

1 INT. LARGE HOTEL BALLROOM - NIGHT 1

NAZIR (25 yrs) - Pakistani, wearing white linen pants, shoes, a smart, casual shirt, and the Islamic skullcap, enters.

Gaudy tinsel drapes amateurishly from the ceiling.

A small number of stalls line one of the walls - selling alcohol-free perfumes, Arabic calligraphy pieces, Islamic clothing.

Scattered around the room are circular tables - some of them have A SINGLE WOMAN sat at them - others have MORE THAN ONE PERSON.

A COUPLE OF PARENTS are whispering conspiratorially to their daughter.

A MOTHER adjusts her embarrassed DAUGHTER'S head scarf.

2 INT. LARGE HOTEL BALLROOM/ONE END OF THE ROOM - NIGHT 2

At one end of the room, around the snacks table, stand A NUMBER OF MEN (A MAN IN CHARCOAL SUIT - DASHING MAN IN TUXEDO - MAN WITH OPEN FLY). Some of them are gathering up snacks as if they're on Supermarket Sweep.

Stood off to the side, Nazir looks like a lost puppy.

A WOMAN smiles bashfully at ONE OF THE MEN. But his smile disappears as he notices HER FATHER scowling behind her.

3 INT. LARGE HOTEL BALLROOM/TABLE 9 - NIGHT 3

FAHMIDA (25 yrs) is sat beside YASMIN (25 yrs). Fahmida appears more conservative in her head scarf and modest attire. Yasmin, on the other hand, appears more liberal in an elegant, sleeveless dress but no head scarf.

They are both looking towards THE MEN at the other end of the room - Fahmida is picking faults.

FAHMIDA

The one with the open fly - clearly disorganised. And the one playing pocket pool? Likely sexual deviant.

YASMIN

Slim pickings?

FAHMIDA

No. These are anorexic pickings.

YASMIN

How about the one in the charcoal  
suit? He's handsome.

FAHMIDA

No, he's pretty. Probably a

6 INT. LARGE HOTEL BALLROOM/TABLE 3 - NIGHT 6  
LATER - AT TABLE NUMBER 3 Nazir is still smiling ...

NAZIR  
I'm currently between jobs.

WOMAN 2  
So how do you get by?

7 INT. LARGE HOTEL BALLROOM/TABLE 1 - NIGHT 7  
AT TABLE NUMBER 1. Jovial and lively ...

NAZIR  
(laughing)  
Public transport mainly.

8 INT. LARGE HOTEL BALLROOM/TABLE 3 - NIGHT 8  
AT TABLE NUMBER 3 Answering the same question again, he is more serious and leans forward intently ...

NAZIR  
I live with my folks so I'm not paying for rent or utilities or food.

WOMAN 2  
Oh. So you're living off you're savings?

NAZIR  
(beat)  
Yes.

9 INT. LARGE HOTEL BALLROOM/TABLE 7 - NIGHT 9

The top buttons on his shirt are open - the hat has not  
been straightened - he isn't ev



FAHMI DA  
The whole bus heard. Your parents  
must curse the day you were born.

NAZIR  
(beat)  
Not to my face.  
(beat)  
I'm in a bit of a predicament  
here.

She finally looks at him.

NAZIR (CONT' D)  
Please.

FAHMI DA  
I shouldn't. As a point of  
principle.  
(pause)  
How much?

NAZIR  
Two pound thirty.

FAHMI DA  
You're a travesty.

Fahmi da slowly rummages through her handbag and hands Nazir  
a fiver.

NAZIR  
Jazak Allahu khayran.

15 INT. BUS - MOMENTS LATER

15

Having paid for his ticket, Nazir goes towards Fahmi da, who  
has an empty seat beside her.

FAHMI DA  
It's taken.

NAZIR  
Clearly. But thank you.

He tries to hand over her change.

FAHMI DA  
Keep it.

Nazir is clearly embarrassed.

FAHMI DA (CONT' D)  
Is there anything else I can help  
you with? Rent, perhaps? Weekly  
shopping? Child support?

Nazir moves away and takes a seat at the back of the bus.

Fahmi da looks to the front of the bus, where a DRUNK MAN in the queue coughs into his sleeve and then sniffs it. He looks at Fahmi da, leers, and eyes up the seat beside her.

Fahmi da looks around the bus, which is quite empty. As the Drunk Man walks towards her, she jumps to her feet and





FAHMI DA

Really? So what are you looking for?

NAZIR

A good-hearted, pious, Muslim woman.

FAHMI DA

Pious? Is that code for 'maid'?

NAZIR

Don't be cynical. Someone who values prayer and fasting and all that jazz.

FAHMI DA

FAHMI DA  
To a certain extent. There's

FAHMI DA  
 (smiling)  
 Robocop.

NAZIR  
 And you were questioning my  
 expectations? If I met a man like  
 the one you've described I think  
 I'd marry him myself.

FAHMI DA  
 Well, unfortunately for us both  
 such men just don't seem to exist  
 anymore. And you know what's  
 really depressing? Young Muslim  
 men seem to be the worst.

NAZIR  
 But you can't judge us all based  
 on our worst specimens. You're  
 not the Daily Mail.

FAHMI DA  
 (beat)  
 A friend of mine, Muslim, she's  
 considered marriage to an  
 Atheist. He was polite, mannered,  
 treated her well. He was willing  
 to accept her, past and all. And  
 it's not because he was an  
 Atheist. It's because he just  
 understood what it means to be a  
 man.

NAZIR  
 But doesn't she want her children  
 to be Muslim?

FAHMI DA  
 Of course she does.

NAZIR  
 But it'd confuse the heck out of  
 them if their father wasn't.

FAHMI DA  
 She knew that. But she needed  
 companionship. She's still not  
 found anyone.

NAZIR  
 Tell her that she just needs to  
 be patient. Allah will bless her  
 with the right man.

FAHMI DA  
 (annoyed)  
 Easy as that.

NAZIR  
I'm not saying it's easy but ...

FAHMI DA  
(interrupting)  
... but you're going to judge her anyway.

NAZIR  
All I'm saying is that religion has to come first.

FAHMI DA  
Okay then. Self apply, Mister Mufti. Would you be willing to marry a widow?

NAZIR  
Yeah.

FAHMI DA  
What about a divorcee?

NAZIR  
Yeah.

FAHMI DA  
(beat)  
What about a single mother?

NAZIR  
(Laughs)  
Oh come on. I'm not a saint. A widow and a divorcee is one thing but a single mother? Somebody else's child? That's a part of somebody else. I don't know.

PAUSE - they both sit in silence.

Suddenly, Fahmi da pushes the button - DING - to stop the bus. The Bus Driver pulls over at the next stop. Without a word, Fahmi da strides off the bus and begins to walk off down the street.

Nazir leans back in his seat, confused. Then, realisation crosses his face. He jumps up and runs after her.

17 EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

17

Nazir catches up to Fahmi da.

NAZIR  
Wait.

FAHMI DA  
Piss off. Knob.



NAZIR  
 (loud whisper)  
 Give me your number. I'll call  
 you.

FAHMI DA  
 (loud whisper)  
 No. Leave me alone.

Nazir catches up. They both stop.

NAZIR  
 Fine. Let me get you a cab.

He dials a number on his mobile.

AUTOMATED VOICE ON PHONE  
 Your current balance is six  
 pence.

Nazir hangs up.

NAZIR  
 That's not gonna work.

Fahmi da tuts, rolls her eyes, and starts walking away.

NAZIR (CONT'D)  
 Wait.  
 (looks across the street  
 at a bunch of washing  
 lines)  
 Last resort.

18 EXT. HOUSE - SHORT WHILE LATER

18

Fahmi da stands looking at a house. A DARK FIGURE appears from the side of the house. It is a person in a BURQA.

FAHMI DA  
 I don't know why I thought this  
 might be something sensible.

The figure briskly walks across to Fahmi da with a manly stride - incongruous with the attire. It is a shamefaced Nazir.

NAZIR  
 We should get moving.

They beat a hasty exit.

19 EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - SHORT WHILE LATER

19

Nazir and Fahmi da are walking together. Nazir doesn't have the veil over his face. Fahmi da looks embarrassed.

FAHMI DA  
Aren't you ashamed?

NAZIR  
Of course I am. I've never stolen anything in my life. But, as you said, man has a duty to protect.

An ELDERLY MUSLIM MAN approaches so Nazir throws the veil back over his face. Fahmida tenses up. As the Elderly Muslim Man passes, Nazir lifts the veil.

NAZIR (CONT' D)  
(continuing where he left off)  
Besides, I'm not intending to keep it and wear it on weekends. I'm gonna take it back.  
(beat)  
What's your house like?

FAHMI DA  
You're not coming in.

NAZIR  
I wasn't hinting. I'm just curious. I've always wanted my house to be an Islamic environment. You know, no distractions - conducive to focused worship.

FAHMI DA  
What does that mean? Television?

NAZIR  
Nope.

FAHMI DA  
Pictures?

NAZIR  
Nah.

FAHMI DA  
Posters?

NAZIR  
Of?

FAHMI DA  
Celebrities.

NAZIR  
No chance.

FAHMI DA  
Calligraphy?

NAZIR  
Hold that thought.

He drops the veil as ANOTHER ELDERLY MAN walks by, and then lifts it.

NAZIR (CONT' D)  
Islamic?

FAHMI DA  
Yeah.

NAZIR  
Of course.

FAHMI DA  
Music?

NAZIR  
Only nasheeds. And Michael Jackson.

FAHMI DA  
Because he's conducive?

NAZIR  
Because he's a legend.

Fahmi da laughs.

BEAT

NAZIR (CONT' D)  
I'm sorry about what I said on the bus.  
(beat)  
Boy or a girl?

PAUSE

FAHMI DA  
I have a little boy. Ismail. He's six.

NAZIR  
Masha Allah. And his father?  
(beat)  
You don't have to answer that.

PAUSE

FAHMI DA  
Everyone has a history. And everyone makes mistakes.

PAUSE



NAZIR

I'm a virgin. By choice, I might add.

FAHMI DA

(beat)

That's your history? It's, like, the complete opposite of mine.

(beat)

After I had Ismail, I tried to find somebody, but eventually realised that a child is just a little too much baggage for most people.

NAZIR

I didn't mean what I said.

FAHMI DA

It's no big deal. We're just two people having a conversation. That's it. There's nothing else to it.

BEAT

NAZIR

What if there is?

FAHMI DA

'Is' what?

NAZIR

Something else to it. I've had many conversations with many random people and this didn't feel random. This feels ... decreed.

FAHMI DA

Everything is decreed.

NAZIR

Granted. But consider how we began this evening and look at how we've ended it.

Fahmi da stops at a bus stop opposite a house.

FAHMI DA

That's my parents' house. This is your stop.

NAZIR

Oh. Wait, you live with your folks too?

FAHMI DA

