

Love, Hate and Other Filters

17-year-old Laya has been invited to a wedding in her very traditional Indian family

The night is beautiful, clear and bright with silvery stars, but I'm walking with my parents toward a wedding where a well-meaning auntie will certainly pinch my cheeks like I'm two years old. "Maya, what's wrong?" My mother eyes me with suspicion, as always. "Nothing." I sigh. "Then why do you look like you're going to a funeral instead of your friend's wedding?" I widen my toothy fake smile. "Better?"

"I guess a little happiness is too much to ask of my only daughter." There is no escape. The tinkling of her silver-belled anklets signals the approach of Yasmeen. "As-salaam-alaikum, Sofia Auntie! Asif Uncle! How are you? Mummy will be so excited to see you both. Maya Aziz, look at you. You're adorable. You should wear Indian clothes more often, you know?" My mom winks at Yasmeen. "Take her, beta, and show her how to be at least a little Indian".

Everyone seems happy to be here, except me. My mother notices another middle-aged sari-clad woman. And a boy - probably her teenage son. "Maya, this is Salma Auntie." My mom takes me by the elbow, then raises her voice. "And this is her son, Kareem." "Maya, Kareem is a sophomore at Princeton my mother says, "studying engineering." I can practically see the cartoon light bulb over her head as she speaks. "Kareem, Maya will attend University of Chicago next year." "I got in, but I haven't decided yet," I correct "Decided? What's to decide?" my mom demands. "You've gotten into one of the best schools in - the country. It's decided."

*Adapted from Samira Ahmed,
"Love, Hate and Other Filters" 2018*

pinch: pincer
anklets: bracelets de cheville
sophomore: étudiant en deuxième année

"Smart, heartbreaking, honest . . . Ahmed tackles weighty issues with thoughtfulness and flair."—SANDHYA MENON, *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *WHEN DIMPLE MET RISHI*

