

Title: Reflections

Soundtrack link: https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL6Ma3zuroj_-CK01URP5buWE54mRY2eFi

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Quickly adjusting her hijab with the aid of her reflection in the puddle - it had been raining all August which was a bummer during her summer after A levels - Sadiya made a dash for the bus.

“Have you got the cake sorted?” Sadiya was currently in deep conversation with Nadia about the next gathering- and possibly the biggest challenge for their ever feuding family - a 5 year old’s birthday party.

“Yep, I’m making a jungle themed cake to fit the theme. Maya’s going to love it.”

Sadiya got comfortable on the upper deck - the traffic looked like she was going to be here for a while. “What about *him*? Is he coming?” Even 1 year after the divorce was finalised, Maya’s dad was always an awkward topic amongst the sisters.

“He said he’ll try, which in his words means no, but I don’t care. I’m not going to let him ruin anything else. All I care about is giving Maya the birthday party she deserves.”

Sadiya could never understand how Nadia, a confident woman, ended up with the scrub that was her ex husband. Was she blinded by love? She could never understand the concept of soulmates, probably because she has never spoken to a boy, but even during the really bad times, when her sister came back to their house because of yet another argument, she would always ask “why do you stay with him?” And her sister never failed to reply with a solemn “because I love him.” Well, thank god that changed.

Nadia was quick to change the subject. “You met your friends today, right? How are they?”

“Oh same old-”

“Ugh, Maya’s having a meltdown upstairs, I’ve got to go, we’ll talk more about the party soon though, yeah? Bye.” Nadia hung up before Sadiya got another word in.

It had been a long day, and Sadiya knew that the bus ride home would help her get her head straight. She loved her friends, but she loved her own company even more. She glanced at herself in the bus window, the wind was not doing her scarf any favours, but a day of listening to Aisha rant about her boyfriend had exhausted her to the point where she didn’t care about her appearance; she just wanted to get home before Maghrib.

Sadiya popped her earphones in and enjoyed the bus ride home.

Sadiya did get home in time for Maghrib, not that anyone would have noticed. Ever since her brother had left home for university, she’d become more accustomed to the life of an only child. It was

strange, one day she was sharing a room with Nadia arguing over stupid things, and now, she was sitting in her own room, only her parents downstairs for company. When they weren't at work.

After a mundane dinner with her parents, discussing the ins and outs of the upcoming party and a short sit down whilst the 10 O'clock news in Bangla played, Sadiya was getting ready to turn in, applying moisturiser and taking an intense glance at her face.

Sadiya never really considered herself ugly, but she didn't exactly consider herself pretty. A lifetime of being called average had made her immune to criticism, but sometimes, she just wished she was conventionally pretty, if there was such a thing.

Her obsessive gaze in the mirror came to a halt as she prayed Isha, keeping full focus on her prayers.

Sadiya again stood in front of her mirror; it seems she couldn't escape her own vanity (or insecurity) today. As she gazed there, she saw a flicker of... something? She herself could not bring what she saw into thought because it was completely and utterly impossible to see *that*. Her.

After pushing... whatever that was to the back of her mind, Sadiya decided it was time for bed, she'd been sad and confused and miserable too many times this year, and she had to move on with her life. Even if she couldn't bear thinking about her lonely future.

"Nadi- oh, Sadiya, I'm off to work!" Sadiya was woken up by the excessively loud shutting of the front door, her mum's 'polite' way of saying 'you can't have a lie in every morning.'

She never understood her parent's logic of naming both her and her sister Sadiya and Nadia, and always put it down to her parents being too lazy to come up with another for her. Looking out her window, Sadiya could tell she was set for another rainy, murky day stuck inside. Fun.

Sadiya was caught off guard yet again at the hallway mirror. She saw what she couldn't think about, couldn't bear to spend another second dwelling about. As quickly as she happened in front of the towering mirror, Sadiya ran up the stairs, choosing to distract herself with laundry before and not give... her another thought.

The day passed with Sadiya trying not to think about what she had been thinking about all day. Her parents had come back from work pretty early and she could smell dinner cooking.

Sadiya didn't think she'd felt so alone in her life. Sure, she had people, friends, her sister, her parents, but they weren't hers. Not really. She couldn't tell them everything and anything and know that they will still look at her not with judgmental eyes, but with understanding. Not like Ayah.

Ayah was her best friend. She always would be. They were meant to do everything together; university, move in together, even work together if they could, but now, she's on her own.

And looking in the mirror, seeing her staring back at her, it scared her. Would she be happy? What would she say? Sadiya glanced in the mirror, this time looking Ayah dead in the eyes and gave her a smile.

Ayah smiled back.