability experienced by many women in midlife. Community-based organizations, women's groups, and online forums provide platforms for mutual encouragement, shared experiences, and resource exchange. Encouraging open dialogue about aging, menopause, and emotional health helps destigmatize these topics and promotes solidarity among women traversing similar life transitions.

Furthermore, workplaces and educational institutions should implement policies promoting work-life balance, career development opportunities, and age-inclusive practices to empower women over forty in their professional pursuits. Flexible scheduling, mentorship programs, and skills enhancement initiatives enable women to adapt to evolving career trajectories and pursue their aspirations with confidence.

The journey of women over forty is characterized by profound physical and emotional changes that necessitate comprehensive support systems. Through collective efforts, we can create an inclusive society where women of all ages thrive, contributing their wisdom, experience, and resilience to enriching the fabric of our communities. By understanding all these facts, I never took any initiatives to

bring change in my life. I just keep carrying on like a parallel line.

My transition from 30s to 40s is almost the same- I found myself standing at the crossroads of life, my reflection in the mirror betraying the passage of time with subtle lines etching my face and a hint of silver gracing my hair. As I, cruising the maze of midlife, I embarked on a transformative journey of physical and emotional change, seeking the support I needed to travel this uncharted territory.

As the sun set over the horizon, casting hues of gold and crimson across the sky, I stood tall amidst the landscape of my life, my heart brimming with gratitude for the journey that had brought me to this moment of grace and renewal. With each step forward, I embraced the boundless possibilities that lay ahead, knowing that no matter what challenges may come, I would face them with courage, resilience, and an unwavering belief in the power of transformation. Yes, it is me and it's my story!