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Tabitha Suzuma

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Présentation de l'éditeur

Le livre phénomène qui bouleverse tous les tabous ! Pourquoi faire quelque chose de si mal peut-il être si bon ? Tu crois que personne ne peut te comprendre, mais tu te trompes. Tu n'es pas seul.

Ils disaient qu'on refusait de se mêler aux autres, qu'on n'avait pas d'amis. Mais ils se trompaient. On était là l'un pour l'autre. Il était ce que j'avais de plus précieux au monde.

Qu'est-ce qui leur permet de dire que notre amour est monstrueux ? On n'a fait de mal à personne.

Il est mon âme-sœur, ma raison d'être. Il est aussi indispensable à ma vie que l'air que je respire. J'ai toujours su que je l'aimais plus que tout au monde, et que l'amour que je lui portais n'était pas simplement fraternel. "Maya et Lochan ne sont pas des adolescents comme les autres. Élevés par une mère alcoolique et instable, ils sont livrés à eux-mêmes et n'ont d'autre choix que d'élever seuls le reste de la fratrie. Forcés de devenir adultes plus tôt que prévu, ils se soutiennent dans l'adversité et finissent par tomber amoureux.

Lochan se sent seul au monde, et Maya est la seule à pouvoir le comprendre. Conscient de la monstruosité de cet amour, Lochan est prêt à tout pour bâillonner le désir et les sentiments que sa sœur lui inspire. Mais comment résister alors que Maya a besoin de lui autant qu'il a besoin d'elle ? Est-ce un crime de s'aimer si fort ?

« Ce roman aussi délicat que déchirant vous surprendra jusqu'à la dernière page et résonnera longtemps en vous. » Booklist

« Tabitha Suzuma n'a pas son pareil pour explorer les tréfonds de l'âme. Une lecture poignante qui vous fera réfléchir bien au-delà de la dernière page. » New York Journal of Books

Tabitha Suzuma est née à Londres en 1975 d'une mère anglaise et d'un père japonais. Elle est l'aînée de cinq enfants. Elle fréquente le lycée français de Kensington, mais abandonne ses études à l'âge de quatorze ans, en situation d'échec scolaire. Dix ans plus tard, après avoir suivi des cours par correspondance, elle devient enseignante et se met à écrire. Forbidden a rencontré un succès immédiat, obtenu de nombreuses récompenses littéraires et été traduit dans le monde entier.

CHAPTER ONE

Lochan

I gaze at the small, crisp, burned-out black husks scattered across the chipped white paint of the windowsills. It is hard to believe that they were ever alive. I wonder what it would be like to be shut up in this airless glass box, slowly baked for two long months by the relentless sun, able to see the outdoors—the wind shaking the green trees right there in front of you—hurling yourself again and again at the invisible wall that seals you off from everything that is real and alive and necessary, until eventually you succumb: scorched, exhausted, overwhelmed by the impossibility of the task. At what point does a fly give up trying to escape through a closed window—do its survival instincts keep it going until it is physically capable of no more, or does it eventually learn after one crash too many that there is no way out? At what point do you decide that enough is enough?

I turn my eyes away from the tiny carcasses and try to focus on the mass of quadratic equations on the board. A thin film of sweat coats my skin, trapping wisps of hair against my forehead, clinging to my school shirt. The sun has been pouring through the industrial-size windows all afternoon and I am foolishly sitting in full glare, half blinded by the powerful rays. The ridge of the plastic chair digs painfully into my back as I sit semi-reclined, one leg stretched out, heel propped up against the low radiator along the wall. My shirt cuffs hang loose around my wrists, stained with ink and grime. The empty page stares up at me, painfully white, as I work out equations in lethargic, barely legible handwriting. The pen slips and slides in my clammy fingers. I peel my tongue off my palate and try to swallow; I can't. I have been sitting like this for the best part of an hour, but I know that trying to find a more comfortable position is useless. I linger over the sums, tilting the nib of my pen so that it catches on the paper and makes a faint scratching sound—if I finish too soon, I will

have nothing to do but look at dead flies again. My head hurts. The air stands heavy, pregnant with the perspiration of thirty-two teenagers crammed into an overheated classroom. There is a weight on my chest that makes it difficult to breathe. It is far more than this arid room, this stale air. The weight descended on Tuesday, the moment I stepped through the school gates, back to face another school year. The week has not yet ended and already I feel as if I have been here for all eternity. Between these school walls, time flows like cement. Nothing has changed. The people are still the same: vacuous faces, contemptuous smiles. My eyes slide past theirs as I enter the classrooms and they gaze past me, through me. I am here but not here. The teachers tick me off in the register but no one sees me, for I have long perfected the art of being invisible.

There is a new English teacher—Miss Azley. Some bright young thing from Down Under: huge frizzy hair held back by a rainbow-colored head scarf, tanned skin, and massive gold hoops in her ears. She looks alarmingly out of place in a school full of tired middle-aged teachers, faces etched with lines of bitterness and disappointment. No doubt once, like this plump, chirpy Aussie, they entered the profession full of hope and vigor, determined to make a difference, to heed Gandhi and be the change they wanted to see in the world. Now, after decades of policies, intraschool red tape, and crowd control, most have given up and are awaiting early retirement, custard creams and tea in the staff room the highlight of their day. But the new teacher hasn't had the benefit of time. In fact, she doesn't look much older than some of the pupils in the room. A bunch of guys erupt into a cacophony of wolf whistles until she swings round to face them, disdainfully staring them down so that they start to look uncomfortable and glance away. Nonetheless, a stampede ensues when she commands everyone to arrange the desks in a semicircle, and with all the jostling, play fighting, desk slamming, and chair sliding, she is lucky nobody gets injured. Despite the mayhem, Miss Azley appears unperturbed—when everyone finally settles down, she gazes around the scraggly circle and beams.

“That’s better. Now I can see you all properly and you can all see me. I’ll expect you to have the classroom set up before I arrive in the future, and don’t forget that all the desks need to be returned to their places at the end of the lesson. Anyone caught leaving before having done his or her bit will take sole responsibility for the furniture arrangements for a week. Do I make myself clear?” Her voice is firm but there appears to be no malice. Her grin suggests she might even have a sense of humor. The grumbles and complaints from the usual troublemakers are surprisingly muted.

She then announces that we are going to take turns introducing ourselves. After expounding on her love of travel, her new dog, and her previous career in advertising, she turns to the girl on her right. Surreptitiously I slide my watch round to the inside of my wrist and train my eyes on the seconds flashing past. All day I have been waiting for this—final period—and now that it is here I can hardly bear it. All day I’ve been counting down the hours, the lessons, until this one. Now all that’s left is the minutes, yet they seem interminable. I am doing sums in my head, calculating the number of seconds before the last bell. With a start I realize that Rafi, the dickhead to my left, is blabbering on about astrology again—almost all the kids in the room have had their turn now. When Rafi finally shuts up about stellar constellations, there is sudden silence. I look up to find Miss Azley staring directly at me.

“Pass.” I examine my thumbnail and automatically mumble my usual response without looking up.

But to my horror, she doesn't take the hint. Has she not read my file? She is still looking at me. “Few activities in my lessons are optional, I’m afraid,” she informs me.

There are sniggers from Jed’s group. “We’ll be here all day, then.”

“Didn’t anyone tell you? He don’t speak English—”

“Or any other language.” Laughter.

“Martian, maybe!”

The teacher silences them with a look. “I’m afraid that’s not how things work in my lessons.”

Another long silence follows. I fiddle with the corner of my notepad, the eyes of the class scorching my face. The steady tick of the wall clock is drowned out by the pounding of my heart.

“Why don’t you start off by telling me your name?” Her voice has softened slightly. It takes me a moment to figure out why. Then I realize that my left hand has stopped fiddling with the notepad and is now vibrating against the empty page. I hurriedly slide my hand beneath the desk, mumble my name, and glance meaningfully at my neighbor. He launches eagerly into his monologue without giving the teacher time to protest, but I can see she has backed down. She knows now. The pain in my chest fades to a dull ache and my burning cheeks cool. The rest of the hour is taken up with a lively debate about the merits of studying Shakespeare. Miss Azley does not invite me to participate again.

When the last bell finally shrieks its way through the building, the class dissolves into chaos. I slam my textbook shut, stuff it into my bag, get up, and exit the room rapidly, diving into the home-time fray. All along the main corridor overexcited pupils are streaming out of doors to join the thick current of people; I am bumped and buffeted by shoulders, elbows, bags, feet. . . . I make it down one staircase, then the next, and am almost across the main hall before I feel a hand on my arm.

“Whitely. A word.”

Freeland, my form tutor. I feel my lungs deflate.

The silver-haired teacher with the hollow, lined face leads me into an empty classroom, indicates a seat, then perches awkwardly on the corner of a wooden desk.

“Lochan, as I’m sure you are aware, this is a particularly important year for you.”

The A-level lecture again. I give a slight nod, forcing myself to meet my tutor’s gaze.

“It’s also the start of a new academic year!” Freeland announces brightly, as if I needed reminding of that fact. “New beginnings. A fresh start . . . Lochan, we know you don’t always find things easy, but we’re hoping for great things from you this term. You’ve always excelled in written work, and that’s wonderful, but now that you’re in your final year, we expect you to show us what you’re capable of in other areas.”

Another nod. An involuntary glance toward the door. I’m not sure I like where this conversation is heading. Mr. Freeland gives a heavy sigh. “Lochan, if you want to get into UCL, you know it’s vital you start taking a more active role in class. . . .”

I nod again.

“Do you understand what I’m saying here?”

I clear my throat. "Yes."

"Class participation. Joining in group discussions. Contributing to the lessons. Actually replying when asked a question. Putting your hand up once in a while. That's all we ask. Your grades have always been impeccable. No complaints there."

Silence.

My head is hurting again. How much longer is this going to take?

"You seem distracted. Are you taking in what I'm saying?"

"Yes."

"Good. Look, you have great potential and we would hate to see that go to waste. If you need help again, you know we can arrange that. . . ."

I feel the heat rise to my cheeks. "N-no. It's okay. Really. Thanks anyway." I pick up my bag, sling t...
Revue de presse

"Ms. Suzuma's ability to dig so deeply into the various layers of human need and desire across several strata—physical, emotional, situational—renders a cringe-worthy premise another human experience to evaluate. The poignant and shocking ending will leave the reader pondering this story long after the final page is turned." --*New York Journal of Books*

"The novel's surprises continue to the very end, and the secondary characters are well developed, including the needy younger siblings, who are shown in all their anger, sweetness, and rebellion. Most of all, though, it's Lochan's and Maya's alternating first-person, present-tense narratives, both tender and heartbreaking, that will stay with readers." — *Booklist*

"There is nothing about this novel that is easy, but readers who snag the book for the controversy will stick around for the polished writing and compelling character development." --*BCCB*

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