Ethiopia, 2012

The following is based on a true story.
FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HER LIFE, ALMAZ FLEW TO RIYADH.

WE'RE FROM THE AGENCY. WE'LL TAKE YOU TO THE OFFICE.

TWO MEN MET HER AT THE AIRPORT.

THE NEW GIRLS ARE HERE?

YES SIR. COME WITH ME.

ALMAZ? WHICH ONE IS ALMAZ?

IS THERE SOMEBODY I CAN WASHER HERE?

NOT HERE. YOU'LL BE SENT TO YOUR HOUSE SOON AND HAVE EVERYTHING YOU NEED THERE.

GIVE ME YOUR PASSPORT. WE NEED TO KEEP IT SAFE HERE.

ALMAZ: A STORY OF MIGRANT LABOUR

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You were supposed to be here thirty-five minutes ago... What's your name?

Your home is so beautiful... Mmm. This way.

You'll clean the floors in the mornings - they get so dusty, just look. Filthy.

Well, can you or can't you?

Yes but you'll manage. I can see you're young and fit - don't make any complaints.

You'll make the beds and wash the sheets...

Yes mama.

You can cook. I hope they said you can. I think so mama.

Well can you or can't you?

I'm here mum.

I'm safe.

It'll be ok.

This is where you'll sleep - keep your belongings tidy...

You have a washroom next door so do not use the family washrooms.

You can go to sleep now but I'd like those floors cleaned before you start breakfast tomorrow. We've been without a maid for a whole week now!
ALMAZ WOULD WAKE AT FIVE EACH MORNING AND PRAY BEFORE STARTING WORK

ALMAZ! WHAT DO YOU CALL THIS MUCK? IT ISN'T EATABLE! A WASTE...
I'M SORRY MAMA.

STUPID GIRL! WHY DID YOU MAKE SO MUCH? THIS IS ALL WASTED AGAIN! HOW MUCH YOU WASTE?
I'M SORRY MAMA! I DID NOT KNOW SIR WAS AWAY...

YAWN

SOMETIMES SHE WOULD NOT CRAWL INTO BED UNTIL TWO...
I'm sorry—I didn't know you were here—I'll come back.

CARRY ON. DO IT NOW.

PLEASE... PLEASE... NOT AGAIN...

SHUT UP.

OW OW OW OW OW OW.

SHUT UP.

Almaz! You burnt the pizza again—how can you be so stupid? What is the point of you—?
FOR SEVERAL WEEKS

LIFE SETTLED

MOTHER

ALMAZ

INTO A HORRIBLE RHYTHM
I love what they have done - look! You can see through to the pool...

“Hi... Devi?”

“I’m Almaz.”

“I have it! The very same one! I found it at Chanel in London...”

“Ah, what a shame—perhaps you can exchange it.”

“So how was London?”

“Boycotting had to under the whole time.”

“Goodnight Saha, Faisal, everyone...”

“...I’m sorry we must leave so early in the morning...”

“Mama. I’m sorry...”

“Before you go. Almaz. I’m tired...”

“Before you leave tomorrow. Is it possible to pay my wages, Mama?”

“Before you leave tomorrow. This will have to wait...”

“Oh, not now, Almaz - we leave for New York tomorrow. This will have to wait...”

“Enough!”

“But Mama, it is for my mother. She needs the money. She’s waiting for it. I must send something. Please, Mama...”
YOU'LL LET US KNOW YOUR DATES...
OF COURSE, DEPENDING ON THE WEATHER
WE MAY STOP IN LONDON ON OUR WAY BACK

REMIND ME WHAT YOUR GIRL IS CALLED?
IT'S ALMAZ...

AND I'M AFRAID YOU MUST CHECK ON HER - SHE CUTS CORNERS AND MAKES EXCUSES...
I'M SURE - WE HAD AN ETHIOPIAN GIRL WORKING FOR US BEFORE, YOU REMEMBER?
THEY ARE JUST SO STUBBORN AND ARGUMENTATIVE...

CAN'T PLEASE HAVE MY SALARY? IT IS FOR MY MOTHER...

...SHE NEEDS IT...

AIEE! NO MADAM

AIEE! IT'S FOR MY MOTHER - MY MOTHER -

IN THE CORNERS - THE CORNERS!
MADAM, IT'S RUDE TO SPEAK WHEN YOU ARE NOT SPOKEN TO.

BUT MADAM, DEM WAS PAID YESTERDAY AND I HAVE NOT RECEIVED MY SALARY.

WELL THAT'S NOT OUR RESPONSIBILITY.

BUT... I DON'T KNOW WHEN MAMA MAVSAN IS RETURNING AND...

...MY MOTHER IN ETHIOPIA IS WAITING FOR ME. I HAVE TO SEND HER MONEY!

I SAID SHUT UP!

BUT, MADAM PLEASE!

I MUST HAVE MY SALARY...

STUPID GIRL!

I CANNOT CONTINUE WITHOUT PAY!

AIEE!

IT HURTS

BE QUIET

AIEE!

SHUT UP!
I don't know what happened - Shara says the stupid girl overbalanced and fell out of the window - she's so vacant it wouldn't surprise me...

Last Wednesday, and she hasn't risen since then.

Well, when does May return? I mean, the girl is her responsibility - what are we supposed to do with her?

We have to do something... Well it shouldn't be our problem...

My back. My back. Oh please.

MADAM PLEASE

Come back quickly. I need you to drive to the mall this afternoon...

AII-E PLEASE SINNER!

Hold this, girl. It's your passport.

You are crying back there? Don't cry, girl. It will all be over soon.

You'll be home. It will be better there - you'll be with your family. You must miss them.

I miss mine.

Please... A doctor. Oh please...

We'll have to send her home.
This story was based on a testimony received in April 2014.

We interviewed the real Almaz as she recovered from her ordeal at a women’s refuge in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Names and identifying details have been changed.