

The Best Education

At school the next day, Rashid and I sat together in class as always and went to Sam's afterwards to eat cheap chicken and chips. I told him about what happened with Adam and me. His face was stiff, and I could see that he was uncomfortable with the conversation but I kept talking anyway. His only response to my story was, "fuckin' 'ell".

Rashid was different for the rest of that day. There was something different about how he looked at me. I caught him staring at me a few times and he put his hands in my hair when we were sitting in the Quad in between classes, something he had never done before. Just as our last class was ending, and the students were exiting the classroom, Rashid flirted with me by play fighting. He raised his fist and stepped forward as if he was going to hit me. He was smiling, and I knew he was playing but I don't take well to any form of physical violence from men.

As soon as he made his playful gesture I made it clear to him that I didn't like it and that he should never raise his fist to me in any way for any reason whatsoever, not even as a joke. He walked me home that night after class and carried my bags. As we walked we talked about a party that the Pakistan Society at Middlesex had organized and the class trip to Edinburgh that was coming up.

We both stopped at the front door of my building. There was an awkward silence for a few seconds then I asked him if he wanted to come up for anything, a drink, to use the bathroom...he said he didn't. Then he hugged me tightly. With his arms wrapped around me, he looked into my eyes and said, "You know I won't do anything to hurt your feelings. I didn't mean to upset you in class today. I'm sorry."

Rashid wrapped his arms around me tightly again and then said good night. It was clear to me then that he was attracted to me and had an interest in me beyond friendship, and it was only a matter of time before our friendship would turn into something else.



I noticed a new guy in class the next day. I figured that he had registered for the program late. I didn't take much notice of him until he stopped me after class. I could tell he was Nigerian as soon as he spoke.

"Are you from America?" he asked me.

"Yes," I said in an annoyed tone. I was already thinking that he was going to try to get my number, after that fast crash with Adam I wasn't interested.

"Are you from Miami? I think I saw you in King of Diamonds," he said referring to the famous strip club. I was really annoyed then.

“No, you’ve never seen me at King of Diamonds!” I said and rolled my eyes before walking away.

I learned his name was Naasir in class the next day. I noticed that he dressed nice and wore nice watches. The first time I saw him he was wearing a Rolex and the next time he had on a Hublot. I didn’t care though. I couldn’t stand him. Something about him just irked me. He looked my way a few times, but I always gave him an unpleasant look, then looked away. I ignored him every day in school.



Later that week I got dressed in traditional Asian attire; a blue and gold shalwar kameez lent to me by one of Rashid’s friends for the party hosted by the Pakistan Society. I met Rashid there. He was the event’s photographer, so he was running around all night. I stayed with a few of his friends. He came over and checked on me throughout the night.

That party was my first taste of Eastern culture. I watched the women as they walked in. They were gorgeous. Their hair was dark, long and silky, and their make-up seemed to match their skin perfectly as if they were born wearing it. They wore bright colored silk, and chiffon saris adorned with sequence and rhinestones with unique patterns that illuminated their sun-kissed and fair complexions.

The sound of pipes from the traditional music could be heard throughout. I ate meat samosas and kebabs. After a few conversations, I found out that cricket is to Pakistanis as football is to the British. I also realized how close Indian, Pakistani and Afghans were to each other culturally. They seemed to all be the same with the only difference being that they were born across an imaginary line that separated their countries. They spoke the same languages, ate the same food and enjoyed the same music.

Some of the Afghan men did a dance on stage. There were about five of them. They stood in a circle and stepped up, back and forth then spun around in a circle around each other and clapped to the sound of the music playing. They moved faster as the music got faster. I watched in amazement. I learned later that the dance is called Attan. Experiences like this are what make life interesting to me. There is no shortage of new things to learn, see and do.

I walked home alone that night in the crisp, February air. As I walked, I thought about how happy I was to be there. I had only been there for a month, and I had already learned more about the world than I had in years. At least that’s how it felt.

One of my French classmates took me to see real tennis being played and explained the difference between it and the tennis that is more popular today. Another one suggested that I should go to the Canary Islands because they were nearby, just off the coast of Spain. I had

heard of the Canary Islands before but never knew where they were. The new music I heard, the Afghan dance I saw, Stonehenge and Bath...My mother used to tell me that traveling provided the best education. I finally understood what she meant.