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Zama, Farahad. The Marriage Bureau for Rich People

Retiree Mr. Ali is at loose ends, knocking about the house aimlessly and annoying his wife. She is happy, then, when he decides to start up a marriage bureau to assist families looking to set up arranged marriages for their children. Contemporary India has modernized in many ways, but it is still considered inappropriate for people to make their own matches, or love marriages, and after a slow start, Mr. Ali?s Marriage Bureau for Rich People begins to do a lively business?so much so that he takes on an assistant, young Aruna. Aruna herself has marriage woes; her family is suffering financially and her father refuses to entertain any matches because he will not be able to pay for a large wedding and a good dowry. Meanwhile, Mr. and Mrs. Ali are fighting to keep their son, a young man now and a political activist, safe?but he defies their wishes and leads demonstrations against the government on behalf of India?s poor farmers.

Often mentioned as a readalike for Alexander McCall Smith?s *Number 1 Ladies? Detective Agency* series, the comparison is a fair one. *The Marriage Bureau for Rich People* shares the interconnected-vignette style, charmingly wise and understated tone, and emphasis on culture and community seen in McCall Smith?s series. Though the characters have their problems, nothing very terrible happens to anyone, and the reader is swept quietly along as the characters go about their daily lives in modern India.

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