

UNBRAIDED

Written & directed by Razan Alsoghayer

COMING OF AGE, DRAMA - FEATURE - SAUDI ARABIA, CANADA & THE NETHERLANDS

LOGLINE

Two childhood best friends fight to preserve their friendship as womanhood, tradition, and a changing Saudi Arabia begin to reshape their lives.

CHAPTER 1: BLUE SKIRTS

Maha (12) and Yasmeen (12) have been inseparable since childhood, their friendship growing through the controlled, censored rhythms of an all-girls school and the expectations slowly closing in around them. While Maha’s home feels smaller and more restrictive, Yasmeen’s house becomes a world of temporary freedom, where they imagine futures that still feel limitless.

They share an unspoken fear: that Maha’s first period will mark the end of childhood freedom and the beginning of new rules. Yasmeen promises to help her hide it for as long as they can, protecting the life they have together. Then, on an ordinary afternoon swimming at the family farm, a thin line of red blood runs down Maha’s leg, quietly marking the end of their childhood.





CHAPTER 2: GREEN SKIRTS

As they grow older, their bodies and surroundings begin to change. Puberty brings new restrictions, while a changing Saudi Arabia opens new possibilities for young women, even as traditions continue to shape their lives. On graduation night, Maha learns that Yasmeen’s brother Yassir has asked for her hand in marriage. But marriage is almost beside the point; all Maha cares about is what this means for her friendship with Yasmeen. When Yasmeen suddenly disappears and stops responding, Maha initially says yes to Yassir, only to realize that Yasmeen’s silence is an answer of its own, leading her to call off the marriage.

CHAPTER 3: NORMAL CLOTHES

Ten years later, after a decade of no contact, Maha has built a new life for herself in Amsterdam when Yasmeen comes to visit with her two children, now wearing the hijab, married to a Saudi man, and still following the traditions they grew up with. The impending sale of Yasmeen’s childhood home has pushed her to finally reach out. Seeing her again brings back the intimacy of their childhood, but also forces Maha to confront how differently their lives have unfolded, and whether the friendship she has carried with her all these years can ever truly exist again.



Unbraided grows out of my own personal story. Not everything in it is exactly what I lived, but I grew up in an environment where small freedoms and friendships formed secret worlds. With Unbraided I want to explore Maha and Yasmeen’s hidden friendship and invite others to imagine this private and delicate space. **I also set the film during a transformative period in Saudi Arabia, when ideologies are slowly shifting and the country is beginning to open more.**

This change gives the story another layer, showing how the private lives of two teenage girls echo a broader social transition. The loosening of rules and the arrival of new freedoms mirror the tension in Maha and Yasmeen’s experience of growing up and **show the fragility of a bond caught between tradition and possibility.**

Traditional minds may see that world differently, plan around an innocent bond and decide what is best. Arranged marriages and family expectations can disturb even the strongest connection. As a teenager faced with such choices, nothing mattered more to me than my closest friendship.

That feeling of innocence, loyalty and quiet defiance lies at the heart of this idea.



*Down memory lane of my childhood friendship.



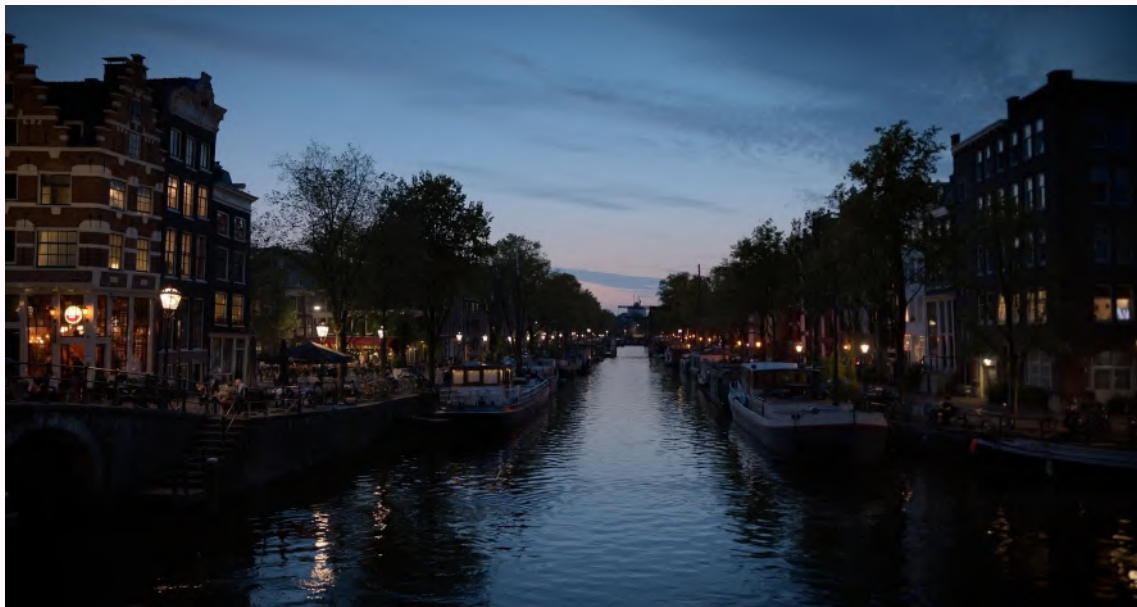
I want audiences to feel the tension between inner life and outer expectation, to recognize themselves in a story rooted in a specific culture yet universal in its longing. Years later, when Maha and Yasmeen meet again abroad, I hope that moment resonates as both a reunion and a question about what survives. With Unbraided I hope to capture that hidden world and offer it as a shared memory in cinematic form while also opening a window onto a society in motion and a generation discovering its own possibilities.



Soft, muted color palettes with warm natural light, creating a nostalgic atmosphere where gentle reflections add depth and a dreamlike sense of childhood.



Cooler, muted tones with softer contrast and restrained natural light, reflecting the uncertainty and emotional weight of adolescence.



Bright, vibrant imagery with crisp light, contemporary architecture, open horizons, and spacious environments. A fresh, modern aesthetic that emphasizes openness, movement, and possibility.

Razan Alsoghayer

WRITER / DIRECTOR

Razan Alsoghayer is a Saudi writer, director, and producer. She holds a bachelor's degree in Media and Communication from King Faisal University, studied filmmaking at La Fémis in Paris, completed a filmmaking certificate at the National Film and Television School (NFTS) in the UK, and earned a master's degree in Film Studies from the University of Amsterdam.

She was selected for the 2025 directing mentorship with Spike Lee. Her short film *A Letter to My Grandfather* premiered on NOWNESS and Director's Library in 2026 and won the Gold Award in the Personal – In the Making category at the 1.4 Awards. She is currently developing her debut feature, *Unbraided*, with Film Independent and the Red Sea International Film Festival.

Previous work:

- "A Letter to My Grandfather" (2026) <https://vimeo.com/1181258802>
- "The Last Cigarette" (2025) <https://vimeo.com/1072947564> pass: 2024



Shaista Roshan

PRODUCER

Shaista Roshan is an Indo-Canadian filmmaker raised in the UAE, drawn to the beauty of hybridity and the unique perspectives it allows.

A Canadian Screen Award-nominated producer and founder of Shifting Sands Media, her recent producing credits include 'Till The Milk Runs Dry' (TIFF 2026, Festival du Nouveau Cinéma 2026) 'Karupy' (Slamdance 2026, TIFF 2025) & 'Queen Mother' (VQFF 2025, Reelworld 2025, Whistler Film Festival 2025). With over a decade of experience producing across MENA, South Asia, and the US, she has collaborated with leading showrunners on The Greatest (Amazon), Tokyo Vice (HBO Max), Brilliant Minds (NBC), The Doctors (CBS), and worked extensively on regional MENA productions such as Sabah Al Dar Dirhami, Sha3r Al Million and Andama Yatil Massa (ADTV).

She continues to build an international slate spanning the Middle East, India, and North America, with projects developed through TIFF, Amazon MGM Studios, and the Red Sea Features lab and Film Independent, championing bold, cross-cultural stories with global resonance.



Producer's note

As I continue to define my voice as a creative producer, I am drawn to narratives that hone a hybrid sensibility of complex characters navigating the spaces between cultural expectation and personal desire. **Unbraided embodies exactly this.** Maha and Yasmeen's story, while deeply rooted in a specific culture, resonates universally in its portrayal of friendship, loyalty, and the quiet defiance of young women negotiating tradition and individuality.

My recent film Karupy had its world premiere at Toronto International Film Festival 2025, an experience that reaffirmed my commitment to championing stories that hold both cultural specificity and global resonance. Having been raised in Middle Eastern and South Asian communities, I understand societal pressures and what comes with arranged marriages. **I feel a strong responsibility to amplify female voices from the MENA region—stories that are often overlooked or simplified in mainstream cinema, yet hold rich, layered perspectives on identity, belonging, and resilience.**

The story of Unbraided speaks directly to this commitment. Growing up in spaces where tradition often overshadowed individual freedoms, I understand the fragility and significance of bonds like Maha and Yasmeen's. **Bonds that survive in the hidden corners of girlhood but are tested by societal pressures such as arranged marriage and family expectation.** These intimate and often unspoken struggles are ones I believe audiences across the globe throughout international communities will not only recognize but deeply feel.

At a time when conversations around representation continue to evolve globally, the imbalance in female presence remains bleak. This year, women filmmakers accounted for only 25% of submissions across more than 2,000 entries at the Cannes Film Festival.

As a producer, I feel a responsibility to actively support female-driven work that is ambitious, formally daring, and internationally resonant like Unbraided. particularly stories emerging from MENA and diasporic spaces, where many voices still struggle to access global platforms at the same scale as their Western counterparts.

My collaboration with Razan on this has only strengthened my conviction. **Our shared sensitives and cultures allow us to give each other and story a well-rounded and unique perspective as women filmmakers within our societies, particularly where culture, identity, and relationships intersect.** Together, we are committed to building a cinematic space that challenges cultural barriers while celebrating the human connections that endure beyond them.

THANK YOU

Shifting Sands Media

shaista@shiftingsandsmedia.com

+1 905 208 4976 / +971 50 6364 4976