

Lost in translation

A cultural compass

Alaa Dusky

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Introduction

If no one's told you lately: you are allowed to take up space.

Not the quiet, "polite" kind of space, but the real kind. The kind where your voice is heard, your dreams are valid, your struggles are understood, and your identity is not something to shrink, translate, or apologize for.

This book is for you: the girl who has walked into rooms and felt like too much and not enough at the same time. The one who has been praised for her strength but rarely given permission to be soft. The one who's trying to build a life that makes sense in a world that often doesn't see her clearly.

I wrote this book, because I wish someone had handed me this years ago.

A book that didn't tell me to "fit in" or "fix myself," but reminded me that I already had everything I needed. I wish I had read stories that looked like mine, that made space for the messy, brilliant, layered lives we live as girls navigating family, culture, career, healing, and our own voice.

This isn't a rulebook or a lecture. It's a conversation. It's a place where you're allowed to be honest about how hard it is to carry other people's expectations while trying to build your own future. A place to unpack what it means to belong to multiple worlds, and still learn to belong to yourself.

You might find yourself nodding along or even crying. You might laugh in recognition. You might feel seen. My only hope is that you leave these pages feeling less alone, and more powerful than you've ever allowed yourself to be.

You don't need to be perfect to be worthy. You don't need to have it all figured out to take the next step. And you don't need permission to be who you already are.

Welcome to the guidebook I wish I had. Welcome to cultural compass.