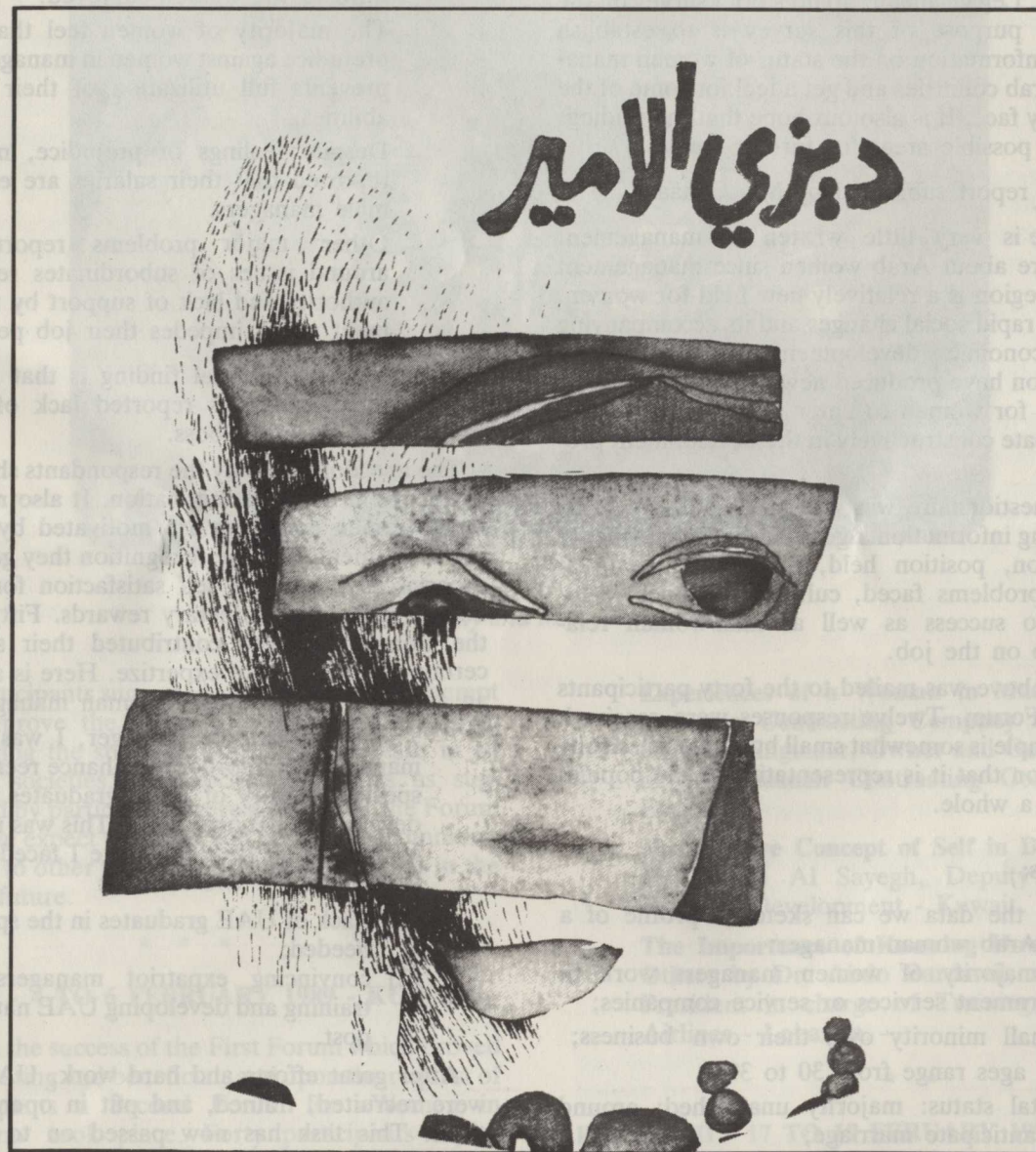


The False Hair-Piece (a short story)

by: Diasy Al Amir

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The Faraway Country that She Loves
And the Wave Comes Back
The Cycle of Love and Hatred
Promises for Sale
On the Waiting List

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She stopped as the traffic light changed. The car ahead bore a diplomatic plate... It was driven by a woman.

A woman? A woman?

What is her job? What is her position? Is she an Arab? She looks like a foreigner.

A child's head suddenly appeared sitting beside the woman.

Then the woman is married and is driving her husband's car. She does not merit a diplomatic plate... The car belongs to the man whose title she bears.

But She is an Arab woman holding diplomatic status. She earned it not through her father, her brother or her husband, but because she is capable, highly qualified and deserves it. She comes from an Arab country where women are appreciated and are granted positions on their own merit and not through dependence on a man's support.

The woman in front enjoys the diplomatic privileges that go with her husband's position. What is she proud of? What has she earned? She is like any other woman. She reaps the harvest of her husband's achievements.

But She has worked hard and fought for her position. In her memory flash the names of all those men she could have married. They would have given her a new name, a different life, a new home, other responsibilities. But all this would have been given to any woman who marries. Proudly she bears her own name, and has her unique responsibilities. She is not introduced as someone's daughter, wife or mother. Her name is distinguished, highly praised and well-known.

The car behind urges her to drive on as the traffic light changed and the diplomat's wife had already driven off quickly.

Of course, she had to hurry to reach her husband and children... She has responsibilities towards them.

She too has to hurry, not for someone, but because she has an appointment to record a story at the Radio Station... after which she has to attend the third part of a conference to critique the discussions that had taken place yesterday. The Indian woman delegate was very precise and talked in depth on her subject while the delegate from Ceylon could not reach such depth in the points he made. After all this is the woman's decade and women are surpassing men. The Indian woman delegate was however, married... She wondered how she manages to find the time to lecture at conferences, leaving her husband and home responsibilities. The Phillipino delegate, who is very beautiful and wears the latest fashion, had not given the impression of an intellectual. But once she started speaking the audience forgot her looks, beauty and elegance... They were only aware of her intelligence and eloquence.

She almost crossed the red light. The policeman smiled.

«I am sorry, I made a mistake,» she said.

He laughed, «There are special rules for women.»

She was mute with anger.

What are these special rules for women? Is it permitted for women to break the rules? Is this what they call women's rights? What about her other rights? that she cannot obtain because of her femininity? She has no need for such humiliating rights - even though - she excels over men.

As she drove by attractive shops displaying the latest models, her eyes caught a host of women going in and out. Don't these women have better things to do with their time and money except spend it on frivolities?

She reached the Radio Station. A man was still recording his program while two other men were seated waiting their turn. One of them stood up and offered her his chair. She thanked him and pointed out that she preferred to stand.

«I am a gentleman and cannot allow a lady to stand while I sit.»

«What is wrong with that? Is this not the age of equality between men and women.»

«I am offering you the chair for two reasons, one because you are a woman and two because you are a famous figure whom I admire and respect.»

She felt a glow within her. She thanked him again and went to the other side of the room to get a chair. A workman raced to help her. She wondered if his assistance was due to the fact that she was a woman or because he knew who she was...

The recording was completed and the Director of the Studio came towards her inviting her to enter. She looked at the two men and said, «These gentlemen were here first»... She almost said: In don't feel like a woman... I work more than men and do all my duties equally well if not better than men... But she kept silent.

She finished recording. The Producer congratulated her on her elocution saying she would not have to repeat any part... even men could not record so well. If he only knew what her job was. A job a thousand men wished for... What is so important about recording a story in comparison to the position she holds?

Getting back to the parking lot she found two other cars parked very close to hers. It would be difficult to maneuver it out. A man approached her saying «Can I help you? Getting your car out needs a man's strength.»

His words challenged her. She thanked him angrily and struggled to get it out without scratching or damaging the other two cars. She drove away with