

CHAPTER 20

I liked Yusuf so much that I didn't mind putting on the uncomfortable fancy wedding clothes when it was time. When I looked in the mirror,

I Looked Like a different kid!


Like my own Pakistani twin.

Amber and Ambreen were wearing matching outfits. Maryam had put on her princess clothes and looked very pleased with herself. She was

trying to take selfies on her phone, to show her friends.

The house was busy with people running around looking for their shoes or putting on lipstick. My dad was standing at the door shouting about getting into the car already, which my uncle found hilarious.

'Don't worry, everybody will be late.

Nobody goes  on time'.
he said, chilling out on the sofa.

'What? Uncle? Are you even dressed?' asked Dad.

'No, no, the ladies will take too long. I will get dressed in a minute,' he chuckled.

This was very difficult for Dad, who thinks it's the end of the world to be late to anything. So, being told he had to be late on purpose

was pretty much the same as being told he had to eat through his nose! He checked his watch longingly and sat down uncomfortably in his outfit.

We finally piled into the car. When we arrived, we saw Uncle was totally right: EVERYONE was late. Now, I've been to Pakistani weddings in London before, but this was something different. It was crazy!

Good
crazy, not WILD
CRAZY.

It was outdoors, but in a **BIG**
MARQUEE,
which is just a fancy word for a tent that is the

size of a big house. It was decorated with lights – so many of them on the inside and outside!

There were hundreds and hundreds of people there. In a way, it was like a game, because there were 'sides'. We were on the groom's side, which meant we had to make a

Grand
Entrance with him.

You're not going to believe this, but Yusuf made his entrance on a horse. A dressed-up horse! And the horse looked just big enough to take his weight, but only just. And there were other horses that were dancing. A few men were playing the biggest drums I have ever seen, which they hung around their necks. The sound was

HUGE.

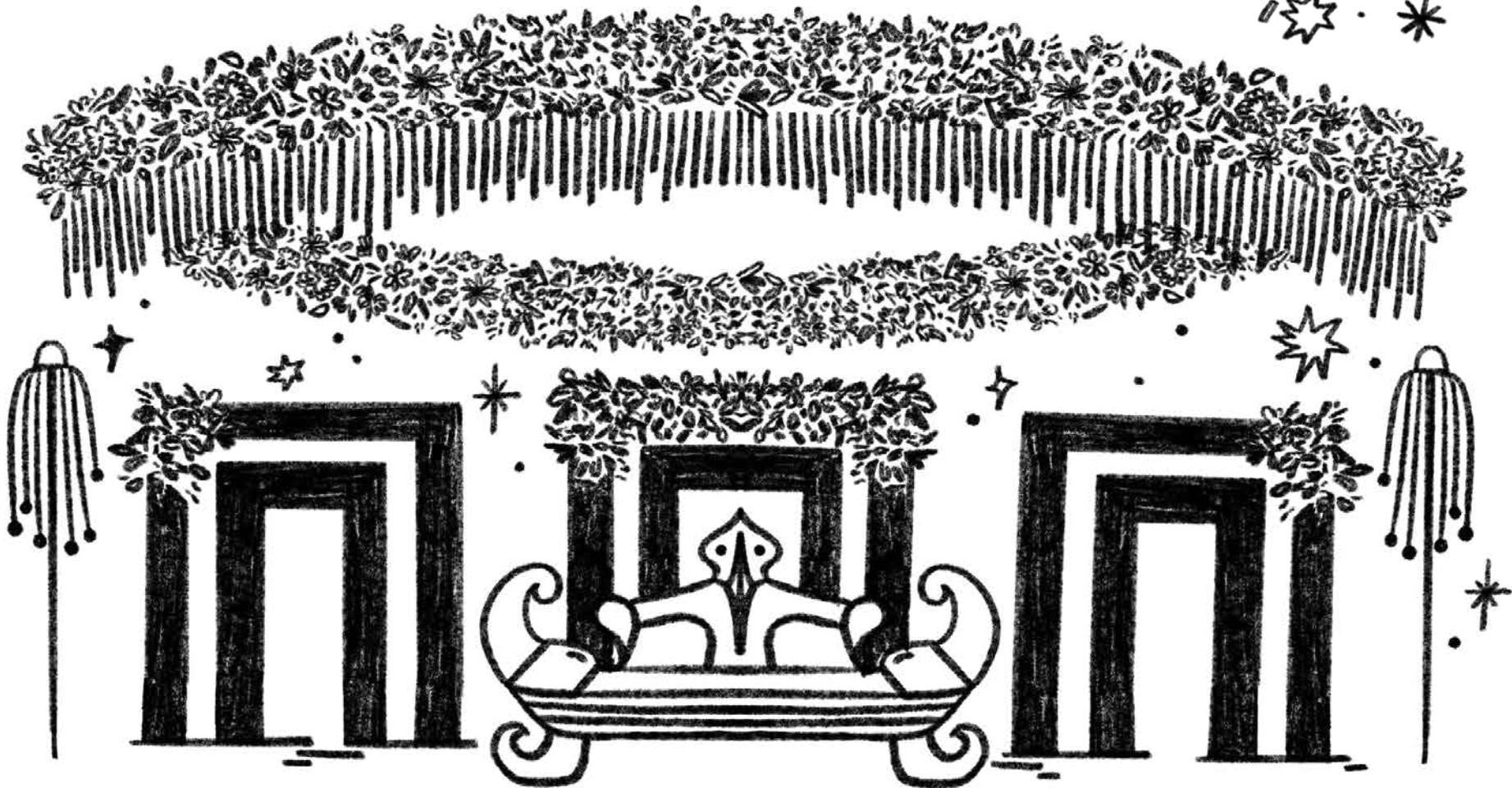
And it was a good tune. It made me want to

dance walk, instead of normal walk my way into the marquee.

The bride's side were already inside, and they threw lots of flower petals on us as we walked in. Together with the fancy clothes

everyone was wearing, *it was a*

BIG EXPLOSION ^{of} *COLOURS.*



Esa was loving it and Maryam was trying to love it, but she was also busy complaining about how **itchy** her princess dress turned out to be. Amber and Ambreen looked like they weren't seeing anything special, probably because they see these kinds of big Pakistani weddings all the time.

Then the bride came in. Maryam's princess clothes were nothing compared to hers. She was wearing a dark red dress that was so long, she couldn't actually walk unless someone was lifting it for her a bit.

It looked **HEAVY** too,
with **MILLIONS** of
GEMS and **BEADS**.

Yusuf and his bride, Aisha, sat together and then a man in a hat and a beard came to talk to them.

'That's the imam,' Mum explained.

'He's going to marry them now.'

A lot of people were still chatting away, which I thought was crazy. 'They're missing it!' I said.

It was over in just a couple of minutes. He just asked them to say some words and sign a paper and that was it! Yusuf was married to Aisha, **and half the people missed it!**

When the food came, I couldn't believe how much there was. There were so many things to eat, I couldn't even try them all. Most of it was too full of chilli for me, anyway – which is

weird because I thought **I LOVED**
spicy food.

And at the end, when it was time for the
bride and groom to go, everyone
cried lots and lots like something
bad had happened. That was
super weird. It was a wedding
and weddings are supposed to
be happy, right?



'Why are they crying?'

I asked Maryam.

'Probably because their clothes are too
uncomfortable,' she replied, tugging her itchy
dress away from her skin
and walking painfully
in her golden heels.



'It's sort of like a tradition,' explained Dad.
'It's the girl's side that is crying, because they
are sad that she's leaving their family.'

'But she's not, is she? She'll be back and
still see them?' I asked.

'Of course,' said Dad.

Traditions were funny things, sometimes, I
guessed.

I imagined they saw Yusuf as a giant alien
in disguise that was abducting her and taking
her to outer space for ever on his dancing
horse, which seemed funny for a minute until
I remembered that that's exactly what could
have happened to Mrs H.

I gulped.