



Sofia Khan Is Not Obligated

Ayisha Malik

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'Snort-Diet-Coke-out-of-your-nostrils funny . . . will resonate with any woman who's looking for love'

Sarra Manning, author of *It Felt Like a Kiss*

Sofia Khan is single once more, after her sort-of-boyfriend proves just a little *too* close to his parents. And she'd be happy that way too, if her boss hadn't asked her to write a book about the weird and wonderful world of Muslim dating. Of course, even though she *definitely* isn't looking for love, to write the book she does need to do a little research . . .

Sofia Khan Is Not Obligated Details

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From Reader Review Sofia Khan Is Not Obligated for online ebook

Abbie | ab_reads says

If you're looking for either of the following things:

1. A fun, light read between heavy books,
2. A fun, light read that is still poignant and moving in parts,
3. To diversify your reading lists with more Muslim women authors with books that feature women as the main characters,

Then I highly recommend you pick up Sofia Khan Is Not Obligated by Ayisha Malik!

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It's a funny (hilarious actually) but important contemporary about a young Muslim in Britain and her everyday experiences and issues as a hijab-wearing woman, who is asked to write an exposé about the Muslim dating scene by her boss!

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I'm really glad I picked this one up! I never read contemporary, and this was a refreshing break from all the heavy books I've been reading recently. But that is not to say that there isn't depth to it. This book explores family relationships, female friendships, racism, religion, and love. It also raises important questions, such as could you be in a relationship with someone who didn't share your religious beliefs?

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It was maybe a bit predictable at times, but also moving, relatable, and did I mention hilarious?? It's also eye-opening, as it delves right into the family dynamics of an immigrant family, and some of the customs and traditions of Islam while keeping things fairly light! Give it a go!

Nick Imrie says

The thing about romantic comedy is that it has to be funny. If the plot consists almost entirely of a round of everyday events - drinks with mates, squabbles with parents, deadlines at work, dates with boys - then it really needs to be packed full of sparkling wit and astute observations. Otherwise, it's just banal.

In 'Sofia Khan' the comedy is strongest during moments of culture-clash: when the well-meaning but clueless colleagues in *'the most white-centric, middle-class industry there is'* are fascinated by Sofia's scarf (imagine everyone at work being amazed that you keep your trousers up by doing up the buttons!), or when her squabbling parents are baffled by the behaviour of their 2nd generation children: 'What is this click?' her mother asks when Sofia turns down yet another perfectly eligible young man. But the laughs were few and far between, and the story rambled on and on, in desperate need of an editor.

Part of the reason that it fails as a comedy is that Sofia is hardly ever the butt of the joke; in fact, the book was firmly on her side. It could have worked as a comedy if she had been ridiculous, or it could have worked as chick-lit if she'd had a moral journey and learnt from her failures. Instead, there are no consequences, or worse: she's presented as having been in the right all along. The more Sofia was self-righteously justified, the more frustrating I found her.

Early in the book Sofia bumps into a man on the underground and he mutters *'terrorist'* at her. She is upset by this and the story of her encounter with The Racist is repeated to friends, family and co-workers who are all suitably aghast. Later in the book she spots him again, chases him into the tube and then steals the last

seat *'that was rightfully his'*. He calls her 'paki bitch' which provokes a rather delightful scene of solidarity as he is shamed by an old white lady and forced to apologise by a young black man. But this public humiliation is not enough for Sofia, who wants him to have *'an epiphany about [his] narrow-minded, prejudiced views'*. So she marches up to him, calls him a cunt and then punches him in the face. He calls her a crazy bitch; she calls him a racist wanker.

It makes me so uncomfortable, because punching people is wrong. Racist insults are also obviously wrong, but it's not ok to escalate insults into violence. But more than that, Sofia has been against violence throughout the book, and this moment of hypocrisy is neither comedic nor regrettable. It's a moment of gratifying victory. It seems that violence is only wrong unless it happens to be emotionally satisfying for Sofia Khan.

Sofia wears the hijab, despite the hassle this brings her from racists, colleagues and even her mother (who desperately wants her to take it off to catch a husband). She calls herself *'a walking, talking sign for religion'*. It's clearly very important to her. Yet, her attitude towards it (or more precisely: her attitude towards other people's attitudes towards it) is confusingly variable. Different positions that Sofia holds on the hijab include: **Men should make assumptions about her based on the hijab.** Sofia is frustrated when non-Muslim men on dating sites don't realise that they have no chance: *'I wondered whether they could actually see I wear a hijab? [...] Marrying a non-Muslim would be the most nonsensical thing for a hijabi to do'*.

Men shouldn't make assumptions about her based on the hijab. Sofia resents men assuming that her conservative clothing choices imply conservative morals: *'Thanks, strange person, for your opinion, but who said I'm conservative. Talk about judging a person by their scarf.'*

Men should adjust their clothing choices based on hers. Sofia is mortified when a man (who is very kindly allowing her to use his home as an office) doesn't dress according to her morals: *'as if it was perfectly natural to be shirtless, tattoo-armed in your boxers in front of, hello, a hijabi.'*

But there are some assumptions that she lets pass. Like when a man says: *'I meant you're a hijabi and, so you know, you're a certain way. There's depth and whatever to you'*.

So overall, Sofia just ends up looking a little narcissistic: everyone is expected to be able to read her mind, know what the hijab means to her, and adjust their behaviour accordingly. Only one person criticises Sofia for wearing the hijab, a man on a dating site who says: *'A hijab???? Seriously?!! You're living in the West!!!!'*

Sofia's reaction: *'Who is this prejudiced person who suffers from punctuation hysteria, one might ask? A BBC correspondent. Had to double-check he was actually brown. In true Zen manner I wished him luck with his identity crisis.'*

This dismissal is so frustrating, because she's hypocritically practising exactly the kind of prejudice she criticises in everyone who disagrees with her. First she's conflating 'brown' and 'Muslim', assuming that because he's in one group he must be in the other. And secondly for assuming he's having an identity crisis – as if there couldn't be any other reason for a man to be against the hijab! The opportunity for comedy is lost, because Sofia has to be in the right.

Sofia's friend Hannah becomes a second wife to Zulfi, a man who is already married. Everybody seems to think this is a bad idea; nobody says so: *'Everyone tucked away their opinions as Hannah and Zulfi came and sat at the table'*. His wife and children do not attend the wedding and when Sofia's mum (god bless her) points out their absence Zulfi is embarrassed while Hannah is *'steadfast and defiant'*. I really felt like I was expected to admire Hannah's grace, but there really isn't anything to admire in someone being 'defiant' while they poach someone else's man! Home-wrecking is wrong.

It pretty soon becomes apparent that Hannah is living like a Victorian kept woman: Zulfi buys her a house and he visits her when he's not spending time with his real family. She becomes consumed with jealousy. Sofia is always humblebragging about her big mouth and opinionated ways, and how much they get her into trouble. Except in this case, when she and all her friends are absolutely derelict in their duty to tell Hannah: 1) It's obviously a terrible mistake that will make her unhappy.

2) It's actually wrong to get together with a man when his already existing family don't want you too!

Where's the solidarity with other women?

But Sofia says nothing because: *'it's not PC to judge – we are all autonomous beings, blah blah blah'*. Her friends at work are horrified:

'But that's not even legal!' Fleur exclaimed, going red in the face.

Err, hello. Neither is murder, but that doesn't stop people.'

There you have it: the Sofia Khan justifications for bigamy:

1) It's not PC to judge.

2) Murder still happens!

So, it was difficult to like Sofia because she's really morally inconsistent and yet she's presented as morally superior. Perhaps I could've liked her if she had any other redeeming qualities but she doesn't have any other qualities at all. Her only activities are meeting men, and talking about meeting men. There is a sort of high-school feel to the story: she hides men from her parents; she talks constantly about boys with her friends; she is bitchy and judgemental whenever the boy she likes notices another woman or adds one on facebook.

In the final section of the book, (view spoiler) Once again, Sofia Khan is just in the right.

Warda says

Reread!! Brilliant. Loved it! As hilarious and as heartfelt as the first time.

Initial review

[4.5] LOVED THIS!

It's about time more books came out that feature Muslim protagonists and showcase diversity and representation in all kinds of forms.

This book was just an overall fun read. I had the best time with it and I couldn't put it down!

It follows a Muslim woman who's been asked to write a book about 'Muslim dating' by the publishing company she works for. It tackles many of the stereotypical and preconceived notions others may have about Muslims and our cultures and is presented in such a funny way. I loved the constant sarcastic dialogue, how the cultural aspects were infused and how Ayisha Malik gave insight into a genuine Muslim family.

Even though it follows a Pakistani household, I still found this extremely relatable and I love how familiar everything felt. Let's be real, our cultures aren't that different.

It was easy to read, the characters were well fleshed out and there were so many laugh-out-loud moments! Plus, it made me think!! About life, love, the cultural aspects our parents and elders cling to, because it is their only form of familiarity, but also showing that it is possible for a family to move past that and becoming more open-minded, loving and accepting.

I did have a minor gripe towards the end with how well everything worked out. But looking back on it, I'm

thinking, why should that even be an issue?

The tone of the book, whilst it was a lighthearted read, was serious as well, touching upon issues such as racism, immigration and the dangers of stereotyping.

I cannot wait for the sequel!

Robin Stevens says

Funny, lovely and romantic, this is an absolutely brilliant book. It's basically Bridget Jones with Muslim dating, with added loving jabs at the bonkers world of publishing. It's weird that it is so weird to see a protagonist who's a practising Muslim, and I'm so glad that this book is beginning to redress that balance.

Puck says

“Oi,” I shouted. “Terrorists don’t wear vintage shoes, you ignorant wanker!”

Imagine “The Diary of Bridget Jones” but with an sarcastic, independent muslima as the main character. Doesn’t that sound awesome? And it is, because in this #OwnVoices novel Sofia Khan tackles muslim dating life with reluctant enthusiasm, cheeky questions, but also with the silent wish of finding true love. And what a fun story that is to read about.

Sofia Khan is a book publicist in her thirties, single, a Hijabi Muslim, living in London and the daughter of Pakistani immigrants. When her boss asks her to write a book about Muslim dating, it pushes her to (uneagerly) starting looking for a husband for, especially since that’s all her family asks her about these days. During her investigations into (online) dating, I as a white woman* learned a lot about the various traditions and aspects of Muslim culture. So many things - living with the in-laws, the discussions on religions, being a second wife, the double standard of sex - were completely new to me, and so a real eye-opener.

Sofia Khan is a great main character as well. She’s witty, intelligent and headstrong: she knows what she wants and likes and she isn’t going to compromise. Her faith for example is very important to her: she’s proud to wear a hijab and has no problems with praying 5 times a day, even if her workplace - with its glass doors - isn’t the most ideal spot to do so.

She doesn’t have the sharpest people-reading skills, but I loved how supportive she was to her friends and her family, no matter how annoying their constant questions about marriage were.

But despite this being a great romantic comedy, there were also moments in which this book gets more heavy: Sofia being called a terrorist on the tube, Sofia’s editor asking her to take her hijabi off so that she can touch her hair, and uncomfortable conversations when Sofia is looking for a place to pray.

These, and the tense talks between Sofia and her parents whenever her possible-marriage comes up, give this book its depth that “Bridget Jones” lacked.

So if you’re looking for a fun, heartfelt story about a woman finding love in unexpected places - because the ending came as a big surprise to me! - you should definitely read this. For Valentine’s Day maybe? :)

*= sadly I didn't get all the remarks or comments since I'm neither a muslim or a Pakistani girl myself. However, reviews from those women - like Warda's (here) and Nuzaifa's (here) - informed me that this book is doing a great job at representation.

Nuzaifa - Word Contessa says

If I were to count the number of times I've seen myself represented in fiction, it would take no more than 60 seconds. You'd say I'm lying considering the fact that Muslims are mentioned so often in media. However, literature that is truly representative of Muslims, are few and far between.

Ayisha Malik's debut follows Sofia Khan, a Hijabi Muslim and a first generation immigrant from Pakistan living in London and working in the book publishing industry. Just bouncing back from a broken engagement with a man, Sofia is ready to swear off men. Except, she accidentally pitches a book about Muslims dating to her publicity director!

Armed with nothing but a spankin' new shaadi.com profile (for research, of course), Sofia throws herself hijab first into the Muslim blind dating scene. What follows is **a heartwarming, authentic tale of a young Muslim woman in a race against time as she attempts to finish her book and maybe, just maybe find love.**

One of my favorite things about the novel is Sofia Khan - Malik's portrayal of a hijabi was so refreshing and accurate. When most people view a hijabi they see two things, a possible terrorist or a victim of oppression. Sofia Khan is neither. She prays five times a day, seeks solace in God, abstains from alcohol/pre-marital sex and fasts in Ramadan. She chooses to wear the hijab. But she's no angel.

I was talking to fellow blogger and hijabi, Sabeena (who coined #HijabNotAHalo, an apt hashtag really) some time back about how most people including Muslims hold us hijabis to impossible standards of behavior. From sneaking the occasional fag to swearing, I loved Sofia's little 'flaws'. She's strong-willed, stubborn and often makes poor decisions with good intentions. She's independent, witty and an incredible friend. Most importantly, she's human. **And as a reader, you can't help but love Sofia Khan.**

Muslim women are constantly underestimated but I can attest to the fact that they are some of the craziest and funniest people. I thought that Malik does a brilliant job in capturing just how incredible we are. ;)

Sofia Khan is Not Obligated **aces the Bechdel test**. I'm a feminist through and through and believe in supporting and uplifting women. My friendships in real life and online are all founded on mutual, unfailing support systems and because of this I love seeing female relationships portrayed positively in fiction. Most female friendships in fiction are either token friendships or are negatively portrayed but Sofia's friends are all shown as incredibly supportive women. I loved the fact that Sofia's BFFs Hannah, Suj and Fozia were well fleshed out characters with their own independent story arcs. They all had distinctly different personalities reflecting the fact that Muslim women are not a monolith. The book also highlights the strong familial relationships that are common in Desi families - Very, very heartwarming.

There's a lot of issues within our own communities like colorism, racism especially towards Black people. It takes a lot of courage to confront and address these prejudice issues and I think Malik does this brilliantly through her spunky heroine. She even points out that publishing is 'the most white-centric, middle-class industry!' The West has a LOT of misconceptions about Muslims. Misconceptions that often cost us our

lives. One day while commuting, a bigot calls Sofia a terrorist during her commute. It takes a minute for her realise that she was just racially abused. First comes the disbelief and then she tells herself that it shouldn't affect her so much because it's just a few 'flimsy words'. But then comes (almost comical) rage.

I stared at the ground and looked at my shoes: my lovely, teal, snakeskin, peep-toes (which, by the way, are offset perfectly by my coral scarf). I was like, hang on - I don't look like a terrorist...

...“Oi,” I shouted. “Terrorists don't wear vintage shoes, you ignorant wanker!”

The magic is in the details.

Whenever Sofia finds herself lost and second guessing her decisions, she performs the Istikhara prayer (Muslims when faced with difficult decisions often seek guidance from Allah by performing this prayer). During her sister's wedding, the entire house is decked in fairy lights and Sofia quips about how the only place free of fairy lights is the washroom! We, Desis do love our fairy lights. From ranting about the hopelessness of brown men and worrying about the length of our tops to bemoaning her disastrous culinary skills and dodging nosy Rishta aunties, Sofia kept me giggling page after page. It's these seemingly small details that made this whole book a special experience for me - It was like reading my entire life!

As a 20-something Desi Muslim woman, I hear the 'M' word no less than 5 times a day. Seriously, every day. Everyone from your interfering relatives/neighbors to well-meaning friends tend to ask you when you are getting married. You dodge one bullet and turn around the corner only to fall into the clutches of another Rishta aunt!

Sofia also talks about how most workplaces can be a bit uncomfortable for Muslims especially, when trying to find a place to pray. Muslims pray five times a day and since there are designated times for each prayer, we often face the challenge of finding a place to pray. There's a particular incident in the book where Sofia's makeshift prayer room has been turned into a medical room. What follows is an awkward conversation where she has to explain to the (white) administrative guy that she needs a place to pray and would it be okay if she could get the entry code to the room? After explaining that yes, we do pray all year round and yes, we do pray five times a day, she gets the access code. Except now the door to the prayer room has been changed to glass so everyone who walks past is treated to a view of her arse in the air. This is literally, what I've had to go through at every workplace. It's 2016 and workplaces fail hard at inclusivity. As Sofia says “*Bad praying space, good canapés.*”

At first glance(read) this book seems like a light hearted rom com. It is. But it is also so much more.

Sofia Khan's first person, diary entry narration made it easy to connect with the protagonist. As much I love a solid plot, there's something about a really good character driven book that always hooks me in. Sofia's distinct voice drives the narrative in this fun yet thought provoking read and I couldn't help but devour this book chapter after chapter. At a time when Islamaphobia is rampant, books like Sofia Khan is Not Obligated are so so relevant because they offer a way to bridge this sense of Otherness created by ignorance.

A book about Muslims that is neither a tragedy or an “issues” book - Hurrah.

THE RATING

5 Stars

QUOTE-WORTHY

“I tried! I did! But what normal human being would ask another human being to live with a cohort of mother, father, brother and sister-in-law with two children, complete with a sister and brother-in-law and three children next door, and a hole-in-the-wall joining the two houses? (Just writing that sentence about so many people confused me; imagine living with them.)”

FINAL VERDICT:

Ayisha Malik's *Sofia Khan is Not Obligated* is an authentic, warm and hilarious read that will stay with you days after finishing it. Muslim or not, this book guarantees you a good time.

Joanne Harris says

It's been a while since I read a love story as satisfying as this. Repeatedly and unfairly touted as "the Muslim Bridget Jones", this is a delightful book; light-hearted but thought-provoking. Sofia is a marvellous heroine with a marvellously raucous and opinionated voice, and her story, though peppered with ostensibly Bridget-like comments on marriage, clothes and biscuits, is about as far from Bridget Jones as it is possible to be. Sofia is an unapologetic hijabi, secure in her Islamic faith, but she nevertheless manages to defy virtually every stereotype. She smokes, she swears, she lives life on her own terms, and that includes her relationships with men. She loves *Sex and the City*, and yet modestly keeps to shaking hands with boyfriends: she prays five times a day, doesn't drink, and yet still manages to negotiate the tricky field of working and socializing in the notoriously white (and boozy) world of publishing. The author handles the love story with remarkable deftness, and even the happy ending is far from being a happy-ever-after, concentrating far less on the idea of a wedding and more on that of a marriage - a grown-up distinction that many romantic novelists fail to make. The style is idiosyncratic: I liked it, though others may find it a little choppy, relying on texts, e-mails, book entries and short chapters that sometimes feel in the need of expansion, but Sofia's voice carries it all, and the depictions of her family, colleagues and friends (in my mind, the backbone of the story) are lively, well-drawn and satisfying. Read it with the blinkers off: you may find it surprising.

Shaikha says

4.5/5

Different. Brilliant. One of a kind. ??

I was going to give this book 4 stars only BUT THAT ENDING DAMMIT, exactly how I wanted it to be!
?♥

"I don't care about *I love yous* - they're for people who don't know any better. *You should never change* is the culmination of all your flaws made necessary: the imperfect sum of an imperfect past, which turned to be a good thing for someone."

Sofia is thirty years old when she breaks up with her potential husband, Imran, after he asks her to live with his parents and a hole-in-the-wall. Sofia works in publishing, and when she relates this story to her co-workers, her boss becomes very interested in the different aspects of Muslim dating, and proceeds to ask Sofia to write a book about it. What follows is mostly insights into Sofia's life as she writes the book, though the book itself doesn't particularly have priority, it is the starting point for a lot of the situations Sofia gets into.

"Perhaps this is God's way of saying, here, you might not have a man, but have a book instead."

The book is told from Sofia's perspective in a diary-style format, so naturally much of the book's success depends upon how much you like Sofia as a character. Personally, I loved her. I thought she was a very real, very relatable character. She's by no means perfect, which for my part only made her more likable. She's stubborn, hardly ever giving in to anyone, and she's very funny, her humour is often very dry and sarcastic, so I really appreciated it. I really liked that Sofia was quick to defend her beliefs in every aspect of her life. If someone said something she disagreed with, or took issue to, she almost always let them know. Even if that someone was a member of her own family. She has a close relationship with her dad, which I loved reading about, and I feel like I don't see this anywhere near often enough. Her dad was very funny, and it was very easy to warm to him. Sofia comes under a lot of criticism from members of their extended family and, at some point, the families of people that she's considering dating.

As this book is a romantic comedy, obviously I need to mention the romance. Sofia had several potential partners over the course of the book—which you'd expect, given that she's writing a book on Muslim dating—and I really liked seeing the various successes and failures of these dates that she goes on. It offered some very funny insights into the world of online dating, as Sofia meets more than her fair share of odd ones when she signs up to Shaadi.com (later referred to only as "Shady"). I'm not going to spoil who she ends up with, but I will say that I loved how the relationship developed. It felt very easy and natural – and though I did have an inkling as to who it might be very early on, that didn't make it any less satisfying.

Female friendship also has an important role in this book. While I'm no expert on romance novels or films, it often feels like the protagonist's friendships can get brushed aside in favour of the love interest, or they'll just have one particularly close friend, but that wasn't the case here. Sofia's friends are all well-developed, brilliant women, and though the focus is obviously on Sofia's life, we get to see a fair share of her friends' lives too.

"Must be grateful for friends who forgive and forget. They are the best kind." ♥

Sofia Khan is Not Obligated has often been described as a Muslim Bridget Jones, and I can definitely see the comparison. However, there are several points of differences that do get touched on throughout. There are some things that Sofia experiences that a non-Muslim protagonist would not experience. The reaction to her situation with her almost-husband, for one, and the assumption that she'd somehow get into trouble for writing the book. Very early on, a man calls Sofia a terrorist after she accidentally bumps into him while

trying to get on the tube, and there's a very uncomfortable moment wherein Sofia's editor asks Sofia if she'll take off her hijab so she can see her hair, and then proceeds to touch her hair without her permission. I really liked that these moments were in the book. Like I said, they were important points of difference. They were all dealt with very lightly, and the book never gets too dark.

"One of the issues about the whole 'being alone' stance is not having anyone to share the world's problems with. A person's been scoped out of your life and so you speak into a pit of nothingness."

I highly recommend this book. I guarantee you're going to take something away from it. I really look forward to reading anything else Ayisha Malik writes.

Emer says

HEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!!!! <<<<< THAT is the sound of the high pitched squeal I let out of me when I finished this book. LOVE IT!!!!

Chick-lits and women's fiction in general so often seem to get a bad rep... And sometimes I guess that is kinda earned because they frequently fall into the same old clichés and the same old storylines with only moderate differences! Maybe change the geographical setting, change the names of the main characters and their professions... And then it's a case of slot these variations into the main outline!!!

Well not completely so with Sofia Khan Is Not Obligated. This is fresh and funny. I laughed, and then I laughed, I laughed some more, I cried a little bit and then laughed a lot again!!!
PERFECT!!!!

And what really makes this book stand out is, it is a fantastic example of diverse popular fiction written by an #OwnVoices author, Ayisha Malik. Sofia, the main character is a British Muslim with Pakistani heritage and this COMPLETELY turns the chick lit genre on its head. So nice to see diverse representation in this very main stream, easy to read type of book.

Sofia Khan Is Not Obligated has frequently been referred to as a Muslim sort of Bridget Jones' Diary because the main theme of the book is dating and marriage prospects. Sofia is thirty, living at home with her family who are always asking when is she getting married. An opportunity arises at work for Sofia to write about Muslim dating and thus our story line is formed. What follows is so freaking hilarious!!! I couldn't even begin to count the number of times I burst out giggling and laughing at some of the histrionics of Sofia's life. Her family were written so beautifully well and the antics of her parents with regards to Sofia's perennial single-status were always scene stealing but there were also beautifully poignant family moments scattered throughout the book which also made this feel apart from the usual chick lit fare.

And even though this is something that I would categorise as an easy read that doesn't take itself too seriously, it has these amazing moments of clarity for the non-Muslim reader about what it must feel like to be constantly identified just for your religion. To be singled out for no justifiable cause. There was one occurrence on the London Underground where Sofia was verbally abused because of her appearance (she wears a hijab) and it really struck a chord with me. Because really Sofia, as you would expect, is the same as any other thirty something year old woman. She obsesses over her job, her friends, her relationships, her family, her shoes!! Just read this passage and see what you think yourself...

Before the doors closed I made a run for it, accidentally bumping into a man who was walking towards me. Accidentally. I heard him mumble something, but the doors were beeping and I was too busy pushing through the rush of people to really hear. As I stepped into the crammed carriage, the word finally penetrated my commute-fogged brain. I turned around, mouth open in delayed realisation. Terrorist? Me?...

Forget him, I rationalised to myself, you should be used to racist abuse, Sofia. Such flimsy words make no difference to me. It was a decent rationale, but didn't quite do the job of putting my world back into balance. I stared at the ground and looked at my shoes: my lovely, teal, snakeskin, peep-toes (which, by the way, are offset perfectly by my coral scarf). I was like, hang on – I don't look like a terrorist...

I looked up, and just as the doors were about to close, a very clear bout of logic possessed me. 'Oi,' I shouted. 'Terrorists don't wear vintage shoes, you ignorant wanker!'

I kind of hoped my usefully loud voice would carry. Of all the things in the world I could be, that was the brush he decided to tar me with.

But what was the point in my outburst?

The doors had already closed between us and he was long gone.

You know who wasn't gone?

Me. Surrounded by a tube full of people who were now casting me sideward glances and inching away tentatively.

How is anyone meant to explain reasonably to a train full of people that they are not a terrorist?

I mean, I work in publishing for goodness sake!

So I did the next best thing and in poised fashion focused on my book (or pretended to focus, as how was such a thing possible?).

Unfortunately I didn't take into account that I was reading "The Reluctant Fundamentalist".

I need a fag.

What I love about that passage is the humour that is embedded into such a dark and troubling event. To be labelled a terrorist purely for your religion and faith is disgusting and I just love how the author juxtaposed the innately stereotyped ideas that many people have about Islamic clothing with a love for beautiful vintage shoes that many women would obsess over. For me this was a chick lit with masses of substance because of very witty and astute moments such as this.

But this being a book about dating what were the boys like I hear you ask???? YES!!!!!!!!!! There were some great hotties and banter.

BANTER!!!!!!!!!!

This book was all about witty banter and flirtation AND I LOVED IT!!!! Okay so Conall became my

favourite boy but he's Irish like me so that's kinda natural but there are boys in here to suit all tastes and the evolution of each of their character arcs is great fun to follow and it being a romantic-comedy there are some hilarious interactions between Sofia and these various guys. And it also features one of my favourite meet-cutes of all time in a supermarket!!!! Read it and swoon!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Also, this book FINALLY gives the elevated status that it deserves to the marvellous Lemon Puff biscuit. DAMN THEY ARE GOOD BISCUITS!!!! If you like Lemon Puffs I would recommend that you read this book with a packet or twenty because there is sooooo much talk of biscuits!!!! They really are the universal food. Everyone gets what it's like to sit down with a cuppa and a biscuit right???? To dunk or not to dunk? That is the only question worth asking!!! (I don't dunk!!!!)

At the end of the day, this is a chick lit so certain plot rules are followed and any fan of the genre will love the emotional highs and lows of the story and will very much feel moved by the ending, but to me, this book should have a wider reaching audience because it is so incredibly witty and a whole lot of fun to read, but most importantly it's normalising of a religion that is sadly so often prejudiced against.

Sofia is a great main character. She's immensely flawed as a human being and pretty much gets the wrong end of the stick all the time but she is so beautifully human. So gorgeously drawn and her heart is so lovely. As the reader I very much connected to her and her plight. She is a character that wants love but on her terms and isn't that what we all want? Just to be loved and to be allowed to be the best version of ourselves?

I've already downloaded the sequel and can't wait to see what happens for Sofia and co. in the next book. If it's even half as funny I will be delighted!! So if you're on the fence about reading this one, I suggest you get off it IMMEDIATELY and

four stars

Some of my favourite quotes / funny bits:-

7 a.m. Ooh dear –jeans feel a bit snug. But it's better to be a little bit fat and embroiled in a struggle to become a size eight than actually being a size eight –where would you go from there? It's not the destination that counts, it's the journey.

7.05 a.m. Wish the journey didn't involve having a muffin top.

I can't believe it! *He* has pulled his finger out and set a date. Does this mean that people can change and surprise you?

Or did he just break under the weight of ultimatum – which is a charming story.

I asked whether she's sure. I mean really sure –because humans are pretty great at self-delusion. She said she loved him, which didn't really answer my question. But apparently if you argue with that logic (if that's what you want to call it) then you're a cynic, God forbid. That, and of course *she's* thirty-one – funny how age is always inserted into the equation of love.

Ambreen, because she can't help herself said, 'Come on, Sofe! Find a husband.'
Honestly, married people live in a bubble –husbands don't just pop out from nowhere, like a jack-in-the box.
I ignored her, and Ambreen's mother-in-law looked at me and said, 'See, Sofia, this is progress. Ambreen has two children now – what progress have you made?'
I stared at her for a moment and was about to say, 'Well, I'm writing a book!'
But then I thought; if it doesn't involve a human the size of a cantaloupe coming out of my vagina it mustn't be very impressive.

6.17 a.m. Argh! Looked in the mirror. Shouldn't I seem youthful and fresh given abstinence from partying and drinking? Maybe it's that occasional cigarette . . . might as well join a convent and be done with life altogether –except I'm the wrong religion.

All the world's a stage. And my unwieldy hijab is its curtain.

K. says

Trigger warnings: Islamophobia, death of a parent.

This book is essentially Bridget Jones' Diary, if Bridget Jones were a Pakistani hijabi who still lived with her parents in 2011. Seriously.

I was a little hesitant going into this, because it uses the same short-chapters-with-time-and-date-stamps format as Bridget Jones, and the story seemed to be going in a fairly similar way. So I was scared that it was going to be TOO similar, particularly as the author acknowledges the fact that she has written a Muslim version of Bridget Jones.

HOWEVER.

The characters are so much fun and they wormed their way into my heart. The story is often funny. It was compelling. It came with a side of Feelings, and it had a happy ending. What more could you want?

Please Pass the Books says

I'm sorry, but this book reads like a first draft—and not a very good one. There are many, many typos, misspellings, and grammatical issues, and the acerbic tone, which is cute and funny for about two pages, becomes tiresome far too quickly.

I adore books about South Asian culture, especially when they pit the volatile mismatch of tradition against the plight of progressive women. The blurb promised an intriguing tale from a perspective that we don't get nearly enough of: A thirty-something modern hijabi publicist in designer shoes, looking for love in all the wrong places. Unfortunately, it did not deliver. What could have been a fun story was let down by unpolished prose and a protagonist that is difficult to find at all endearing. I really wanted to love this book and was excited to pick it up...but, alas...I'm not obliged.

I'd like to thank Net Galley and the publisher Twenty7 Books for providing a copy of this book in exchange for my honest opinion, which this is

Sumaiyya says

Loved this book! It's definitely a favourite of mine. I can't imagine someone not loving this book unless they're racist or can't stand reading stories of diverse characters or just don't want to participate in at least trying to understand the humour or the sentiments presented in the book (basically lazy people). Seriously, I can't imagine a better book than this one when it comes to honest and hilarious Muslim fiction. I've been waiting for the kind of book that would actually be something I relate to, especially after reading *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* by Mohja Kahf (which was a genius book that I loved and super related to). This is that book. I absolutely LOVED how funny it was. I loved that it made me think about my own choices in life. In many ways it prepared me too, for the craziness that goes into getting married and it also allowed me to understand my own position, through the experiences of Sofia. I'm not going to claim you'll have the same enlightening experience with the book because you're a different person with your own set of plans and worries in life. But I can assure you this book will make you laugh, it'll make you sad and it'll make you really bloody happy. It'll also really make you appreciate your own family and friends. Finishing this book made me realise how much I'd love to have friends like Sofia does. It's just something so pure.

I also loved the writing, it was easy to connect to. I loved Sofia's fearless yet flawed character. I also loved that the story got better the more you read and finally finished with an ending that stuns and makes you really think. Don't wanna say too much because spoilers. Malik flawlessly tackles issues in the Muslim

community that most people, even the young, are too afraid to boldly address.

I really recommend the book to everyone. Especially those who complain about lack of diversity and those who feel too comfortable in its lacking.

April (Aprilius Maximus) says

DNF at 25%. The representation is A+, but I just really wasn't enjoying the story. It's soooo similar to Bridget Jones' Diary which I absolutely hate, and I'm just really not in the mood for a chick lit tbh.

Nasom says

Full Review

This is a book I don't think I would have come across or been interested in but my friend who was reading it suggested I do too because of how funny it is and she was kind enough to borrow me her copy. She did not lie!! I laughed so hard while reading this and sometimes too much that it led to crying.

This book is about Sofia, a 30-year old Pakistani Muslim who is writing a book about Muslim dating. She uses herself, her family members and friends' lives as inspiration for the book. From her POV, we get a glimpse into her world as a hijabi.

I love how light/funny the book is especially coming from a hijabi. It shows people that they are more than their religion and they have similar problems as others who might not be Muslims. I honestly could relate to her on some things: For instance, a culture obsessed with women getting married as soon as possible (that's my culture alright). She also talks about things such as not drinking, abstinence from premarital sex and all around being modest (again, my culture/religion) but not in a judgemental way, more as a way of life.

She also talks about things that I could not relate to but were concepts I have heard of before so it was nice reading a detailed perspective on those, such as a married woman living with her in-laws. This book starts with Sofia breaking up with her boyfriend because he wanted to have a hole in the wall between two houses after they get married, theirs and his parents, which was a no-go for Sofia because she does not want to live with her in-laws. The book also discusses polygamous marriage and negative viewed things such as a divorced woman and marrying/dating someone from another race. What I liked about the book is that it discusses the issues in a funny/unserious way which made it interesting to read.

The book also discusses the notion of dating as a hijabi and it was nice seeing a halal (acceptable) Muslim relationship that was portrayed in a cute, funny way. Just because there are restrictions does not make it any less interesting. I found the main love story to be so cute and I shipped them together!

I think the only negative thing was that I felt that on some pages, nothing was really happening and the book could have been a little bit shorter, but I enjoyed it overall. You do not have to be Muslim to enjoy this (obviously because I am not) and Its an easy cute read.

I recommend this if you're interested in a non-mainstream love story/culture ♥♥?

Inge says

2.5 stars

I've been kind of falling out of love with chicklit lately, but I really wanted to give *Sofia Khan* a try. Alas, no pancakes. I do think Muslim readers would love this a lot more, as they can really relate to & laugh along with Sofia.
