

1954 - Yaz, a talented young costume designer from the UK, moves to LA and meets Frances, a rising movie star. Both face challenges, racism and misogyny as their friendship deepens into a powerful relationship. Together, they have to navigate career struggles and societal norms.

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## Chapter 1

It was a summer of 1954. The sun casted a golden glow over Los Angeles as Yaz, a young British woman, drove in a cab down Sunset Boulevard. Her eyes, wide with wonder, taking in the city's bustling energy and iconic landmarks.

The Hollywood Sign gleaming on the hills, an emblem of the film industry's golden age. The car passes by Grauman's Chinese Theatre, its ornate exterior hinting at the glamour of recent film premieres.

The radio plays the vibrant strains of "Shake, Rattle and Roll" and Yaz's fingers tap along to the rhythm, the song a reflection of the city's vibrant pop culture.

Her attention shifts to the Santa Monica Pier, where the boardwalk is lively with visitors and colorful attractions.

As Yaz drives along Wilshire Boulevard, sleek new cars and modern buildings showcase the American dream of the era. The warm breeze flows through the open window, carrying with it the promise of new experiences and adventures.

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The cab glides to a stop in front of a charming single-story ranch-style house. The sun casts a warm glow over the quiet, tree-lined street.

The house is a classic 1950s middle-class home. Its exterior a combination of stucco and brick, painted in soft tones. A neatly trimmed lawn stretches out in front, adorned with colorful flower beds and a small hedge bordering the yard.

A concrete path leads from the sidewalk to the front porch with an inviting entrance and a modest door.

Yaz, still sitting in the back seat, looks out through the window with a sense of curiosity and admiration. Her gaze travelling from the lush lawn to the well-kept facade of the house. The front yard is meticulously maintained. A pair of garden chairs rest on the porch, and a decorative wreath hangs on the front door and curtains in floral patterns flutter through the open windows

She plays a driver and steps out of the car waiting for him to take her suitcase from the booth.

"Thank you" she smiled and took her luggage

A woman in her early 40s stepped out of the house. Her face glowing welcoming smile.

"Finally! I was starting to worry"

"Susan!" Yaz turned with bright smile

"Hello honey" she hugs her so tight Yaz could barely breathe

"Hi...It took forever.... But I'm finally here"

"You look a picture...You must be starving"

"I am actually"

"Well come on...Let's get you settled" she waives her hand and nods her head towards the door

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As they stepped inside Yaz took a glimpse of a neatly arranged living room. Inside, a plush sofa and matching armchairs face a coffee table, and the walls decorated with framed family photos and a mid-century modern clock. A patterned rug covers part of the wooden floor, and a lamp with a simple but elegant shade stands in the corner by the window.

They walked into the kitchen and her eyes soak every detail. A vintage refrigerator and a small breakfast nook. The wooden cabinets neatly organized, and a few dishes visible on the work top. Yaz takes a deep breath, soaking in the serene suburban ambiance and smiles sitting at the table.

"Eat first, then I'll show you your room"

"Alright...I still can't believe I'm here"

"Me neither" she smiles taking a tray out of the oven. "How was the trip?"

"Long... I slept most of the way to be honest...Now I think I'm just running on adrenaline"

"You will suffer with the time difference. It will take a while to get used to"

"I'm having a job introduction tomorrow...That's gonna be fun"

"Oh, you're gonna do great. It's quite an achievement to even get through the door."

"You mean for someone like me" she giggled

"For anyone honey...But yes...specially for you...unfortunately." She pursed her lips putting a plate in front of her

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She followed Susan to the bedroom which would be her home for the next few months until she hopefully gets settled. The room is softly illuminated by the afternoon sun streaming through a pair of pastel curtains, gently fluttering in the warm summer breeze. The walls painted in a serene light blue.

Her gaze pans across the room, revealing a neatly made twin bed with a wooden headboard, floral-patterned quilt and matching pillows. On either side of the bed, wooden side tables and lamps with simple, elegant shades, a small radio on one of them and alarm clock on the other one. A wooden make up table against one wall and a vase of fresh flowers on top of it,

A small reading nook near the window with a comfy armchair, draped with a cozy throw. A few well-organized books rest on a small table beside it.

"I hope you like it?"

"It's perfect" she smiles

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The jet lag caught up with her the next morning and she dragged out of bed with difficulty. On the way to work she stopped at a local dinner recommended by Susan. She sat by the window sipping a hot cup of coffee enjoying fluffy pancakes served with syrup and topped by fresh fruit. She took a generous bite and reached for the newspapers. Front page announcing SEATO (Southeast Asia Treaty Organization), reflecting the broader global context of Cold War tensions.

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She was just in time for work, with a few minutes to spare. Sitting nervously on the wooden chair in the hallway contemplating the possibility of failure, she nervously twirled the handle of her bag through her fingers. A woman sitting opposite kept eyeing her out judgmentally making her more nervous. She flinched as the double door flung open and a mid-aged man in a tailored suit stepped out.

"Yasmin Khan?"

"Yes?" She studs up

"Nice to meet you Yasmin....Patrick" he shakes her hand

"Nice to meet you too...Oh, Yaz please. Nobody calls me that"

"I like Yaz...Follow me"

She followed behind him through a narrow hallway dimly lit and lined with old movie posters and framed photographs of Hollywood stars. The sound of footsteps echoed off the walls as they moved quickly. The hallway is cluttered with various studio equipment and props stacked against the walls. A faint voices can be heard behind the doors of nearby rooms, and the smell of paint and wood fills the air.

The man walks confidently, glancing back occasionally to ensure Yaz is following. He swings open the door and Yaz steps into the courtyard, her eyes adjusting to the bright light after the dim hallway.

The courtyard is bustling with studio employees chatting, actors rehearsing lines, and crew members moving equipment.

He gestures towards a small round table under a canopy, where a few colleagues are gathered. The table is set with coffee cups and paperwork, suggesting a casual meeting. She takes a seat at the table and man begin discussing some project. Yaz takes her time looking around absorbing the vibrant, lively atmosphere of the courtyard.

"Right, let's go" he gestures towards another building.

Yaz follows through a bustling backstage area of the Hollywood studio. The narrow hallway is lined with doors leading to actors' changing rooms, each door labeled with names of famous stars.

Her eyes roam around the studio as she's trying to catch up behind him. Assistants moving around, actors in mid-costume changes, and makeup artists pass them by. The walls are covered with costume sketches and fabric samples.

A man points to various rooms "This is where the magic happens...each room is assigned to a different actor. As a costume designer, you'll be working closely with these rooms."

He opens a door to a fitting room, revealing a vibrant array of costumes neatly hung on racks. Mannequins dressed in glittering outfits stand in the center, surrounded by fabrics, sewing tools, and design sketches pinned to the walls.

"Here's where the actors come for their fittings. Your job will be to ensure every detail is perfect, from the fit of the costumes to the selection of accessories."

Yaz takes in the scene of this organized chaos of costumes in various stages of completion, from elaborate gowns to period pieces and a table cluttered with sewing supplies.

"You'll also be collaborating with the directors and producers to understand their vision for each character. Every costume needs to support the story and help bring the characters to life."

"Yes of course" she swallowed deep. The sheer scale of everything now brings a touch of anxiety.

He then leads Yaz further down the hallway, passing even more changing rooms. He stops in front of a door labeled "Wardrobe Department." and opens the door.

"This is the main wardrobe department. It's where you'll spend a lot of your time, organizing and maintaining the costumes, as well as coordinating with the laundry and repairs teams." He explains

The room is full of racks of costumes meticulously organized, and several seamstresses and assistants are busy working on alterations. Large tables are covered with fabric rolls, thread, and design plans.

"In this department, you'll be responsible for overseeing all costume-related activities, including fittings, alterations, and inventory management."

Yaz's eyes widen as she takes in the scale and organization.

The man smiles charmingly "It's a big responsibility, but it's also incredibly rewarding. You'll play a crucial role in shaping how the characters are perceived on screen."

Yaz nods, her face reflecting a mix of excitement panic but also determination.

"Another very important thing. As you will be interacting with a lot of actors, it is important you remember your place. You are not to engage in any private conversations, you do not ask for their autographs, or ask any questions or discuss and comment about their private life. You must hold a level of professionalism at all times."

"Understood"

"Good... You start at 5am tomorrow morning. You will get the schedule for the next week by your supervisor"

"Alright, thank you" she smiled

"I have to go now. It was nice meeting you"

"Nice to meet you too."

"Good luck"

"Thank you"

She exhaled as he left then realized she didn't ask him where she needs to report first thing in the morning.

"Shit" she rolled her eyes

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She arrived at work around 5am. The sun just started to rise from the surrounding hills and the air was still crisp. She was meeting her coordinator first thing in the morning for a brief meeting. Standing in the same courtyard from the day before, she watched as people slowly started coming to work. Studio employees chatting in the corner, crew members already moving equipment. Suddenly her thoughts got interrupted by someone calling her name. She turned her head and saw a man approaching her in haste.

"Hi...I'm terribly late. I'm so sorry." He approaches shaking her hand

"That's alright...I was busy taking it all in" she smiles

"Charlie Adams, just call me Charlie, no sir or mister Adams. We like to be on first name basis here"

"Yasmin Khan, Yaz for my friends."

"Fantastic...Very nice to meet you Yaz"

"Nice to meet you too Charlie"

The woman in front of him impressed him from the get-go. She had a graceful, elegant presence that combined traditional South Asian features with a stylish modern flair. She has long, dark hair, styled in soft waves pinned up in a sophisticated manner, reflecting British elegance. Her complexion is warm and radiant, and her expressive eyes, framed by well-defined brows, convey both determination and creativity and he like it.

He immediately noticed her wardrobe. She is wearing a tailored fitted skirt with an elegant blouse. A choice of fabrics and colors reflecting a blend of classic style with subtle hints of her cultural heritage. He noticed a statement brooch, clearly South Asian origin and a delicate yellow scarf adding a touch of personal flair. Her outfit is meticulously chosen to balance professional sophistication with her unique sense of style, and he is well impressed.

"A lot to take in I guess." He smiles "I won't keep you for long. Let's go to my office for a short chat and then we have a staff meeting." He spoke while they walked "I will introduce you to everyone. Don't get nervous, they can be a bit overwhelming at first but they're a good bunch. You'll see, you will feel at home in no time"

"I hope so...It's all very exciting. I'm so chuffed being here"

"God, I love your accent. Where do you come from?"

"Yorkshire, but I moved to London for studies. My mum was a seamstress and my nan was a first South Asian woman in Sheffield to be a manager of a clothing factory"

"Impressive...So this runs in your vans?"

"Definitely" she smiled

Charlie seemed as vibrant and charismatic man in his mid-thirties. He has distinctive, wavy hair, styled in a fashionable, slicked-back manner that hints at his creative personality. His expressive blue eyes twinkle with enthusiasm, framed by a pair of stylish, round glasses that give him a touch of intellectual charm.

He wears a bright, patterned bow tie and colorful vest over crisp white shirt and unique handkerchief tucked into the breast pocket of his jacket. His trousers are impeccably tailored, and his look completed with polished dress shoes that make a subtle click-clack sound as he moves.

He leads her into a small room which is obviously his backstage tiny office. Her gaze pans over a small filing cabinet in the corner, a big wooden desk in a center filled with fabric samples and colorful sketches of different costume designs. A big self-starting floodlight sits in a corner, reminding her she is in fact in Hollywood. The room radiates simplicity and charm.

Charlie gestures for her to sit down and he joins her on the opposite side of the table. He flicks through her resume whilst Yaz sits nervously but patiently waiting.

"So, you worked in West End? The "Red Mill", "Kiss Me, Kate", "Annie Get Your Gun" and your last work was "The King and I".... Impressive" he lifts his eyes fixing his glasses "What made you come here?"

"It's quite a difference between the theatre and the movie business. And I wanted to gain more experience, educate myself, build my portfolio"

"It is very different and much more demanding. I worked on both in fact I started like you in a theater. But this is a different world Yaz. It's much more demanding and a lot more ruthless. You will also find it a lot more changing considering your skin color. Do you think you can handle the pressure?"

"Yes, I think I can."

"Well then...I hope you stay." He smiled "I'm looking forward to working with you."

"Likewise...Thank you. I'm very excited"

"We are working on two projects at this present time. You will be switching between the two as needed. To make things run more smoothly around here we dedicated three actors per each designer. It just makes things less hectic around here. I will give you more information later in a meeting.

"That's great"

"Since we are mid shooting already, most of the designs and costumes are already made and your job will be overseeing any amendments or repairs and final fittings. At the same time, you will be working together with a team on designing new wardrobe for the second part of the shooting. We will be briefed on that when the time comes. We are halfway through so you will pick up from the previous person left off. You're welcome to make any suggestions or changes but we do all work as a team and the directors always have a final say. So, you will have to run it pass them for the final approval."

"Understood...That sounds reasonable"

"I will give the scripts you will have run through them to familiarize yourself with what we are doing. And I will also show you a costume design portfolio. It includes sketches, fabric swatches, and notes that outline the design and appearance of costumes for both projects you will be working on"

"That all sounds fantastic. Thank you"

"Alright..." he glanced at his watch, getting up and she followed.

"Let's get to work...It's show time baby" he hopped cheerfully opening the door making her laugh

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Her first day at work was going relatively smoothly though she was still navigating the creative chaos behind the scenes. The day started with a staff meeting where she was introduced with the concept of the projects she would be working on as well as being introduced to the rest of the team. An array of bubbly creatives and artisans from all walks of life who each had their own dream.

Charlie proved to be a vibrant and charismatic man. He had infectious energy and optimism about him. His laughter and easy going character fill the costume department with a cheerful atmosphere. Even from an hour meeting Yaz could see Charlie has an eye for detail and an imaginative flair. It was evident he loves to experiment with fabrics and textures, pushing the boundaries of traditional costume design. She noticed how Charlie's bubbly nature makes him a



favorite among colleagues. He seemed a colorful and spirited person and Yaz has a feeling she will enjoy working next to him.

She was assigned with three actresses one of which she was about to meet. Her name is Frances Louise, and she was told by her colleagues she was a star in rising who was expected to have a very successful career in the future. She had a fitting with her scheduled for 7am this morning so Yaz headed towards the Wardrobe Department to pick up the costumes. Reading her notes she searched through the racks for two dresses labeled by the internal codes.

"Oh, is this for Frances?" A young woman approached Yaz

"Yes..."

"There over their honey" she pointed on the other side of the room

"Oh...sorry"

"No need to apologize. It's your first day...I love your accent...it's so posh"

Yaz burst out laughing "Thanks, but I assure you it's not considered posh where I come from"

"It is to me...I always wanted to speak like a Queen..." she chirped helping her to find the dresses  
"Here we go...that's it."

"I'm a bit nervous" she admits exhaling

"Oh, don't be...Frances is wonderful. Everyone loves her around here. She's one of the rare down to earth normal ones." She leans whispering in her ear

"Happy to hear that..." she giggles "I got to go"

"Sure...see you later...Good luck"

"Thanks"

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The door to the dressing room department swings open, and Frances Louise steps into the long hallway. Her entrance is marked by a burst of bright energy as she walks confidently, cheerfully greeting the staff as she passes them by.

She is dressed in a stylish, tailored dress that hugs her figure. Her blonde curls bouncing just below her chin and framing her face with a soft, glamorous look. The royal blue dress fits her curves perfectly, highlighting her small bust and rounded hips, and her elegant heels click on the floor as she walks.

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Yaz was on her way. She's carrying two glamorous dresses wrapped up a protective sleeve. As she walks towards the dressing room department, she feels tension rising inside her.

Combination of excitement, anxiety and intrigue. She stops in front of a door glancing at the sticker with Frances's name on it. She takes a last pause and a deep breath and knocks on the door

"Come in" a voice chirps from the other side and Yaz grabs the door handle

Frances Louise's dressing room is a blend of glamour and comfort. The space is adorned with plush furniture, soft lighting, and elegant decor. The walls are lined with mirrors and racks filled with a variety of costumes and accessories. The room feels warm and inviting. She looks around, taking in the luxurious surroundings.

Frances is seated in front of the mirror, surrounded by makeup and hair products. Her blonde curls are pinned up in preparation for a fitting. She turns on her chair and looks up as Yaz as she enters, her expression shifting from a serene to an enthusiastic welcoming bright smile. She stands gracefully, her silky dressing gown flowing around her with each movement, and steps toward Yaz with an outstretched hand.

"Hi, I'm Frances. I've been looking forward to this fitting." She smiles cheerfully

Yaz, slightly taken back by Frances's radiant presence, shakes her hand warmly. She takes a moment to appreciate the actress's effortless friendliness.

"Hello, Frances. It's a pleasure to meet you, too. I'm excited to work with you and get started on your costume fitting"

Yaz doesn't fail to notice Frances's soft and delicate features, with expressive hazel eyes and a warm smile. Her makeup is meticulously applied, with a focus on classic bold lipstick and well-defined eyeliner, reflecting the glamorous look.

"Aaa...Your accent tells me you're from somewhere in Yorkshire. Am I right?" She notices straight away "

"Yes, you are...Sheffield actually. "

"Charlie told me a lot about you. He called me this morning. He is very impressed"

"Let's hope he stays that way" she giggled

"Oh, don't you worry about him darling, he's like a Teddy bear.... Alright...let's do this. So, what do you have for me?"

"I have two dresses. I would like you to try them on so we can see if some last minute repairs or amendments need to be made for you."

"Yeah sure..." she walks over to the changing station and effortlessly slips down her silky dressing gown leaving her in her underwear.

Yaz notes her petite, slender frame with a small bust and rounded hips that create a graceful, curvy silhouette. Her midsection, while slim, has a gentle curve that enhances her hourglass figure.

Soon the two women engage into a vibrant conversation while Yaz is zipping the glamorous gown.

"How come you moved?"

"I wanted a change...I also wanted to explore a different side to this business. The film set is very different from the theatre, and I just wanted to see if I can do both."

"How ambitious. Good for you honey...I love ambitious women. I used to be a model, but acting was always my goal. Huh...it's a bit tight" she rans her palms over her waist

"It's not comfortable, is it?" Yaz stepped back a bit examining the dress

"No, not at all. I'm having trouble breathing and I hate to think what's going to happen if I sit down"

"It's going to rip" Yaz giggled

"Well, I'm definitely going to be on a cover if it does"

"Should we leave it then?" She smiles

Frances turns over her shoulder confused then burst out laughing. "Maybe" she winks

"Also...if I may say so, I think these cups don't do anything for you."

"OMG thank you." She sighs relieved "I've been trying to say this to the previous designer, and we had a bit of a clash there"

"I was worried how you would take it. But I'm glad you agree."

"Oh, noo pleaseeee...Always say what's on your mind. I want to hear your opinion"

"If we put some padding it would look lovely"

"That's fantastic..." she smiles glancing at Yaz in the mirror

Yaz continues to explain alteration choices, pointing out details. Frances smiles warmly, clearly pleased.

"Your attention to detail is impressive.... See....we get along already" she chirps haply

"Thank you" Yaz beams at the compliment smiling back at her

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I hope you enjoyed this. Please give feedback, I would love to hear it.