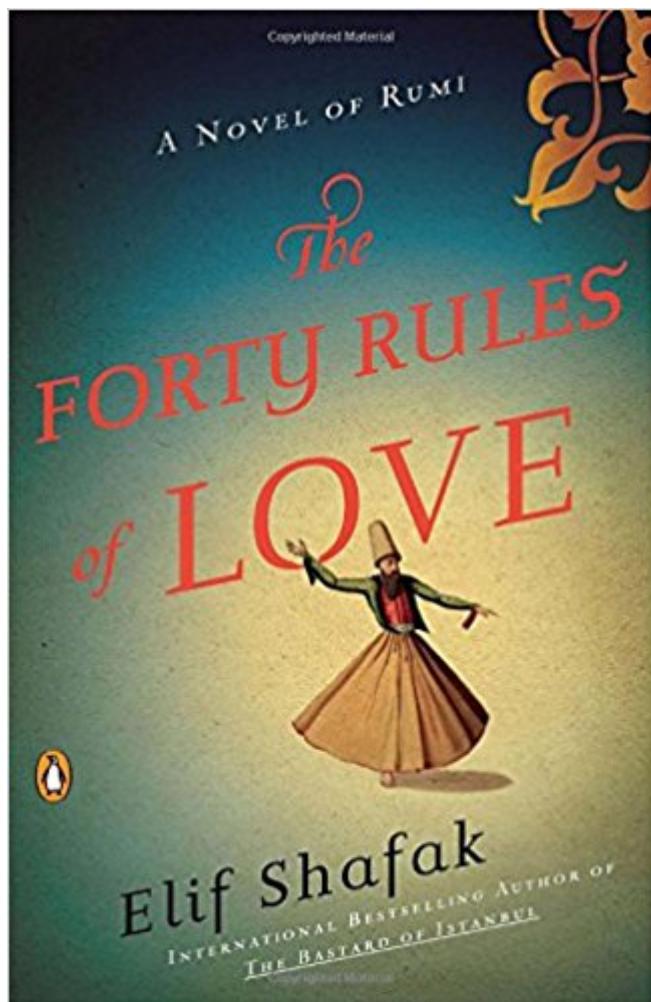


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# The Forty Rules Of Love: A Novel Of Rumi



## Synopsis

In this lyrical, exuberant follow-up to her novel, *The Bastard of Istanbul*, acclaimed Turkish author Elif Shafak unfolds two tantalizing parallel narratives—“one contemporary and the other set in the thirteenth century, when Rumi encountered his spiritual mentor, the whirling dervish known as Shams of Tabriz”—that together incarnate the poet’s timeless message of love. Ella Rubenstein is forty years old and unhappily married when she takes a job as a reader for a literary agent. Her first assignment is to read and report on *Sweet Blasphemy*, a novel written by a man named Aziz Zahara. Ella is mesmerized by his tale of Shams’s search for Rumi and the dervish’s role in transforming the successful but unhappy cleric into a committed mystic, passionate poet, and advocate of love. She is also taken with Shams’s lessons, or rules, that offer insight into an ancient philosophy based on the unity of all people and religions, and the presence of love in each and every one of us. As she reads on, she realizes that Rumi’s story mirrors her own and that Zahara “like Shams” has come to set her free.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Celebrated Turkish novelist Shafak (*The Bastard of Istanbul*) serves up a curious blend of mediocre hen lit and epic historical to underwhelming results. In present-day Boston, dull suburban mother and cheated-on wife Ella Rubinstein takes a job as a reader for a literary agent and becomes entranced by Aziz Zahara, the author of a manuscript about the relationship between 13th-century poet Rumi and Sufi mystic Shams that, for better or for worse, becomes a story-within-a-story. Aziz and Ella strike up an e-mail relationship, largely made up of Ella’s midlife crisis and Aziz’s

philosophical replies. Meanwhile, Aziz's novel, *Sweet Blasphemy*, is occasionally interesting but mostly dull, weighed down by Rumi's and Shams's theological musings. Its better moments concern tangential characters; Rumi's son, Aladdin, who is resentful of his father's closeness to the mystic, and Rumi's adopted daughter, Kimya, whose doomed marriage to Shams is touching in a way Ella's failed relationship with her husband never manages. The rumblings against Shams reach a peak, and Ella and Aziz finally meet, tying the story lines together into a readable, if not enthralling, tale.

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**\*Starred Review\*** As in her previous book, *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2007), Shafak, a courageous, best-selling Turkish writer, boldly links East and West in converging narratives. In present-day Massachusetts, Ella, an unhappy housewife on the cusp of 40, begins reading manuscripts for a literary agency, and soon finds herself exchanging personal e-mails with Aziz Zahara, a wandering Sufi photographer and the author of Ella's first assignment, an enthralling novel titled *Sweet Blasphemy*. It fictionalizes the true story of the esteemed thirteenth-century Muslim teacher Rumi, who undergoes a profound transformation when the wandering dervish Shams of Tabriz, a renegade of strange and unnerving powers, comes to town. The two become inseparable, and as Shams shares the liberating forty rules of love, Rumi becomes a rebel mystic, the inventor of the eecstatic dance of the whirling dervishes, and a fervent and cherished poet. Under Aziz's influence, Ella also breaks free of convention and opens herself to cosmic forces. Infused with Sufi mysticism and Rumi's incomparable lyrics, and sweetly human in its embrace of our flaws and failings, Shafak's seductive, shrewd, and affecting novel brilliantly revives the revelations of Shams and Rumi, and daringly illuminates the differences between religion and spirituality, censure and compassion, fear and love of life in our own violent world. --Donna Seaman

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I had read a few of Rumi's poems over the years, and loved them, but finding this treasure has delighted me so much that I intend to start over and read it again. Also, now I'm intrigued by Sufism and will be looking into more about this path. The chapters intertwine two centuries (the 13th and the 21st) and two engaging stories with ease. As for the forty rules, well, their wisdom shines out.

The author has done considerable research into the life and ways of dervishes and Rumi. The modern part I might have done without but it was okay. Where she delved into the life of Shams and

Rumi was a delight to be immersed in. Beautiful. Tragic. Wonderful historical context for Rumi.

I guess I didn't get it. I wasn't particularly enamored of any of the characters, particularly Ella, who seemed flat and self-absorbed. I kept reading in hopes of finding out how this all tied together, but ultimately, I found it tedious to read.

This book was highly recommended and I wanted to read a Turkish author who is current. However, this book felt a little flat and unrealistic to me. I found the story about Rumi interesting enough to not include the unhappy American housewife.

I loved this book! But it helps that I studied Sufism and am a fan of Rumi to begin with. Nevertheless, it is haunting, lyrical, romantic, poignant. Most importantly it is well written. I shall be pursuing other books by this author as I was unfamiliar with her until I read this. I wish I could find more like it!

Elif Shafak's voice and message is beautiful. Read her book if you want to go back in time and better understand Rumi's poetry. On the way you will twirl with Sufis and learn more than 40 rules of love!

A look into Sufism and Rumi. A nice story, allegorical perhaps. Well written. I just wish I knew where I could get a copy of The Forty Rules.

A beautiful book that interweaves lessons on the Sufi principles of love and two magically untraditional "love" stories. This book challenges its readers to question the true meaning of love and deeply inspires the reader to reflect on themselves and their way of being.

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