You have already crossed the eligible marriage age. You'll have to be satisfied with whatever comes your way now," she says sadly.

I am perfectly happy being single, you say in an exasperated tone.

"That's just delusional. How can you be happy if you don't get married? Who doesn't want to get married?" says yet another aunt, her freshly plucked eyebrows waggling suggestively,

I don't, you say tartly.

"Well, will you look at that? Look here young lady, you won't find anyone with that attitude of yours. You might as well get some manners if you want to get married," says the plump aunt.

You mutter that you have something to do and excuse yourself from the gathering. Your mother has returned from the kitchen at this point and is being reassured by the seemingly well-meaning women in the room.

"Don't worry, bhabi. She'll come around. No girl can stay away from marriage for too long. She will have to give in at one point or the other," you hear someone saying while you trudge to your room.

Epilogue

Many of us have hoped, or do hope, to find our soulmate and settle down in pleasant matrimonial bliss. But it may seem to some that the parental units, dear and wonderful as they are, are quite unreasonably driven in their quest to get us hitched to the right kind of spouse - that is, a spouse of their choosing. They will explain, not untruthfully, that they know and want what's best for us. They've lived far longer, they've seen much more of the world. They've made all the best choices for us. They've brought us into the world for Pete's sake. Why shouldn't they make this decision too? It's not like we've ever shown any wisdom or maturity. We're children, after all. Children who need to get married off *right now*.

And plain marriage won't do. You need to get married to the right person; the person chosen by them, to be precise. Anyone you choose will be scrutinized to the hilt, their every fault pointed out. They have a divorced uncle? That's a no-no. Their parents are vegetarians? Nope, that won't do at all. And God forbid if your 'chosen' one is from the creative field! They can't trust you to find your own life partner; that's their business as is everything else that goes on in your life.

The marriage mania that our parents are fully caught up in from the moment we show faint signs of being adults results in a comedy of frustration that wouldn't be out of place in an Austen novel. Bangladeshi mums can summon the kind of dogged determination that would make Mrs Bennett proud when it comes to their children's matrimonial prospects.

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Yet we can't stay mad at them too long. Their hearts are in the right place. We want to please them, but we don't want to be unhappy for the rest of our lives. What is a young person to do?

Well, knowing our own heart is a good first step. Some of us have already found the love of our life, at work or in college. The rest of us want to wait a few years, get that career chugging along merrily first. The best way to explain what you want to your anxious parents is to be certain of it yourself.

Then comes patience. There will be tears, blustery declarations, anger. The wisest course of action is to avoid the dramatics and wait it all out. When your parents calm down, you can have the rational conversation, but forcing the issue never quite works, does it? Keep calm and carry on, as the saying goes.

Of course, there's a time and place for dramatics, too. At least a few tears can come in handy to counter Baba and Maa's masterly emotional maneuvers. Be strategic with those, though. You don't want to be the boy that cried . . . and then cried and cried and cried. Have them take that guilt trip when the weather's just right.

Finally, listen to your parents. Figure out why they want what they want for you. They truly do have years of wisdom. But they will know, if you talk to them from a place of love and clarity, that happy endings can't be hurried. And that you want them to be part of yours, regardless of what your prince or princess charming looks like. ■