



Nylon pleated-lace Juliet dress by ERIN FETHERSTON. Gold-and-diamond ring in 18k gold by BRANCH. Vintage beaded cummerbund from Family Jewels, NY.

Summer Bishil

☒ometimes, an actor's career begins with an ending. "Yup, I was a tail-end of a dinosaur," says Summer Bishil, about one of her first stage experiences. "I got really sick, and I puked everywhere on the first night. It was terrible." Bishil, 19, has since shed the dino suit for pivotal roles in two films slated to open this summer.

In writer-director Alan Ball's *Nothing Is Private*, Bishil plays Jasira, a 13-year-old Arab-American girl struggling with identity, sexuality, and community, in Texas, during the first Gulf War. The role was close to home for Bishil, who was raised in Bahrain, in the Middle East, before she moved to Pasadena, California, when she was 14. "I had a lot of emotion invested in the character," Bishil says. "It really consumed me."

For the upcoming immigration drama *Crossing Over*, which features Harrison Ford, Sean Penn, and Ashley Judd, Bishil plays a devout Muslim

facing hardships in the Los Angeles school system. To get inside the head of her character, Bishil hit the books to capture the nuances of the religion—and to revive her feeling of being an outsider.

"I read the Quran and that helped a lot to understand the foundation that [my character] lives by," Bishil says. "I initially had some tough times trying to assimilate. It really makes you think about who you are and where you're at."

Now, as her subtle beauty and acting style—both imbued with a refreshing realness—propel her into a more high-profile Hollywood scene, she doesn't stress about her looks overshadowing her hard work. "I used to worry a bit about that, but now I just get deeper and deeper into the screenplay. And I remember I'm an actress, so I don't need to worry about image." ☒—Drew Tewksbury