



Ask Arita



Preventing crime, protecting the public and helping those in need



GAY BROTHER TRICKED AND ABANDONED

Dear Arita

Ever since I was little, I've known my brother Hasan was gay. He never came out to my parents but I knew they could tell. Last month we were told my grandfather was ill and we all needed to fly to my parents' homeland to say goodbye. When we arrived my dad and uncles took away Hasan's phone, passport and money and told him they knew about his sexuality and that he had to stay there and marry a girl from my grandfather's village to 'cure' him of his homosexuality. When he refused they beat him up, and threatened to beat me up when I tried to intervene. It was horrible watching him forced to marry this girl against his will, and I feel so sorry for her as she knows he is gay and will never love her. I'm now back in the UK and desperately missing my brother. I want to help him but I don't know how - he has no phone and I can't talk to anyone else in my family about this as I'm the only one against it. How can I help him? I'm so far away.

Alma, Birmingham

ARITA SAYS Alma, your family have committed several offences against both you and your brother and clearly have duped him into believing he was visiting his poorly grandfather, while really arranging his marriage. Despite the fact that the marriage took place abroad, an offence of forced marriage has taken place. You must go to the police immediately and tell them all that you know and they will work with the Forced Marriage Unit in London, to repatriate your brother back to the UK.

Need Help?

If you are worried about forced marriage, please call West Midlands Police on 101 or 999 in an emergency.

Arita's photo story

DAY 4

I'VE GOT SOMETHING TO TELL YOU. MY FAMILY ARE MAKING ME GET MARRIED...I'M ENGAGED



WHAT?! DO YOU WANT TO MARRY HER?



NO! BUT MY FAMILY WILL BE SHAMED IF I DON'T.

NOW I'VE LOST JADE. THIS ISN'T WHAT I WANT...



Terrified of my brother

Dear Arita

For years I had a great relationship with my older brother, but recently it's completely broken down. I've had to move in with a friend due to problems at home after I called off my engagement (I realised I didn't have anything in common with the man my parents set me up with. They didn't take it well at all so I left the family home for a bit). I've had to change my number as my brother has been bombarding me with texts calling me all of the names under the sun, and telling me I've brought shame on our family. I'm now scared to leave the house as the other day he was following me in his car.

I don't think he would ever hurt me but he has got an awful temper. I don't want to call the police and get him into trouble for following me, but I just want him to leave me alone for a while to let the situation cool down. Who can I call if he follows me again (not the police).

Alma, 24, Solihull

ARITA SAYS Alma, it is very common for brothers to act as the gatekeepers for their sister's 'honour', and will do all they can to prevent the family from being 'shamed'. Rejecting a forced marriage can be perceived as a dishonourable act and many incidents of violence and even worse, have been seen from these situations. You have done exactly the right thing by moving out of the family home. Now you have now been tracked down by your brother, both you and your friend may be at risk. Although you say you do not want to go to the police, officers are trained to listen, to support and guide you and will do all they can to give you your choices which may or may not include a criminal

FM facts!

Forcing someone to marry against their will has been a crime since 2014, with perpetrators facing up to seven years in prison. The law is designed to help people at risk of forced marriage in England and Wales, as well as UK nationals who are overseas.

prosecution. If you are adamant you do not want to go to the police then there are other specialist organisations who can help guide you, such as the Sharan Project, Karma Nirvana and the Jan Trust.

Stalked by her cousin

Dear Arita

I'm a secondary school teacher and I've got some worries about one of the girls in my year 10 class. She's gone from being outspoken to very quiet and withdrawn over the last few months. Her older cousin has also started to escort her around the school, and is always waiting for her outside my classroom at the end of her lessons. She doesn't seem happy to see him and I've overheard other children in my class saying she's getting married in a few months when she turns 16. I've raised my concerns with the head teacher and he doesn't know what to do because we don't want to interfere if it's a cultural thing, but the change in her personality makes me think she is far from happy. Who can we contact for help?

Anonymous, Birmingham

ARITA SAYS What you are describing are all the tell-tale signs of an imminent forced marriage. Pupils becoming withdrawn and being chaperoned by relatives everywhere they go are classic symptoms of a looming

unwanted marriage. Other indicators can include self-harm, not being bothered to study for exams any more as they don't see the point, losing their aspirations, not being able to stay for after school activities, absences and extended holiday periods. Forced marriage is a criminal offence and is against the law. You have done exactly the right thing by raising this to your head teacher and you must not grey this issue with perceiving it as cultural. This is child abuse in plain and simple terms and you must invoke your normal safeguarding procedure and report this matter immediately to the police and children's services. Forced marriage can lead to all sorts of emotional and physical harm such as rape, assault and severe psychological harm. The Freedom Charity offer free training to schools. Take them up on their offer to make sure that all your staff and pupils can recognise the signs of forced marriage and know what to do to prevent it.

Charities of the week

If you're at risk of forced marriage or scared you might be there are so many places you can go to seek help. This week we're highlighting:

Throughcare

A Birmingham based charity who offer support and guidance to male and female victims who have been forced into marriage or feel they are about to be. They have specific refuges where victims can go to escape from a forced marriage and start to rebuild their lives.

Web: www.throughcare.com

Tel: 0121 554 3920

Sandwell Women's Aid

A charity based in West Bromwich who offer refuge, support and counselling to victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence. Their

services include a specific South Asian women's refuge, and specialist Asian women's floating and resettlement support. **Web:** www.sandwellwomensaid.co.uk / **Tel:** 0121 553 0090 (9am - 5pm, Mon to Fri. For their 24 hour domestic violence helpline call 0121 552 6448)

It's not culture...



...it's crime

For help call 101

