

No Pink
In A
Rainbow

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PROPERTY OF MASOBE BOOKS

No Pink
In A
Rainbow

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a novel

ANGEL PATRICKS AMEGBE



MASOBE

First published in 2024 by Masobe
An imprint of Masobe Books and Logistics Limited
34 Gbajumo Close, off Adeniran Ogunsanya,
Surulere, Lagos, Nigeria
Tel: +234 903 097 1752, +234 701 838 3286
Email: info@masobebooks.com

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

ISBN: 978-978-60090-9-4

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Jacket design by Anderson Ofuzim Oriahi

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For the many 'Naomis' out there, who have cradled stars within them, and for anyone reaching for light in the depths of darkness, burdened by the weight of unspoken trauma, may healing find you.

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SOLSTICE

June 2018



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ONE

Nascent Dreams

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A super moon with a rosy glow was casting a spell over the earth. Beneath it, a lake stretched out in a graceful curve, an extension of a meandering river miles away. Naomi sat in the window nook of their bedroom on the first floor, looking outside. Her back against the wall, a notebook lay open on her lap. For as long as she could remember, she has been fascinated by the sky, with stars and what lay beyond them. Her fascination had turned into an interest in astronomy and astrology.

A significant life-changing event is coming your way. That was the last prediction her horoscope app had sent her based on her birth chart. Naomi had no idea what it meant. Maybe it had been referring to the super moon she was currently witnessing.

Naomi dragged her gaze back to her notebook. She had been looking over its content and brainstorming ideas for her presentation at work the following morning. She had also been practising out loud, focusing on her articulation and pronunciation. After living in Belgium for four years and taking intensive Dutch classes, she had become fluent enough to get a desk job; but she still needed extensive rehearsals whenever she had to deliver a lengthy monologue, so that her tongue wouldn't trip over words that still felt alien to her English-speaking brain.

The click of a door closing caught her attention, and she looked up to see Jan walking in from the bathroom in his underwear, his lithe Nordic build accentuated by the otherworldly glow provided by the moon. It streamed in from the open window Naomi sat in front of, emphasising the low light of the bedroom. Their eyes met and Jan smiled softly. He knew she only sat in that nook, gazing at the night sky, whenever she felt nervous.

“Do you feel prepared yet?”

She shrugged noncommittedly so as not to worry him. “It's not that big a presentation. *Het komt goed!*” Naomi replied, pursing her lips. She flashed a half-smile that revealed her laugh lines.

“If you want, we can go through it once more before we sleep,” Jan offered, making his way across the room to kneel beside her. The coconutty smell of his shampoo wafted in from his damp, sandy blonde short hair. She used to love the scent but with her current condition, it nauseated her.

“I'm good, love,” Naomi said on a soft exhale, trying to clear the coconutty scent from her nose and soothe her quietly churning stomach. “You've been a great help already. Besides,

this is the first time they're asking me for a presentation. I want what I say to be as authentic as possible."

"I trust you, *schat*." He leaned over and placed a kiss on her forehead.

Naomi smiled, instantly soothed.

Jan had told her many times before that her Dutch was good, but Naomi still felt pressured to prove herself, to hold herself apart from the claims of her classmates at the language centre that being married to a Belgian who did translations for her was an unfair advantage. Though she hated having to do any of it, especially to strangers blind to her effort and determination. She had realised very quickly that being good at the language, the ability to apply it in communication, was the key to feeling at home in a new country so unlike hers—a university degree and her general capabilities as a person were secondary. That was why she had gone the extra mile to pay for expert level language classes when the government-subsidised classes that covered the intermediate level ended.

When they got married, Naomi and Jan had committed to raising their future children in a multilingual environment. In their everyday conversations, they smoothly blended both Dutch and English, with Naomi in particular striving to respond in Dutch even when Jan spoke to her in English, pushing herself to embrace the language fully as a commitment to their shared journey in their new life in Belgium.

She gestured to Jan's Kipling backpack resting against the foot of the bed. "I did your packing while you were in the bathroom."

Jan was an engineer for a railroad rolling stock company and had to occasionally attend training sessions on weekends, which required him to spend a night or two in the Netherlands.

Although, when he could, he preferred to spend the night at home and leave early in the morning, cutting his two-day trips that much shorter.

Jan left her side and crossed over to the bed to rummage through the backpack. “Three pairs of underwear, a single pair of pants, and two shirts?” he said, amused. “Darling, I’m only going to be gone for a day.”

Naomi rolled her eyes at him, a smile playing on her lips. “Oh no,” she said. “I can’t believe I left out two more pairs of pants, an extra shirt, a raincoat, and a large duvet, just in case it gets a little too cold—since that’s the thank you I get.”

Jan chuckled, ambling over to cup her chin. He kissed her lips.

“That’s still not a thank you,” Naomi protested gently.

“Forgive my offense, my fair lady,” Jan said with an affected baritone and a bow. “But . . .” he glanced at her tummy, breaking character, “what part of ‘don’t lift a finger’ do you not understand?”

Naomi frowned at him, a brow lifting. “Will you die if you say the word?”

He went back to his affectations. “Ah! My sincerest apologies, fair maiden. I do appreciate your kind gesture.”

“Looks like someone skipped lessons on the magic words in kindergarten,” Naomi said, looking away. She pretended to ignore him.

Jan laughed. He left her by the window nook and climbed into bed, tucking himself under the duvet.

“So, did you find any mama water playing in the lake?”

He was teasing her, trying and failing to mimic her Nigerian accent. Ever since Naomi told him some folktales from her childhood—her favourite being one about water

spirits—Jan decided that he had uncovered the origin of her fascination with the lake.

Naomi sucked her teeth. “It’s not ‘mama water’, abeg. Besides, what will Mami Wata be looking for in a lake in Belgium? I was staring at the moon.”

Jan smiled fondly. “You do like to stargaze.”

“Mmm hmm.” Her expression turned wistful. “Ma would have called me a witch if she had caught me staring at the moon like I did today. Everything is tied to spirituality and the occult for that woman.”

Naomi looked down at her pregnant belly, lightly stroking the taut surface that lay underneath her nightgown. “Speaking of Ma,” she continued, “I was thinking, perhaps that we should leave the news as a surprise since I’m already far gone. What do you think, love?”

“It’s up to you, darling,” Jan said. “So long as she doesn’t think it was my idea and blame me.”

Naomi beamed. “She’ll be too busy rejoicing that her great-granddaughter is named after her, she’ll forget we kept the news to ourselves.” She paused, smiling. “Ivie.”

Something caught her eye in the window.

Naomi gasped and pointed. “Jan! Look.”

He came over just in time to see the tail end of the falling star before it disappeared into the inky sky. As light from the star petered out, Naomi realised that she no longer had any wishes to make. She had everything she had ever hoped for, maybe more.

A mere three years ago, the case was very different.

Despite not being a praying person, much to her grandmother’s chagrin, Naomi had clung desperately to her wish of becoming a mother much like the faithful would a

fervent prayer. For three and a half years, her body had failed her, refusing to do what “normal” female bodies did.

Normal.

Who knew such a benign word could be so hurtful? And that Naomi wouldn't need the help of other people to make it stick, bludgeoning herself with it over and over again when her ovaries failed to function as they should have all those years. Despite the coaxing, the hoping, and the longing?

How many hours had she spent with multiple tabs open, researching POI and PCOS, noting the chances of fertility and enveloping herself with success stories? Those agonising nights she had been unable to sleep, wondering when her time would come. Especially in the first year—the year that ushered in the others, marking their IVF journey in failure? All Naomi wanted was to be normal, or despite failing at that, be in the position of the fortunate women whose bodies at least responded to science. To be told that her eggs had been fertilised.

But Naomi's body would fail her. Not once but multiple times.

Last year, her gynaecologist, Dr Karen, had advised them to allow her body heal before trying the egg donor route as she didn't think they had any more chances with IVF. However, six months later, she and Jan were back on the IVF journey again, giving it their all.

Maybe something in the universe could tell that their journey was coming to a full circle; their hope in its last dregs, because all that effort finally paid off, those dark years blooming into a mesmerising dawn. Naomi didn't care that her dream of becoming a mother before thirty happened