

= Yusef Khan =

Yusef Khan M.D. is a fictional character from the BBC soap opera EastEnders , played by Ace Bhatti . Yusef is the father of Afia Khan (Meryl Fernandes) and former husband of Zainab Masood (Nina Wadia) . He appears from 23 November 2010 . Described as strong @-@ willed , he arrives as Walford 's new general practitioner . He departed on 26 December 2011 , following the end of his domestic abuse storyline with his wife Zainab Masood (Nina Wadia) . Bhatti was voted " Best Newcomer " at the TV Quick awards and for " Best Storyline " for destroying the Masoods .

= = Storylines = =

= = = Backstory = = =

Yusef married Zainab Masood (Nina Wadia) in an arranged marriage in Pakistan at the age of 17 . Zainab brought shame upon their respective families when she had an affair with Masood Ahmed (Nitin Ganatra) . As punishment , Yusef set Zainab on fire , though he claimed it to be his family 's doing and that he tried to save her . Masood rescued Zainab and she divorced Yusef to marry Masood , moving with him to the UK . Yusef later remarried and had a daughter , Afia (Meryl Fernandes) .

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Yusef first appears when Afia introduces him to her boyfriend Tamwar Masood (Himesh Patel) . Tamwar feels he is not good enough for Afia in Yusef 's eyes as he is from a poor background , but Yusef says that does not matter and approves of Tamwar . After Tamwar mentions his mother Zainab Masood 's name , Yusef visits the Masood home and finds the door open . When Zainab sees him , she screams and orders him out . It is revealed they were husband and wife from an arranged marriage when Yusef was 17 , and Yusef 's family had poured oil on her and set her on fire . Yusef says it was his family , not him , and he attempted to save her , revealing bad scarring on his body . Tamwar 's father Masood Ahmed , Tamwar and Afia return home , and Masood attacks Yusef , punching him twice . After Yusef returns , Tamwar asks Masood to speak to Yusef , and when he visits , he finds out Tamwar and Afia are still seeing each other . He gives his blessing for them to be married .

Yusef becomes the local general practitioner for Walford and takes an interest in Denise Fox (Diane Parish) . He is later pickpocketed by Janine Malloy (Charlie Brooks) . Denise tells Yusef that there have been rumours about him going round , Dot Branning (June Brown) is responsible so he goes and talks to Dot ; she ignores him . Zainab tells Yusef that Afia will be welcome to the family but he will not . Yusef reminisces about the past leading to Zainab telling Masood they must stop the wedding . Yusef starts a relationship with Denise .

Yusef encourages Zainab and Masood 's estranged son Syed Masood (Marc Elliott) to take the first step in making amends as he is gay , and Syed goes to Tamwar and Afia 's mangni (engagement party) . The roof collapses and Syed is hospitalised and Yusef lies to Zainab that Syed could die so she visits him , but his injuries were not serious noticing that Yusef tricked her . Yusef makes out that he is sleeping with Zainab so Masood and Phil Mitchell (Steve McFadden) then kidnap Yusef in an attempt to scare him away . Masood threatens to pour petrol over Yusef , though it is only water and leaves him unharmed . When Masood returns home , Yusef has cuts on his face and blames it on Masood . Everyone believes Yusef and Masood is rejected from his home . Yusef convinces Tamwar , Afia and Zainab that Masood should not be at the mehndi . At the wedding , Masood turns up to try to stop it but Tamwar reveals that he and Afia already married . Yusef 's cousin Tariq (Antony Bunsee) arrives and he reveals that Yusef started the fire that burnt Zainab .

After hearing news that Syed is trying to find his wife Amira Shah (Preeya Kalidas) , Yusef visits her father , Qadim (Ramon Tikaram) at his office and offers to avenge his family for causing Amira

pain . When Zainab and Yusef attend an event together , people assume they are married and Zainab does not correct them . Afterwards , Yusef admits to Zainab that he has great feelings for her but they should maintain some distance as she is married . Yusef continues to manipulate Zainab and ply her with pills , but she says she wishes to stop taking them , so Yusef crushes up a bottle of pills and conceals them in Zainab 's food . Zainab passes out and is hospitalised , with her family believing she took a deliberate overdose , as was Yusef 's plan . Concerned that he himself is causing Zainab 's worries , Masood divorces Zainab by saying the triple talaq .

Yusef learns that Amira gave birth to Syed 's daughter Yasmin , so persuades Zainab to take a holiday with him and Kamil in Pakistan . While there , he suggests that they move there permanently as a family . On their return to Walford , Yusef learns that Amira has been seeing Syed , so tells Amira that she is not wanted by the Masood family . Amira ignores him and Zainab meets Yasmin , and informs Yusef that she cannot leave Walford after becoming a grandmother . Yusef then puts doubt into the mind of Syed 's boyfriend , Christian Clarke (John Partridge) , about Syed 's paternity of Yasmin . Christian then asks Yusef to perform a secret paternity test on Yasmin , however Yusef uses his own DNA for the test , creating a false result . However , his falsification is exposed , leaving the Masood family hostile towards him , and Zainab devastated . Later , Yusef tells Zainab that he told the lies to protect her . She is sceptical , but when Yusef revives Amy Mitchell (Natalia and Kamil Lipka @-@ Kozanka) who has almost drowned , Zainab is impressed with Yusef 's caring attitude , but says it does not change things .

Amira goes to Yusef for help , saying she needs him on her side , threatening to tell Zainab that Yusef bought her a plane ticket if he does not help her get Syed back . She convinces Zainab to talk to Yusef , and when Yusef sees 15 @-@ year @-@ old Ben Mitchell (Joshua Pascoe) , who has recently come out as homosexual , running out of Christian 's flat , he asks if Christian acted inappropriately . At first Ben says nothing happened but later Ben tells Yusef that Christian touched him , and they tell Ben 's father , Phil . This turns out to be untrue , but leads to Christian leaving Syed and Walford .

Yusef continues to manipulate Zainab , to the point of becoming violent with her . Yusef then tries to encourage Zainab to move to Pakistan , and recruits Amira to manipulate Syed with the same idea . As Zainab starts to disrespect his wishes , Yusef slaps her and apologises as he thought he was going to lose her . Yusef meets up with Tariq and offers him his daughter 's restaurant . Upon discovering that the restaurant doesn 't belong to Yusef , he reveals to Afia that Yusef started the fire involving Zainab . Afia then tells Yusef she knows he started the fire and threatens to tell Zainab if he does not do so first . Yusef admits to Zainab that he started the fire and kicks him out of the house , she later forgives Yusef however . Yusef and Zainab then marry .

After Zainab and Jane argue in the street Zainab and Yusef return home . Zainab slaps Yusef after he says Kamil will be an outcast to him but Yusef slaps Zainab back . Yusef then hastily arranges a flight for himself , Zainab and Kamil to Pakistan , but Zainab purposefully discards her passport to prevent the trip . Yusef then kidnaps Kamil , telling Zainab that he is being kept in a safe place and refuses to let Zainab see him . After about four days of not knowing , Yusef takes Zainab to a café in the High Street , where a relative returns Kamil to Zainab . During the visit , it emerges that Yusef told Bushra 's family that Zainab had a nervous breakdown , which is why he needed to have Kamil looked after . When Yusef takes a call outside the café , Zainab tries to escape with Kamil through an emergency exit in the back of the shop . However , Yusef guessed her plan and was waiting for her outside the exit . As she tried to escape , Yusef warned her that he knows everything , and if she leaves him , he will kill Tamwar and Kamil . Masood races to the restaurant and secretly promises that he 'll do whatever it takes to get her out of her marriage to Yusef . Zainab finally stands up to Yusef and refuses to leave for Pakistan . Yusef attacks her and after learning that Masood has Kamil , retaliates towards Yusef . Yusef drugs Zainab , and the family return to the house . Masood punches Yusef before calling the police . Afia confronts Yusef and orders him to leave . Yusef is later found by Masood at the bed and breakfast with a match and some petrol . Yusef attacks Masood and lights a fire leaving Masood for dead . Shirley Carter (Linda Henry) and Christian put the fire out but the fire is later reignited trapping Masood , Phil and Denise inside . Yusef taunts Zainab outside . Zainab lies and tells him that Afia is in the building and he runs in followed by

Tamwar . Masood is later rescued and as Yusef remains upstairs he realises that Afia is in fact outside . Realising Zainab tricked him , he briefly smiles , and the floor collapses beneath him and he succumbs to the flames , killing him . The following day , firefighters retrieve his body . He leaves everything to Zainab in his will .

= = Creation and development = =

= = Casting , introduction and departure = =

Bhatti was already known to EastEnders executive producer Bryan Kirkwood when he auditioned for the part , as Kirkwood and Bhatti worked on Coronation Street at the same time . Bhatti was the only actor who auditioned for the part of Yusef . In fact , Wadia recommended Bhatti to Kirkwood to play Yusef , as she " thought that he definitely had the quality that Yusef would need ? which is a very ambiguous but charming quality ! " Bhatti explained to Digital Spy that the EastEnders cast are very welcoming . He explained : " They 're so welcoming . There 's a lot of joking about . I 'm having a great time at EastEnders - it 's a real privilege to be here . I 've known Nitin and Nina Wadia , who plays Zainab , for a very long time and we 've always got on very well . Nitin and I play tense scenes together so it 's nice that we can have a laugh afterwards . "

Yusef is introduced as part of a storyline involving the Masood family . Tamwar dates Afia and when Yusef is introduced to Tamwar 's parents Masood and Zainab , Masood " explodes " with anger at the sight of him , recognising him as a man from their past . Ganatra explained that although Yusef allegedly tried to save Zainab from the fire , all Masood saw was Zainab locked in a burning kitchen : " we are only playing it from each person 's point of view . Yusef is playing it from his point of view that he did try and save her . Masood is saying , ' All I know is that I went back to get her and she had been locked in this kitchen and it was on fire ' . " Patel said the storyline is a shocking one with a clever twist . In March 2011 , Bhatti said he was staying with EastEnders until around June 2011 , and would " see from there " . He made his first appearance on 23 November 2010 . Ganatra spoke at the British Soap Awards 2011 to Digital Spy and praised the impact of Yusef saying , " He 's very much an arch @-@ villain - he 's a great character who 's there to put jeopardy into the Masoods ' relationship . Zainab and Masood have been married for 28 years and they 're mad about each other - for someone to come and destroy that slightly , it 's exciting . It 's exciting for us to play . "

Bhatti 's departure was not announced . When a fire was reported to be happening around Christmas 2011 , rumours emerged from an alleged EastEnders insider that " Yusef has long been tipped as a possible fatality " . The insider added " This is the biggest fire EastEnders has ever seen and there will be casualties . It is such a huge disaster that it will affect most of the families on the show in one way or another . There is a great tradition at EastEnders of captivating Christmas Day storylines and this year is no different . " Yusef 's death aired on 26 December 2011 concluding his storyline .

= = Personality = =

On the EastEnders website , Yusef is described as calm , collected , strong @-@ willed , mysterious , loyal to Afia and regretful of his past . Daniel Maier from The Guardian said that Yusef " is clearly a wrong ' un but it 's hard to tell exactly what his game is . You suspect he 's not sure himself . A Baddie Without Portfolio , most of his time seems taken up with malicious glances and general inveigling . " Susan Hill from the Daily Star called Yusef " twisted " , while Tony Stewart from the Daily Mirror called him " smug , deceitful and dangerous " . Wadia opined that Yusef is not evil but much more complex than that , and his personality would be explored during his storyline . Bhatti told Inside Soap that Yusef has " more bad qualities than good " but is insecure because when Zainab left him , it brought shame on his family .

= = Storyline development = =

In an interview with Digital Spy , Bhatti described his relationship with his daughter Afia , explaining that they have a " strong bond " and that Yusef would die for his daughter . He said that " it definitely hurts " when he finds out that Tamwar and Afia are already married as he is so close to Afia and she has betrayed him . In an interview with Inside Soap , Bhatti admits that he is sympathetic for his character , Yusef . He said that Yusef is very insecure and that he can understand his behaviour in some ways . Meanwhile , discussing the fan reaction to his character , Bhatti admitted that women have told him that he 's a " bad man " . Bhatti also hinted that Yusef will become more firmly established as a Walford villain over the next few weeks , stating that Yusef does have more bad qualities than good and that fans call him " Dr. Evil " .

Yusef is wrongly accused of having an affair with Zainab , due to his sister @-@ in @-@ law overhearing them speaking . A source said that the whole day turns into a disaster . When Shameem sees Yusef and Zainab together she automatically thinks they 're having an affair and everyone struggles to come to terms with what they have heard . Bhatti has admitted that he is surprised by his status as a heartthrob . Interviewed by Will Payne of the Sunday Mirror , he said that it 's a great compliment however , it was a complete surprise . Bhatti hinted that perhaps women love the character , but he prefer trainers and jeans to smart suits .

= = = = Kidnap = = = =

In April 2011 , it was reported that Masood would kidnap Yusef , pour petrol on him and threaten to set him on fire . Yusef will then go to the Masood 's house and tell Zainab what Masood has done . An EastEnders insider told the News of the World , " Masood has never got over that . Tension has been simmering for a while and leads to an outpouring of violence from Masood that leaves Yusef seriously injured . But Yusef will get his own back . It is a twisted love triangle that will also show the sometimes brutal side of arranged marriages . It 's not clear if their marriage will survive Yusef 's meddling . [...] Yusef obviously wants [Zainab] back and will do anything he can to drive a wedge between Masood and Zainab . " Ganatra said that Yusef will turn " very manipulative and very nasty " and Masood finds him as a big threat saying , " He throws a real spanner in the works for Masood . [...] He is doing everything he can to wreck Masood 's life , really , and the way you do that is to get to his family . It 's a very clever way of doing things ? it 's not about destroying his family , it 's about winning his family and turning them against him , so that Masood is left isolated and on his own . " Ganatra spoke of the storyline saying , " I think there 's rumours of revenge ! Yusef is a really nice catalyst - he 's a very exciting character to throw into the mix . If it goes that way , it 's more drama for us to play . " The scenes were broadcast on 2 June 2011 with Phil Mitchell also taking revenge alongside Masood .

= = = = Domestic violence = = = =

In late 2011 , Yusef manages to win his former wife back . They later make plans to get married . Nina Wadia explains why Zainab is willing to forgive Yusef . Wadia said to Inside Soap : " He tells Zainab that he was forced to start the fire by his family . Yusef goes on to explain that he knew it was wrong the minute he lit the match , and that he ran into the house to save her . And by the end of this conversation , she finds herself saying to him , ' Let 's get married ' - regardless ! Obviously , it was something I struggled to get my head around . But being burnt in that fire is what they both have in common - and that experience connects them so deeply . She recognises that he made a mistake but also decides that the whole thing was probably her fault , because she walked out on their marriage . " Wadia continued : " It doesn 't look like Zainab 's going to listen . But as Denise leaves , it 's clear she 's torn about what to do . " A short time before their wedding day arrives , Yusef starts to abuse Zainab both physically and mentally . He forbids Zainab to leave the house and later starts using her son , Kamil , to control her . Wadia explains that she wants the storyline to have a positive impact against real @-@ life violence . She told BBC News : " I think the idea behind showing a strong woman like Zainab changing like this is to show that it can happen to even the

strongest of women . They can change and they can be manipulated - especially if they 're isolated from their friends and family . The manipulator can take advantage , so it 's to prove that it can even happen to people like her . To be honest , if even one woman rings that Action Line at the end of the show and there 's some difference made to her life , I 'll feel like we 've done our job , " she continued . " It is a serious issue and I 'm glad it 's being highlighted . I hope that it wakes anyone up - not just women , I know that there are abused men out there as well . So if it gives anyone the strength to leave a relationship like that , we 'll have done our job . " The scenes where Yusef refused to let Zainab see Kamil pulled in 8.69m viewers at 7.30pm. BBC Three 's repeat of the episode later secured 994k viewers at 10pm .

Wadia admitted to feeling " emotionally drained " after her scenes with Ace Bhatti . She explained to The People : " It 's very draining . I 'm putting myself into this very dark place which I know sadly is a reality for so many women . Zainab 's confidence has been steadily eroded . She 's feeling isolated and has fallen under Yusef 's control . He wants revenge . She is totally in his power . I had to show this can happen to any woman , no matter how strong she seems . Zainab was strong and not naive , but a woman is vulnerable if the man hits the right psychological weak spots . But both Ace and I have found it hard to do . I 've known Ace for a long time and we 're good friends . He has been wonderful to work with on this and very concerned about me all the way through . " Wadia has been given advice on the storyline from the Roshni refuge in Birmingham , which specializes in abuse within Asian families .

Wadia warns that Yusef will ultimately get worse as time progresses . She said to Inside Soap : " I was filming out on location recently with Ace and a bunch of women came over to him and said , ' God , you 're such a horrible man ! ' It 's funny because Ace is such a sweet man - and you haven 't even seen the worst of Yusef yet ! " Wadia continued : " Let 's just say that what happens is the complete opposite of what you want to see . Zainab and Yusef share a dark and twisted love , and she definitely has feelings for him . It 's not true and pure like what she used to have with Masood - and if Yusef manages to get her back to Pakistan , it will be the end for her . I wouldn 't be surprised if Zainab ends up in some sort of home to recover from everything that 's going to happen . "

Nitin Ganatra who plays Masood Ahmed explains to Digital Spy Masood 's reactions when he discovers that Yusef has taken Kamil away . " Masood goes crazy over this ! " Nitin replies . " I 've got kids myself , and I know I 'd react the same way if I found out that some other guy had taken my child to somebody 's house who the child doesn 't even know . Masood is still the only person who can see Yusef for what he really is , so he goes into a blind panic over the situation . Masood calls in the police , and they make sure that Kamil is safe , but we 're left to wonder if he will stay that way . The police say that they can 't get involved in domestic disputes , so Masood says , ' Well , what about the father 's rights ? If a mother reported this , you 'd see it as kidnap ' . I thought that was a great line and really interesting - I think in that moment , Masood 's representing a lot of fathers who have separated or divorced and don 't have access to their children in the same way . "

Asked what Masood 's reactions are over Zainab 's abuse , Nitin says : " Masood tells Denise , ' It 's just another one of Zainab 's dramas ' , but then there comes a point where he sees bruises on Zainab . Then Masood becomes very concerned for Zainab in a very genuine way . It also might reignite something between the two of them as well , as they have to work together to solve these problems . " The scenes showing Masood and Denise race to the café where Kamil was raised 8 @. @ 26 million viewers . BBC Three 's repeat screening later secured 781k viewers at 10pm .

= = Reception = =

Bhatti revealed that since appearing in EastEnders , people have come up to him in the street and called him a " bad man " , and that fans call him " Dr Evil " . In May 2011 , Bhatti was nominated in the Best Newcomer category at the TV Quick Awards and the storyline where he tries to destroy the Masoods ' marriage was nomated for Best Storyline . Bhatti was surprised to hear that Yusef is liked mainly by women , but in an interview with the Daily Mirror , he admits that he is nothing like Yusef in real life . BBC News branded Yusef as " Zainab 's sinister first husband " , elsewhere , Metro.co.uk described Yusef as a " deceptive doctor " . Jane Simon of the Daily Mirror said that

Zainab sending Yusef into the blazing building was a "stroke of genius". Simon also said that it's unknown what Yusef is hoping to achieve with his "one @-@ man reign of terror". Being married to a woman he can't stand, with a son he doesn't want. She added: "It doesn't sound like much of a game @-@ plan."