

**EVERYTHING
IS NOT
ENOUGH**

PROPERTY OF MASOBE BOOKS

Also by Lọlá Ákínmádé Åkerström

In Every Mirror She's Black

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MASOBE

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For the strong looking for safe spaces to be weak.

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Trigger warnings

Please be advised, this novel discusses issues of infidelity,
sexual assault, infant loss, and suicide.

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PART ONE

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ONE

YASMIIN

Yasmiin watches the police officer's thin lips. They're still moving, spewing words which are making no sense. The room plunges into ear-popping silence as the loud ringing in her ears drowns out the officer's words.

The last time Yasmiin sat in a police station was years ago in Rome, Italy. The body of a Togolese girl—late teens, early twenties maybe—had been pulled from the Tiber, which flows through the city. The police didn't share details of how she'd been murdered. They simply wanted to talk to her "friends." The pack of girls who had strolled the same block.

Yasmiin had turned eighteen just a few days earlier and was scared shitless. She sat wearing a faux leather miniskirt which covered nothing and required strategically placed hands for modesty. She recalls an Italian officer screaming in her face, demanding answers he knew she didn't have. Intimidating her. When he finally took what he wanted from her in a backroom of the station in exchange for the freedom she already had, her fear had already taken her choice and reason with it.

Now the officer in front of her, a blonde woman with clear eyes, is staring her down, watching for signs of evasion. The air around them suddenly shifts and Yasmiin swallows.

"So, you haven't seen Muna Saheed in over a year, is that correct?"

"That is correct."

The officer scribbles words in a notebook. Yasmiin watches her write.

"But your husband," the officer keeps writing, not looking up at her. "He had contact with Muna Saheed, is that correct?"

Yasmiin hesitates for a few seconds, then nods. The officer asks again, forcing the words out of her.

“Yes, he told me Muna used to come see him at the kebab shop,” Yasmiin explains. Pen moves over paper some more.

“And how often did your husband say Muna used to come see him?”

“I don’t know.”

“Every day? Once a week?”

“I don’t know.” More scribbling. “Maybe once a month? Two months? I don’t know.”

“But you haven’t seen Muna in over a year, is that right?”

“I told you already. Yes.”

“So why would your husband be meeting her without telling you?”

Yasmiin swallows. She knows where the officer is heading. Why had Yagiz been meeting Muna at the kebab shop? She knows it couldn’t have been an affair. Maybe he pitied her?

“He told me he didn’t want me and Muna hanging around together because she was a troubled woman.”

“So, you let him pick your friends?”

“No! He said he was protecting me from her.”

“Why would he need to protect you from her? Was she dangerous?”

“No.”

“Did she have radical leanings?” the officer asks. Yasmiin frowns at her. “Is that why your husband kept her away from you?”

“No!”

“Why do you think Muna Saheed would do this? When you were friends, did she mention these thoughts to you?”

“No. She never mentioned anything. Yes, she was sad and depressed because she had no family. But to do this to herself? *La Samah Allah!*”

“Was Muna ever violent?”

“Never,” she exclaims.

“Do you know that minutes before she jumped she attacked a young man, fracturing his skull?”

Yasmiin’s hand flies to her mouth. None of this is making sense.

“The man will survive, but his injuries are severe,” the officer continues. “His family decided to temporarily withdraw their charges against Muna when they found out what she tried to

do to herself.” The officer takes a sharp intake of air. “They are waiting for her to recover before deciding whether to proceed.”

Yasmiin sits back in her chair. Muna? Attack a man? He must have provoked her in some way. Yasmiin is sure he must have said or done something vile for little Muna to have fought him and broken his head.

“Here is what I think, Mrs. Çelik.” The officer drops her pen and links her fingers, resting them on her notebook. “I think your husband was having an affair with Muna Saheed.”

“How dare you say that?” Yasmiin sits on the edge of her seat. “Yagiz would never touch her. He called her a little girl. He pitied her and said he only gave her food whenever she came to the shop.” Yasmiin continues breathlessly. “She worked for him. His cleaning company. Maybe that was also why they had contact.”

The officer relaxes into her own chair, listening as Yasmiin rails on.

“And how many times did you say your husband saw Muna Saheed again?”

“Maybe once a month? I don’t know!”

The officer leans forward again. “Mrs. Çelik, you know I spoke to your husband before you?”

“Yes, I know. He’s waiting for me in the lobby.”

“According to him, he hasn’t seen Muna in over a year.”

Yasmiin’s heart sinks. “Now, why would he lie? What more isn’t he telling me about the nature of their relationship?”

After ten more minutes with the officer, Yasmiin shuffles to her feet. Muna had survived. A few broken ribs and limbs, but lying in a medically induced coma at Karolinska Hospital.

Alive. Korttåg. Short train.

It had been slowing to a stop when Muna jumped, a fact that had saved her life, the officer explained. Yasmiin’s heaves come in fits and starts, a mix of elation and relief at the news.

When Yasmiin rushes back to the lobby, Yagiz springs to his feet.

“*Aşkim?*” *My love.* “How did it go? He scans her face, trying to get a read on what had transpired between her and the officer. Yasmiin stands frozen, her gaze to the ground, her mind racing. “*Aşkim?*”

She peers into his dark eyes before wrapping her arms around his

neck, jerking him down for a suffocating hug. He lets her take what she needs until she eases out of their embrace.

A few more moments of silence.

“She made me her next of kin.” The words make their way out of Yasmiin. “Before this, before all of this happened,” she continues. “She made me her next of kin.”

“So, what does that mean?” Yagiz isn’t so much asking a question, but pondering how much more he needs to be involved, Yasmiin’s sure of it. He was never going to shake Muna Saheed off, he once told her. Yasmiin now wonders if Muna kept coming to his stall because he was the only certainty in her life. The only person who didn’t go away.

Yasmiin hiccups a few sobs, before responding. “It means I am her family now.” She sucks in a deep breath. “Once she wakes up, I am all she has.”

BRITTANY-RAE

Three forty-two a.m.

Brittany leans against the jamb of her daughter Maya’s fairytale-unicorn room, a slender hand cupping her mouth to muffle tears.

A light waft of alcohol reaches her as her toddler snuggles into the familiar grip of a man she no longer recognizes. The man she shares this child with, shares her life with. One she finally realizes she really doesn’t know after all.

Jonny.

His mother Astrid had sent her a photo yesterday. One she’d never seen before. A picture of a teenage Jonny with an arm wrapped around his girlfriend, his first love, taken in front of Big Ben in London over twenty years ago.

That face.

A replica of Brittany’s.

That name.

Maya.

Jonny shuffles from foot to foot, rocking gently, cooing to their daughter. “*Kära Maya,*” he whispers softly, before breaking into a grin. “*Min söta Maya.*” *My sweet Maya.* He swivels toward Brittany and flashes that smile of a thousand small teeth.

That grin.

Jonny barged into her life over two years ago. She knew deep down why she let this stranger in. She wanted to taste what it would feel like to be wrapped in a class above all others, where race no longer mattered. So, Brittany welcomed his advances. She wanted his privilege cloaked around her shoulders.

And Jonny had chased her meticulously. He memorized her body like topography and used it against her. A man so besotted she couldn't help but bask in this knowledge. It cost her freedom instead. A heftier price to pay.

He inches closer now, Maya drowsily clinging to his neck. His eyes roam Brittany's face, scanning like they always do, learning to read emotions better so he doesn't have to ask.

She knows his quirks. He stares intensely. Often blankly. For the receiver, it borders on hair-raising—her best friend Tanesha calls it his “*resting serial killer face*.” She's grown to love him, yet his intensity still bothers her; the way he fixates on things, situations, people.

Like Maya Daniels.

Brittany heaves a breath. She feels a suffocating squeeze on her chest. “Give her to me.” The words barely leave her quivering lips. “Please.”

He pivots toward her with his asphyxiating gray-blue glare. “Why?”

“Please,” Brittany cries, her hands reaching, grasping air, wishing the child was in her arms instead. “Stop saying her name like that.” Her daughter's name. A name she now loathes.

Jonny was so attentive while they were dating. He always wanted to know how to please her. To fix anything he might have done wrong or said to upset her.

Now she knows why. He and his bevy of assistants were grooming her to be a dead woman's replacement. Because Jonny can't handle loose ends, abruptly broken conversations, and sudden breaks, he will never stop trying to make up for Maya Daniels's death.

Perhaps his only love.

He convinced her to name their daughter Maya before she ever knew of his obsession.

Now that ghost name will haunt her forever.

Fear grips Brittany once more. “Please,” her mouth crumbles into an ugly pout. “Give her to me.”

“She’s mine,” Jonny’s voice turns harsh. “You can’t take her away from me.”

She inches toward him, but halts when he tightens his grip on Maya, his brows dipping inwards.

“You know I’ll never hurt her, right?” He’s asking, not stating. “Right?” She knows he doesn’t like unanswered questions. “You know I’ll never hurt her?”

She’d always thought he was a terrible liar. Another quirk. So, when he lied brazenly about knowing who Maya Daniels was when she’d confronted him, deep terror had welled up within her. What else does he keep from her?

Brittany presses her lips together, shuts her eyes tightly, and nods, switching into survival mode. She lifts her eyelids in time to catch him spin once more, Maya exhausted in his arms, Jonny reeking of drink.

“*Pappa älskar dig, gumman,*” he mutters low beneath his breath, touching his forehead to their child’s.

Daddy loves you, sweetie.

KEMI

Mirrors are cruel.

They cut with truth. No sugar coating with compliments. They run honesty like blades across your skin. Slashing with each glance you cast their way. Each gaze revealing what you’ve let yourself become.

In the dark orange of dawn, while Stockholm quietly wakes one opaque winter morning, Kemi stands in front of her mirror. Her eyes travel her bare shoulders, still strong even though they haven’t seen weights in years. They roam over full breasts, across a soft stomach that never knew flatness. They move across wide hips and sturdy thighs. They journey her length, and return to rest on eyes beginning to lose their luster.

It had taken years to train those eyes to move lovingly over the curves they own. To smile with upturned lips at the space they take up with pride.