



## The Diary of a Hounslow Girl

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*Shaheeda is a sixteen-year-old British Muslim girl grappling with growing up, traditional values, friendship and relationships. Shaheeda enters a relationship with a boy named Aaron, but he starts to ignore her. Noticing a change in Shaheeda's behaviour, her sister Aisha asks if she is okay. This speech is Shaheeda's reaction.*

**SHAHEEDA:** I looked at her, ready to tell her everything, about how I fell in love and lost my two best friends, didn't do my GCSEs, discovered things about myself that I never really knew, like my love for poetry, and that I'm gonna be a mum... at sixteen, and that I wished I could have been like you and could have done everything by the book but there's something either very wrong or very right with me and I can't work it out because I haven't had time because... *(She pauses, catches her breath and exhales.)* And before I had a chance to speak I felt my mum grab me by the arm and say: 'Kya hogya tumhe? Abka shakel itna harab he!' If you can't be happy Shaheeda, then go home.

I wasn't going to cry. Not in front of all these people and just as I felt my chest tightening and the tears coming, I legged it. I left the family to it, through Beaverfield Park, down Heathdale Avenue, and I could see the Intuition Centre getting further and further away as I looked back, disappearing in the distance and people were looking at me like I was crazy, running through Hounslow with my salwar kameez, like I was running away from my own wedding or something. *(Beat.)* I ran so fast that I got to Aaron's house in the space of ten minutes. I wasn't even sure about what I was there to say, or what he was gonna say when he saw me in the state I was in. I rung his doorbell and there was no answer but his window was wide open and he always closed it when he went out so I thought he must just be blanking me like he had been doing for the past six weeks when I needed him the most and I couldn't work out why, I mean I didn't know what I had done to mess this all up? Aaron?

*(She looks up at a window.)*

I've tried to ring you, but your phone's off. I just wanted to let you know that I'm ready. Packed! And I know you've seen all my messages this month coz I can see the double blue ticks on all the *WhatsApps* I've sent.

*(She looks around her as if she is standing outside his window and people are walking past.)*

Look. This thing I need to chat to you about, it's important. Like proper important. Like World War Three important... *(Pause, she waits for a response.)* I saw Miss Middleton at Hounslow East, she stopped me and said that I'll have to retake my GCSEs next year with Sinead O'Brian and Lacy Adams. She said that I had a lot of potential, you know? Her exact words were that I have 'a natural ability to retain information and I just get things quicker and that if I had put it to good use I'd be a proper success.' And do you know what I said? Aaron, do you know what I said?

I said that I remember what Aaron was wearing when I first saw him. I could tell you every single tattoo he has and what they all mean. I remember our first kiss like it was yesterday and how both his eyebrows rise when he's waiting for an answer to a question. I told her not to worry and that my ability to retain important information had been put to good use.

*(Pause.)*

Aaron?

*Part 3, Scene 1, 'The Valima'*