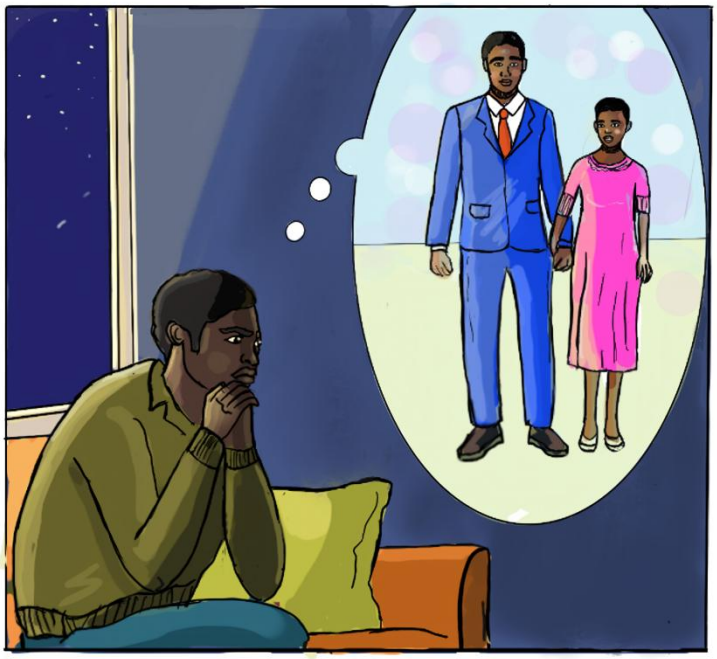
BECCA


YOU CAME TO REPAY THE MONEY THAT I LENT YOU.
PLEASE. I NEED A BIT MORE TIME


I HAVE ALREADY GIVEN YOU MORE TIME !!
ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!!


YOU ARE GOING TO BRING ME THE MONEY BY THE TIME I CLOSE THE SHOP TONIGHT
OR ELSE...


B-BUT I DON'T...
I CAN'T...
I DON'T HAVE THE MONEY...




I GIVE YOU MY DAUGHTER IN MARRIAGE
YOUR DEBT IS REPAID


CHIP
CHIPS



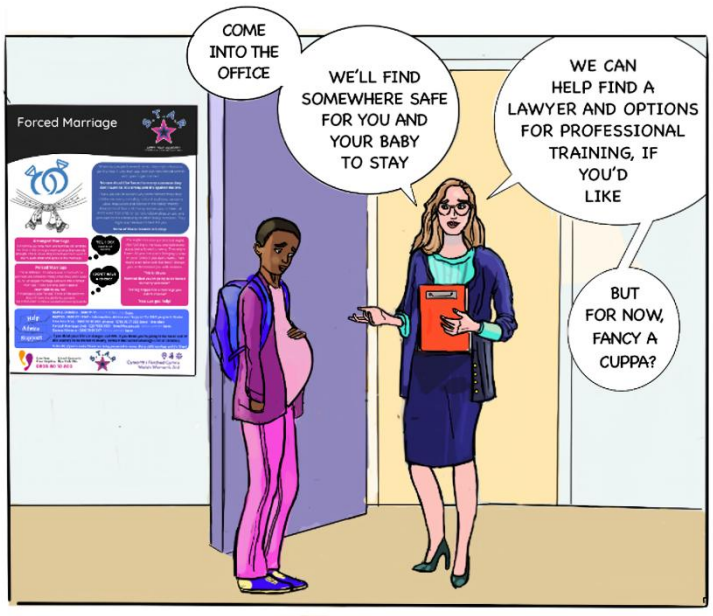

CHIP
CHIPS


HI....YOU ALRIGHT THERE LOVE?
I'M FINE, THANKS


OH, PARDON ME


HI. I'M SAM. DO YOU MIND IF I PUT THIS POSTER UP?
IT'S FOR AN ORGANISATION I WORK FOR. WE RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT HONOUR-BASED ABUSE


3,000 incidents of honour crime are reported each year in the UK.*
SPEAK OUT.
*According to the Iranian and Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation, more than 11,000 incidents of honour crime were recorded by UK police forces from 2010-2014.
saverauk.co.uk
SAVERA UK


COME INTO THE OFFICE
WE'LL FIND SOMEWHERE SAFE FOR YOU AND YOUR BABY TO STAY
WE CAN HELP FIND A LAWYER AND OPTIONS FOR PROFESSIONAL TRAINING, IF YOU'D LIKE
BUT FOR NOW, FANCY A CUPPA?
Forced Marriage


SO THESE ARE YOUR OPTIONS RIGHT NOW
apply here

Let's talk about Becca: Discussion questions and key points

Becca's story focuses on the relationship between forced marriage and modern slavery. Her father gives Becca in marriage to pay off a financial debt. Becca's husband then forces her to work long hours, without pay, in his shop. The story also indicates that he is physically and sexually violent towards her (she has a bruise on her cheek and is pregnant when she meets Sam), controlling her movements, sexuality, and labour. Customers in the shop present opportunities for resistance and intervention which Becca takes to escape her slavery-like marriage. With the support of an organisation, she rebuilds her life and future.

1. Why is Becca forced to marry?

Explain that people can be forced into a marriage for many reasons. People force their children to get married because they are worried about the family's reputation and honour. Many people also still try to justify forced marriage as part of their traditions and beliefs and think that it is their obligation to comply. And forced marriages can happen because people want to ensure what they consider to be a better and safe future for their children; because they do not want their children to have relationships or sex outside of marriage; or because they do not approve of their child being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender.

Becca is forced to get married to pay off a family debt. In her story, the debt is financial. However, there are situations where the financial debt is historic, carried through generations and transformed into a social obligation. This indicates that it could also be debt in the sense of owing favours.

The first page of the story makes clear that giving Becca in marriage to pay off his debt is not an easy decision for Becca's father. With his threatening demeanour and words, the shopkeeper puts a lot of pressure on Becca's father to pay his debt, even though Becca's father says that he does not have the money. The close up on Becca's father shows him crying, highlighting how desperate he is. At home, Becca's father stays up late into the night, thinking about what to do and contemplating what he might see as his only option: giving Becca in marriage to pay his debt.

We can tell that Becca is married against her will because of her body language when she first meets her husband (her arms are folded protectively in front of her and her chin is lowered). Additionally, Becca rarely speaks in the comic, and she never gives consent to either her father or her husband.

2. Slavery is when one person owns another person, or when someone is treated as if another person owns them. Enslaved people have to do whatever the owner tells them to do. Is Becca enslaved by her father and her husband?

The 1926 Slavery Convention defines slavery as "the status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised." [1] In the UK and many other countries, slavery isn't allowed under the law. So no one can legally own another person like they would own, for example, a phone. But people are still treated as if someone owns them. In those situations, someone exercises the powers usually associated with (legal) ownership over them, against a background of control. The 1956 Supplementary Slavery Convention states that a situation in which "a woman, without the right to refuse, is promised or given in marriage on payment of a consideration in money or in kind to her parents, guardian, family or any other person or group" is "an institution or

[1] Article 1(1), Slavery Convention 1926.

practice similar to slavery".[2] It is also an "institution or practice [similar to slavery when] a child or young person under the age of 18 years, is delivered by either or both of his natural parents or by his guardian to another person, whether for reward or not, with a view to the exploitation of the child or young person or of his labour."[3] Therefore, Becca's marriage could be seen as a slavery-like marriage. Even though he does not do it lightly, her father trades her like an object when he gives her in marriage in exchange for debt relief. Her husband forces her to work all day every day and he benefits from her labour but does not pay her. Her husband controls and exploits Becca, and deprives her of her liberty. She cannot move around freely and has no means of escape. The comic depicts Becca working in the shop, then scrubbing the floor in a kitchen, then working in the shop again. The window above the kitchen counter shows the night sky, indicating that her working hours are endless and her life is a cycle of labour. Even though we do not see the husband on the second and third page, we can imagine him taken her to and from work, not allowing her to go anywhere else or to have any contact apart from with the customers in the shop. He might be checking up on her, checking if she has done her work (properly), always asking her to do more, finding fault with everything she does. We can imagine his presence looming over Becca. The fact that she gets pregnant indicates a sexual relationship which is unlikely to be consensual under the circumstances.

3. Is forced marriage a form of modern slavery?

"Essentially, [modern slavery] refers to situations of exploitation that a person cannot refuse or leave because of threats, violence, coercion, deception, and/or abuse of power."[4] It is much broader than slavery (being treated like property) or institutions and practices similar to slavery (which is limited to a very specific list of situations such as bride sale) that we mentioned in relation to the previous question. Modern slavery also includes, for example, forced labour, human trafficking, and domestic servitude. But those forms of modern slavery would not be considered slavery or institutions and practices similar to slavery as defined in the 1926 Slavery Convention or the 1956 Supplementary Slavery Convention. However, the concept of modern slavery is broad enough to include slavery and institutions and practices similar to slavery. Forced marriage is a good example here. As described above, it can be a seen as a institution and practice similar to slavery, for example when the bride is sold to her husband. Forced marriage can also be a form of modern slavery, for example when it includes sexual exploitation and extraction of labour under the guise of marriage. However, this is not the case for all forced marriages.[5]

4. What if Becca would have to do housework instead of work in shop? Would that be modern slavery?

Yes. The circumstances and conditions of Becca's work could still amount to slavery, for example if her husband withholds her identity documents; does not allow her to leave the house; limits her contact with other people; and subjects her to threats or violence.[6]

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[2] Article 1(c)(i), Supplementary Slavery Convention 1956.
[3] Article 1(c)(iv), Supplementary Slavery Convention 1956.
[4] International Labour Organization, Walk Free, and International Organization for Migration, 'Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage' (2022).
[5] Helen McCabe, Wendy Stickle, and Hannah Baumeister, 'Forced Marriage and Modern Slavery: Analysing Marriage as a "Choiceless Choice"' (2022) 7 Journal of Modern Slavery 33.
[6] Anti-Slavery, 'Domestic Slavery'; End Slavery Now, 'Domestic Servitude'.

5. The encounter with Sam changes Becca's life. Who else could have helped?

Generally, the advice is that Becca could speak to someone she trusts. However, this can be difficult if she is isolated from other people. She could have approached the nurse or other customers who came into the shop. For example, she might have been able to slip them a note. She could also try to reach out to the Forced Marriage Unit or organisations that work to end forced marriage, like Karma Nirvana and Savera UK, or the police. For example, she could have written a note asking a customer to contact someone on her behalf. However, it is really hard for people to trust that they can seek help, and that people will help, especially where the whole family and/or community is in some way involved in their situation. So there are good reasons why Becca might not have risked doing this. For example, some customers might be friendly with her dad or her husband, or she might not trust that they wouldn't just tell her dad or husband what she'd done, or try to tackle him themselves (leading to terrible consequences for her). And even if Becca thinks they would try to help, it would be risky to reach out to them and she might not think it's worth it, given the potential negative consequences.