

Chapter 35

By the end of the week, things were finally looking up. Alex was feeling much better, and little Prem had turned a corner too, no more fever, and he was starting to sleep peacefully through the night. That gave Sonya a chance to rest herself, something she hadn't managed in what felt like forever. Today, she'd left her baby with their mum, and now she was on her way to meet Yaz, heart thumping with excitement. They were going to IKEA, a simple enough outing on the surface but one that had filled her with a sense of possibility she hadn't felt in ages.

As she waited by the elevator, the IKEA catalog clutched tightly in her hand, its pages carefully marked with sticky notes, her small but hopeful plans for her and Prem tucked between its pages. She glanced down at the colorful tabs and felt a flutter of joy she hadn't dared to let herself feel in a long time. This trip was a step toward something she thought she'd lost, a future with happiness and comfort, even if only in small things like new furniture or cozy touches for Prem's room.

For so long, Sonya had felt battered by disappointment and betrayal, struggling as a single mother with little support from anyone outside her family. She'd spent countless nights doubting herself, questioning if she'd ever be able to make a life worth living for herself and her baby. But lately, things have shifted. She felt lighter, like a weight was gradually lifting. For the first time in a long while, her days weren't filled with just survival, they held a glimmer of hope, the belief that maybe her and Prem's future wouldn't be so bleak after all.

The elevator doors opened, and she stepped in, a small smile tugging at her lips.

As Sonya walked toward Yaz's car, Yaz gave a cheerful honk, rolling down the window and calling out, "Furniture shopping, here we come!"

Sonya burst out laughing as she climbed in, leaning over to give her sister a quick kiss on the cheek. "Ready to raid IKEA on the dickhead's account?" she teased, her eyes gleaming with mischief.

"Oh yeah!" Yaz grinned, pulling onto the main road, excitement simmering in her own chest. "Alright, give me the scoop. What are we getting?"

"Okay, so there's this range that's being discontinued.... I can't even pronounce the name," she laughed, holding up the catalog. "But everything's basically half off. I'm getting a whole setup for Prem... a wardrobe, chest of drawers, shelves, and look!" She flipped to a page marked with sticky notes, pointing to a storage solution for toys. "Aren't these bins adorable?"

"Oh my God, they're perfect! And you have to get that rug!" Yaz exclaimed.

"I'm debating," Sonya admitted, scrunching her nose. "It's so cute, but I need to be careful with the budget."

"Totally get it." Yaz nodded, giving her a quick, reassuring glance. "But let me know if you need any extras, alright?"

"I'll keep it in mind," Sonya grinned, then turned the page. "I also found a bathroom set that's all-in for 140 quid. Nothing fancy, but it'll do the job."

"Is that it?" Yaz asked, raising her brows.

"For now! I'm only getting this now cause it's half price.... My bedroom's gonna look like a warehouse." she laughed "Plus, I found some cute kitchen stuff, and I'm grabbing linens. They're on sale too!"

"Nice! We'll just put the seats down if we run out of room. And anything big, the store can deliver."

"That's true!" Sonya settled back in her seat, practically bouncing. "God, I can't believe I'm actually this excited."

"Me neither." Yaz shot her a bright smile. "I can't wait for you to move in."

Sonya smiled, a little shy but filled with warmth. "Don't worry, I'll keep out of your way. I know you two lovebirds need your space.... I won't be eavesdropping on the lovey-dovey chatters."

Yaz burst out laughing. "Good thing I already made a 'DO NOT DISTURB' sign for our door," she joked, shaking her head as she tried to stifle her laughter. "Seriously though, we wouldn't have asked if we thought it'd be an issue. Honestly, it's more likely Alex will be hovering around you, stealing Prem whenever she can."

"Hey, I'm all for co-parenting," Sonya giggled. "She can be my platonic wife."

"Oh, can she now?" Yaz raised an eyebrow, smirking playfully.

Sonya feigned innocence, laughing. "Yep. You and I can co-wife her together. Deal?"

"Deal," Yaz chuckled, and as they drove on, a shared happiness filled the car.

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Sonya and Yaz walked into IKEA with wide eyes, both grinning like kids in a candy store. "Look at all this!" Yaz gasped, grabbing one of the iconic yellow bags for their smaller finds.

"I'm only here for essentials," Sonya laughed, holding up her catalog like a compass to keep her on track. "No veering off into cute-but-useless knick-knacks."

Yaz gave a salute, though her eyes sparkled with mischief. "Essentials only. Got it."

They started with the living room and bedroom section, where Yaz found a set of decorative pillows she couldn't resist, and a nice blanket. Sonya found the linens she was eyeing out and opted for a sturdy-looking lamp for her bedside.

Next was the Kids Rooms section, where Sonya was carefully checking the pieces she needed, a wardrobe, a chest of drawers, and some adorable little storage solutions for Prem's toys

Aren't these cute? Perfect for all his stuff."

"Oh, they're perfect!" Yaz agreed, genuinely happy for her sister.

As Sonya was momentarily distracted by a set of shelves, Yaz spotted the rug with playful animal designs her sister wanted and quickly added it into her own trolley, covering it with the blanket she just picked so Sonya wouldn't notice. She'd surprise her with it later.

Next they moved to the kitchen section, where Sonya picked out a few basics, glasses, cutlery, a good set of chopping boards. Yaz wandered, her hand drifting over a set of cream plates and mugs as if they might be essential to her. The price was good and she couldn't help but shove them in her trolley. As Sonya examined a glass jar, Yaz slipped a tiny vase into her trolley, covering it with a dish towel she'd picked up. Sonya looked up, smirking. "Did you just...?"

"I swear it's essential." Yaz grinned, her eyes darting over the shelves. "And look, these little spice jars? How could you not want a whole row of them?"

Sonya rolled her eyes. "I don't even have a spice rack yet."

"Then we'll get you one," Yaz said triumphantly, dropping a few jars into her cart anyway.

So, do you think we need matching colanders?" Yaz asked, holding up two brightly colored options.

"Absolutely," Sonya laughed, tossing it into her cart. "Nothing says adulting like matching colanders!"

As they continued through the kitchen section, Sonya was keeping it real, her focus on exactly what she needed to make her future place feel like a home. Yaz, however, kept slipping little extras into her own cart, a set of glasses, zipper bags, a can opener, and then her eyes fixed on storage containers with wooden lids wondering if they were essential.

Eventually, Sonya's attention was drawn by a set of high-quality stainless-steel saucepans. She lingered over them, comparing prices, and while she was distracted, Yaz smoothly dropped few bits and pieces Sonya was eyeing out into her own trolley, hiding it under her items. She shot a quick glance to ensure Sonya hadn't noticed, feeling a bit pleased with herself.

They spent what felt like hours in the maze of kitchenware and finally, when they had piled the essentials, and Yaz's secret extras into their trolleys, they decided it was time for a food break.

"Thank God," Sonya sighed, "I was starting to think we'd have to call for a rescue team just to get out of here."

Yaz laughed, pushing her trolley to the café. "I mean, worst case, we'd just bunker down and build a fort out of those faux-sheepskin rugs."

They grabbed a couple of trays and filled them with Swedish meatballs, mashed potatoes, and lingonberry sauce. Yaz grabbed a large slice of almond cake, and when Sonya shot her a look, she raised her hands. "Hey, essentials!"

Sonya just laughed, leading the way to a table by the window. They sat down, a satisfying mountain of food between them.

"Alright," Sonya said, stabbing a meatball with her fork, "let's talk strategy. We've done kitchen, bedroom and kids room stuff. Next, storage solutions, and then we hit furniture last, right?"

"Right," Yaz nodded, looking equally serious, even though a spark of mischief remained.

They both dug into their food, talking about all the little details Sonya had planned for the space. She looked so happy, Yaz couldn't help but grin.

"So," Sonya asked between bites, "how's Alex feeling?"

Yaz sighed, her smile softening. "Still pretty tired. She wanted so badly to come with us today, but she's still weak and sleeping a lot. I told her to take it easy. Saturday's our lunch with Layla, and she's desperate to feel better by then."

"Aww, bless her... shame" Sonya said, her expression softening. "I know she was looking forward to today, too. But I'm glad she's resting, it's tough to shake these bugs off sometimes"

Yaz nodded. "Yeah, especially with how wiped she's been. But you know how stubborn she can be...I practically had to tie her to the sofa and insist she not even think about coming"

"Speaking about Layla...It's been forever since I've seen her...Shame I can't join you."

"I knooooow.... Me too...I was just telling Alex the other day, everyone's gone one way or the other."

"True...I mean look at me...I used to have twenty people around me...Now I'm lucky if I can count them on one hand...Shame though...You and Layla were close...Ever since you stole her from me" Sonya wrinkled her nose playfully

"Guess I was just more fun than you!" Yaz battered her lashes taking one more bite of her cake

Sonya's laughter bubbled over, her face lighting up as she leaned back in her chair. "I've missed this," she admitted. "It feels so good to just... laugh and talk about happy things, you know?"

Yaz reached over and squeezed her hand. "And you deserve all the happy things, Sonya. Especially the little things, like storage bins and rugs and stupidly cute kitchen towels."

Sonya squeezed her hand back, her face brightening. "Thank you.... Seriously, I don't know how I'd have gotten through this year without you."

Yaz's smile softened. "Hey, that's what sisters are for."

They finished their meal and, refreshed, set off with renewed determination. They spent a while in the storage section, finding bins in every color and size. Sonya managed to hold herself back from some tempting baskets but did pick up some cute drawer organizers, and Yaz happily matched her choices, claiming she needed more for their own house.

Finally, they made their way to the furniture section, and Sonya pulled out her catalog again. They carefully chose the pieces that would transform the granny extension into a real home for Sonya and Prem.

At the end of the trip, with all the big items marked for delivery, they wheeled their brimming trolleys to the checkout. Sonya turned to Yaz, her face flushed with excitement. "I don't even want to think about my bank balance after this."

Yaz grinned, patting her on the back. "Don't worry...no regrets! And maybe a few hidden surprises." She waggled her brows, and Sonya laughed, not knowing she'd have a special rug for Prem waiting for her.

As they loaded the car and climbed inside, Yaz looked over at her, a genuine happiness glowing in her expression. "So, how's it feel to be all set up?"

Sonya exhaled, her smile softening. "It feels amazing. Like... like I might actually be able to make a life for us, you know?"

Yaz reached over, giving her hand one last squeeze. "You already are. And now you have the cutest rug in the world to prove it."

"Love you"

"Love you too..." Yaz leaned over hugging her tight "Now I need to justify all the stuff I bought...Alex is gonna pop a vein" she laughed

"I don't know what you're talking about...It's all essentials"

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As Yaz wrangled the massive IKEA bags through the front door, the noise echoed through the hallway, and Alex stirred awake on the sofa. Groggy but curious, she heard Yaz call out from the door, her voice full of energy despite the day's shopping spree.

"Hello, gorgeous! Don't mind me... just, you know, bringing in a tiny bit of stuff..." Yaz chuckled, already imagining Alex's reaction.

Alex rubbed her eyes and wandered into the hallway, her expression shifting from drowsy to astonished as she took in the mountain of bags stacked near the door. Her mouth fell open slightly, her eyes widening. "Bloody hell babe... did you buy out IKEA?"

Yaz laughed, a little sheepishly but mostly delighted. "I know, I know...it looks like a lot, but it's all bulky stuff. It's really not that much!" She grinned, trying to downplay the scene. "Just some necessities... and maybe a couple of extras."

Alex smirked, clearly unconvinced but amused as they carried everything to the kitchen.

She raised an eyebrow, teasing, "A couple? You sure they didn't hand you a part-time job there with a discount to go with it?"

Yaz rolled her eyes playfully. "I might have... indulged a little. But, come on, some of it was on sale! And I even snuck in a little something for Prem. You'll love it!" She

watched as Alex started diving into the bags, pulling out item after item with an amused expression.

Alex pulled out a little ice cube tray frowning confused "Ice cube tray? We have five of them already."

"But look!" Yaz pointed, eyes twinkling. "Aren't these little whales and boats adorable?"

Alex shook her head, laughing despite herself. "I suppose they are cute. And what's this?" She lifted a box containing a small shelf unit, brows furrowed.

"Oh! That's the kitchen counter organizer," Yaz explained like it was the most essential item in the world. "It's for the teas... right there in the corner. We'll have a little tea station, all nice and neat."

Alex's look of confusion melted into one of panic, her OCD hitting the ceiling "You're just gonna pile up the tea boxes on it?"

"Oh no," Yaz laughed, tapping the side of her nose playfully. "I got these matching tins for the tea bags... all neat, just the way you like it."

Relief washed over Alex's face, and Yaz chuckled, reaching out to squeeze her cheeks playfully before giving her a quick peck on the lips. "See? I planned it!"

"Oh? And what about this?" Alex held up a pair of decorative cushion covers and a soft, matching blanket, her lips twitching as she tried not to laugh.

Yaz's grin was unstoppable. "All matching, aren't they awesome?"

Alex shook her head, finally giving in to laughter as she draped the blanket over Yaz's head, then wrapped her arms around her swaying them side to side. "Honestly, I love it... It's the happiest I've seen you in ages."

Yaz's expression softened, a touch of self-consciousness creeping in. "I might've gone a bit mad..."

Alex smiled, pulling her close. "I love your mad," she whispered, tilting Yaz's chin up before pressing her lips to hers in a long, lingering kiss. The kind they both had missed since Alex had been sick, and the kind that made all the bags, blankets, and whale-shaped ice trays feel like just the right kind of perfect.

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Alex stood in front of the wardrobe, her brow furrowed as she weighed her options for lunch with Yaz's friend, Layla. It was meant to be a casual outing, but Alex couldn't help herself from fussing. She held up two choices: high-waisted trousers with a chic shirt or

a new 60s-inspired checked dress she'd been dying to wear. She thought the dress would pair perfectly with a white polo neck jumper, but nerves were getting the better of her.

Yaz, fresh from the shower with a towel wrapped around her, stepped into the room. She grabbed her body lotion, noticing Alex's indecision. In her underwear, Alex stood in the center of the room, eyes darting between the two outfits hanging on the wardrobe door.

"You look like you're doing your A-levels," Yaz teased with a chuckle.

"I can't make up my mind..." Alex admitted, biting her lip as she continued to debate.

"Dress," Yaz said without hesitation.

"You always say that," Alex rolled her eyes

"Cause you look so sexy," Yaz murmured, brushing a kiss against Alex's shoulder as she walked past, making Alex chuckle.

"Maybe I'm too old for this dress,"

"What? Why?" she frowned as she reached for her underwear from the chest of drawers.

"I love the dress, just don't wanna look like I'm trying too hard."

"Don't be daft... It's gorgeous...very retro. Love the belt,"

"Cool, isn't it?" Alex's mood lifted slightly.

"Yes! Go on, wear the dress. Fuck the trousers...you're always in them."

"Alright... dress it is," Alex said, smiling as she tossed the dress onto the bed.

Finally dressed, she stood in front of the mirror, checking her reflection from all angles. The burgundy pencil dress fit her perfectly, hugging her figure in all the right places. It stopped just above her knees, striking the perfect balance between elegance and casual.

"Stunner," Yaz said, slipping behind her, wrapping her arms around Alex's waist.

Alex smiled, covering Yaz's hands with her own as they looked at each other in the mirror. "Says the most gorgeous woman ever."

Yaz made a goofy face, and they both burst into laughter. "Come on, we're gonna be late."

"Alright," Alex replied, turning just enough to give her a quick peck on the lips before reaching for her bag. "Let's get going."

"Can I drive?" Yaz asked as they made their way down the stairs.

Alex, now feeling more relaxed, jumped down from the last step. She tossed the car keys to Yaz with a grin "Sure...Just don't prang my car!" she joked

Yaz caught the keys, laughing as they headed out the door. "Oi!...It was just a scratch...Not my bloody fault they put the fucking bollard so low."

"I knooooow...how dare they put bollards around the hospital" she laughed

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They arrived at Silversmiths, a cosy restaurant Alex found, about 10 minute drive from their house. As they stepped inside, they're greeted by a warm, elegant ambiance that combines modern touches with a nod to the building's history. Once a silverware manufacturing site, the interior now offers a stylish and relaxed environment, featuring cosy booths that encourage intimate conversations. The décor is chic with subtle, refined hints of the space's industrial past, making it both inviting and sophisticated. With a focus on showcasing Yorkshire's local charm.

"This is nice" Yaz looked around as she sat down

"Told ya" Alex grinned proud of herself "And food seems really nice too...They've got quite an interesting menu"

"Good job babe"

"Is she gonna be here soon?"

"Yeah, she just text me, she'll be here in five minutes"

"Goodie...Exited?"

"Yeah...Haven't seen her since she left...Stupid really, not like London's miles away, is it."

"It gets like that...Shame really."

Alex's gaze drifted over Yaz's shoulder, catching sight of a tall woman by the entrance. She was holding her phone, eyes scanning the room. Dressed effortlessly stylish in

casual jeans paired with a beautiful cream jumper with fluffy, oversized collar. A wool coat with large wooden buttons hung loosely over her frame, and her long brown hair cascaded down over her shoulders from beneath a cozy wool beanie.

"Oh... I reckon that's her, Yazee," Alex said, nodding towards the entrance.

Yaz spun around, her face lighting up as she got to her feet. "It is!"

The woman by the door broke into a grin, and without hesitation, made a beeline for Yaz, arms open wide.

"Oh, my days, babes!" she exclaimed, her voice warm as they hugged each other tightly. "I hardly recognized you!"

"Same here!" Yaz chuckled as they pulled apart.

"Yeah, well," the woman laughed, "I bleached my hair to hell and back. Had to stop before it all fell out!"

"Brown looks amazing on you, though," Yaz grinned, then turned to Alex. "Let me introduce you... I'm so excited! This is my wife, Alex."

Alex stood, extending her hand with a friendly smile. "Lovely to meet you."

"Nice to finally meet you, too," Layla said, shaking her hand with a big smile. "Honestly, I nearly fell off my chair when Yaz told me she'd got herself married!"

Alex chuckled as they all sat down. "Yeah, we didn't exactly take it slow."

"Well, sometimes you've just got to follow your gut, haven't you?" Layla said, slipping off her coat and making herself comfy. "Life's too bloody short."

"Too right," Yaz agreed.

Layla reached across the table, giving Yaz's hand a warm squeeze. "I'm so chuffed we're catching up. I've missed you loads. Sorry I'm so rubbish at keeping in touch... Honestly, I'm just run off my feet half the time. Can barely tell me arse from me elbow!"

Yaz laughed, nodding in understanding. "I get it. I've missed you, too. How's life down in London, then?"

"Absolute madness," Layla said, rolling her eyes. "I love the job, don't get me wrong, but God, it's full-on. A hundred miles an hour, and just when you think you're catching up, they chuck something else at you."

"Sounds proper stressful," Alex chimed in.

“You’ve no idea,” Layla said, shaking her head. “I reckon I’ll stick it out for another five, six years, tops. Then I’m calling it quits before I end up grey and frazzled. But enough about me! Come on, I need all the gossip... How did you two even meet?”

“At the hospital,” Yaz explained. “Sonya was having a baby.”

Layla’s jaw dropped. “Sonya had a baby?!”

Yaz burst out laughing. “Yeah! Blimey, we really do need to catch up.”

“I’ll need to start making notes at this rate!” Layla said, wide-eyed. “When was this?”

“Last July,” Yaz said, still giggling.

“Is she married, then?” Layla asked, eyebrows raised.

“Nope,” Yaz replied, shaking her head. “It’s complicated. She’s a single mum.”

“Oh, bless her,” Layla said, looking genuinely touched. “That must be tough.”

“She’s doing alright,” Yaz said confidently. “She’s got us lot to help her out. She’s moving in with us this summer, actually. We’re building a granny annex above the garage.”

“That’s so lovely,” Layla said, smiling. “Right, so, I know you’re an OBGYN, Alex, that much I got from Yaz. Were you Sonya’s doctor, then?”

Alex laughed. “Nah. We met by accident...Yazee was off getting herself a drink, but the vending machine was broken. I was on my lunch break, so we got chatting. I’d just moved up here and didn’t know anyone, so Yazee asked me out for dinner.”

“Dinner turned into lunch, and before you know it, I’m snogging her in a car,” Yaz said, her face lighting up with laughter.

Layla let out a squeal. “No way! That’s adorable. I’m dead happy for you two.”

“Thanks babes,” Yaz said, grinning. “What about you, though?”

“Me?” Layla groaned, rolling her eyes. “Absolute disaster. Men these days, honestly... they’re all over the shop.”

“Not just men, believe me.” Yaz said, laughing knowingly.

"I knooooow...I was in shock when you told me about...what's her face...What a psycho"

"Don't remind me...I don't know what I was thinking."

"Where'd you move from Alex?" Layla asked curiously

"Helmsley...well...small village nearby"

"Oh lovely.... I'd love to live in a small place like that."

As the waiter approached the table, they quickly skimmed the menu and placed their orders, settling on a mix of dishes. With the food ordered, they leaned back, comfortable and ready to dive into old memories.

"So," Alex started, "Yaz tells me you all know each other since kids."

"Too right," Layla smiled "Sonya and I were thick as thieves back in the day...I was always at their house...We were in a same class together. Then we dragged this one out with us one night" she gave Yaz a playful shove "...I always thought she was boring till that night"

"Thanks mate"

"You're welcome" she grinned

Alex looked curious. "So, what changed?" she laughed

Layla's eyes lit up as she recounted the story. "We were out on the razz, having a right laugh, and I ended up driving Yaz home. Only, about halfway there, my car hits something, and we get a bloody flat tire! It's pitch black, and there we are, faffing about with the spare. It was a total shamble."

Alex chuckled, imagining the chaos. "Oh my god... Why didn't you just give a call to AA?"

"Cause this one thought we'd be alright sorting it ourselves," Layla laughed.

"That's cause you said you don't have Home smart and it'll cost you at least 100 quid to sort it out...It was absolute carnage," Yaz said with a grin. "But we got there in the end."

"Oh yeah... We were stood there by the roadside in short skirts and high heels while she's scrolling through YouTube for tutorials," Layla added.

"Oh, no way!" Alex laughed, shaking her head. "I'd pay to see that!"

"It would cost you" Yaz laughed "Well, I didn't have you back then," Yaz chuckled. "You'd have sorted it in five minutes flat."

“Really?” Layla’s eyebrows shot up as she looked at Alex.

“Yeah, I reckon I could,” Alex said, modestly.

“She’s got a knack for cars, bikes, all that stuff,” Yaz said, a bit of pride in her voice. “She’s sorting out her brother’s bike all the time.... knows all about it.”

“Not all, but I know enough,” Alex shrugged.

Layla raised an eyebrow with a knowing smile. “Now that makes sense... Yaz has always gone a bit weak at the knees for girls who like cars and bikes.”

“Oh, give it a rest!” Yaz groaned, chuckling as Alex looked intrigued. “You’re making it sound like I’ve got a proper fetish or something.”

“Am I wrong, though?” Layla teased, her grin widening. “Remember that girl with the Triumph few years back? You were besotted.”

Alex leaned back in her chair, clearly enjoying this. “I need details.”

“No, you don’t...” Yaz rolled her eyes, her face turning a bit red. “Please, don’t egg her on, Alex.”

“Oh, I’m definitely egging her on,” Alex laughed. “Go on, Layla...spill.”

Layla cracked up. “Alright then, so there was this girl...Can’t remember her name...dead fit, leather jacket, and a new Triumph. Yaz couldn’t get enough of her. She even took the long way home every day for a week just to ‘accidentally’ bump into her.”

“Layla!” Yaz protested, laughing so hard she nearly snorted. “You’re making me sound like a right creep!”

Alex raised her eyebrows. “Did you ever actually speak to her?”

“She tried...” Layla scoffed. “Got about two words out before she tripped over the kerb and nearly went flying.”

“Sounds like something I’d do” Alex laughed

Yaz groaned, covering her face. “Oh god, I’d blocked that out! It was mortifying.”

Alex chuckled, shaking her head. “So, you do have a thing for it.”

“Oh, she’s got it alright, just don’t wanna admit it.” Layla said, giggling.

“I do not...In fact, I’m well scared of bikes... Ask Alex, she tried getting me on one.”

"Being scared of them and fancyin' sexy girls on them are two different things!" Layla laughed.

"Alright, pack it in!" Yaz said, still grinning. "Let's talk about your embarrassing crushes, eh?"

"Not a chance," Layla shot back, winking at Alex. "This is far too good."

The rest of lunch went by with lots of laughter and easy conversation. Layla shared more funny stories from her and Yaz's past, while Yaz filled Layla in on the latest news. Alex, enjoying every moment, found herself joining in with ease, feeling like she'd known Layla for years. They ordered coffees to wrap up the meal, and by the time the plates were cleared they realized they were there for over three hours.

As they finally got up to leave, Layla pulled Yaz in for a warm hug. "We really need to do this more often, babe," she said, a sincere tone in her voice.

"Absolutely," Yaz agreed, squeezing her tight. "Let's not leave it so long next time, yeah?"

"Yeah, we really shouldn't, or you'll be walking around with five kids next time I see you!"

"I'm well up for that" Alex added with a grin

"She would be...Don't give her ideas." Yaz laughed

Alex stepped in to give Layla a friendly hug. "It was lovely meeting you. I had a proper good time."

"Me too," Layla smiled tapping Alex's shoulder "I'm well chuffed we finally got to meet."

With one last wave, Yaz and Alex headed out, leaving Layla behind with a promise to stay in better touch.

As they got in the car and drove off, Alex glanced over at Yaz, a content smile on her face. "That was brilliant.... I really had a nice time. It's not often I feel so relaxed around someone I've just met."

Yaz beamed, clearly pleased. "I'm so glad. You and Layla seemed to hit it off."

"Yeah, we have," Alex said, relaxing back in her seat. "I didn't expect to feel so chilled. It was nice."

Yaz reached over to squeeze her hand. "Told you you'd like her. And it means a lot to me that you got on."

Alex nodded, leaning back in her seat, a content look on her face. "Yeah, I really did. We'll definitely have to do this again."

Yaz nodded in agreement, feeling a warmth spread through her.

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