

**BRIDGES  
ARE FOR  
BURNING**

PROPERTY OF MASOBE BOOKS

PROPERTY OF MASOBE BOOKS

BRIDGES  
ARE FOR  
BURNING

PROPERTY OF MASOBE BOOKS

A NOVEL

BINA IDONIJE



MASOBE

Published in 2022 by Masobe  
An imprint of Masobe Books and Logistics Limited  
34 Gbajumo Close, off Adeniran Ogunsanya,  
Surulere, Lagos, Nigeria  
Tel: +234 906 730 5909, +234 701 838 3286  
Email: info@masobebooks.com

Copyright © Bina Idonije 2022

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of both the copyright owner and the above publisher.

PROPERTY OF MASOBE BOOKS

The moral right of Bina Idonije to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted in accordance with the Copyright Laws.

A catalogue record for this book is available from  
The National Library of Nigeria

ISBN: 978-978-990-722-9

This is a work of fiction and is not intended maliciously.  
Public figures in this work are used in a fictional depiction.  
All other names, characters, organisations and events appearing in this work are the product of the author's imagination.  
Any other resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

Cover design by Anderson Ofuzim Oriahi  
Layout by AI's Fingers

[www.masobebooks.com](http://www.masobebooks.com)

For Aaron, Gracie, Isabella, and AJ.

As a young girl, I presumed  
I would have my writing published by  
the time I turned twenty.  
It has taken another twenty years.

I hope every time you hold this book in your hand,  
you are reminded that whatever time of day you wake  
up is your morning.

PROPERTY OF MASOBE BOOKS

PROPERTY OF MASOBE BOOKS



# PROLOGUE

It had been exactly twenty-two months and four days since Gigi last had sex with a living, breathing, human being. Yep, she had been counting. Sometimes she counted in terms of days, weeks and months. Other times, she counted with reference to her age. For example, she was twenty-nine years old when she last had sex.

Everyone and their sister were either getting engaged, married, pregnant, or had just had a baby, but her romantic life had ground to a halt. She partly blamed the stagnation on her decision to channel all of her energy into growing her fledgling business following the breakup with her ex.

*I'm not asking for too much,* she thought.

All she craved at that point was a warm body against hers and inside her. No strings attached. She'd said as much to her closest friend, Alana.

Alana had snorted a laugh in her signature way before saying, 'Gigi, you're not cut out for meaningless sex. What you need is to meet someone you really like, but how on earth is that going to happen when you *never* go

out? You do know you actually need to be *seen* to couple with someone right?’

Alana was right. Gigi couldn’t recall the last time she properly went out. Her social life had been limited to the occasional wedding reception—which felt more like an obligation than a real outing, and the not-so-occasional lunch date with Alana. She vowed to do better, which Alana dismissed as useless, knowing Gigi. They had hatched a plan for a night out—they were going to step into town, salaciously dressed, with the intent to do copious amounts of mingling. Well, only Gigi would be doing any real mingling since Alana was practically married to her beau of nearly six years.

‘Let’s pick a date now, otherwise, knowing our schedules, this outing might never happen,’ Alana said excitedly and reached for her phone to consult her calendar app.

Before Gigi could respond, she chimed in again.

‘February 13th!’ Her hand shot up in the air like an eager student. ‘It’s the day before Valentine’s, Cupid will be working overtime to answer prayers offered up by all those in search of true love.’

‘You can be so dramatic,’ Gigi chuckled fondly. ‘I am not as certain that I am looking for true love as I am of the fact that I need to get laid by someone’s son—but, February 13th it is then.’

Their planned night out ended up being a failure from the start. Instead of mingling and flirting with hot



(hopefully) single guys, Gigi ended up seated alone at the bar of *Pills and Potions*. Alana had become one of those ‘people and their sister’ who were either getting engaged, married, pregnant or just had a baby. She was five and a half weeks pregnant, and suffering from hyperemesis gravidarum, which, as she had belatedly explained to Gigi, was the medical term for a severe case of morning sickness.

‘Why didn’t you just call it morning sickness?’ Gigi digressed, thankful that hyperemesis gravidarum didn’t turn out to be as sinister as it had initially sounded when Alana mentioned it to her over the phone.

The day before Valentine’s came around soon enough, and Gigi found herself on a solo date. *Pills and Potions* was a hip spot in Victoria Island frequented by Lagos’s coolest and trendiest. Everyone who went there seemed that much more interesting once they were within its four enchanting walls. There was a contagious energy whose source Gigi couldn’t quite put her finger on—was it the sparkling all-white setting, or the vast floor-layout which allowed the space to be a functional restaurant, bar and live-music arena, all-in-one? Or maybe it was just the heightened cosmopolitan vibe there was to this place. It had only been Gigi’s second time there. Her first visit had been with her older sister Fifi, and Alana. Fifi and Alana had remarked that they appeared to be the only ones without some foreign-sounding accent within earshot, to which Gigi sarcastically replied that either pretty much

everyone there had spent some accent-altering amount of time living abroad or the accents were location sensitive—materialising on the tongue when the crowd was right.

She smiled at the memory as she looked around. It was definitely love season tonight at *Pills and Potions*. The usual stark-white decor was juxtaposed with pops of red everywhere. The waitresses were dressed in red miniskirts into which their white, long-sleeved shirts were tucked, buttoned only half-way up to allow previews of their breast-slopes. Their outfits were topped off with red berets and they strutted about in matching red stilettos. The waiters clearly had less wardrobe pressure—the only difference to their usual white shirt paired with black trousers was the red bow ties they were spotting.

Perched by the expansive white-marble top bar, Gigi swivelled casually on the barstool, sipping her third glass of martini and munching on some peanuts that tasted like they had been bottled up in receptacles previously used to store vinegar.

When they'd started out planning their night out roughly ten days before, Alana did not even know that she had fallen pregnant.

'I'm so sorry Gigi.' Alana's genuine remorse carried through Gigi's cell phone receiver. 'I was really looking forward to hanging out. I can't even get out of bed; the nausea is overwhelming and I just feel generally useless all day. You should plan to go out still, probably best that you go alone—ensures a proper bull's eye on you.'

In the crowded solitude of the buzzing bar area, an impotent smile touched the edges of Gigi's lips. She fixed her thoughtful eyes on the two green olives submerged in her glass of martini. Her stare bore into them as though they were physical conduits with osmotic prowess, allowing her thoughts to permeate and travel through them. The light green olives reminded her of Alana's striking eyes, which were set in the most spectacular face.

Gigi always felt like her light ebbed in luminance whenever Alana was present. Attention always flourished in favour of the Dutch-Nigerian beauty—and from everyone, not just the opposite sex. With a mass of honey-gold ringlets for hair, skin like butter scotch, and a five-foot-ten-inch frame that God himself contoured to slender perfection on a Sunday, Alana was still the most beautiful woman Gigi had ever come across, nearly twenty years into their lifelong friendship. So, even though it was not what Alana had meant when she spoke of the bull's eye being on Gigi, she was right—Gigi would not stand a chance of being the centre of gravity with her around.

As though her exquisite beauty were not enough, she had to go and possess a lovable, kind and vivacious personality. She was perfect. In every way.

When they were sixteen, Alana was already on to her second or third boyfriend, while Gigi couldn't acquire one until she turned the ripe 'old' age of nineteen. All the boys she fancied, fancied Alana. Alana was The Mona Lisa in their proverbial Louvre. Gigi's first sexual encounter

was with Osagie, the boy she had fallen in love with at nineteen. Their relationship lasted the ensuing ten years, but even Osagie had been an “Alana-reject” having aimed for Alana and missed.

In those days Gigi was permanently friend-zoned because all the guys wanted Alana, and temporarily being friends with her was one sure way of getting close to Alana. Osagie came to lick his wounds with Gigi and she had offered a comforting shoulder. At twenty-nine, their relationship finally arrived at its best-before date. They both stopped loving each other at about the same time, it would seem. No common goal, no joint agenda. Osagie was the one who summoned the courage to pull the dying plug. Their split was somewhat amicable and they'd said their goodbyes one last time with a round of loveless lovemaking. That was twenty-two months and fourteen days ago.

‘Gigi?’ A voice called tentatively from beside her.

Gigi swivelled in the direction of the familiar voice.

‘Benji!’ She stood up to greet him, and he kissed her familiarly on both cheeks. The fleeting warmth of his breath was mildly doused in whiskey.

‘How are you?’ he asked, in that distinct accent of his that layered a fusion of Arabic and Hausa intonations over his English.

‘I’m good!’ she replied.

‘Are you alone?’ he added, forehead crumpled in curiosity.

Hesitant and mildly embarrassed she replied, 'I am.'

'Good, I'll join you.' He didn't wait for her to respond before pulling the unoccupied bar stool that was next to hers closer.

'I was sitting over there,' he pointed, 'and saw you from that distance, and thought, *that looks like Gigi* . . . and when I got closer, I saw that it was definitely you.' He laughed. She laughed too, but uneasily, as she wondered just how long it had been since he had spotted her. She didn't quite relish the idea of being obliviously studied.

Gigi kept her eyes on her best friend's soon-to-be baby daddy. Lebanese-born Nigerian, Benjamin Halal was disturbingly handsome. Standing just over six feet, his dark, wavy hair was slicked backwards with a generous amount of hair product, making his facial features more pronounced on his close-shaven face—especially his probing brown eyes which were hooded by slightly askew brows that had a roughish appeal to them. Although she had seen him many, many times before, it occurred to her just then that she had never really *looked* at him—at least not in a way that amounted to any meaningful observation.

He had on a crisp white linen shirt that was two-thirds buttoned-up over light blue jeans. Straying wisps of hair peeked through the opening of his shirt, sprawling lavishly over his expansive chest. His shirt sleeves were casually rolled up just above his wrists, drawing the eyes to the exquisite black and gold Hublot watch on his left

hand. He wore a spicy scent, which was being muted by the pungent whiffs of beer and rum in his breath.

Benji and his four siblings ran one of the most successful construction companies in the country, and Benji was not modest in displaying the lifestyle that running a business as successful as theirs availed him. Exotic, insanely expensive cars were his penchant, and he did not hesitate to splurge on them. He and Alana, with all that beauty and wealth meshed in one high-profile relationship, was more than people could bear. They were the literal talk of the town, and the proverbial streets of Instagram were littered with photos of them together.

As Gigi sat inches away from him, she realised that it was probably the first time she had been in his company without Alana. She suddenly wished he hadn't been so quick to pull his chair close, or better yet, that she hadn't been so forthright with him about not having company. *There goes my chance of meeting anyone interesting tonight*, she thought ruefully, mentally eyeing Benji who had now comfortably stationed himself next to her and placed an order for more drinks for them both.

'Oh no, please—don't order for me, I'll be leaving as soon as I finish this.' She held up her glass of martini.

'No way!' he protested. 'From where I sat you looked like you needed company,' he said pointedly, looking straight at her, gauging her, 'and I definitely would like some company,' he declared. 'So, let's keep each other company a while longer.'

His words had conveyed an unmistakable plea, even though they were spoken with bravado. Gigi tried to relax a little. It just seemed odd sitting at a bar all alone with her best friend's boyfriend, was all.

Well, if she were to be honest, that was not all. It just seemed odd sitting at a bar all alone with her best friend's boyfriend, whose mental image she sometimes climaxed to in those secret moments when she touched herself. Alana's accounts of intercourse with Benji sometimes got too vivid, benignly planting seeds in the recesses of Gigi's sex-deprived mind. Images which she would conjure as she wriggled and twitched over her pink electrical penis.

The first time she ever climaxed over imaginary sex-scenes starring herself and Benji, she loathed herself for days on end. The next time, she came harder, as she did each successive time. Until finally, she accepted the harmlessness of it. She wondered if her mental escapades were playing tricks on her when sometimes it appeared as if Benji were flirting with her, but she dismissed these thoughts as quickly as they presented. He couldn't possibly—and, not with Alana. No man in his right senses would have Alana and want anyone else.

'What are you doing here? Does Alana know you're here?' As soon as she spoke, she wished she could retract the faint hint of accusation that had latched itself onto her words.

He smiled but it did not journey to his eyes.

'Does. Alana. know. I. am. here?' He asked himself

rhetorically, counting his words as if to commit them to memory, as he wriggled left and right on the bar stool trying to find a good balance. 'No, Alana doesn't know I'm here,' Benji responded, after gulping down half the pint of beer he had ordered at one go. He set the glass down and wiped off the disappearing trail of foam that the lager had lad left over his upper lip.

He turned to look at Gigi who was watching him with interest and rapt attention. Their eyes locked for a fleeting second, his light brown eyes contrasted nicely with his clear, olive skin and dark hair. He smiled and looked down at his glass.

'I bet you know she's pregnant,' he said, casting Gigi a side-eye glance.

Gigi nodded.

'You probably even knew before she told me. You two . . . thick as thieves.'

'I doubt that,' Gigi muttered, looking away.

He sneered and waved it off like it didn't matter to him either way.

'So, does that mean I should go hunting for a ring now?' he asked, stretching out his left hand in front of him, imaginarily simulating what it would look like if accessorised by a wedding band.

Startled, Gigi didn't immediately respond. She studied him more intently this time, trying to gauge just how drunk he was. The longer the minutes passed between them, the more awkward she felt.