

TOMORROW SOMEONE WILL ARREST YOU

Also by Meena Kandasamy

Fiction

The Gypsy Goddess

When I Hit You: Or, the Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife

Exquisite Cadavers

Poetry

Touch

Ms Militancy

TOMORROW SOMEONE WILL ARREST YOU

Meena Kandasamy



JUGGERNAUT BOOKS

C-I-128, First Floor, Sangam Vihar, Near Holi Chowk,
New Delhi 110080, India

First published in Great Britain in 2023 by Atlantic Books,
an imprint of Atlantic Books Ltd

First published in India by Juggernaut Books 2024

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10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

P-ISBN: 9789353457600

E-ISBN: 9789353458041

This publication was made possible by the Akademie der Künste, Berlin
in the context of a fellowship by the Young Academy.

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For sale in the Indian Subcontinent only

Printed at Thomson Press India Ltd

Dedicated to Amma, Dr Vasantha Kandasamy

For your quiet, fierce strength...
For holding me together after each of my heart-breaks...



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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

THE POET lives in language. She deploys words as weapon and caress, they are both jagged protest and an offering made to a lover. She sees the weight of history, unwraps implicit meanings hidden in speech. She has not always given herself to poetry, but here, she returns.

HER COMRADE is steadfast: political, reliable, temperamental. He is THE POET's compass of integrity, her second home. He is impassioned, resolute, idealistic, almost lost. Together, they build shelter, raise children, share a life.

HER LOVERS, men and women, are woven through her life, suspended here in memory:

- The one who taught her to love, to soften herself to love's possibilities, but could not himself commit;
- The demon, the tease, the brute, the all-consuming one who makes the rest of the world disappear;
- The stranger for whom she risks everything, builds layers of caution for one perfect, fleeting night.

All HER LOVERS prefer anonymity. Some of them morph into a single creature in the middle of a line of verse. None of them are imaginary.

HER FRIENDS are considered dangerous, threats to the state. They struggle & think & love together with THE POET: they are her allies in language, their voices joining together in an advancing chorus of rage and rallying cry. In standing up against state terror, HER FRIENDS are termed terrorists.

HER COUNTRY is that land where she is instantaneously considered a troublemaker. The oppressive regime is THE POET's intimate enemy – there is no aspect of life that escapes its rigorous incursions, its sanctioned oppressions. Under this rising fascism, THE POET dodges arrest. She also rebels with the certainty that her incarceration is imminent. She inhabits an inversion of her own making: she is guarded with her words; she is reckless in the frontlines of protest. HER COUNTRY is a dream colouring itself. HER COUNTRY is, at this instant, a nightmare.

THE POET

A POEM IN WHICH SHE REMEMBERS

We were not lovers, we were love.

– Jeanette Winterson

The woman you once knew
will not own up to her face.

She'll tie her hair in a topknot,
guard its million tangles, skip
kohl that once defined her eyes,
forsake the loud jewellery, milk
cigarettes in her mouth, and stop
herself from dancing in the rain.

She'll curse her restless anklets
that break the silence of cruel days,
bury herself under a blanket that
betrays the shame of night hungers,
and sleep herself to a dream
of waking by your side.

She'll write you the daring first lines
of long love-letters she will never
send, struggle to prevent a poem
from forming in her mouth,
and in its place, feed the promises
of your kisses to her eager tongue.

I DO NOT KNOW DEATH

I do not know
death, how it feels,
or how long it lasts,
but sometimes think
that when it comes,
it will burn like this
emptiness that follows
the night of your silence—
slow-motion charring,
the refusal to let go
of stillness, and, in
cold blood, the feeding
of its endless hunger
with the panic
in my flesh.