



## Fairytales for Lost Children

*Diriye Osman*

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*Fairytales For Lost Children* is narrated by people constantly on the verge of self-revelation. These characters - young, gay and lesbian Somalis - must navigate the complexities of family, identity and the immigrant experience as they tumble towards freedom.

Using a unique idiom rooted in hip-hop, graphic illustrations, Arabic calligraphy and folklore studded with Kiswahili and Somali slang, these stories mark the arrival of a singular new voice in contemporary fiction.

## Fairytales for Lost Children Details

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Author : Diriye Osman

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## **From Reader Review Fairytales for Lost Children for online ebook**

### **Alessandra says**

Fantastic! From the very first page to the last. This is a collection of short stories that I will read over and over and over again. Diriye plays with prose so beautifully and vividly you stumble, wondering if it's poetry or prose, fiction or real. And when you get to the end, you realize it is everything in one. Looking forward to reading We Once Belonged To The Sea, the minute it is out.

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### **Samira Moalim says**

Amazing. I totally fell in love with this book after the first story. This is really an extraordinary book, which I recommend to all queer somali folks. And to everyone in general. A complete page turner.

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### **William Frost says**

I won't lie--I haven't finished this book. It's a bit too hard and brutal for me. The raw emotion in so many of the stories hurts my heart every time. But it's a beautiful book, with amazing language and richness. If you can handle the raw emotions in it, you'll love it.

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### **Sarah says**

This short story collection was a Christmas present which I don't think I would have bought for myself, making it the best kind of present. The stories all feature young LGBT characters trying to find their way in the world, but also intersecting with issues of race, religion, being a refugee, mental health and more besides.

Not all the stories were stand-out for me. Some were hopeful, some were sad, but they were all evocative and moving.

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### **Juanita says**

i've never really been a fan of short stories till I stumbled on this book. And my god. Every story's a tenderly woven cloth. As you turn each page, it begins to wrap itself around you, and once the last line on the final page is read, you feel warm inside and wrapped up on the outside. That's what it is to me. The author writes prose in a moving, poetic form thus I struggled to put it down even for a few minutes. Interesting concept and a beautiful book.

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## **Tori (InToriLex) says**

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This was a beautiful exploration of what it's like to grapple with your identity. It illustrates how people toil just to exist as they need to; as a minority, as a lesbian/gay person, as a refugee and as someone who identifies with a religion that demonizes parts of themselves. These short stories are intimate glances into young people's lives who are discovering themselves. The writing is wonderful because it seamlessly flows from thoughtful prose into believable dialogue. Most of the stories are about Somali refugees who dream of home, while dealing with the pain of being rejected from their Somalian and Muslim community's.

**"In the end something gives way. The earth doesn't move but something shifts. That shift is change and change is the layman's lingo for that elusive state that lovers, dreamers, prophets and politicians call 'freedom'."**

There are wonderful illustrations between each chapter that whimsically interpret the themes in each story. I would recommend this book to readers who enjoy great writing and reading about gay and lesbian marginalized voices. Below are short summaries of each short story to pique your interest and give you more context:

***Watering the Imagination*** - focuses on a mother's understanding of her daughter's happiness is more important than her understanding of it.

***Tell the Sun Not to Shine*** - follows the lives of two adolescents who experimented together, but later occupy very different roles in their community.

***FairyTales of Lost Children*** - explores how quickly, naively and tragically friendship can begin and end.

***Shoga*** - follows a young man who is demoralized by his loved ones and struggles to accept it.

***If I Were A Dance*** - a couple comes back together to interpret their relationship into dance for a show, the dance leads them to both to grapple with the truth of that relationship.

***Pavilion*** - is about a transsexual woman who flamboyantly flaunts her otherness, and vulgarly rejects those who don't.

***Ndambi*** - is about loving someone beyond their dislike for who you are, and learning to cope with the loss.

***Earthling*** - is about a woman who is dealing with her declining mental health, and trying to be in love with someone who has a struggling to keep her grip on reality.

***Your Silence Will Not Protect You*** - details the often long, painful and sometimes dangerous process that coming out to an intolerant family can be.

***The Other (Wo)man*** - is about struggling to learn gender boundaries, relationship honesty and being comfortable on the journey to a choice.

**My Roots Are Your Roots** - is about two men finding home with each other and not living in the beauty of love and intimacy with each other.

**"But I've learnt that when it comes to being an African artist working in a white field, tutors or patrons want my experiences to reflect their fantasies: the cliched notion of the noble savage. Sometimes you have to give in, because they hold your destiny in their hands."**

I received this book from the author in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Roxane says**

Powerful, raw, uneven collection. Oh this needs proofreading, BUT there is so much passion and brilliance in the first half that this collection overcomes its weaknesses. Toward the end of the collection the stories start to feel less essential but Osman brings to light stories of queer Somalis and also tackles what it means to be displaced among a displaced people. Definitely worth reading.

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### **Darkowaa says**

!!! Review here: <https://africanbookaddict.com/2016/04...>

\*sigh\*

Raw, erotic, sassy, exciting, vivid, devastating, liberating. This has got to be the ultimate LGBTQ- themed African lit novel out there. I enjoyed and remember every single one of these stories (11 stories in all). Until I read another LGBTQ themed African fiction novel, this is my number 1. I can't recommend this enough. I truly admire Diriye Osman.

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### **Brian Murray says**

I might do a longer, more in depth review of this if I have the time but for now...

This is one of the best books I have read all year. I am a sucker for good, honest, and original LGBTQ literature, and this collection covers all the ground. You have a diverse array of narrators, an unflinching depiction of their circumstances (both wondrous and abysmal), and most importantly, heartbreak upon heartbreak. I laughed, cried, and rejoiced.

This is a rejuvenating book. It's the whole package. I highly recommend for any LGBTQ reader and especially for anyone who wants to understand the realities and complexities of this community.

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### **Naz (Read Diverse Books) says**

For the in-depth review, visit my blog: [Read Diverse Books](#)

This short story collection is only 150 pages, but the stories are powerful, memorable, and warrant a reread once you're done. Each one is about gay, lesbian, or transgender Somalis living in Somalia, Kenya, or England. Somalia has had a troubled history of political turmoil, violence, and famine, so many of people we follow are refugees trying to build a life outside of their homeland. Many of the stories are tragic, but some are hopeful, and all of them are honest and relevant.

If you regularly read LGBT fiction, I urge to read *Fairytales for Lost Children* with an open mind and a willingness to explore nontraditional and non-western narratives. Also, please note that this collection includes stories that are sexually explicit. I personally thought the explicit content was relevant and realistic, given the subject matter of some of the stories, but others may not agree. The fact that these stories, written by a gay Somali, exist is a bold and powerful statement, so it is important to read them without judgment and allow the voices of the men and women who are traditionally silenced to ring loudly and fearlessly.

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### **Bellish says**

A really beautiful collection of short pieces spanning Somalia, Kenya and South London, and a whole lot of people who, at the end of the day, know who they are, even if it's not easy to be that person. The shortest stories are less than 2 pages long but have a lovely poetic quality that begs to be read aloud and shared. There are a few bum notes, but I forgive those for the ones that made me cry.

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### **Sanchita says**

Short story collections are always a mixed bag. The only thing that you can hope for while going into one is for them to stand out and be memorable. I did not like all of stories here but if you tell me their titles, everything else rushes back. This is where "*Fairytales for Lost Children*" finds success.

The stories are mainly about being queer and the implications of being so as a Muslim and a refugee. It also talks about dealing with poor mental health in hostile spaces. Needless to say, it discusses a lot of complex topics and sometimes without much success. However, I discovered something new with every one of them. Even if I cannot remember the specifics, I remember what it made me feel. I always value authors who can do that and for this, the books will remain special to me.

There are also beautiful illustrations at the beginning of each story. Imagine Rupi Kaur's sketches but with a bit more finesse. I had never heard of Osman when I picked this up and later found out that he is an artist too, which made sense considering the characters of the collection. As a whole, I would definitely recommend this to everyone. It is not perfect and you would probably not love all of it. It just provides you a new lens to view the world with.

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### **Rowena says**

**I often dream of home. It is a place that exists only in my imagination: it is my Eden, my Janna. Sometimes I associate it with my father, my mother, my grandmother, my sister, all of whom have rejected me, all of whom I still love...Other times I regard Somalia, my birthplace, as home, as the land where my soul will eventually be laid to rest. Many times home is Kenya or London. But none of**

**these places truly embody home for me. Home is in my hair, my lips, my arms, my thighs, my feet and hands. I am my own home.- Diriye Osman, *Fairytales for Lost Children***

2017 hasn't been a great year for me writing review-wise. However, on that note, I'm happy to resume more frequent reviewing with a book that encompasses so many of my interests, and also reminds me why we need diverse books, and why the representations of POC in the diaspora are going to have to be more complex.

In the short stories in *Fairytales for Lost Children*, Osman' discusses the African (Somali) diaspora, sexuality, and tradition, among other themes ( at this point, if you haven't already figured it out, it's probably good to mention that these fairytales are not for children! There is plenty of sexual content in them). Other important themes include love, breakup, tragedy, and family.

One of my favourite stories was the titular *Fairytales for Lost Children* which featured the kind of teacher I wish I'd had in primary school: *Miss Mumbi*:

***Even Story Time was political. Miss Mumbi infused each story with Kenyan flavour. She illustrated these remixes on the blackboard. 'Rapunzel' became 'Rehema,' a fly gabar imprisoned in Fort Jesus. Rehema had an Afro that grew and grew...Her Afro became so strong that it burst through the fort.***

*I really like reading about different diasporas, and this book gave me a lot of info about the Somali diaspora, particularly in Africa and the UK. A couple of the stories speak to living in limbo:*

***Every day I asked Hooyo, "When're we heading home?"***

***"Soon," she'd sigh, 'Soon."***

*The precariousness of life for groups in the diaspora was definitely very poignant, and it makes sense that the word "fairytales" is in the title, because fairytales can be an escape from the tough realities of life. One reality is not being wanted by the society one lives in:*

***My waalid may have reinvented themselves but to the booliis we were still refugee bastards who sucked on Nanny State's iron teats until there was nothing left for her legitimate children.***

*Sexuality is definitely a huge theme, and all the protagonists in the story are gay. This allows Osman to explore their relationships with their more traditional and conservative environments. There was one excerpt that talked about how in Somalia being gay is likened to being possessed, mentally unstable, and there are stories where gay Somalis are disowned by their family. But the reality is there are gay Somalis, and those like Osman are working hard to share their stories and experiences:*

***The Prophet once said that dreams are a window into the unseen. I have been told many times by family, friends, colleagues and strangers that I, a black African Muslim lesbian, am not included in this vision; that my dreams are a reflection of my upbringing in a decadent, amoral Western society that has corrupted who I really am. But who am I, really? Am I allowed to speak for myself or must my desires form the battleground for causes I do not care about?***

*What I've found about being part of the African diaspora, and what Osman also managed to illustrate (focusing on queer characters) is how the diaspora is a tricky space to inhabit and navigate. There's always the question of deciding how to create one's identity when straddling two or more cultures. Definitely a*

*great collection of short stories to give me a glimpse into how others in the diaspora live.*

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### **Abby says**

beautiful

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### **Vijayalakshmi says**

There are so many things to love about this anthology by Diriye Osman. The first, of course, are the illustrations that are so beautiful and graceful that they leap off the page. The second are the stories themselves. Each story has something for the reader to take away and it is honestly difficult for me to decide which ones are my favourites. What I really love about all the characters in all the stories is that they refuse to play the victim. They are confident, bold and unapologetic. This is what gives the darker themes their silver lining. The writing, coupled with the comments on Somali culture, really help one to immerse oneself while reading. Reading this book was a fantastic, eye-opening experience, and I would sincerely urge anyone reading this review to go read the book. Full review at [bit.ly/Ftales](http://bit.ly/Ftales).

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