

YASMIN
young

AMINA
young

Borderline

Hanif Kureishi

First performed at the Royal Court Theatre in 1981.

Susan, a young journalist who has just returned from India, is gathering information for a radio programme about the Asian community in London. Among the younger people she talks to are Amina, daughter of Pakistani parents; Haroon, whose father owns the Light of India restaurant; and Anwar and Yasmin, organisers of the Asian Youth Movement. Amina and Haroon have been lovers for the past year, but now Haroon is going to university and Amina's father has arranged a suitable marriage for her.

In this scene, set in the park, Amina has been talking to Susan when Yasmin arrives. Yasmin has little time for journalists and Susan goes, leaving Amina and Yasmin on their own.

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Act Two, Scene Two

AMINA I like Susan. You're so hard on her.

YASMIN She's great fun.

AMINA What?

YASMIN Oh I've got no idea. She means well, yes.

AMINA Are you sad today?

YASMIN No, just thinking how to control an office full of angry, ignorant boys. They smoke and sweat and boil over. They talk of petrol bombs, they explain how to saw off a shotgun. I tell them to learn how to read and write. But they hate anything that takes longer than a night to achieve. Apparently they intend to do something about the stabbing. They're definitely not prepared to rely on either the police or prayer. [*Pause.*] Oh, I'm tired. I work so hard. And I can feel myself becoming too

austere. Yes. When people do weak things they look guiltily at me. Or avoid me. Anwar.

AMINA I see.

YASMIN He is worried that weakness is capitulation. Stupid. I think I should fuck more.

AMINA Yes.

YASMIN What's Haroon like? No. Sorry.

AMINA Can I say something?

YASMIN If it's funny. [*Pause.*] No. What is it?

AMINA Suppose . . . suppose you're in this situation. And you have to decide. You just have to. And if you did one thing you'd hurt people you love and nothing could be the same again. But if you did the other thing, what they want, you'd hurt yourself.

YASMIN How badly?

AMINA Badly. Badly.

YASMIN I won't decide things for you. You're too intelligent.

AMINA Yasmin, please.

YASMIN No.

AMINA Yes, you're right. I've decided already. I won't . . .

YASMIN What?

AMINA I'm not going to resist.

YASMIN I see.

AMINA I'll marry him.

YASMIN There'd be just too much tearing of tissue all round, you mean.

AMINA My father.

YASMIN Him?

AMINA Yes.

YASMIN I've told you my own marriage wasn't a frolic.

AMINA Yasmin, can't you understand? I can't be tough like you.

I just can't be. I can't. Sorry, I can't. I'm too frightened.

YASMIN Well.

AMINA Yasmin, tell me what to do.

YASMIN Go through with it then. For them.

AMINA It would be evil to defy them. You can't see that can you?

What would I do with my freedom anyway. I don't think I can do good like you.

YASMIN Your father is too sick to defy.

AMINA Yes, yes.

YASMIN Go through it then. Then come out of it.

AMINA Could I?

YASMIN Maybe. In time.

AMINA I make you feel sick, I'm so weak. Don't you turn against me.

YASMIN I'd never do that.

AMINA You have already.

YASMIN Only a bit.

AMINA Oh, and this is silly. I'm not a virgin and I'm afraid my husband will complain to my father about it.

YASMIN Oh that. I tell you, you just scream at the right moment, that's an orgasm in itself for men. And beat their backs with your fists, tear their skin. When they complain say your passion overcame everything. And have no brats.

AMINA D'you know, the first time I met my future husband, Farouk, he picked his nose and wiped it on his tie.

YASMIN What kind of tie was it?

AMINA A big fish one. So bright he had to wear dark glasses.

YASMIN Do you like this weather?

AMINA I love it, yes.

YASMIN Do you? I always think the English talk too much about that stuff.