

Chapter 5

The car eased to a stop outside the grand movie theatre, its polished surface gleaming under the early evening sky. The lights of the marquee cast a soft glow over the red carpet that stretched out like a ribbon leading into the opulent building.

Yaz leaned closer to the window, her eyes widening at the sight. Elegantly dressed women were stepping onto the carpet, their gowns shimmering in the spotlight. The buzz of excitement was palpable, a whirlwind of color and glamour. Reporters with cameras poised eagerly snapping photos, capturing every moment of the guests.

Frances looked over to Yaz. She found the childlike sparkle in her big brown eyes wide open in wonder adorably cute.

She leaned in with a reassuring smile. "Darling....This is where I get out. Don't worry.... I won't be long, I promise."

She nodded, her heart pounding with a mix of anticipation and anxiety. "Alright," she said trying to steady her voice.

Frances took a deep breath, her excitement barely contained as she stepped out of the limo. The moment she emerged, she was engulfed by reporters, their cameras flashing like bursts of light. The crowd's murmurs grew louder, the energy heightened by Frances's presence. She greeted the reporters with practiced grace, her smile unwavering as she posed for pictures.

Yaz watched from the car, her gaze following Frances until she disappeared from view. The elegance of the evening, the dazzling spectacle, and the reality of being part of such an exclusive event still felt surreal to her.

The limo glided smoothly toward the alternate entrance, away from the red carpet and the crowd of reporters. As they approached, Yaz's nervous anticipation heightened. The car came to a stop, and the chauffeur opened the door with a courteous nod.

"Welcome, Miss Khan," the doorman greeted with a warm smile, guiding her towards the entrance, Yaz wondering how he knew her name.

To her surprise, she was treated with a level of respect and formality that made her feel both special and a little uneasy. She was led into the foyer, where she was met with a complimentary glass of champagne.

"Thank you," she said, accepting the glass, though she had no intention of drinking it.

She looked around, taking in the luxurious surroundings. The polished marble floors, elegant decor, and the soft hum of excited conversations filling the space.

Yaz moved to a quiet corner, trying to calm her fluttering nerves as she waited. Her eyes wandered around, spotting a few familiar faces from her work, though she felt out of place among the high-profile guests.

After only a few minutes Frances stepped inside. Her eyes scanned the room, and when they landed on Yaz, a bright smile spread across her face and she immediately made her way over to her

“There you are,” she smiled warmly, reaching out to take a glass from Yaz’s hand leaving it on a side.

"Hiii!" She managed a nervous smile

Frances leaned into her ear whispering "Don't be nervous, you look amazing"

"So do you"

"Come...Let me introduce you to few people " she reached for her hand

"Oh god"

Frances glanced around before heading towards a small group of people introducing her to each person

“This is my agent, Andy,” Frances said, gesturing to a man with a warm smile. “And this is Judith, she plays Patricia. And over here, you might recognize Ms. George Caldwell, the producer.”

Yaz shook hands and exchanged pleasantries, her nerves easing slightly with each introduction. The people were surprisingly welcoming, their smiles genuine, but Yaz’s focus remained on Frances.

Once the introductions were complete, Frances gently guided her towards the theatre’s entrance.

“Shall we?” she sparkled with excitement.

“Yes, let’s,” Yaz’s heart beating a little faster as they walked together.

They entered the grand theatre, the opulence of the venue taking Yaz's breath away. She took her place beside Frances.

As the lights dimmed, the soft rustle of the audience settling into their seats filled the room. The glow from the screen cast a faint light, and Yaz felt a surge of anticipation flutter in her chest. This was more than just a movie premiere, it felt personal for her.

Half way through the movie she glanced at Frances, who looked breathtakingly elegant, the dim lighting highlighting the soft curve of her cheek and the sparkle in her eyes. There was an ease about Frances, but also a kind of excitement that Yaz could feel in the air between them.

She hesitated for a moment, her heart racing, before her fingers shyly sought out Frances's hand in the dark. It was a small gesture, almost tentative, as if testing the waters of something fragile and new.

Frances didn't hesitate for second. She squeezed Yaz's hand in a gently, their fingers intertwining as though they had done this a thousand times before. Yaz's heart swelled, the warmth of Frances's touch spreading through her. Then carefully Frances tucked their joined hands between them, hiding them from unwanted eyes, creating a small, private world just for the two of them amidst the grandeur of the theater.

The connection between them deepened, unspoken words flowing through the simple touch. In that moment, Yaz felt completely at ease, the nervousness of the evening melting away. It was just the two of them, sharing a quiet, intimate moment in the dark, and it felt as though nothing else in the world mattered.

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The film ended to enthusiastic applause, the theater filled with the warm hum of voices as people began to rise from their seats, excited for the after-party. The two women shared a brief, tender glance before joining the flow of the crowd toward the lavishly decorated room where the event would continue.

The space was alive with Hollywood's elite, their laughter and conversation adding to the electric atmosphere. But Yaz's excitement was tinged with anxiety as she took in the grandeur around her. The magnitude of the event felt overwhelming, and the sea of unfamiliar faces and names soon blurred together.

Frances, on the other hand, moved through the room with ease, her confidence shining as she accepted congratulations and praise for her performance. Yaz admired her from a short distance, noticing how effortlessly she commanded attention, her presence magnetic.

As they settled down for a meal, Yaz found herself seated at a beautifully decorated table, reminding her of a wedding. The conversation at the table flowed easily, though she felt slightly out of her depth amidst such company. She was pulled from her thoughts when the woman seated next to her commented on her outfit.

"Your dress is stunning, Miss Khan," the lady said, her tone genuinely kind.

"Oh, thank you," she replied, with a polite smile.

"It's very unusual, your gown. Very chic, and the fabric is amazing."

"It's South Asian hand-embroidered silk," Yaz explained, her voice soft but proud. "It's actually called a sari. My mother made it for me. It's traditional in my culture."

"How interesting, yet it looks so Western on you at the same time. The color really complements your complexion"

"Thank you very much. That's very kind of you."

It was a rare occasion when she got complemented on the color of her skin, and she found it beautifully refreshing for a change

"I love your gown. Oleg Cassini, am I right?" Yaz asked, her knowledge of fashion slipping into the conversation.

"Spot on! You know your fashion," the woman replied, clearly impressed.

"Yaz is the designer behind my dress, and she worked on some of the pieces for this film as well." Frances added, her voice full of pride as she looked at Yaz affectionately.

"Oh, did she? Wonderful work, Miss Khan. Very exquisite."

"Thank you so much," Yaz said, her cheeks warming under Frances's gaze and the praise from this stranger.

"She's my hidden jewel" Frances smiled warmly

The woman extended her hand with a friendly smile. "Oh, I believe I haven't introduced myself. Lillian Hartley."

"Lillian is a wonderful artist, Yaz" Frances added. "She's a production designer behind the visual look of my movie."

"Oh, I see. How interesting. I love to meet successful women," Yaz said, her voice filled with genuine admiration. "It's very inspiring."

"It is, isn't it?" Frances agreed

"Well, I believe we women need to stick together," Lillian said with a nod "As it happens, Frances and I are working on gathering a group of talented women to work together. I guess Yaz is one of the ladies you have in mind, my dear?" She turned to Frances

"Absolutely," Frances replied without hesitation. "She needs a little push...if you know what I mean."

"Perhaps we could include Miss Khan in our next brunch?" she suggested

"I was hoping you would say that" Frances smiled satisfied

As the evening continued, Frances leaned closer to Yaz, her voice soft. "Come with me."

"Okay," she replied confused

Frances excused them from the table and led Yaz toward the restroom. Once inside, she shut the door behind them, barely containing her excitement.

"She took the bait," she said brimming "I was planning this, and it worked...This is fantastic"

"I don't understand," Yaz frowned, still trying to grasp the situation.

"Lillian is one of the most powerful women in the industry, Yaz," she explained, taking Yaz's hands in hers. "She has loads of connections her husband is a director."

"Okay..." her confusion began to clear, but she still didn't fully grasp what Frances was getting at.

Frances squeezed her hands, her smile radiant. "You don't get it, darling. She's surrounded by rich, powerful women who love to brag about discovering new designers and have loads of cash to spend on new clothes"

Yaz's eyes widened as it finally dawned on her what she was saying. "And you want me to design their clothes?"

"Yes!" her excitement was contagious. "That's exactly what I want."

"But you've only seen two things I've made,"

"And they were both breathtaking.... I believe in you. I've seen your sketches and all the gorgeous things you've made for your current project. You've got something special, Yaz, and I'm not gonna let you waste your talent in the shadows of some dinghy studio. I want you to shine darling."

"Hun...I don't think you understand how this works. I can design whatever I want, but I need a workshop to actually make it."

"So, we will find you one" she chirped

"And it's just gonna pay for itself? And fabrics?"

"Where there's will, there's a way. Hey Scarlet O'Hara had a dress out of curtains."

Yaz burst put laughing "It's a movie"

"You can make a dress out of curtains"

She shook her head not able to stop laughing "Yes I can"

"There you go...Oh, we'll figure it out...So are you ready to take on Hollywood darling?"

Yaz's heart swelled at Frances's words, her emotions bubbling to the surface. "Bloody hell girl...You're making me soppy" her chin wobbled, and she stepped forward, embracing Frances in a warm hug, her voice choked with emotion. "I don't know what to say."

"Just say yes," Frances whispered gently as she melded into a hug, her arms wrapping around Yaz tightly.

Yaz closed her eyes, resting her head on Frances's shoulder. "Yes," she breathed out. "Of course it's yes you silly woman."

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It was late in the night when the party ended, the once lively atmosphere now replaced by the calm of the Hollywood hills. Lines of flashing cars gathered at the entrance, each one picking up guests and whisking them away.

Yaz's ride came to a stop in front of her, and the driver stepped out, opening the door.

"I had such an amazing evening... I don't know what to say," Yaz said, her voice soft as she hugged Frances tightly, almost as if she feared letting go.

"Thank you, darling. I'm glad you enjoyed it. You made it extra special by being here. I had a wonderful time," her tone was equally tender.

As they pulled back, their eyes met and held. Yaz felt her breath catch in her throat as Frances's hands gently squeezed hers, a simple gesture that sent a surge of warmth through her.

"Breakfast tomorrow?"

"Absolutely,"

"I'll give you a call in the morning."

"Alright, hun. Good night."

"Good night, darling. Sleep well."

"You too."

Yaz finally stepped into the car, giving Frances one last wave as the door closed behind her. As the car pulled away from the curb, Yaz leaned back in the seat, a pleasant sigh escaping her lips, her face still lit up with a permanent smile. Yet even as her heart raced with excitement, her mind was a tumultuous sea of emotions.

The city lights blurred past her, each one reflecting the chaos inside her. The light breeze coming through the slightly open window kept her grounded in the present, but the exhaustion of the evening began to weigh on her.

Her body was tired, but her mind refused to rest. It kept replaying the small, intimate moments between them...each touch, each glance, each word exchanged. She examined them from every angle, trying so desperately to make sense of it all.

Her feelings for Frances had grown with each passing moment, intensifying in a way that both thrilled and terrified her. The more she thought about it, the more she felt herself being pulled into an abyss of uncertainty. Did Frances feel the same way? Or was this just wishful thinking, the product of her own desperate longing?

What if all these little signs, were nothing more than friendly gestures from a kind wonderful woman? The idea of losing Frances, or worse, of ruining what they had was almost unbearable.

Yaz inhaled deeply, trying to push the anxiety away. She forced herself to focus on the joy of the evening, on the connection she felt with Frances, rather than the fear that threatened to consume her. She wanted to savor this feeling, to let herself be happy, if only for tonight. But even as she tried to hold onto the joy, the fear lingered, whispering doubts into her ear, making her wonder if this happiness was too fragile to last. She wiped the tear that rolled down her cheek and watched the city lights fade into the distance.

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Yaz was still sleeping when Susan burst into the bedroom like a whirlwind. The door hit the wall with a bang, jolting her.

"What!" Yaz screamed, her heart pounding.

Susan just laughed, yanking the duvet off Yaz's body. "Quickly! Frances Louise is on the phone!"

"Whaaa?" She frowned, struggling to comprehend what Susan had said. Her brain was still fogged with sleep.

"Get up! Frances is calling you!"

"Oh... shit..." she jumped out of bed, her feet barely touching the ground as she rushed out of the room.

"I can't believe I just spoke with her!" Susan followed close behind, grinning star struck "Her voice is so different in real life, and she's so well-spoken!"

Yaz rolled her eyes and couldn't help laughing. "Yes, she is," she replied, reaching the kitchen and grabbing the phone off the counter. "Hello?"

"Morning, darling... Did I wake you up?" Her voice was warm, like a ray of sunshine cutting through the morning fog.

"Well, Susan did... I thought there was an earthquake," she laughed, her heartbeat slowly returning to normal.

"Oh, so sorry... I'm used to waking up early..."

"That's alright, don't worry about it."

"How fast can you get ready?"

"Pretty fast..."

"Should I send a driver in one hour? I don't want you rushing too much... We have a whole day."

"That sounds reasonable. Do I need to bring something?"

"Just your beautiful self, darling."

Yaz couldn't help but laugh again. "Alright, hun."

"I'm so excited... I've got everything planned."

"I don't doubt that" she giggled. "See you soon."

"See you."

Yaz hung up the phone, still chuckling to herself, and sat at the kitchen table with a sigh, trying to steady her heart, which was still racing from the sudden wake-up call.

"So?" Susan asked, her eyes gleaming with mischief.

"Nothing," Yaz replied, shaking her head with a laugh. "It's just breakfast."

"Of course it is... She took a shine to you," she teased, her tone playful yet curious.

"What's that supposed to mean?" She frowned, still laughing as she walked over to the fridge and grabbed some juice.

"Nothing... Just saying... Is her house glamorous?" Susan's eyes sparkled with curiosity, eager for details. "Tell me everything, I want all the gossip"

"Actually, you'd be surprised how simple and elegant it is. Not tacky at all... It's just really nice and warm."

"Is it big?"

"Not really... You know, she's just a normal person like you and me."

"Well, I know she's not an alien," Susan giggled. "But she's a star."

Yaz shrugged. "Amongst other things... She's also very clever. She's got a whole library at home, you know."

"Really? Like the big one? The whole room?"

"Nooooo..." she laughed, shaking her head. "I meant she's got loads of books."

"Oh..."

"I better start getting ready," she said, leaning over to kiss Susan's cheek before heading to her room.

"Could you do something for me?" Susan called after her.

"Anything."

She opened the kitchen drawer and pulled out a magazine with Frances on the cover. "Could you ask her to sign it for me?"

Yaz burst out laughing. "I shouldn't be doing that, you know."

"Pleeease?"

"Oh, alright... Give it here," she took the magazine with a smile, shaking her head at Susan's enthusiasm

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Frances poured herself one more glass of vintage wine, her laughter mingling with Betty's as they chatted comfortably in the kitchen. The morning was warm, the house filled with a relaxed, cozy energy. Just as she was about to take another sip, the doorbell rang.

Frances quickly placed the glass on the counter and darted out of the kitchen.

"Isn't that my job?" Betty called after her, laughing.

Frances just waved her off, her excitement too palpable to resist. She swung the door open to find Yaz standing there, a bright smile lighting up her face. She looked effortlessly charming in red capri trousers and a crisp white shirt, her hair neatly braided into two French plaits, each tied with a red bow that matched her outfit perfectly.

"Oh my... don't you look adorable," her smile widening and heart skipping a beat as she took in Yaz's appearance.

"I brought some cakes. Compliments from my friend Susan," she said, balancing the box carefully in her hands as Frances stepped forward, hugging her warmly and pressing a surprising gentle kiss to her cheek.

"How sweet of her. Come on in," Frances said, waving her inside with enthusiasm.

As they stepped into the hallway, Betty emerged from the kitchen, ready to leave. "I'll say goodbye now, Miss," she said with a polite nod.

"Have a nice weekend, Betty,"

"You too, ma'am. Nice to see you again, Miss Khan," Betty added with a friendly smile.

"Please, just Yaz....Nice to see you again too. Have a lovely weekend, Betty."

With a final nod, Betty left, and Frances led Yaz into the kitchen.

As the rest of her house, the kitchen had the same charm, bathed in soft pastel colors of mint green and creamy white. Gleaming chrome appliances added a touch of glamour. The glossy cream cabinets, adorned with polished chrome handles, lined the walls, their elegance accentuated by the marble worktop and the checked floor. The big Spanish style arched windows overlooked the garden.

"OMG....Your kitchen is so cute"

"Thank you... I picked all of it myself. I'm very proud of it." She said placing the cake box on the counter peaking inside "Uuuu niiiiice...I'll put these in a fridge"

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The mellow tunes from the radio drifted through the kitchen, mingling with the gentle breeze that fluttered the curtains by the open window. Both women had slipped into their swimwear,

layering light, flowing kaftans over them. The air was warm, but not stifling, just perfect for an afternoon spent together.

They moved easily around the kitchen, their conversation filled with laughter and light teasing as they prepared a snack. Yaz stood at the kitchen top, her hands busy chopping an array of colorful fruits and cheeses, while Frances arranged the pieces on a large platter, making it look effortlessly elegant.

Being in Frances's presence was like a soothing balm to Yaz, her gentle manner making her feel like she was melting from the inside out.

Frances reached into the fridge, her arm brushing lightly against Yaz's shoulder as she grabbed a jar of olives. Then, as she took her wine glass from the counter, Yaz waved a cube of mango in front of her, playfully smiling

"Open," she teased, holding the fruit just out of reach.

"Mmm... thanks, darling," she murmured before pressing a quick kiss to Yaz's cheek.

The soft brush of Frances's lips against her skin sent a shiver of warmth through Yaz, her smile growing wider as she fought to contain the fluttering in her chest. Everything about her touch was so tender, so effortlessly affectionate, that it made her heart ache in the sweetest way.

Yaz glanced over at the platter "I think that's enough,"

Frances stepped back, giving the platter a critical look before nodding satisfied. "I think so..."

"Alright, I'll put all of this away, and we can move to the garden," her hands moving automatically as she started tidying up.

"Sounds good to me," she playfully nudged her with a hip and cheerfully picked up the platter.

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Once outside, they settled at a small table in the garden, the sun warming their skin. The temperature had risen since the morning, so they moved the table and sun loungers into the shade of a large tree, streaks of light falling over it created a cozy, intimate space.

As Frances sipped her wine, her gaze drifted over the shimmering water of the pool, reflecting the soft, golden hues of the afternoon sun. Yaz, comfortably nestled in her chair, took a bite of cheese, her eyes wandering around the garden. The gentle breeze carried the fragrance of blooming flowers, adding a serene touch to the afternoon, so peaceful, almost idyllic.

"It's such a beautiful house," Yaz said, breaking the comfortable silence. "When did you move in?"

"Not so long ago," she looked towards her, lifting her sunglasses on her head "I could only afford it after the last movie I made, so about a year ago."

"It must be awesome to be able to do that. It's like rewarding yourself for all the shit you've been through."

Frances burst out laughing at Yaz's blunt and sincere statement, the sound ringing out like music against the backdrop of the quiet garden.

"What's funny?" Yaz smiled, her eyes twinkling with amusement.

"Just the way you said that. It was so real," she still chuckled

"Well, it's true, isn't it?" Yaz shrugged, her smile widening.

"It is, very much so. And I'll tell you what else is true.... It feels so empowering... And whoever tells you otherwise is lying."

Yaz nodded, the sincerity in Frances's words resonating with her. There was something refreshing about the way she spoke, no pretenses, no sugarcoating, just raw honesty.

"Did you ever think you're gonna succeed like this?"

"Noooo... Not at all," she admitted, "There were times when I thought I'd dropped so low the only lower point was the street, and it's the scariest feeling ever."

Yaz glanced at her, her heart aching at the vulnerability she saw in her eyes. She struggled to fully comprehend her experiences. Growing up in a loving, stable home where, though money wasn't plentiful, but it was always enough, Frances's world seemed so far removed from her own. It was a rare glimpse into the person behind the glamorous façade, the one who had fought battles no one else had seen.

"I can't even imagine how hard it must've been. And you were so young." Yaz said softly.

She wanted to reach out, to comfort her in some way, but she held back, unsure of how to bridge the gap between them.

Frances took a deep breath, shaking off the shadows of the past. She met Yaz's gaze with a big smile "But I'm here now...With you.... So, it was all worth it"

Yaz's heart skipped a beat, and she felt a warmth spread through her chest, "And you deserve all of it..." Yaz said, her voice barely above a whisper. "... every bit of happiness."

Frances reached across the table, her fingers brushing Yaz's in a gesture so effortlessly tender "So do you, darling. We all fought our own battles. I know you did too. It shows in those beautiful eyes" she said softly,

She settled back into her chair and after a short pause turned to Yaz “Where did you live before you came here?” she asked curiously.

“Sheffield with my parents. Then I moved to London for school, rented a room with an old lady for a while, then after that I shared an apartment with two uni mates,”

“Did you work?”

“Yes, in a shop,” Yaz said, then hesitated before her curiosity got the better of her. “Can I ask you something?”

“Yes of course”

“Is it true that you read my resume?...Be honest”

Frances looked down, giggling as she twirled a wine glass in her hand. “Might have done,” she said, lifting her gaze with a playful, cheeky smile. “How did you know?”

“Oh, I don’t know... People talk,” Yaz teased.

“Oh really?” she raised an eyebrow. “And what else do they say?”

“Now that’s not fair missy... I am not grassing anyone,” she laughed.

“I thought you were my friend,” Frances said, turning her head to pout, pretending to be insulted.

“I am your friend...” she laughed

“Then tell me. I wanna know. Come oooon... pleaseee? I promise I won’t tell,” she coaxed, her tone playful.

Yaz rolled her eyes, laughing. “Oh, Alright then....They say you only work with women... You know, when you have the choice.”

“True,” Frances confirmed without hesitation.

“Why’s that?”

“I have enough men trying to get into my panties without adding more of them seeing me in my underwear behind the set. So, if I have a choice, I’ll choose a woman any day,” Frances said with a shrug.

“That sounds reasonable,” she nodded, a smile playing on her lips.

“What else... come ooon, Yasmin Khan... spill the beans.”

“It’s all nice stuff... Some of it is gossip.”

“Come on... what’s the gossip?” she shifted on the sun lounge, crossing her legs and turning toward Yaz, her curiosity piqued "I want all the dirty details"

“Alright...if you insist.... I heard men saying you slept with your previous co-star,” Yaz giggled. "Dirty enough for you?"

Frances burst out laughing. “Ewwwww... nooooo... Darling...If I really slept with all the men, they connect me to, I’d never have time to make any movies.”

Yaz laughed along. “Makes sense... Did you ever you know... hook up with a co-star?”

“No,” Frances said firmly.

“You would say that.”

“Honest... I’m not lying. I’d never lie to you. Let’s put it this way... It’s just not my taste.”

“Alright... So, what is your taste, Miss Frances? She teased, seizing the moment.

Her eyes met Yaz’s with a small smile. She took a deep breath, carefully choosing her words as she traced the rim of her glass with her fingers. “Well, I’ve had my share of relationships,” she began slowly "Though none of them really lasted long enough to be called serious."

"How come?"

"I guess I never really found the right person."

“And what would be the right person?” she asked, her curiosity deepening, hoping she wasn't crossing the line

“Well, I’ve been thinking that maybe I’m just more inclined to connect with certain kinds of people. You know.... those who I share a deeper understanding with.”

“That makes sense,” she said, trying to keep her tone light. “It’s all about finding that deeper connection, isn’t it? But It’s not always easy."

Frances nodded, her gaze softening. “Exactly. For me It’s all about finding someone who sees me for who I truly am, not just the surface. And I suppose that was always the hardest bit"

“Well....then I guess we’re both searching for the same thing.... something really special,” Yaz said smiling softly.

“And sometimes, it’s in moments like these that we find what we’re looking for.” gentle smile played on Frances’s lips.

Yaz’s pulse quickened. She looked down at her plate, feeling a surge of emotion. A thoughtful silence fell over them, broken only by the gentle lapping of water against the pool’s edge. Frances’s gaze lingered, her fingers sought out Yaz’s, tenderly lacing them together, and Yaz, feeling the weight of the moment fiddled with her napkin, her heart pounding as she sensed a deeper undercurrent in Frances’s words but still uncertain of their true meaning.

Frances’s face broke into a bright smile, and she tugged on Yaz’s hand playfully. “Let’s have a swim,” she said, hopping up from the chair, her earlier intensity giving way to the easy, joyful energy Yaz had come to adore.

As Frances pulled her toward the pool, she felt the tension melt away, replaced by a warmth that spread through her entire being. This was where she wanted to be, where she felt something real. A connection that was as undeniable as it was terrifying. But for now, in this moment, with Frances's hand in hers, it was enough.

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Yaz was sitting on the edge of the swimming pool, her legs dangling in the water, as she watched Frances swim effortlessly across the pool. The water sparkled in the sun, matching the glistening smile on Frances's face.

"Aren't you gonna come in?" Frances called out, her voice teasing and light.

"In a second... The water is quite cold," Yaz replied with a playful pout.

"Not when you get in... Come on," Frances laughed, playfully splashing water in Yaz's direction. "I might have to make you!"

"Don't you dare!" Yaz giggled, standing up quickly as if to escape her mischief.

Frances’s eyes gleamed in the sunlight, watching Yaz’s every move. Her beautiful cinnamon skin shimmering under the sun's rays, and the cute red polka-dot swimming costume hugging her curves in all the right places. Frances found herself captivated by her grace. She was the most beautiful woman she had ever seen, and just for a short moment she allowed herself imagining she was hers.

Yaz began to step into the pool, careful about her footing over the steps leading into the water. She stepped in to her waist when her foot slipped on the tile. She wobbled, losing her balance, but before she could fall, Frances quickly grabbed her hand, steadying her.

"Oops... careful," she warned with a smile, her voice gentle. "Tiles can be slippery."

Yaz laughed, allowing herself to be pulled into the pool. She flopped into the water, her laughter filling the air as Frances's arms instinctively wrapped around her for just a brief moment before shyly letting go.

"See? It's nice," she grinned, swimming a little away from her but keeping her within reach.

"It's beautiful... I've never been in a pool before,"

"Really?"

"Nooo," she giggled, walking toward the edge. "This is the best thing ever."

"Aren't you gonna swim?" She smiled playfully

"I would if I knew how to," she admitted, giggling as she clung to the pool's edge.

Frances blinked in surprise. "You don't know how to swim, darling?"

"Nooo," Yaz nodded, laughing lightly. "Not many swimming pools in Sheffield," she added with a chuckle.

Frances gave it a moment's thought before an idea sparked in her mind. She swam toward the shallower part of the pool where Yaz stood. "Wanna try? I'll teach you."

Yaz's eyes widened with a mix of curiosity and hesitation. "You can't teach me how to swim. What if I drown?" she giggled nervously.

"I'll be done for involuntary manslaughter," she shrugged with a laugh.

"Well, that'll make you famous,"

"Yeah... for all the wrong reasons," she giggled, extending her hand. "Come on, give me your hand. I promise you'll be fine."

Yaz hesitated, the playful laughter fading from her face as a touch of panic set in. The thought of venturing into the deeper water made her anxious, but Frances's reassuring smile and outstretched hand gave her the courage she needed.

"Nothing to be afraid of... Come on," Frances encouraged gently, her voice soft and reassuring.

Yaz bit her lip, her heart racing as she took Frances's hand. She stepped forward cautiously, feeling the water rise higher as she moved away from the pool's edge. She glanced down at the water, her worry increasing as it deepened beneath her feet.

"It's alright... I'm holding you... Just go slowly," Frances reassured her, her grip on Yaz's hand steady and comforting.

Yaz nodded, her trust in her helping her push past the fear. She moved a little closer, and as the water reached her chest, Frances's other hand came to rest gently on her waist, offering support.

"See? You're doing great," she said with a warm smile

Yaz let out a small, nervous laugh, her fear slowly giving way to a budding excitement. "I guess... this isn't so bad."

Frances smiled brighter, the joy in Yaz's eyes contagious. "Okay, now just try to float. I'll hold you up, and you won't sink, I promise."

Yaz took a deep breath and nodded. With Frances's guidance, she allowed herself to lean back into the water, her body feeling light and buoyant as Frances's hands supported her. The feeling of floating was new and exciting.

"Wow... I'm actually floating!" her laughter bubbling up as she realized she wasn't sinking.

"Told you! You're a natural," She kept her hold on Yaz, her hands firm but gentle, guiding her through the motions.

As Yaz became more comfortable, she tried moving her arms and legs a bit, testing her newfound confidence. Frances stayed close, her arms a constant source of reassurance.

The two of them moved around the pool, Yaz growing more confident with each passing moment, and Frances cheering her on with every small success. Their laughter filled the air, mingling with the sounds of the water as they splashed around.

At one point, Frances, unable to resist, pulled Yaz into a playful spin, twirling her gently in the water. Yaz shrieked in surprise, her arms clinging around her shoulders, then burst into laughter, her nerves completely forgotten.

"Oh look.... she really likes it?" Frances teased, her own laughter ringing out as they continued to play.

"Maybe a little too much," Yaz admitted, her cheeks flushed, but her heart light.

They eventually slowed down, their playfulness giving way to a quieter, more intimate moment. Frances kept one arm around Yaz, holding her close as they floated together. The sun was casting a warm, golden hue over the garden and making the water shimmer even more beautifully.

Yaz leaned into Frances, feeling safe and content in her embrace. "Thank you," she murmured, her voice barely above a whisper.

Frances's lips curled into a gentle smile, though her heart pounded a little faster. "For what?" she asked, her tone tender.

"For this... for everything,"

Her words were laden with more meaning than she could express. She turned her head slightly, their faces now only inches apart. The closeness of Frances, the warmth of her skin, the soft scent of her, everything felt heightened, more intense.

Frances's gaze dropped to Yaz's lips for just a heartbeat before returning to her eyes. Her toes reached the bottom of the pull, keeping herself sturdy. The world seemed to narrow, the only things that mattered in that moment were the two of them, the space between them shrinking.

Yaz's breath hitched as Frances slowly leaned in, her movements hesitant, as if she was asking for permission with each inch closer. Yaz's eyes fluttered shut just before their lips met, the kiss soft and tender, filled with all the unspoken emotions that had been building between them. Her fingers closed around the nape of Frances's neck.

The kiss was brief, just a whisper of contact, but it left both of them breathless, the world around them a little brighter, the bond between them a little stronger. When they finally pulled back, they stayed close, their foreheads resting together as they smiled, Frances's hand glided over her waist, their hearts racing but perfectly in sync.

"Was I wrong to do that?" Frances whispered

"No..." she smiled gently "...not at all" her heart beating so fast she could feel it in her throat

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Inside the house, the warm, tranquil atmosphere followed the two women from the garden. The soft sound of the radio played in the background.

Yaz, now changed back onto her clothes, stood at the counter, carefully taking cakes out of the box and placing them on a tray. The simple task gave her hands something to do as her mind was still replaying the gentle kiss they had shared outside.

Frances, having changed as well, came back into the kitchen. She approached Yaz from behind pausing for a moment by the door, watching her with a tender expression, her heart still fluttering from their earlier moment felt as though it will explode from happiness. Not able to help herself, her hands found Yaz's arms, fingers brushing gently, almost shyly, over her skin.

Yaz twitched a little "Sneaking up on me?" she smiled

The gentle caress sent a shiver down her spine. She instinctively leaned back, her body reacting before her mind could catch up. Her touch was light, careful, yet it carried a quiet intensity that made Yaz's heart race.

"Sorry...I didn't mean to startle you," she murmured, her hands sliding up Yaz's arms, settling on her shoulders "Just... couldn't stay away."

Yaz turned her head just enough, catching her gaze over her shoulder. "I don't mind ..." she whispered, her eyes softening. "... I like it when you're close."

Frances smiled, her heart swelling at Yaz's words. "I like being close to you too," she admitted. She gently turned Yaz towards her, their faces now inches apart.

Yaz's breath hitched slightly, her heart pounding as she looked into her eyes. Frances leaned in, her lips brushing against Yaz's. The moment hung between them, heavy with unspoken words, before Yaz moved in closer, closing the distance in a kiss that was soft, gentle, and full of tender emotions. Her hands, trembling slightly, found their way to Frances's waist, pulling her closer.

This time, their kiss was deeper, more certain, both of them melting into it as if they had been waiting for this moment all their lives.

Frances's hands slid up Yaz's arms, fingers wrapping around the side of her neck, holding her gently yet firmly as if grounding herself in the reality of the kiss.

The world outside seemed distant, as if it had faded away, leaving just the two of them in this moment, wrapped in the warmth of their connection.

When they finally pulled away, both were breathless. Neither spoke, their smiles and the lingering touch of their hands saying everything they needed to in that moment.

Frances broke the silence with a soft whisper, "I could get used to this." her fingertips trailing gently down Yaz's back "

Yaz's smile widened, a playful shine in her eyes. "Who says you have to stop?" she brushed blonde curls from her face

Frances laughed lightly, "I don't plan to," she said, her voice filled with promise as she leaned in kissing her again.

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