

## Arranged Marriage

It was just another day, the alarm clock rang exactly at seven twenty-six am. Abdul woke up to the sound of his mom shouting 'parathas are ready. Come down before your brothers finish it.' But Abdul had no idea what's to come.

As always, he didn't want to go to college today and he wasn't going to. The only reason he was going was to get out of the house and to meet Leasey. He walked downstairs and he noticed that everyone was dressed up in their best outfits but he didn't understand why. It's not like it was somebody's birthday or anything. He didn't really like dressing up in his cultural clothes. Then again, he couldn't be bothered. It was typical of an Asian family to have an event every day of the year. Standard.

As he got on the bus he realised that at home, everyone seemed to be acting awkward around him lately, his older brothers were actually showing him respect for once, since they got married they always thought that they were more important, and his dad was in a good mood unusually; but at least Leasey would be there for him. For some reason she always knew what to say, what to do. He couldn't help thinking about that Saturday morning when they both agreed that they would be dedicated to each other no matter what anyone says. Being Muslim, he knew it would be hard for his family to accept. But only one year left, till they are legally married.

'Hey babes,' he said as he stroked her strawberry blonde long hair that always seemed to fall perfectly on her grown-up mature face. She always did look older than she was. She looked so fit today, with the white gold necklace he saved up to buy her. Took him over 6 months but it was worth it. 'Forget college, let's chill at mine. Free house,' Leasey said flirtatiously with her lips next to his ear.

Hours passed, like minutes; seemed like they had lying there for years. All he could think about was his future life with Leasey, but he didn't want to lose his family even though at times they were a bit too close minded about things. Abdul didn't want to go back to his house, especially today where the house was crammed with his extraordinarily large family. He wasn't prepared for another random occasion, probably just another cousin's birthday. Everyone at home seemed to enjoy them, but he was the odd one out. He wondered how he turned out so different from his brothers.

Leasey got up from the bed; she was wearing his sixty five quid addidas hoody he got for his seventeenth, and gave him a cheeky peck on the cheek. He loved it when she did that. Reluctantly, he finally left at exactly 4 pm; he didn't want his family to get suspicious about him not going to college. That was one of his best few hours he'd had in a long time. He never thought he would ever feel like this about a girl before, but every time he thought about her, he always thought about his family. Life's so hard.

He caught the eleven bus that stopped outside the dixis chicken hut at the end of his road. He never got sick of that cheap processed meat. As he walked up to his house he noticed there were a lot more cars that usual. But no-one he knew had the new BMW Z4; it just wasn't what his family bought.

As he walked inside the house, eyes from all over the room started at him. Was there something on his face? He felt isolated and awkward. Why was everyone staring at him? He saw his parents smiling; sigh of relief, at least there was someone he knew. These faces seemed to be unrecognisable. In the corner of the room, he noticed a shy girl with a veil on her head unusually dressed like a bride. She had to be at most sixteen, with her petite figure and her small but round baby face. While he was staring at her in confusion all of a sudden, his father came from behind him and put one hand on his shoulder. He pointed at the girl and whispered 'pretty isn't she, well that is your future wife.'

Fawziah & Haneen