

The blaring bhangra music poured out from the speakers, so ridiculously loud, it felt as if someone had punched me in both ears. The bright, almost-glowing hues of everyone's outfits made up for the dim lights shrouding the tables while I ate. My Mum's eyes followed my hand to the plate and again to my mouth. I ate steadily on, chewing reluctantly, tears drawn with each swallow. Guilt had tinged the taste of the food, making it almost inedible; the texture had been reduced to chewing an old sock.

Each mouthful was interrupted by various relatives enroute to the dance floor to demonstrate why absolutely no one in my family should ever go on Strictly Come Dancing. Sweat-patches ran amok, and one uncle's shirt almost slid off his perspiring back as male relatives showed off their lack of dancing prowess. Everyone complimented my outfit as I ate, or at least the part that was visible.

Earlier in the morning, I remember being excited to dress in my Indian finery for my Aunt's wedding, long ankle-length swishy skirt and matching embroidered top that was completely alien to my usual fare. It was part of a far away world, which I had only heard about when I had been forced to endure staring through reams of holiday photo-albums, showing my relatives all wearing polyester clothes and regretting them afterwards.

It had been raining that day, which wasn't really very significant apart from the fact that a huge lake of a puddle had formed outside the reception hall. A single brick formed the stepping stone that my cousin and I were to use when crossing the vast oceans of our games.

Our world of knights, princesses and Power Rangers was shattered with the arrival of my uncle, who we could tell wasn't too impressed due to his facial expression. All the other kids had made the wise decision to play instead in the drier coach that had been used to transport wedding guests to the reception hall. After my uncle marched me back to my mum, I finally realised the source of his irritation. My skirt, in the morning, had been a vibrant peacock blue, was now the same dirty grey as the dismal clouds in the sky. However, my outfit had now joined the league of all my other clothes, no longer exotic and new, but instead dull and stained. The slimy wetness clung to my leg, as if I had plunged my leg in the slippery undergrowth of a forest, worms squirming their way out of my drenched dull now-brown sock.

Despite the wrath of my mum, which could have melted metal, my skirt remained resiliently damp and I was forbidden to change into my jeans as "it wouldn't look nice in front of your grandmother." I was forced to sit beside her while being reprimanded in Punjabi, I knew if I was in big trouble depending on which language I was being shouted at in. If it was English, I knew that there was only a light punishment to come, but in Punjabi, my future was bleak. I only half-understood Punjabi, but my mum's red-stained face made it evident exactly what she was saying.

I watched my male cousins jump around, playing tig, while envying their dry trousers and squirming in my soggy skirt. When my aunt entered, in her crimson bridal finery, wearing more gold jewellery than Tutankhamun's sarcophagus, the hem of her skirt was spotless, leading to my quick conclusion, that she must have been much better at jumping across a puddle than I was.