



The Consequences of Love: A Novel

Sulaiman S.M.Y. Addonia

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A Romeo and Juliet story set against the strict Muslim laws of Saudi Arabia, Sulaiman Addonia's astonishing debut novel is a sensuous and intensely wrought story of a young immigrant and a girl behind a veil who defy law and risk their lives to be together.

Under a relentless summer sun, women dressed like long dark shadows and men decked out in light cotton robes roam the streets of Jeddah. While most of Naser's friends have left town to escape the heat, he must stay behind to work. An African immigrant and outsider, Naser spends his spare time frequenting a friend's café, writing letters to his mother in Eritrea, and daydreaming about the glamorous girlfriend he hopes to one day have.

Naser and his younger brother were sent to Saudi Arabia to avoid the war back home, but though they live with their conservative Muslim uncle they remain under the watchful, wrathful eyes of the religious police, who monitor the community's every action, govern the near indestructible boundaries between men and women—walls in mosques, panels on buses, separate visiting quarters in houses, and, of course, the black veil, or *abaya*, that adorns the women—and punish any disobedience by public beating or death.

But a splash of color arrives in Naser's world when unexpectedly a small piece of paper is dropped at his feet. It is a love note from a girl whose face he has never seen and whose voice he has never heard. To identify her among the sea of veiled women, she instructs him to look for a pair of pink shoes peeking out from under her draped abaya. Intrigued and encouraged, Naser rebels against Wahhabist Islamic convention and begins a clandestine correspondence with the girl. Yet even as the barriers that divide them begin to crumble under the weight of their passionate prose and devotion, the lovers' illicit affair will face the ultimate and most heartrending test.

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