



ENVY

People envied everything about Faria. Her charm, her flawless skin, her golden complexion, how affable she was, her sense of humour, the clothes she wore, and her hair – especially her hair, which was long, sleek and jet-black. Everything! It was the reason she never had a solid group of friends, because admiration soon turned into resentment, and people she spent time with would slowly start to distance themselves because they felt like they were always in her shadow. Faria never understood why her

friends would go from wanting to make plans every week, to barely messaging her in months. Of course, with the jealousy came rumours, about how she was so pretty she must have a queue of guys lining up outside her bedroom, about how girls who look like that are only good for one thing, about how she thought she was better than everyone because she had the trendiest clothes and shoes. The list went on and on, and some of those rumours inevitably floated back to Faria, who would barricade herself in her room and cry all night. She was struggling enough as it

was with her health problems. It broke her heart that people could be so petty over something as trivial as hair.

Every night she looked at herself in the mirror. Her hair was long, sure. It was silky and smooth, sure. She took good care of it. It was in good condition because she never dyed it once. Every night she would run a comb through her hair, and then take it off and place it on her wig-stand. She looked at the tufts of her hair, her actual hair, that survived the chemotherapy, and she sobbed, wishing her friends knew.



WRATH

"Jorina?"

Silence.

"Jorina!"

Jorina hurried into the master bedroom, wondering if she had done anything wrong. She was positive that she was ordered to make tea with two teaspoons of tea leaves, with separate pots of condensed – not regular – milk, and sugar, and a plate with three biscuits. She repeated it over and over in her head, there's no way she could get it wrong again. Her cheek was still

smarting from the last time. He was standing by his bed, arms crossed.

"Why does it take so long to answer? Are you deaf?"

Jorina looked down at the floor and shook her head.

"What did I ask you to bring me? Are you stupid? 3pm, every day, what do you bring me?"

Jorina glanced over at the tray she had sat down on his bedside table. She saw the tea, she saw the condensed milk, she saw the sugar, and she saw the plate of biscuits. She counted them quickly – 1,

2...there were meant to be three. Everything on the tray was untouched. Why were there only two? She made sure she counted. She went towards the tray to pick it up so she could take it back to the kitchen but he slapped her so hard she fell back and hit her head on the wall. Her sobs grew into loud wails as he picked her up by her pigtails and slapped her again.

"Scrub that blood off my wall" was all he muttered as he stepped over her body and went outside for a cigarette.



GLUTTONY

Imran and his friends had a habit of crashing weddings. It was harmless fun, a victimless crime. He had little else to and this unofficial national pastime suited him just fine. Imran also loved kachchi. In the last 6 months or so he had visited about 50 convention centres attending as many weddings, and ate at least two heaped plates of his beloved kachchi.

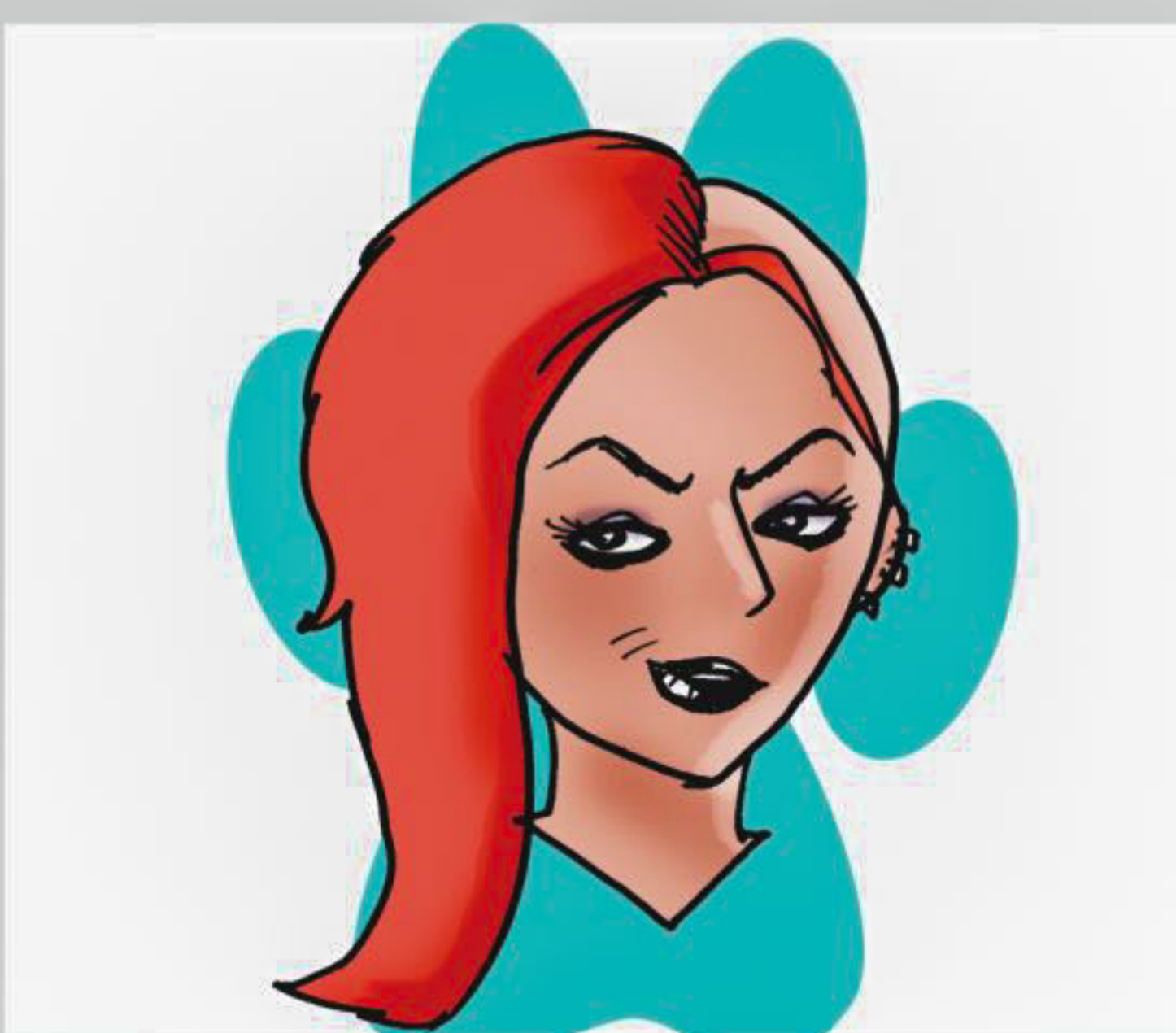
Imran was not a healthy man.

Last night he hoisted himself onto a rickshaw after a particularly successful wedding where he

managed to have three servings of food. He was oblivious to how slow the rickshaw was moving – maybe he was used to it – and was contently rubbing his stomach when he felt it rumble. As the rickshaw pulled up to a set of traffic lights, he felt unfamiliar pangs of pain radiate throughout his body. He was perturbed; he wasn't due to have a snack for another 15 minutes. The pain spread up his torso and throughout his chest as he frantically rummaged around in his pockets. A little beggar boy hobbled up to

him, oblivious to his growing panic, and pleaded with him for some food, saying he hadn't eaten in days. Imran waved him away and kept searching, and then pulled out a half-eaten pack of biscuits he had saved for emergency purposes. Perhaps he was just hungry, yes, that was the reason he was in so much pain.

The rickshaw pulled up to the front of Imran's building and turned around, but instead of seeing an outstretched hand holding his fare, he saw Imran slumped over, covered in biscuit crumbs.



PRIDE

Sadia refused to even consider meeting the men that her aunts tried to introduce her too. There was always something lacking – not handsome enough, not rich enough, not enough qualifications, not high-ranking enough – and despite the pleas of her family to at least meet the potential suitors in the hopes that she'd change her mind, she merely looked the other way. She could do so much better, she told herself daily. After 25 years of being spoiled rotten by her family

and relatives, she was convinced there was no one good enough for her, and she was more than happy to settle for a life of solitude as long as she didn't have to put up with anyone she deemed to be beneath her.

That all changed, however, when Sadia met Abrar. He was a colleague's cousin and they hit it off instantly, and seven months later their families were organising wedding preparations. Sadia was ecstatic. She finally found a man worthy of being her husband, and he seemed to tick all the right

boxes. He was the strong silent type, something she adored, because he had a bit of an edge and he wasn't one of the boring nice guys that her family tried to set her up with. She couldn't wait to start their married life, something she never thought she'd say. She was a princess and she had finally found her prince. No more boring nice guys.

She wished she had gone for a boring nice guy when her prince started to beat her every day.

By Zahrah Haider