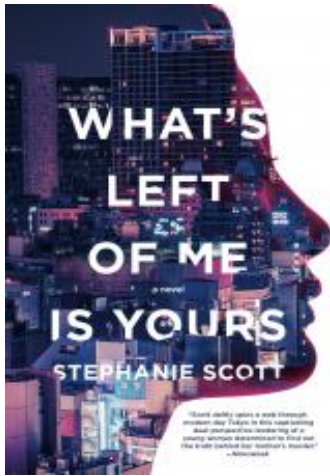


# What's Left of Me Is Yours

by Stephanie Scott

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## About the Book

**A gripping debut set in modern-day Tokyo and inspired by a true crime, for readers of EVERYTHING I NEVER TOLD YOU and THE PERFECT NANNY, WHAT'S LEFT OF ME IS YOURS charts a young woman's search for the truth about her mother's life --- and her murder.**

In Japan, a covert industry has grown up around the "wakaresaseya" (literally "breaker-upper"), a person hired by one spouse to seduce the other in order to gain the advantage in divorce proceedings. When Sat? hires Kaitar?, a wakaresaseya agent, to have an affair with his wife, Rina, he assumes it will be an easy case. But Sat? has never truly understood Rina or her desires, and Kaitar?'s job is to do exactly that --- until he does it too well. While Rina remains ignorant of the circumstances that brought them together, she and Kaitar? fall in a desperate, singular love, setting in motion a series of violent acts that will forever haunt her daughter's life.

Told from alternating points of view and across the breathtaking landscapes of Japan, Stephanie Scott exquisitely renders the affair and its intricate repercussions. As Rina's daughter, Sumiko, fills in the gaps of her mother's story and her own memory, Scott probes the thorny psychological and moral grounds of the actions we take in the name of love, asking where we draw the line between passion and possession.

## Discussion Guide

1. Before reading the novel, had you heard of the wakaresaseya or ?marriage breakup? industry? What do you think are the risks of this industry being allowed to operate? How does this relate to honey-trapping in your own culture?
2. From the beginning, photography plays a large role in the novel. How does photography influence Sumiko?s telling of her mother?s story?

3. Sumiko notes early in the novel that the best lies are close to the truth. How does Kai prove this theory as he tells Rina about himself?
4. Sumiko observes that she struggles to imagine her mother as a young person, an individual separate from her motherhood, "she is my mother and I cannot picture her any other way." Have you ever heard a story about a family member and struggled to reconcile this with your own image and experience of them?
5. This novel revolves around a murder, but we learn the identity of the alleged murderer relatively early in the story. How does that affect your reading of the events leading up to the crime?
6. Almost every character in the novel struggles to balance multiple roles: parent, lover, child, professional, etc. Who do you think struggles the most?
7. How do physical objects trigger memories and emotions for Sumiko and Yoshi after Rina's death? Do you have any "talismans" that remind you of people you've lost?
8. How is the Japanese justice system similar or different to your own? What do you think of Yurie Kagashima's defense of Kai? Is it a fair defense?
9. What do you think Sumiko means when she says that every member of her family, including her, is guilty of her mother's death?
10. How do you think knowing the full truth about her mother's death will affect Sumiko's life after the action of the novel concludes? What do you think will be the significance of her "choice" at the very end? And is it the right one?
11. Is the Law a character in its own right?
12. Are the locations in the novel characters in their own right? How do they affect and shape the narrative?
13. What do you think of the novel's title? How does it apply to all the characters?
14. What economic and societal constraints are faced by the men and women in the novel? Have any of these issues been featured in your own life?
15. How does the novel depict the tension between personal desire and the pressure to conform to social norms?
16. The novel is a mediation of all the different forms of love. What does love mean to you? Who from the book best exemplifies this definition of love?

### **PRONUNCIATION GUIDE**

WAKARESASEYA - wa-ka-ray-sah-sey-ya

SUMIKO - soo-me-koh SARASHIMA - sa-ra-shi-ma

YOSHITAKE - yo-shi-taa-kay SARASHIMA - sa-ra-shi-ma

RINA - ree-na SAT? - sa-toe (long "oh" sound)

OSAMU - oh-sa-moo SAT? - sa-toe (long 'oh' sound)

KAITAR? - kye-ta-roe (long 'oh' sound) NAKAMURA - na-ka-moo-rah

YURIE - you-ree-eh KAGASHIMA - ka-ga-shi-mah

HIDEO - he-day-oh KUROSAWA - koo-roh-sa-wah

**Note:** Japanese words are usually pronounced with equal emphasis on each syllable, for example: *su-shi* = sushi. Here, the exceptions are the given name 'Kaitar?' and the surname 'Sat?', as the final syllable in each name is written with a macron '??', which denotes a long vowel. This is by no means a comprehensive guide, but I hope it serves as a useful starting point.

## Author Bio

Stephanie Scott is a Singaporean and British writer who was born and raised in South East Asia. She read English Literature at York and Cambridge and holds an M.St in Creative Writing from Oxford. Scott was awarded a BAJIS Toshiba Studentship for her anthropological work on her novel WHAT'S LEFT OF ME IS YOURS and has been made a member of the British Japanese Law Association as a result of her research. WHAT'S LEFT OF ME IS YOURS was named a Brooklyn Book Festival Debut of the Year and a *Guardian/Observer* Best Debut of 2020. She is based in Singapore and London.

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