



Heart **BREAKER**

ALSO BY ANIKA HUSSAIN

This Is How You Fall in Love

As A. S. Hussain

Desi Girl Speaking



Heart **BREAKER**

ANIKA HUSSAIN

HOT
KEY
BOOKS

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*To Martin,
There's no one I'd rather lose to at every game we play*

1

My hands don't even shake as I carefully draw as many teeny tiny asses as I can on Fahim Saha's ridiculously expensive trousers.

The communal changing room reeks of sweat and boys and even though it makes me want to throw up in my mouth I don't because I'm on a mission. I am nothing if not an organised queen on a schedule.

For weeks now I've been thinking of ways to get back at Fahim for what he did to Mona, because just telling him off in front of the school wasn't going to cut it.

No, everyone already knows he's an ass but to actually *see* it? To force him to walk around sixth form for the rest of the day with cut-outs of asses on his trousers, shirt and blazer? That's something else. Subtlety never was my strong suit.

When I've finished drawing the outlines, I rifle through my bag for the scissors I nicked from Mrs Henley's desk and start cutting through the fabric. Despite their age and the amount of glue crusted on them, the scissors slice through the fabric with ease. Where most students at our sixth form wear polyester, Fahim wears rich linen, making this even more

satisfying. Usually, I would complain about his excessive display of wealth but in this case it's worked in my favour because it's made it a thousand times easier to locate his stuff.

As I cut around the outlines I've made, bits of fabric fall to the floor, and I feel bad about the mess I'm leaving for the cleaners because I probably won't have time to clear it all up, but convince myself that it's all for a good reason. Because it is.

Let me explain.

It all began at the beginning of summer break when Mona, my best friend, attended a dawat where Fahim Saha, the head boy at sixth form, who is notorious for leaving a string of broken-hearted girls behind him, was also present. Personally, I've never understood why girls fawn over him. At some point or another, most of my friends and even my older cousin, Anaiya, have had a crush on him, but me? No, thank you.

Mona, however, does see the appeal. Has ever since she locked eyes with him at Pohela Boishakh a few years ago.

So, although the dawat shouldn't have been anything out of the ordinary, since they're pretty much a staple of your weekend if you're Desi, it was. This was for two reasons: a) it was hosted by Fahim's cousin's brother-in-law, which meant that Fahim was in attendance and b) the host must have miscalculated the ratio of adults to teenagers to children because there was pretty much a quarter of a teenager to every toddler and set of parents there.

All this to say that they were the only two teens and when you're at a dawat, with nobody you know to hang out with, you gravitate to the person closest to your own age. So after three hours of making awkward small talk, when *the* Fahim

Saha, the guy Mona had been crushing on for the past two years, suggested they go for a walk, she was up and leading the way before he'd even finished asking.

And on that walk? His lips fall onto hers.

According to Mona, the kiss was out of this world. The kind of kiss you read about in those tacky tattered romance novels where the guy catches the girl mid-sentence, right before she's about to say something stupid but the guy can't wait any longer to show her how he feels.

'You don't get it,' she'd told me afterwards, the infatuation in her voice as clear as day as it burst through my phone speaker. 'It's meant to be. Out of all the dawats, what are the chances that we would be at the same one?'

'Pretty high, actually,' I'd pointed out. 'There's not a lot of South Asians in Bristol and you do go to the same school so it's not like you haven't been at dawats together before. Statistically, it was bound to happen again.'

'Saachi, we're not in court right now.'

'Maybe we should be.' I turned the page of the book in front of me, far more interested in trials that changed the course of the law than Fahim Saha. 'I'm doing pretty well at annihilating your arguments right now and it's a pity nobody else is here to witness it.'

She'd tutted in dismissal. 'But what about us being the only teenagers there? It's like practically impossible, you know?'

And although I could disagree with her at length about the many reasons why they were the only teenagers there, I didn't burst her bubble. Mona always has and always will be a die-hard romantic.

Not that I can relate. I swore off romance a long time ago. Maybe something to do with my mum abandoning me, my brother and my dad, despite spending the first eight years of my life promising me she'd always be by my side.

But I digress.

For the rest of summer, Mona obsessed over Fahim. Despite the fact they weren't actually dating, she would comment on his Insta and TikTok like a girlfriend might, lighting up whenever he liked her comment. She would talk about him non-stop, giddy just at the sight of a text from him even though it would take him actual days to respond.

To put it simply: she was into him, and I didn't know why. Still don't.

But when he goes and breaks my best friend's heart by completely ghosting her, not even giving her the courtesy of acknowledging her existence once sixth form started? When he's done this time and time again, treating girls like they're disposable? Then he deserves what's coming to him.

DING

My phone notifies me of a message, and I reluctantly stop my cutting to glance at it, aware that time is running out.

Mona

How's it going?

I send Mona a picture of the trousers I've utterly obliterated along with a clown face emoji. Ideally, Mona would have joined me but I suspect her heart's still too fragile and even

being near Fahim's clothes would send her over the edge.

Mona

Thank you for doing this for me xx

Saachi

Any time xx

I get back to work, destroying Fahim's shirt and blazer next. It doesn't take me long now that I've mastered a steady hand as I cut the symmetrical asses out of the fabric.

When I'm all done, I pause to briefly admire my work and then I hang Fahim's trousers and shirt back onto the peg. To the naked eye, it's as if they're untouched but once he puts them on it'll be a whole different story. And I'll be ready with my phone to snap pictures of him in his new uniform.

The uniform he *should* have been wearing all along.

But I'm not quite finished yet. Before I leave, I take out the patch I'd been saving for Dev's birthday and hold it against Fahim's blazer, the words *CERTIFIED JACKASS* staring back at me where I left part of the fabric untouched, reserving it for the pièce de résistance. I pull out my travel sewing kit from my backpack and am just about to start fixing the patch into place when a shadow falls over me.

'Saachi, what the hell are you doing to my blazer?'

Shit.