

COLOUR ME IN



The Exhibitionist is an online literary magazine.

<http://thexbt.wordpress.com>

About *Colour Me In*

Colour Me In celebrates two years of the author's blog, Avid Scribbler. The blog addresses women's issues, life in Britain, socio-politics, ideas of race, and issues concerning the British youth.



Beauty is Power

I blankly stood at the window pulling my green shawl around my shoulders. Pulling it tighter and tighter as I tried to cocoon myself. A giant green chrysalis trembling on the cusp of two worlds.

The old one I'd leave behind and the new one which lay stretched out before me. I blankly stood at the window pulling my green shawl around my shoulders. Pulling it tighter and tighter over my pitiful breasts as I tried to hide myself, not from a stranger or an outsider, but from me. If that makes any sense.

Searing hot tears stabbed the backs of my eyes as I tried to swallow the golf-ball sized lump that had risen in my throat. I looked at the backs of my hands and felt the curious warmth from my shawl disappear. It neatly slipped down past my arms and fell to the floor. A puddle of green cotton gripped my ankles and stubbornly clung to my feet. I observed the backs of my hands. A haphazard looking network of bottle green serpents weaving their way under my skin. Angry looking ropes binding my flesh to bones.

I caught sight of myself in the reflection of the window and sighed. I really should have made more of an effort. But the tall doctor said that no one would see me or judge me: I was going to be part of something groundbreaking and innovative. I snorted as the doctor's words rung in my ears. They might not judge me, but I am and I know that everyone knows that I am judging myself for what I am about to do.

I dully stared at myself in the window and noted my eyes: a startling shade of green. Beautiful, but too close together, so I've been told.

I ran my finger from the pudgy tip of my potato-like nose to the tip of my too-small forehead.

“Beautiful eyes,” my mother used to say. “You know, she’s the first in our family to have a degree. She’s very intelligent! We’re so proud of her!”

“But Nargis,” my aunt had replied. “There’s no point in having a girl who is a genius but unpleasant to look at.”

I closed my eyes and inwardly sighed. If there was a science to looking beautiful, my Maker had clearly abandoned it when it had come to my turn. I opened my eyes as tears began to form. Behind me, the door slowly opened and a tall woman with curly hair lightly stepped into the room.

She cleared her throat and said: “Momtaz? It’s time.”

Gia nervously tucked a stubborn curl behind her ear and uneasily looked around the sterile waiting room that she was sat in. To her right sat a young, pretty receptionist who was on the phone and to her left was her colleague Dr Rashid, sat with his hands neatly folded on his lap.

She looked down at the bundle of papers in her unsteady hands and closed her eyes. Gia hated conferences.

Especially those where she was required to speak at. Especially on topics she did not feel comfortable with or capable of discussing.

“Gia?” Dr Rashid said firmly “Are you alright?”

She jumped at his voice and quickly collected herself as he laid his heavy hand on her bony shoulder.

Masking her anxiety she giggled and quickly responded with, “Oh, you know, the usual Nadeem! I’m just a bit nervous!”

She reluctantly smiled at the bundle of papers and furiously told herself off for being so abrupt with him.

Dr Rashid laughed and said: “Look, there’s nothing to worry about. We’ve had an 89% success rate. It’ll get approved.”

Gia tentatively nodded, “That’s true.

But...what about the consequences of what we’re doing?”

Dr Rashid candidly smiled as he took the bundle of papers from Gia and held them in his rough, meaty hands.

He leaned in towards her and quietly said, “Gia. This procedure won’t just save the government billions of pounds.

We’ll make a killing from it!”

She looked at him reproachfully as he quickly added: “And we’ll save lives at the same time.”

Gia looked down at the bundle of papers in her hands and felt a heat take hold of face. She closed her eyes. She couldn't even bear to look at him. She took a deep breath in and sat back in her chair.

"Dr McDale? Dr Rashid?" the receptionist called. "You may go into the board-room now."

"Miss Saeed?" the red-faced nurse loudly squawked. "The doctor will see you now."

My aunt jumped up, as though her bottom been struck by lightning, grabbed my hand and yanked me out off my seat. I numbly followed her as she marched down the corridor with the ferocity of a pit bull. Once my aunt had her sights set on something, there was no stopping her.

My eyes fell to the ground as I watched her hammy calves sashay back and forth. I listened to her Barratts sandals squeak as they made contact with the mirror-like floor. Left. Right. Left, right, left. My aunt would have excelled had she entered the army or the police, but alas...Fate had other ideas.

She suddenly stopped in front of a shiny brown door marked "McDale and Rashid." I put on the brakes to stop myself from getting lost in the folds of her wide back. Slightly panting, my aunt beamed and looked at me; her eyes full of exhilaration and triumph. Her vice-like grip tightened around my limp hand as she sharply knocked on the door and lightly dabbed at her forehead with a purple handkerchief.

“Momtaz,” she would say in her stern, matronly voice. “You must always dab, never rub. Dabbing is ladylike. Rubbing is cheap.”

She would say this to me on a regular basis, whilst she applied lotions and potions on her face with the skill of a brick-layer. The process she underwent shocked me as a wide eyed eight year old girl and if I’m honest; it still does.

It was this daily ritual, where my aunt would transform herself from an unknown woman, to the garish porcelain doll that I had seen every single day of my life so far.

They say that we are all great works of art in process. If my aunt were a piece of art, then it would have probably been done by an inebriated individual high on illicit products.

Suhelya Nazir. That’s my aunt’s name. I remember her flamboyantly curly signature when she used to sign my school planner every week. I remember running my finger over the curls and squiggles as I imprinted her signature in my mind.

The shiny door swung open to reveal a tall anxious looking woman with short curly hair.

“Miss Saeed?” she curiously said peering into my aunt’s face.

My aunt let out a roaring laugh. You know; the type of laugh a person does when they have just been offended.

"Oh!" my aunt breathlessly exclaimed, after her laughing fit. "Oh, how very funny Dr McDale! This is Miss Saeed, my niece."

She nudged me towards the doctor, while she tucked her purple handkerchief into the top of her bra and cleared her throat.

I looked up at the doctor and mumbled,

"Hello."

"Hello Miss Saeed," she kindly said, ex-tending her hand. "My name is Dr McDale. My colleague Dr Rashid has asked me to oversee your case. Come inside and let's discuss your appointment."

I gingerly shook her hand and followed her into the office. My aunt and her squeaky shoes followed suit as she closed the door behind her.

The doctor sat down at her desk and sharply rapped away at her computer. I awkwardly stood as my aunt placed her large hands on my shoulders and pushed me down into the chair. She left them on my shoulders as I looked at the door, the doctor and the sealed windows.

Trapped.

Trapped. Gia felt her heart violently pound at the back of her throat as Dr Rashid cordially greeted the executive team. Her hands nervously wrung themselves as

each finger clambered up a knuckle and drop into the folds of her skin as she sheepishly followed Dr Rashid around.

A portly, balding man in a navy suit beamed and said: "Well Nadeem! Enough chit-chat, let's see your results."

A small, mousy-haired woman with cropped hair and large spectacles smiled and added: "Yes, Nadeem, we're ever so eager to see the results!"

Dr Rashid gave a wolfish smile, "Of course, of course. Let's not delay any further!"

Gia took a seat next to the mousy-haired woman and looked down the length of the boardroom table.

Men in navy suits with expressionless faces lined both sides. They each had a glass of water in front of them and had their pens poised ready to take notes. At the head of the table stood Dr Rashid standing confidently with the bundle of papers in his hands. He took a few steps back, dusted off his lapel, looked up at the ceiling, smiled at Gia, winked at the mousy-haired woman, ominously cleared his throat and began.

I felt a sense of numbness take over my body as Dr McDale outlined the procedure in excruciating detail – much to the delight of my aunt.

"So this actually works?" my aunt eagerly asked, pulling her chair closer to Dr McDale.

"Well, so far we've had an 89% success rate," Dr McDale answered, clasping her hands. "Once we get approval from the Board, Momtaz will be one of the first patients."

My aunt dramatically sighed with relief. She released her purple handkerchief from her bosom, dabbed at her eyes and affectionately touched my chin. I weakly smiled back and tried to match my facial expression to hers.

"However," Dr McDale gingerly said. "We need to make sure Momtaz is 100% on board with this."

My aunt carelessly waved her hand in Dr McDale's face and clucked her tongue with impatience: "Yes, yes! We've been discussing this since I put her name down for the procedure."

Dr McDale coolly ignored my aunt and directly looked me in the eye. I felt her gaze burn upon my skin and I forced myself to look at her. Green met blue as she said in an unusually firm tone: "Do you really want this Momtaz?"

I looked at my aunt's eyes burning with fury from her painted face behind Dr McDale's shoulder and back to the doc-tor's face. I looked down at my hands and quietly said, "Yes."

"And you're ok with the ethics of this?" "Yes."

"Are you sure? Once your appointment's booked, there's no going back." "I know, I-I want to go through with it."

Dr McDale sat back in her chair and scanned my face. She raised her slim eyebrows and sighed. With relief or reluctance, I'll never know. She pulled herself to her desk and made eight sharp taps on her keyboard.

She neatly picked up a pen and wrote something on a stiff white card. She put the pen down with a metallic clang and handed it to me.

Tuesday 1st July, 11am, MTP.

To be continued.

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Amazon

<http://www.amazon.co.uk/Colour-Me-In-Chayya-Syal-ebook/dp/B00LDV455G>

Chayya Syal was born, raised, and currently lives in London, UK. She studied English Literature at the University of Reading, holds a diploma in Private English Law, and has worked as a freelance writer, blogger and journalist for the past year. Chayya has been writing for as long as she can remember and enjoys the arts, music, writing, and travelling abroad. She enjoys working with social youth enterprise groups and is due to follow up on her success as a blogger with more writing workshops in London.



