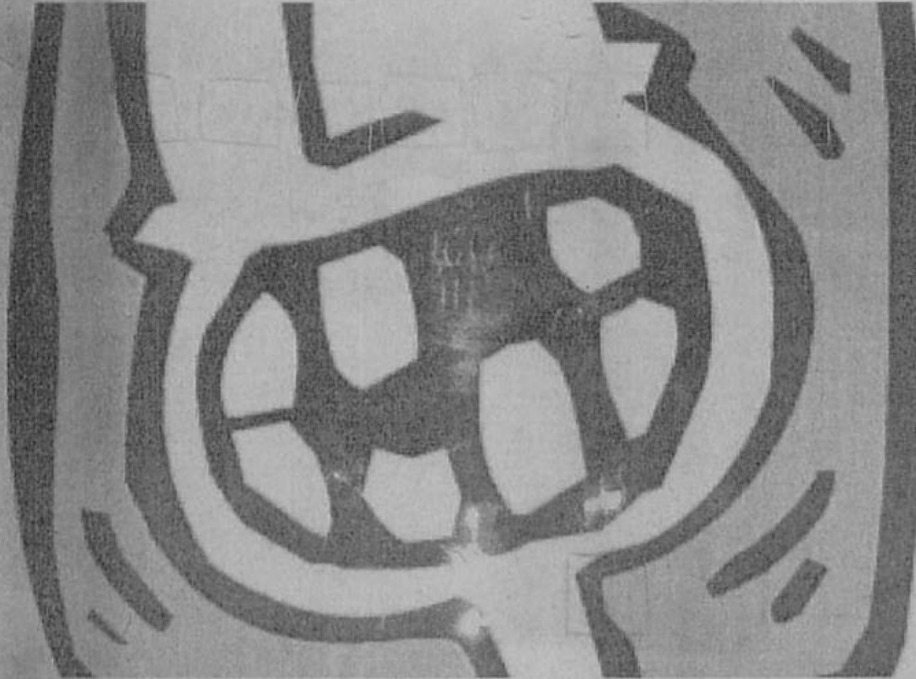


# Toothless...



**R**EMEMBER the time you lost your first tooth; how your father got hold of you, how he planted a small looped piece of string around the dislocated tooth then pulled. The horrors...unspeakable though these incidents tend to be you get to experience them every now and then (it used to be you, now it's your little brother).

I remember the first time it happened to me. I was an unsuspecting little brat not fully understanding the consequences of a loose tooth. It all happened so fast that I can't really remember all the details. All that registers in my mind is a scene of my father fighting against a thrashing six year old me all for a damn tooth... Then there was the prospect of facing school with a 'fokla' smile. Shit, that was harsh...

I arrived at school fearful and totally determined not to smile or open my mouth. This proved a problem since at school every day you come across incidents that you just

have to laugh at (like that guy splitting his pants down the back while trying to pick up his fallen book).

I was however successful to a point (which was also a disadvantage since my friends started to think that I had gone all weird) until the damn teacher just had to ask me what a 'noun' was (bear in mind I was just six and the fact that I did know what a noun was at that time is a miracle). I was forced to open my mouth and answer. It still would have gone my way if only the teacher hadn't observed aloud that I'd lost a tooth. The smile on my friends' faces still haunts me...

For a while I was the toothless wonder, being the first in my class to lose one. Every time I opened my mouth or smiled people used to smile back at me with goddamn knowing look in their eyes.

"Lost a tooth have you?" What's the point of this question?!?! You can see the gap in my row of ivory, why ask the question and further

increase my embarrassment? Then there are the aunts who kept cooing over me exclaiming how I was growing up (and that just wasn't the end, they just had to squeeze my cheeks raw red too). Embarrassment always comes in great big tidal waves and usually accompanies disappointment. Being six I obviously believed in the tooth fairy. It was with a crushed heart that I went to school the next day after checking under my pillow and finding not money but the damn incisor that I'd lost.

What's worse is that these things don't just happen once but a multitude of times spanning a couple years. The next embarrassing incident is even more painful to express than the first. I was at school digging into a burger. Eating the burger was totally uneventful (you've probably guessed by now what happened). Laughing at a particularly funny incident involving a cockroach on the teacher's desk I discovered that everyone else was laughing at me. It was only then that I realized the impossible, I had swallowed the tooth along with the burger. I was teased due to this for the rest of my school life as the Tooth Eating Kid...

If that wasn't enough, there was a third time that took place once again in the damn school. This one was probably the most embarrassing (I think I'm overusing this word, who cares anyway). While obviously not much of an athlete I always avoided playground exercise.

However on that day I don't know what caused me to play basketball. I won't go into details; I'll just tell you that the goddamn ball decided to kiss me so hard that it knocked a molar out. So there was me suddenly a 'fokla' all over again. From then on I was known as the Basketball Tooth...

Teeth are just a goddamn problem, brush them, wash them, don't eat all your favorite sugary delights to keep them fit only to have them come loose and fall out. I just hate teeth...

By Tareq Adnan

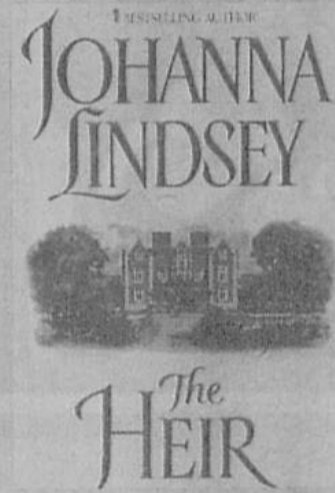
Book review

## The Heir

**L**AST week was a sleepless one for me. What with deadlines breathing down my neck, monstrous homework assignments to complete, WC matches (and by the way, don't believe what Adnan says about me), and the excitement of getting my work published in an international anthology, sleep was the last thing on my agenda. So when the weekend rolled around, my poor brain cells were threatening to go on strike if I tortured them with anything complicated. That's when my best friend Cookie passed me this Johanna Lindsey best seller. What would one do without gal pals like that?

Here's the skinny. Young Duncan Mactarvish suddenly discovers that he stands to inherit the title, wealth, and responsibilities of a marquis from his English grandfather, a man he hasn't heard of during the twenty-odd years of his life in the Highlands. Nearing death, the imperious old nobleman summons his grandson and heir to England to take over the reigns, and to marry the bride that has been selected for him.

A thoroughly exasperated Duncan is bundled off to England against his will,



feeling ill at ease amongst the pretensions and snobbery of the London *ton* that has descended on his grandfather's countryside home. Even worse is his first encounter with his fiancée, the beautiful, but shrewish Ophelia, who publicly insults his Scottish heritage and proceeds to make him the laughing stock of fashionable society. Licking his wounds, he retreats into a sulk, cursing all things English...until he meets the girl next door Sabrina (ahem, ahem). With her sunny disposition, lively intelligence and kind heart, she charms him at the first encounter, and he discovers a kindred soul in her. Two things stand in their way, though. The conniving Ophelia decides that Duncan's wealth and good looks are too good to pass over after all and decides to get him back. Also, there's an old scandal that hangs over Sabrina's family, making them a most unsuitable match in the eyes of society. As Helen put it in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, "The course of true love never did run smooth."

The story moves at an easy pace, the romance developing gradually, and what I particularly liked about this novel was that Lindsey deviates from the norm of the romance novels that base the whole relationship on instantaneous physical attraction. Throughout the narrative, Sabrina's looks take a back seat to her personality, and the relationship that develops between Duncan and her is based on friendship above everything else. Lindsey has an eye for detail that makes her scenes really open up, but if I do have a complaint, it's that her characters are way too two-dimensional; the only character who really had a multi-faceted personality was Mavis, Ophelia's former best friend. Nevertheless, this story was simple and sweet, and is guaranteed to bring a smile to all the romantics out there.

By Sabrina F Ahmad  
Sabera.jade@gmail.com

# Oriyo's prayer

**D**AY by day Oriyo grew tired of his dad's being late. Whenever his dad was late everything went like crazy! His head got hot and the minute hand on his watch suddenly became the sloth on the discovery channel while the second hand became the cheetah! It was even harder for him to understand why he was needed to be picked up, when he was fully capable of making the journey to home by bus! "I should have had a bit of freedom then." But these thoughts were not doing anything to comfort him. He knew, the more he would be thinking of these the more unbearable it would become. So instead he turned around and started for the school cafeteria.

"Huh, I won't be surprised if it's already closed. It's not that they sell lunch to people!" Oriyo said to himself. Upon entering he felt the, 'I am not the only one' feeling, seeing some other students sitting scattered here and there. "Uh, hot dog here I come." The smell of bread made his stomach squirm like crazy. On his way to the counter, he noticed that most were senior students. It seemed like some of them were even doing their home works.

The school cafeteria was cheap but the food was like from heaven. His friends usually said that the recipe was from heaven but the food was cooked in hell as the food was always served very hot. But today Oriyo had to stay satisfied with a cold one. Getting his hot dog Oriyo turned around only to find his fancied girl Andalib having a milk shake and smiling at him. Then she called out, "Join the club. I am sure my dad forgot I am supposed to be school right now!" Oriyo felt a bit sheepish. Being sweaty and having a

big hot dog in his hand, he felt like he looked terrible. "Did you say something to me?" asked Oriyo naughtily taking a look at his sides. "I don't see any orangutan beside you!" replied Andalib with the same naughtiness. Taking a bite from the hot dog Oriyo took the chair beside her and said, "Now there is!" "Ho ho so funny!" she replied with a hint of sarcasm. Finding nothing else to talk about he asked, "Is that a milk shake?" "No, it's something called 'milk shake'. You want some?" then she stretched out her empty glass. "No thanks, I am on a diet." Taking a quick glance at the hot dog she snapped, "I can see that!"

After that the conversation went on to the new girl who started class just a week ago. And then they talked about music. Oriyo's brain was working so hard to bring out topics to talk about that he forgot about being mad to his dad. He felt really good talking to her. It made him realize all over again that Andalib is actually a very friendly and funny person. Then Oriyo said "I didn't know the school cafeteria remained open for this long!" Andalib frowned, "Come on! Some senior students stay at school until 5." Just as she finished Oriyo jumped up from his chair. "What happened?" "Oh, it's my cell. I had put it on vibration and you made me fully forgot I had a cell." Then it was the awkward moment. His dad had called and he was on his way. "Does your dad get late to pick you up everyday?" "No! No he just forgets sometimes", said Oriyo hurriedly. Then Andalib suddenly became melancholy, "My dad is late everyday!" To Oriyo it felt like she was complaining to him. "Actually my dad is late most of the time." Oriyo corrected. Then

Andalib's phone rang and stopped instantly. Andalib sighed and said, "My dad's here. Hey! You know for the first time I enjoyed waiting here for my dad. Thanks for your time!" Oriyo smiled. Reaching the door, Andalib turned to Oriyo, "I owe you a milkshake the next day when both our dads are late again." "Hahaha! I am salivating already!"

After some time Oriyo got out of the cafeteria and started waiting near the gate. At that time one of his friends phoned, "Yo, dawg!" "So, since when are you into gang banging?" Oriyo asked. "Hey hey, you can't talk to me like that! I was just putting on some serious attitude. Above all, I called for a nobler reason. HAPPY B-DAY! What treat is in store for us?" "Oof damn! I forgot!" "What! You playing tricks again? Cuz your mom invited me to your home for dinner already. Just now!" Oriyo was stunned. Then one by one more calls came. At that time he knew why his mom asked for all his friend's phone number saying she needed those for security reasons. When his dad arrived he silently got into the car. "You know, you and mom act silly sometimes. Like keeping it from me... though it was quiet a good surprise! How many did you invite?" His dad smiled, "Sixteen I guess." "So whom did you invite?" Oriyo was praying so that the first name starts with an 'A' and ends with a 'B'. "Called all the numbers you provided. You can't expect me to remember all their names! Besides your mom did the calling!" Oriyo felt sheepish to ask about Andalib. Instead he tried hard to remember if Andalib's number was among those sixteen and the whole way to his home he kept praying so that it was.

By Hitoishi Chakma