



THE  
ASWANG

MARISSA PEDROZA

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The Aswang

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# **The Aswang**

**by**

**Marissa Pedroza**

Reyna's eyes opened. Her heart pounded in her chest as if she'd just run a marathon.

It took a moment to recall that she was at her mother's house, sleeping in her childhood bed.

Tick. Tick. Tick.

The sound came from the darkest corner of her room.

Tick. Tick. Tick.

It was unnatural, like nothing she'd ever heard before.

The lump of clothes on the side chair moved.

Reyna sat up, staring at the black shadow in the chair. After a while, she took a deep breath. "My mind's playing tricks-"

Her pants slid off the chair.

She turned on the bedside lamp as if it were a weapon. With her heart jumping into her throat, she turned to face the thing in the chair.

It was empty.

Tick. Tick. Tick.

Reyna jumped out of the bed, ran out of the room, and straight into Millie, her mother's maid, the woman who had raised her. Millie pushed Reyna behind her, firmly shutting Reyna's bedroom door.

"Do you want to sleep in my room? It's protected."

Reyna didn't challenge Millie's strange question. Millie was an old-school Filipina. She came from the Negritos, a long line of Filipino aboriginals. They believed that everything was

alive and had a spiritual essence, from rocks to water, air, and even dark creatures that modern man cannot make himself believe in.

"Come!" Millie demanded. "Sleep in my room. I will pray over you, and you will rest."

"You look horrible," Reyna's mother said, stepping out of the dark hallway.

"Sorry to wake you up," Reyna apologized. "Millie is helping me because I can't sleep."

"Millie should mind her own business," her mother said, her lips pursing together as her eyes seemed alight with fire.

"I'm sorry, Miss," Millie mumbled, head bowed.

"Leave, Millie."

Millie didn't move.

"Mom, it's okay. Let's not make a big deal out of this. Millie is a part of our family."

"She's always spoiled you," Reyna's mother said, sounding as if she were hissing. "It's why you're so disrespectful."

"You asked me to come here for some emergency, and then when I get here, there's no emergency. The only one who's being disrespectful, Mom, is you."

Reyna's mother spat out a litany of complaints against her daughter in Tagalog, before finishing off in English, "I am cursed to have you as a daughter."

"You could've said that part in Tagalog too, so that I couldn't understand you."

"Go back to your room," her mother commanded.

It brought Reyna back to her childhood, when her mother cut her with words, broke her heart with rejection, or made her feel as if she was never good enough. It was a teenage Millie who had taken her in her arms and comforted her. Millie had always been the soft place in Reyna's memories.

"No," Millie said, "Go home now."

"That's enough!" Reyna's mother screamed. "Know your place, girl."

"Mom," Reyna said. "Don't call Millie that; she's a grown woman."

Reyna opened the door to her bedroom, and this immediately calmed her mother.

Millie began speaking rapidly in Tagalog, her face turning red.

Reyna's mother shrugged her shoulders, letting the maid know she didn't care.

"*Kulam!*" Millie screeched at her mother.

Reyna didn't speak her mother's language, and she had no idea what Millie had said.

Her mother pointed a boney finger at Millie and said, "I curse you. If you love her so much, go with her. Stay in the room with the Aswang. It will feed tonight."

"Mom?" Reyna called as her mother walked away. Reyna bit her lower lip, pushing away the familiar taste of rejection as her mother ignored her.

"I'm sorry you got thrown in the middle of that," Reyna said to Millie. "What did she say to you? I've never seen her that angry."

"Go!" Millie said. "Don't come back."

"I intend to," Reyna promised.

Tick. Tick. Tick.

Reyna turned to look at the shadow that had moved in her room, but Millie slammed her door shut.

"Let's go," she said, running down the stairs.

At the bottom of the stairs, Millie tried to flick on the lights, but they didn't work.

A large shadow stood in front of the door.

Tick. Tick. Tick.

The viscous shadow came closer, and then something shot out of the darkness, grabbing Millie by the throat. Blood splattered on Reyna's face. Wings unfurled from behind the creature; its wingspan blocking out everything around them.

Millie gasped and made loud, wet, gurgling sounds.

Reyna screamed as she realized that it wasn't a hand around Millie's throat but a long, tubular tongue. Stuck on Millie's right jugular vein, the creature drank as if Millie were a juice box. The ticking sounds she'd heard earlier were the chattering of the creature's sharp, pointy teeth.

Millie's flinging hands shoved Reyna away, jolting her into action. Reyna jumped over the stairs, screaming, and crying simultaneously.

She ran out to her car and immediately locked the doors. She grabbed the keys from the center console and started the car. Driving away, she saw her mother watching from her bedroom. How many times had her mother scared her with the story of the Aswang? How many times had she promised to feed her to the Aswang for being such a bad child?

Reyna wiped away her tears as she thought of Millie.

"I promise I'll kill it," Reyna said to the darkness. "I'll find a way to destroy that thing." Reyna wasn't sure if she was promising to destroy the Aswang or her mother.