

The Hidden Mother

by Garf Collins

Ahmad's halfhearted attention to his homework was interrupted by a familiar voice. *What does he want, he thought, he's caused enough trouble as it is, leaving us and then bringing back a second wife from Pakistan. I hate him.*

The last thing he wanted was to see his parent, who had deserted him and his mother for a much younger wife. Despite his hatred, he couldn't help listening to their conversation, although it was difficult to hear because there was also the sound of a baby crying.

"Don't shut the door. Just listen to me."

"Why should I listen to you after what you have done to us."

"Well. I now know it was a mistake because..." *very loud baby crying.*

"You can't expect me to do that. You chose her over me. It's her responsibility."

"I know, but the fact is she is no..." *again an insistent wail.*

Ahmad soon gave up listening. It was impossible to follow what they were saying because of the baby. One thing was clear. His mother was being asked to do something she was arguing against. Ahmad wished his father would go away. After many months his mother had stopped crying every night and seemed to be more content.

About an hour later, Ahmad realized that his father was leaving, but his relief was tempered by what he overheard. "Right. So that's agreed. I'll collect a few things then I'll be back."

When he emerged from his bedroom, he was amazed to see his mother cuddling a baby - obviously, the one which, had been making all the noise, but now it was peacefully asleep.

“What’s that baby doing here, and what did he want. I thought he had gone forever. I never want to see him again.”

“Ahmad sit down. I’ve got something to tell you. I know your father was terrible to us with his new wife and all that, but he’s realized that she is no good as a mother. So what we have agreed is that he will leave her and come to live with us again and I’ll look after the baby.”

Editorial note: This is a true story from an inner London school which had pupils from many different countries. There were many harsh stories there arising from challenging circumstances. Ahmad had been a very promising pupil, but the family upheaval caused him to lose interest in his studies, and he failed all the exams he had been expected to pass with ease.