

BLACK MENTAL WELLNESS PRESENTS

WHAT SHOULD I READ NEXT?

Compilation Created By: Machaela Campbell
(Black Mental Wellness Mentee)



5

**Days of Books all by
Black Authors**

Mystery/Thriller

Memoir

Romance

Sci-Fi/Fantasy

Poetry



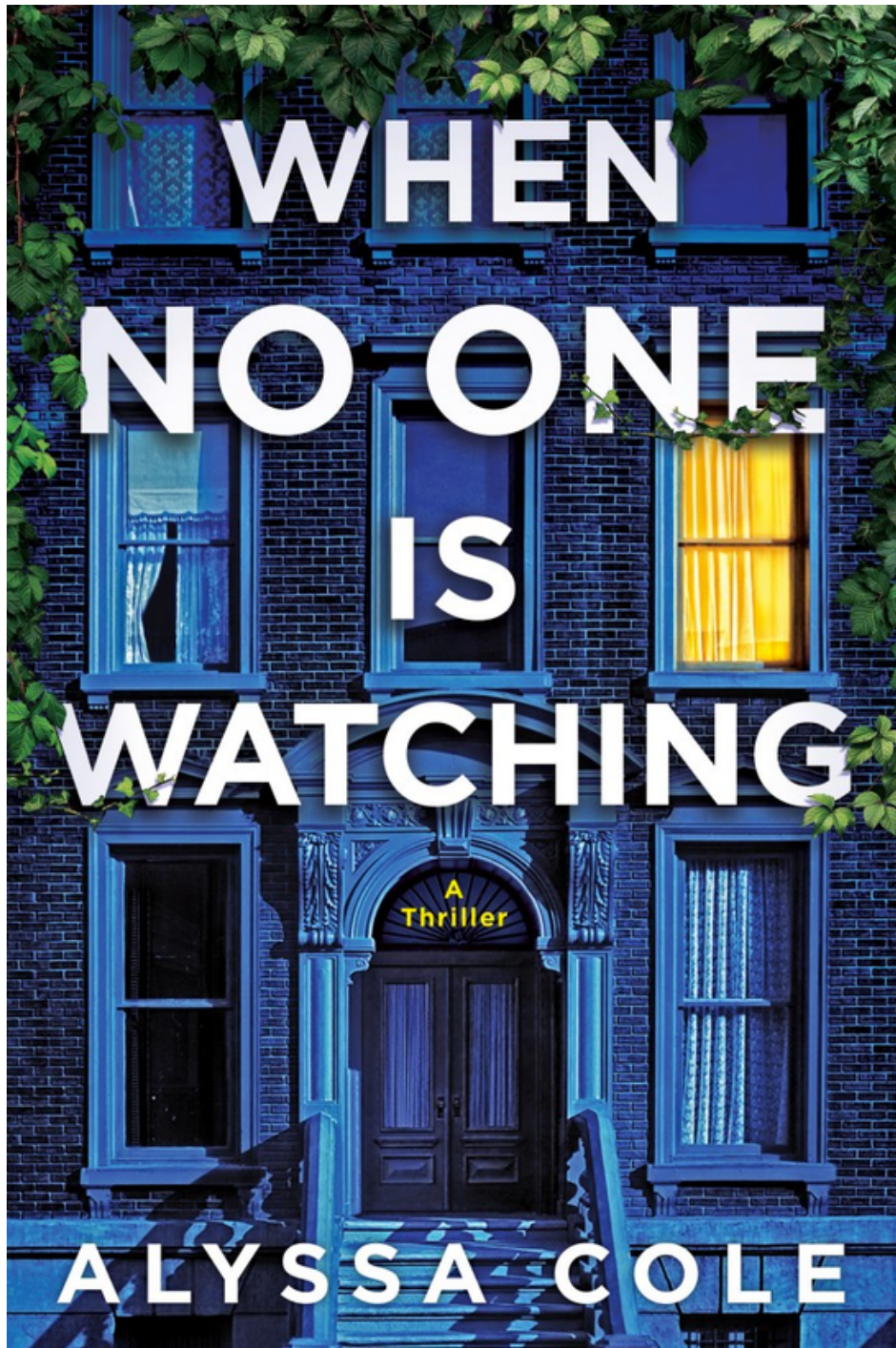
BMW'S "WHAT SHOULD I READ NEXT?"

MYSTERY/THRILLER



WHEN NO ONE IS WATCHING

ALYSSA COLE



Sydney Green is Brooklyn born and raised, but her beloved neighborhood seems to change every time she blinks. Condos are sprouting like weeds, FOR SALE signs are popping up overnight, and the neighbors she has known all her life are disappearing. To hold onto her community's past and present, Sydney channels her frustration into a walking tour and finds an unlikely and unwanted assistant in one of the new arrivals to the block—her neighbor Theo.

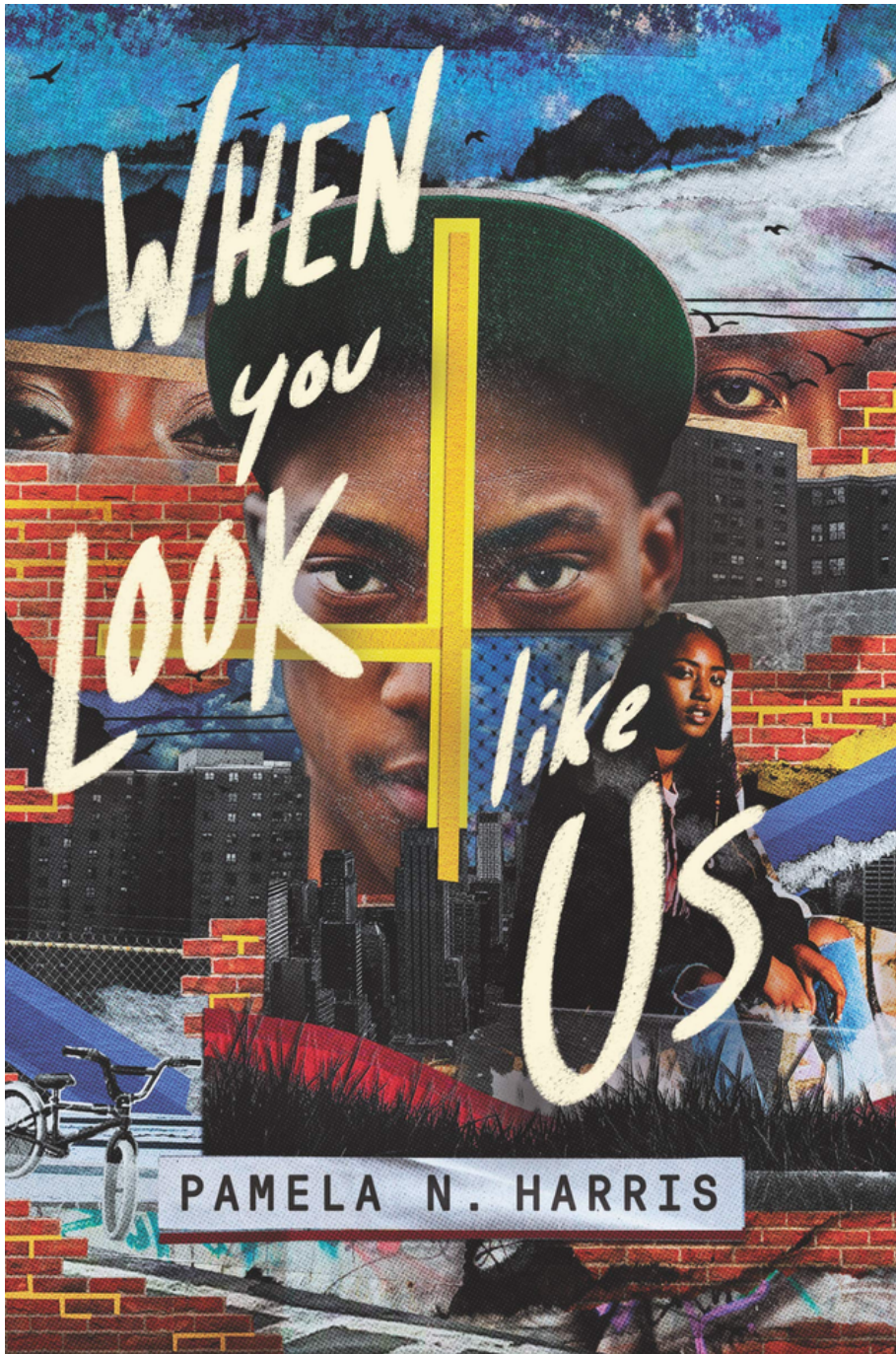
But Sydney and Theo's deep dive into history quickly becomes a dizzying descent into paranoia and fear. Their neighbors may not have moved to the suburbs after all, and the push to revitalize the community may be more deadly than advertised.

When does coincidence become conspiracy? Where do people go when gentrification pushes them out?

Can Sydney and Theo trust each other—or themselves—long enough to find out before they too disappear?

WHEN YOU LOOK LIKE US

PAMELA N. HARRIS



When you look like us—brown skin, brown eyes, black braids or fades—people think you’re trouble. No one looks twice at a missing black girl from the projects because she must’ve brought whatever happened to her upon herself. I, Jay Murphy, can admit that, for a minute, I thought my sister, Nicole, got too caught up with her boyfriend—a drug dealer—and his friends.

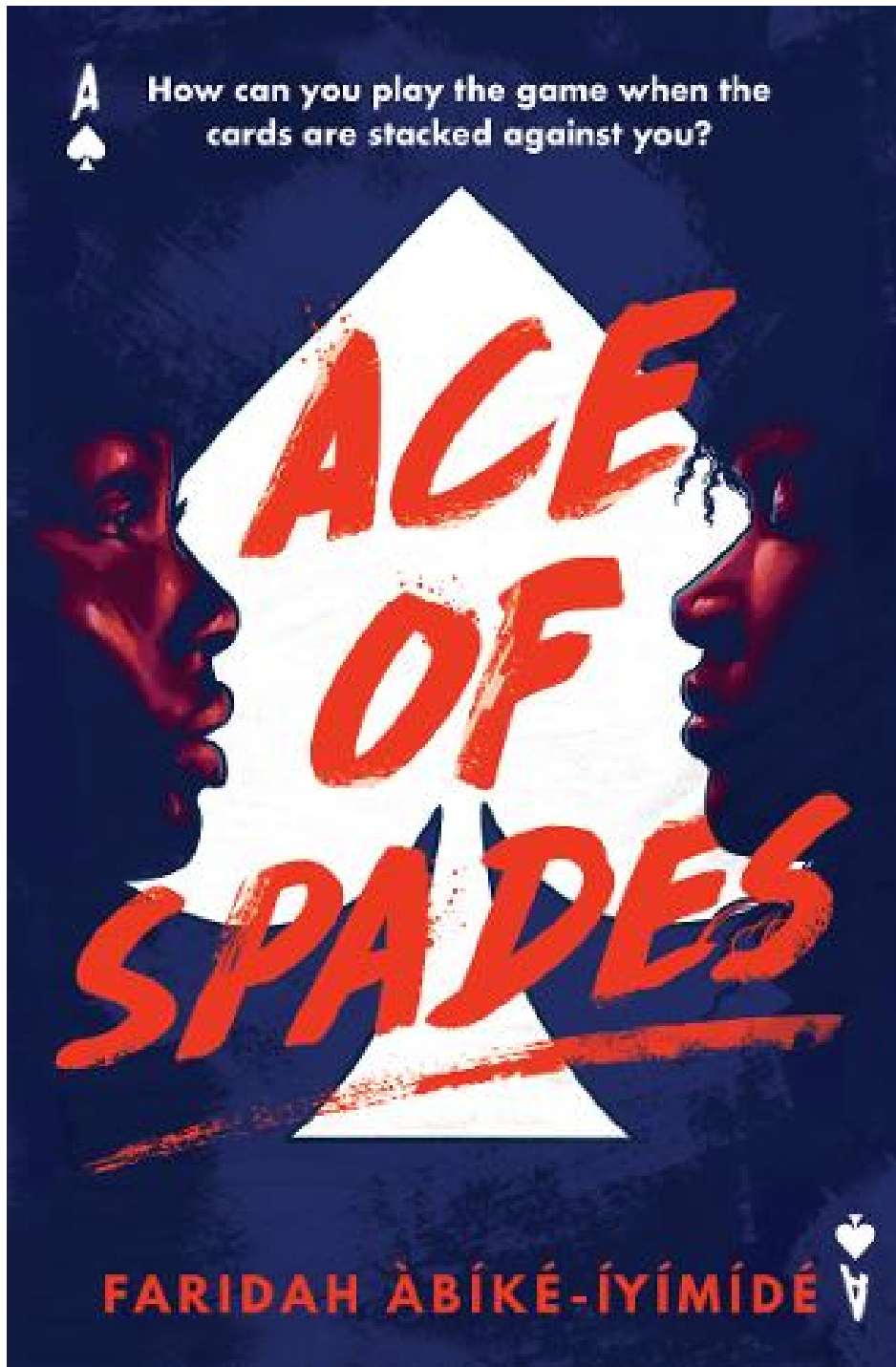
But she’s been gone too long now.

If I hadn’t hung up on her that night, she’d be spending time with our grandma. If I was a better brother, she’d be finishing senior year instead of being another name on a missing persons list. It’s time to step up and do what the Newport News police department won’t.

Nic, I’m bringing you home.

ACE OF SPADES

FARIDAH ÀBÍKÉ-ÍYÍMÍDÉ



Welcome to Niveus Private Academy, where money paves the hallways, and the students are never less than perfect. Until now. Because anonymous texter, Aces, is bringing two students' dark secrets to light.

Talented musician Devon buries himself in rehearsals, but he can't escape the spotlight when his private photos go public. Head girl Chiamaka isn't afraid to get what she wants, but soon everyone will know the price she has paid for power.

Someone is out to get them both. Someone who holds all the aces. And they're planning much more than a high-school game...

AND NOW SHE'S GONE

RACHEL HOWZELL HALL



Isabel Lincoln is gone.

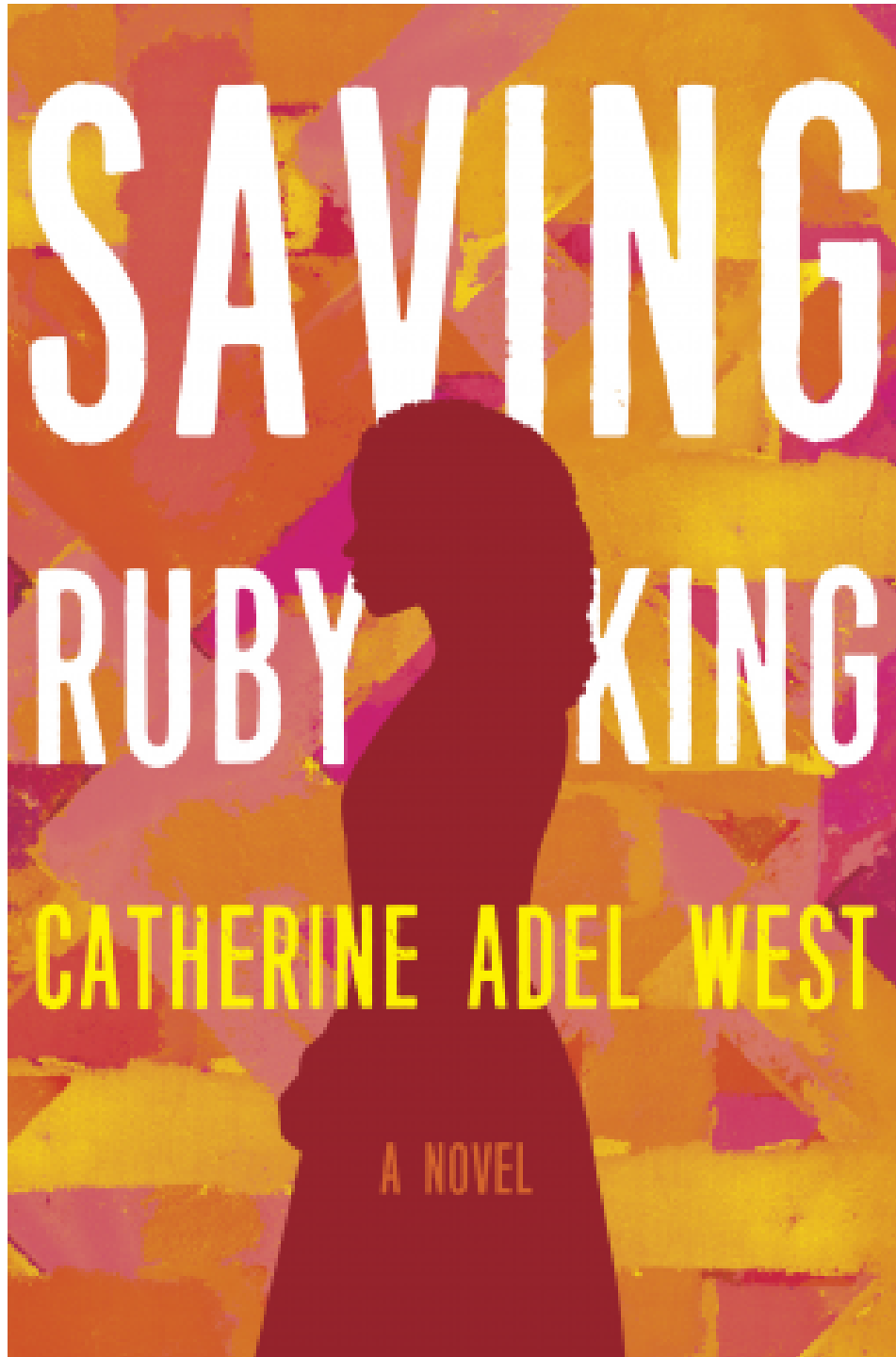
But is she *missing*?

It's up to Grayson Sykes to find her. Although she is reluctant to track down a woman who may not want to be found, Gray's search for Isabel Lincoln becomes more complicated and dangerous with every new revelation about the woman's secrets and the truth she has hidden from her friends and family.

Featuring two complicated women in a dangerous cat and mouse game, *And Now She's Gone* explores the nature of secrets -- and how violence and fear can lead you to abandon everything in order to survive.

SAVING RUBY KING

CATHERINE ADEL WEST



Family. Faith. Secrets. Everything in this world comes full circle.

When Ruby King's mother is found murdered in their home in Chicago's South Side, the police dismiss it as another act of violence in a black neighborhood. But for Ruby, it means she'll be living alone with her violent father. The only person who understands the gravity of her situation is Ruby's best friend, Layla. Their closeness is tested when Layla's father, the pastor of their church, demands that Layla stay away. But what are his true motives? And what is the price for turning a blind eye?

In a relentless quest to save Ruby, Layla comes to discover the murky loyalties and dark secrets tying their families together for three generations. A crucial pilgrimage through the racially divided landscape of Chicago, *Saving Ruby King* traces the way trauma is passed down through generations and the ways in which communities can come together to create sanctuary.

BMW'S "WHAT SHOULD I READ NEXT?"

MEMOIR



SHE MEMES WELL

QUINTA BRUNSON



From comedian Quinta Brunson comes a deeply personal and funny collection of essays featuring anecdotes about trying to make it when you're broke, overcoming self-doubt and depression, and how she's used humor to navigate her career in unusual directions.

Quinta Brunson is a master of viral Internet content: without any traditional background in media, her humorous videos were the first to break through on Instagram's platform, receiving millions of views. From there, Brunson's wryly observant POV attracted the attention of *BuzzFeed's* motion picture development department, leading her to produce viral videos there about topics like interracial dating, millennial malaise, and seeing your ex in public. Now, Brunson is bringing her comedic chops to the page in *She Memes Well*, an earnest, laugh-out-loud collection about her weird road to Internet notoriety.

In her debut essay collection, Quinta applies her trademark humor and heart to discuss what it was like to go from student loan debt-broke to "halfway recognizable—'don't I know you somewhere?'" level-of-fame. With anecdotes that range from the funny and zany—like her experience trying to find her signature hairstyle—to more grounded material about living with depression, Brunson's voice is entirely authentic and eminently readable.

FINDING ME

VIOLA DAVIS



In my book, you will meet a little girl named Viola who ran from her past until she made a life-changing decision to stop running forever.

This is my story, from a crumbling apartment in Central Falls, Rhode Island, to the stage in New York City, and beyond. This is the path I took to finding my purpose but also my voice in a world that didn't always see me.

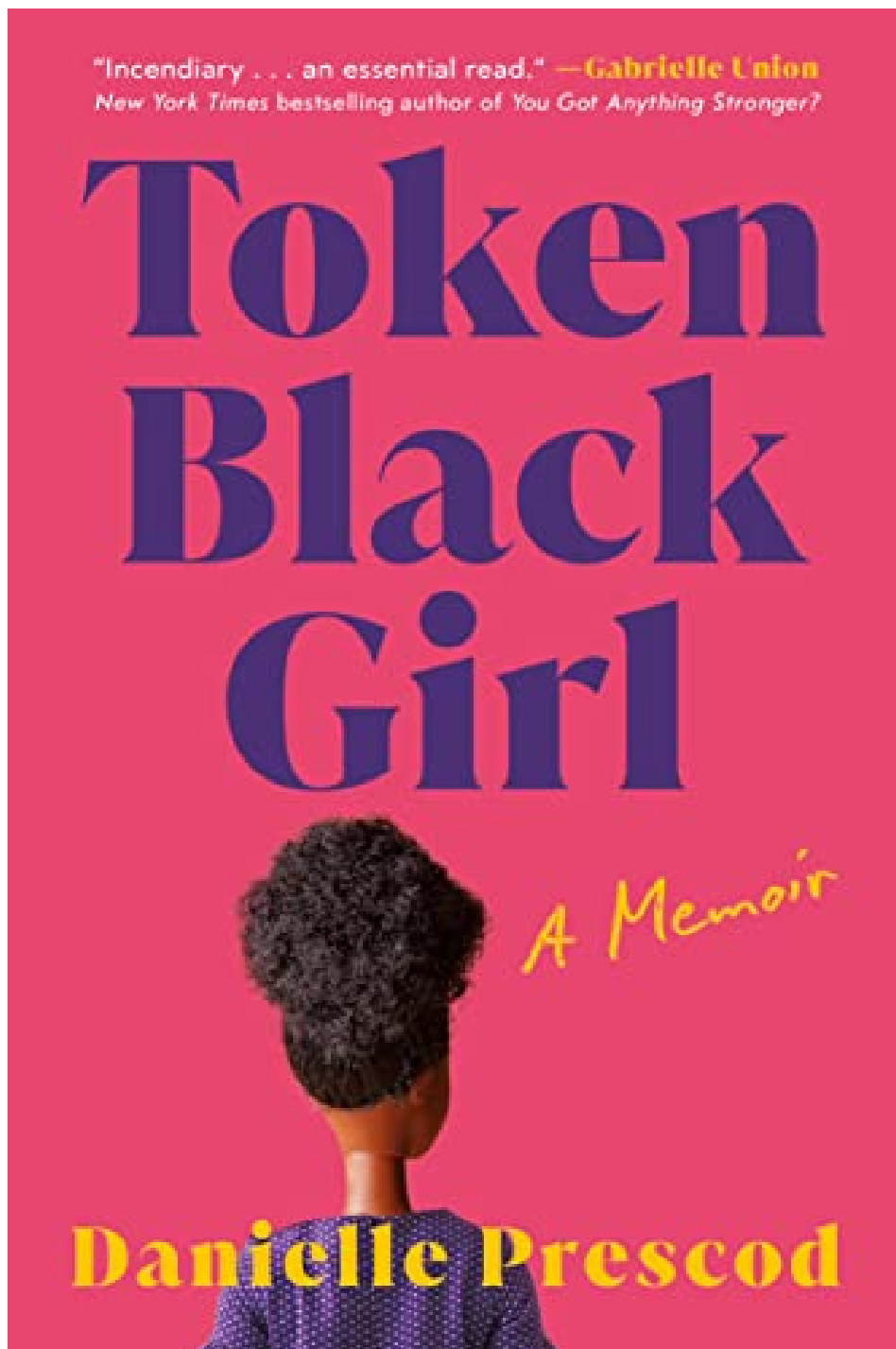
As I wrote *Finding Me*, my eyes were opened to the truth of how our stories are often not given close examination.

We are forced to reinvent them to fit into a crazy, competitive, judgmental world. So I wrote this for anyone running through life untethered, desperate, and clawing their way through murky memories, trying to get to some form of self-love. For anyone who needs reminding that a life worth living can only be born from radical honesty and the courage to shed facades and be . . . you.

Finding Me is a deep reflection, a promise, and a love letter of sorts to self. My hope is that my story will inspire you to light up your own life with creative expression and rediscover who you were before the world put a label on you.

TOKEN BLACK GIRL

DANIELLE PRESCOD



Danielle Prescod grew up Black in an elite and overwhelmingly white community, her identity made more invisible by the whitewashed movies, television, magazines, and books she and her classmates voraciously consumed. Danielle took her cue from the world around her and aspired to shrink her identity into that box, setting increasingly poisonous goals. She started painful and damaging chemical hair treatments in elementary school, began depriving herself of food when puberty hit, and tried to control her image through the most unimpeachable, impeccable fashion choices.

Those obsessions led her to relentlessly pursue a career in beauty and fashion—the eye of the racist and sexist beauty standard storm. Assimilating was hard, but she was practiced. And she was an asset.

Their “Token Black Girl.” Toxic, sure. But Danielle was striving to achieve social cache and working her way up the ladder of coveted media jobs, and she looked great, right? So what if she had to endure executives’ questions like “What was it like to drive to school from the ghetto?” Or coworkers’ eager curiosity to know if her parents were on welfare. But after decades of burying her emotions, resentment, and true self, Danielle turned a critical eye inward and confronted the factors that motivated her self-destructive behaviors

Sharp witted and bracingly candid, *Token Black Girl* unpacks the adverse effects of insidious white supremacy in the media—both unconscious and strategic—to tell a personal story about recovery from damaging concepts of perfection, celebrating identity, and demolishing social conditioning.

HEAVY

KIESE LAYMAN

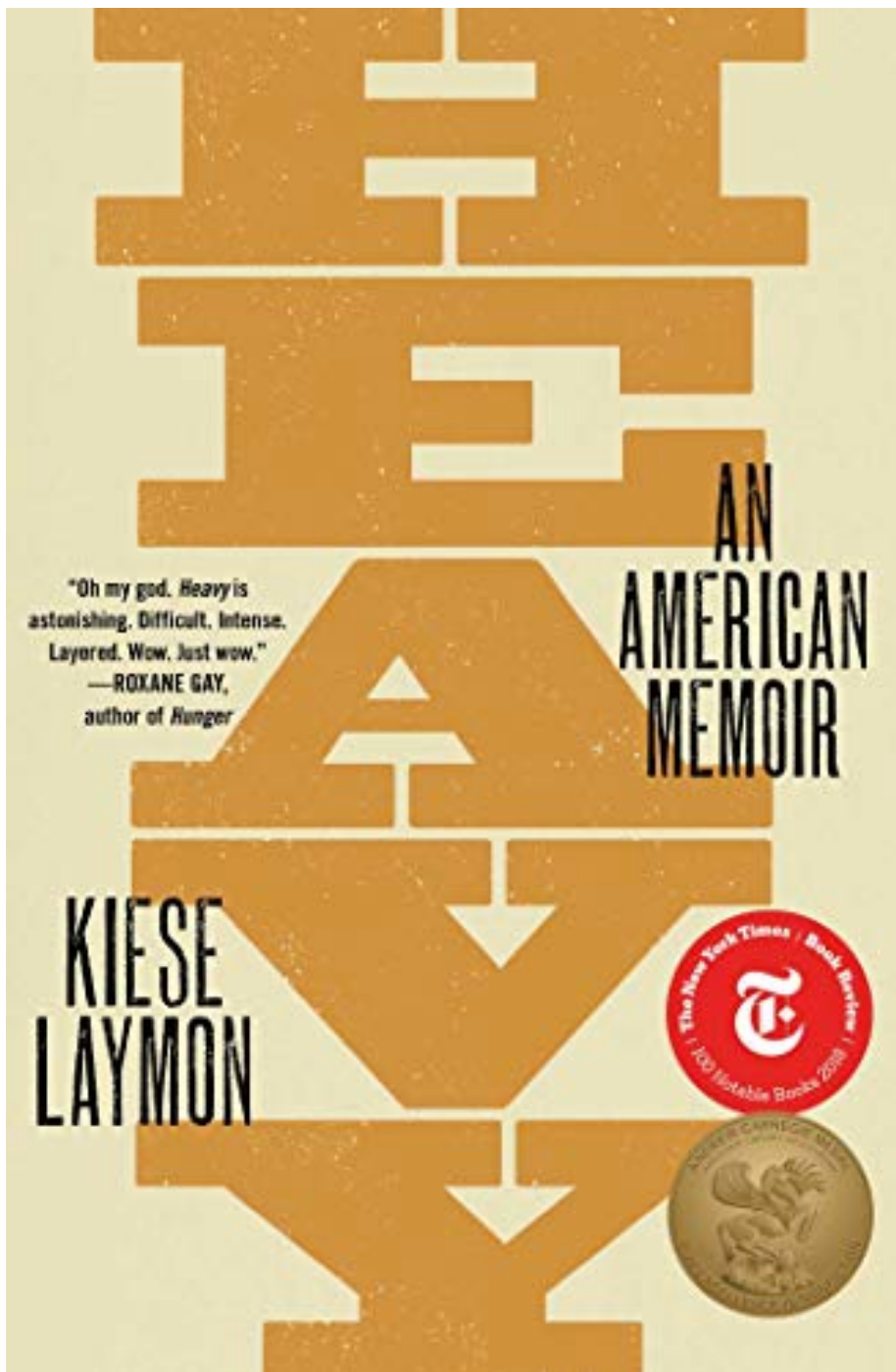
In this powerful and provocative memoir, genre-bending essayist and novelist Kiese Laymon explores what the weight of a lifetime of secrets, lies, and deception does to a black body, a black family, and a nation teetering on the brink of moral collapse.

Kiese Laymon is a fearless writer. In his essays, personal stories combine with piercing intellect to reflect both on the state of American society and on his experiences with abuse, which conjure conflicted feelings of shame, joy, confusion, and humiliation. Laymon invites us to consider the consequences of growing up in a nation wholly obsessed with progress yet wholly disinterested in the messy work of reckoning with where we've been.

In *Heavy*, Laymon writes eloquently and honestly about growing up a hard-headed black son to a complicated and brilliant black mother in Jackson, Mississippi. From his early experiences of sexual violence, to his suspension from college, to his trek to New York as a young college professor, Laymon charts his complex relationship with his mother, grandmother, anorexia, obesity, sex, writing, and ultimately gambling.

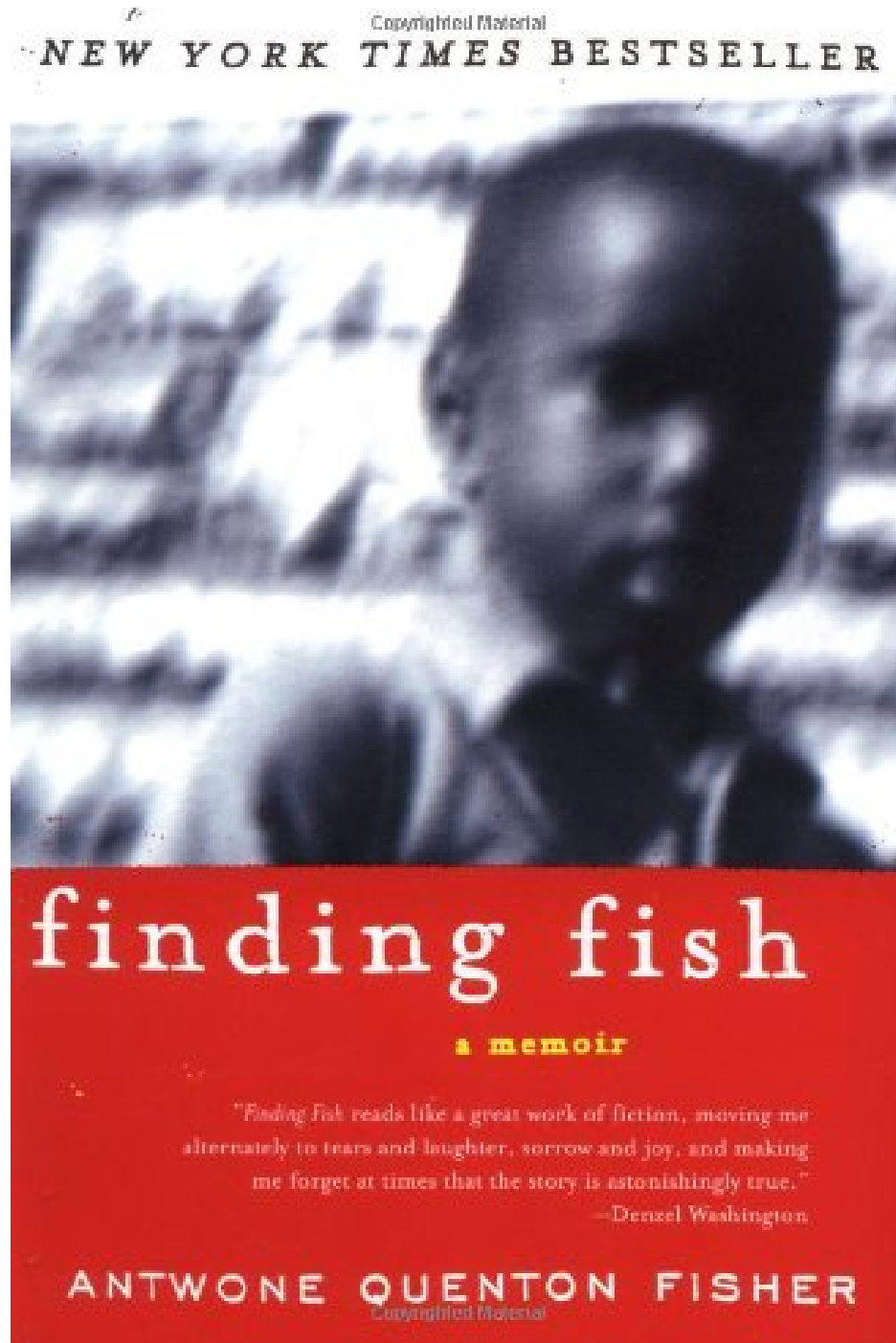
By attempting to name secrets and lies he and his mother spent a lifetime avoiding, Laymon asks himself, his mother, his nation, and us to confront the terrifying possibility that few in this nation actually know how to responsibly love, and even fewer want to live under the weight of actually becoming free.

A personal narrative that illuminates national failures, *Heavy* is defiant yet vulnerable, an insightful, often comical exploration of weight, identity, art, friendship, and family that begins with a confusing childhood—and continues through twenty-five years of haunting implosions and long reverberations.



FINDING FISH

ANTWONE QUENTON FISHER



A major motion picture starring and directed by Denzel Washington, *Finding Fish* is the memoir of Antwone Fisher's miraculous journey from abandonment and abuse to liberation, manhood, and extraordinary success--a modern-day *Oliver Twist*.

Finding Fish shows how, out of this unlikely mix of deprivation and hope, an artist was born--first as the child who painted the feelings his words dared not speak, then as a poet and storyteller who would eventually become one of Hollywood's most well-paid, sought-after screenwriters. But before he ascends those lofty steps, Antwone's story takes us from the Navy to his jobs as a federal correctional officer and then a security guard at Sony Pictures in Hollywood. In its climactic conclusion, the mystery of his identity is finally unraveled as Antwone returns to Cleveland to locate his mother's and father's surviving family members.

BMW'S "WHAT SHOULD I READ NEXT?"

ROMANCE



SEVEN DAYS IN JUNE

TIA WILLIAMS



When Shane and Eva meet unexpectedly at a literary event, sparks fly, raising not only their past buried traumas, but the eyebrows of New York's Black literati. What no one knows is that twenty years earlier, teenage Eva and Shane spent one crazy, torrid week madly in love. They may be pretending that everything is fine now, but they can't deny their chemistry - or the fact that they've been secretly writing to each other in their books ever since.

Over the next seven days in the middle of a steamy Brooklyn summer, Eva and Shane reconnect, but Eva's not sure how she can trust the man who broke her heart, and she needs to get him out of New York so that her life can return to normal. But before Shane disappears again, there are a few questions she needs answered...

NOW THAT I'VE FOUND YOU

KRISTINA FOREST



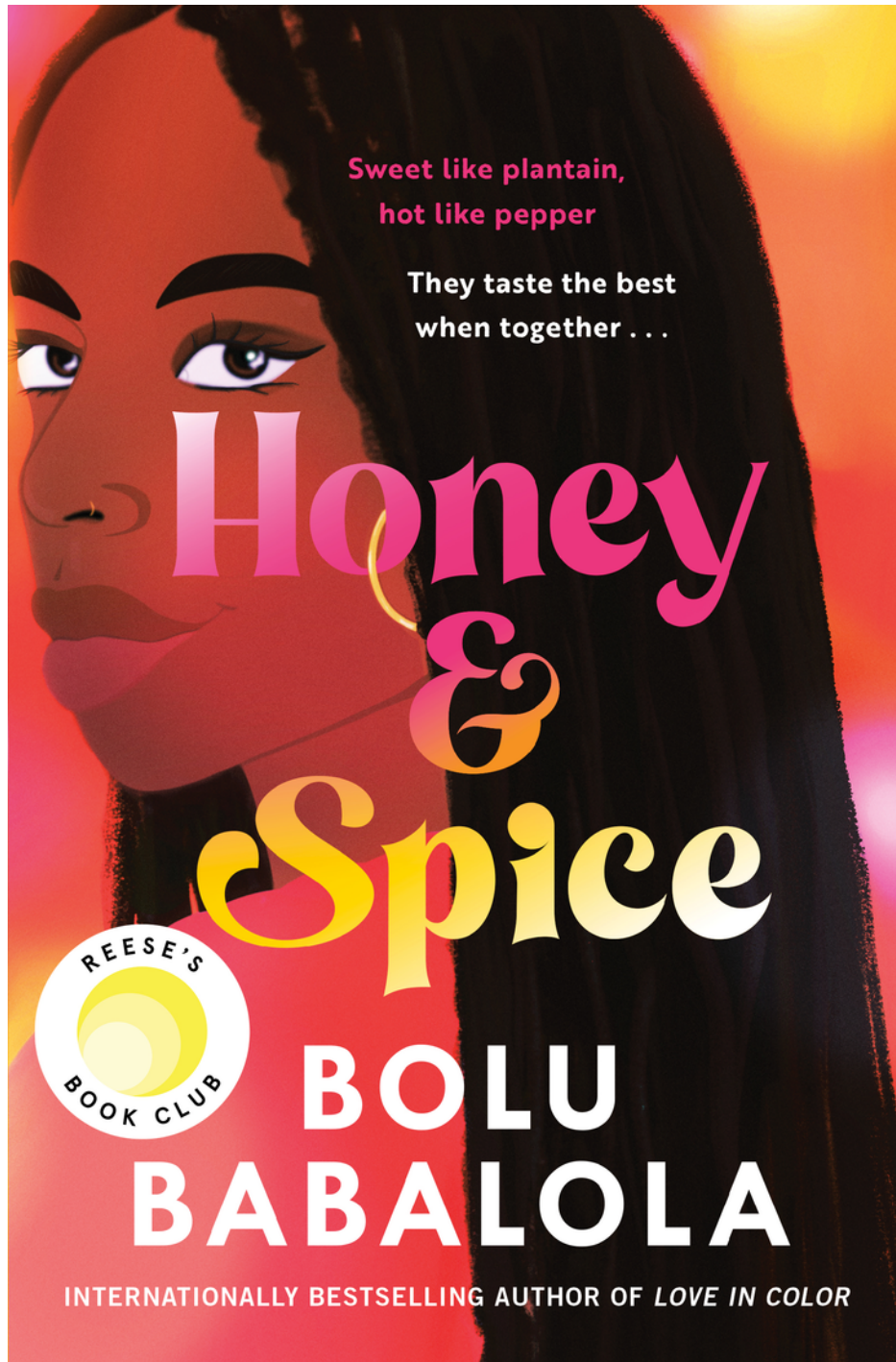
Following in the footsteps of her überfamous grandma, eighteen-year-old Evie Jones is poised to be Hollywood's next big star. That is until a close friend's betrayal leads to her being blacklisted . . .

Fortunately, Evie knows just the thing to save her floundering career: a public appearance with America's most beloved actress—her grandma Gigi, aka the Evelyn Conaway. The only problem? Gigi is a recluse who's been out of the limelight for almost twenty years. Days before Evie plans to present her grandma with an honorary award in front of Hollywood's elite, Gigi does the unthinkable: she disappears.

With time running out and her comeback on the line, Evie reluctantly enlists the help of the last person to see Gigi before she vanished: Milo Williams, a cute musician Evie isn't sure she can trust. As Evie and Milo conduct a wild manhunt across New York City, romance and adventure abound while Evie makes some surprising discoveries about her grandma—and herself.

HONEY AND SPICE

BOLU BABALOLA



Sharp-tongued (and secretly soft-hearted) Kiki Banjo has just made a huge mistake. As an expert in relationship-evasion and the host of the popular student radio show *Brown Sugar*, she's made it her mission to make sure the women of the African-Caribbean Society at Whitewell University do not fall into the mess of "situationships", players, and heartbreak. But when the Queen of the Unbothered kisses Malakai Korede, the guy she just publicly denounced as "The Wastemen of Whitewell," in front of every Blackwellian on campus, she finds her show on the brink.

They're soon embroiled in a fake relationship to try and salvage their reputations and save their futures. Kiki has never surrendered her heart before, and a player like Malakai won't be the one to change that, no matter how charming he is or how electric their connection feels. But surprisingly entertaining study sessions and intimate, late-night talks at old-fashioned diners force Kiki to look beyond her own presumptions. Is she ready to open herself up to something deeper?

TAKE A HINT, DANI BROWN

TALIA HIBBERT



Danika Brown knows what she wants: professional success, academic renown, and an occasional roll in the hay to relieve all that career-driven tension. But romance? Been there, done that, burned the T-shirt. Romantic partners, whatever their gender, are a distraction at best and a drain at worst. So Dani asks the universe for the perfect friend-with-benefits—someone who knows the score *and* knows their way around the bedroom.

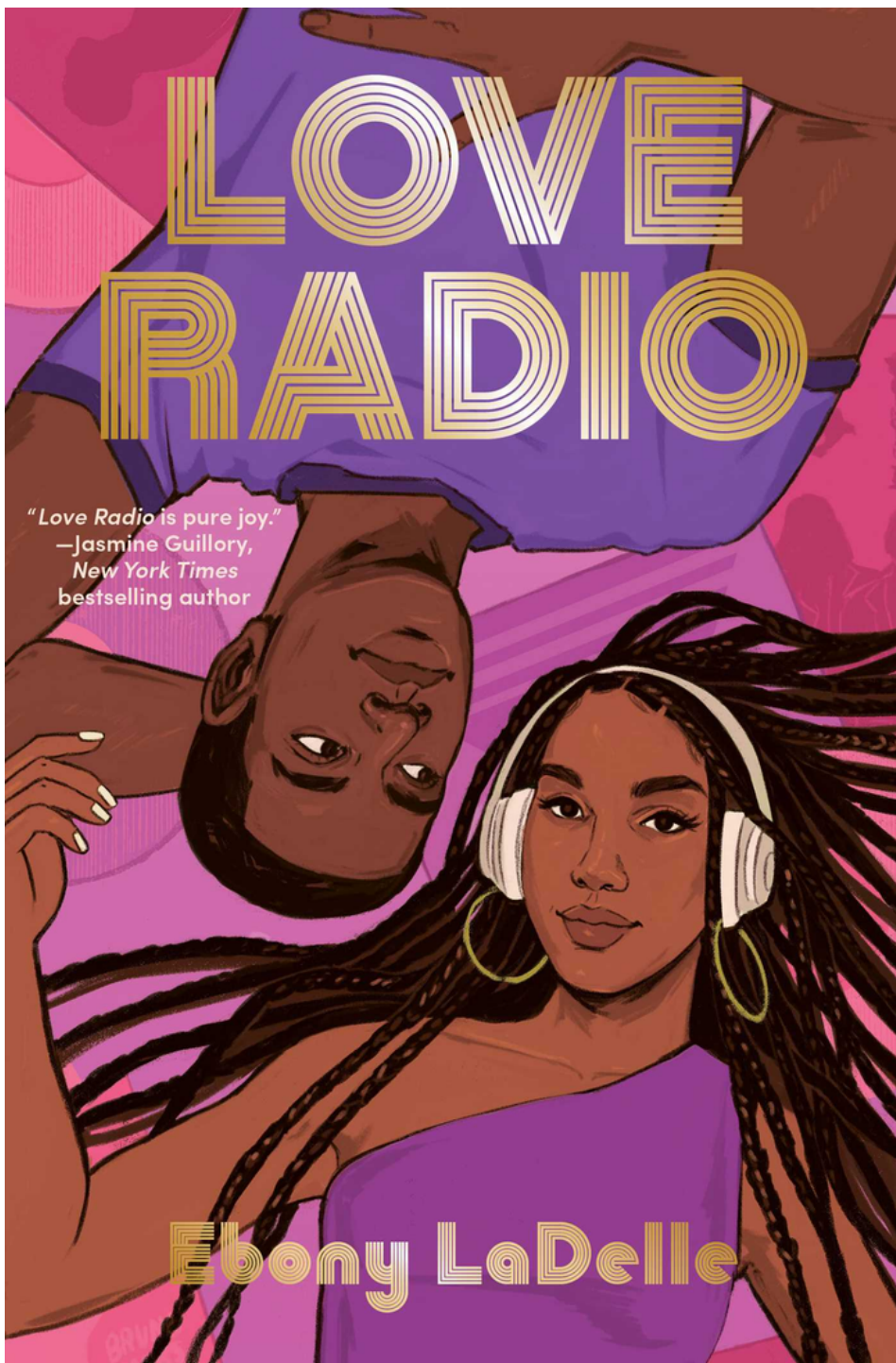
When brooding security guard Zafir Ansari rescues Dani from a workplace fire drill gone wrong, it's an obvious sign: PhD student Dani and ex-rugby player Zaf are destined to sleep together. But before she can explain that fact, a video of the heroic rescue goes viral. Now half the internet is shipping #DrRugbae—and Zaf is begging Dani to play along. Turns out, his sports charity for kids could really use the publicity. Lying to help *children*? Who on earth would refuse?

Dani's plan is simple: fake a relationship in public, seduce Zaf behind the scenes. The trouble is, grumpy Zaf's secretly a hopeless romantic—and he's determined to corrupt Dani's stone-cold realism. Before long, he's tackling her fears into the dirt. But the former sports star has issues of his own, and the walls around his heart are as thick as his... um, thighs.

Suddenly, the easy lay Dani dreamed of is more complex than her thesis. Has her wish backfired? Is her focus being tested? Or is the universe just waiting for her to take a hint?

LOVE RADIO

EBONY LADELLE



Prince Jones is the guy with all the answers—or so it seems. After all, at seventeen, he has his own segment on Detroit's popular hip-hop show, *Love Radio*, where he dishes out advice to the brokenhearted.

Prince has always dreamed of becoming a DJ and falling in love. But being the main caretaker for his mother, who has multiple sclerosis, and his little brother means his dreams will stay just that and the only romances in his life are the ones he hears about from his listeners. Until he meets Dani Ford.

Dani isn't checking for anybody. She's focused on her plan: ace senior year, score a scholarship, and move to New York City to become a famous author. But her college essay keeps tripping her up and acknowledging what's blocking her means dealing with what happened at that party a few months ago. And that's one thing Dani can't do.

When the romantic DJ meets the ambitious writer, sparks fly. Prince is smitten, but Dani's not looking to get derailed. She gives Prince just three dates to convince her that he's worth falling for. Three dates for the love expert to take his own advice, and just maybe change two lives forever.

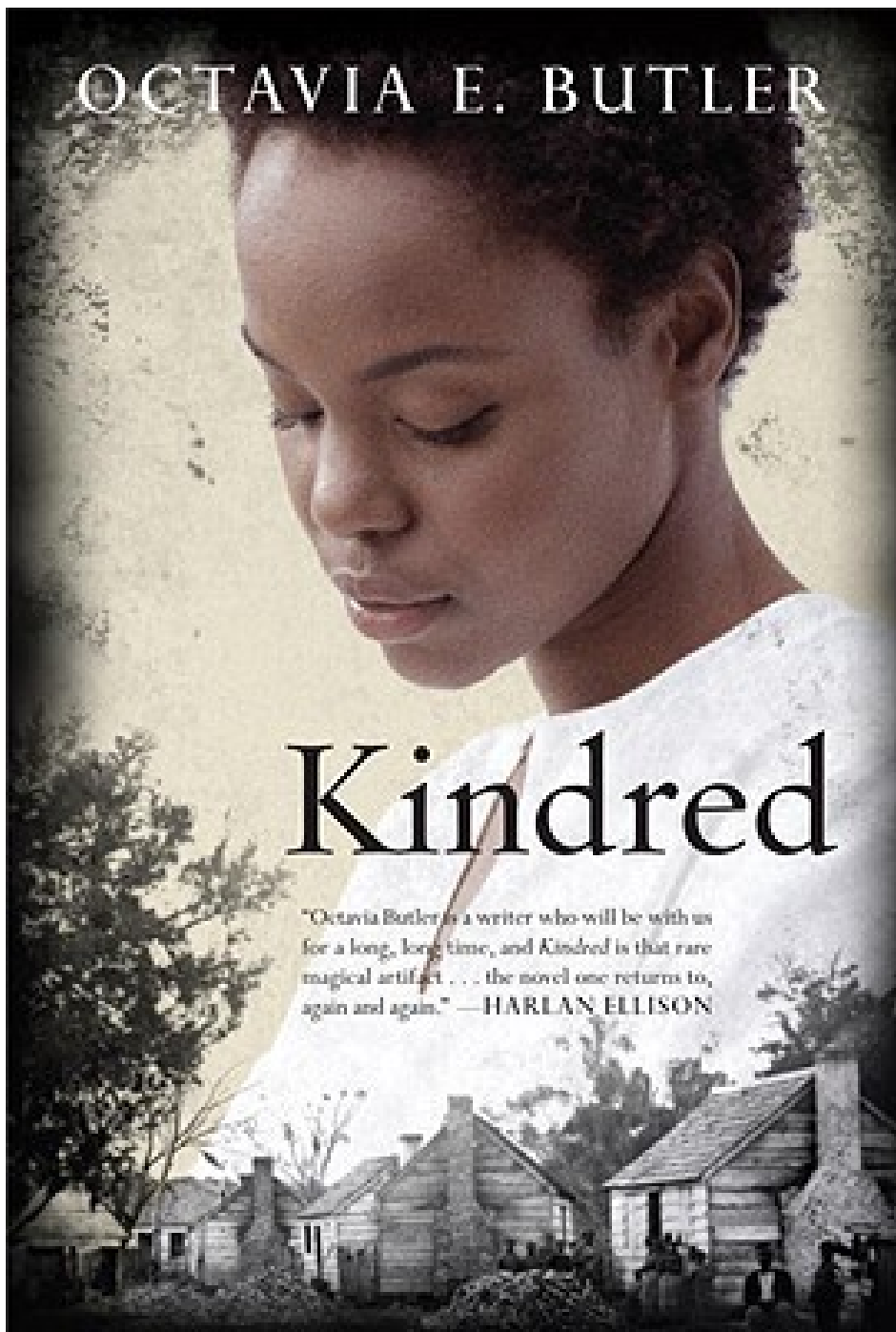
BMW'S "WHAT SHOULD I READ NEXT?"

SCI-FI/FANTASY



KINDRED

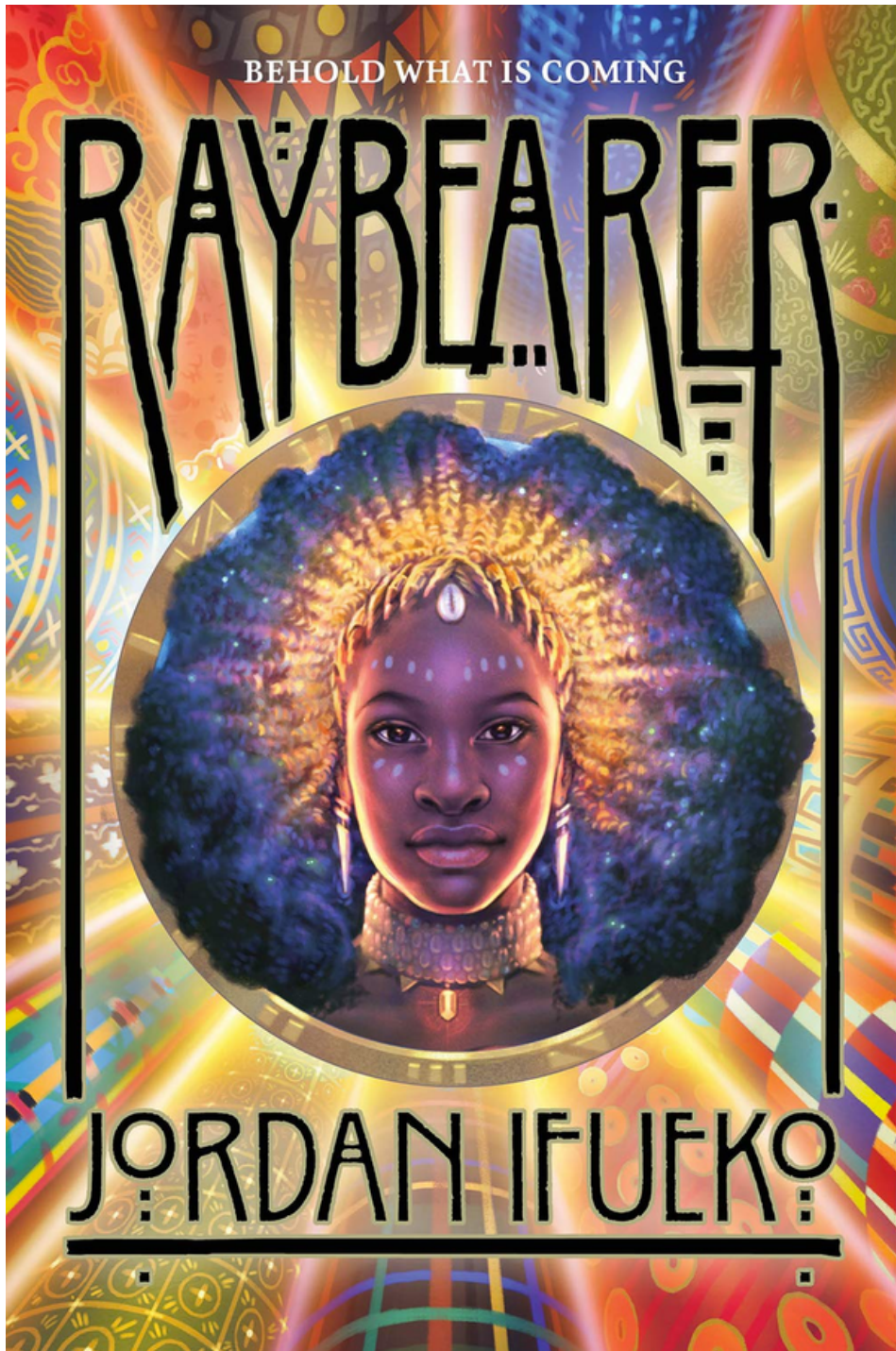
OCTAVIA E. BUTLER



The first science fiction written by a black woman, *Kindred* has become a cornerstone of black American literature. This combination of slave memoir, fantasy, and historical fiction is a novel of rich literary complexity. Having just celebrated her 26th birthday in 1976 California, Dana, an African-American woman, is suddenly and inexplicably wrenched through time into antebellum Maryland. After saving a drowning white boy there, she finds herself staring into the barrel of a shotgun and is transported back to the present just in time to save her life. During numerous such time-defying episodes with the same young man, she realizes the challenge she's been given...

RAYBEARER

JORDAN IFUEKO



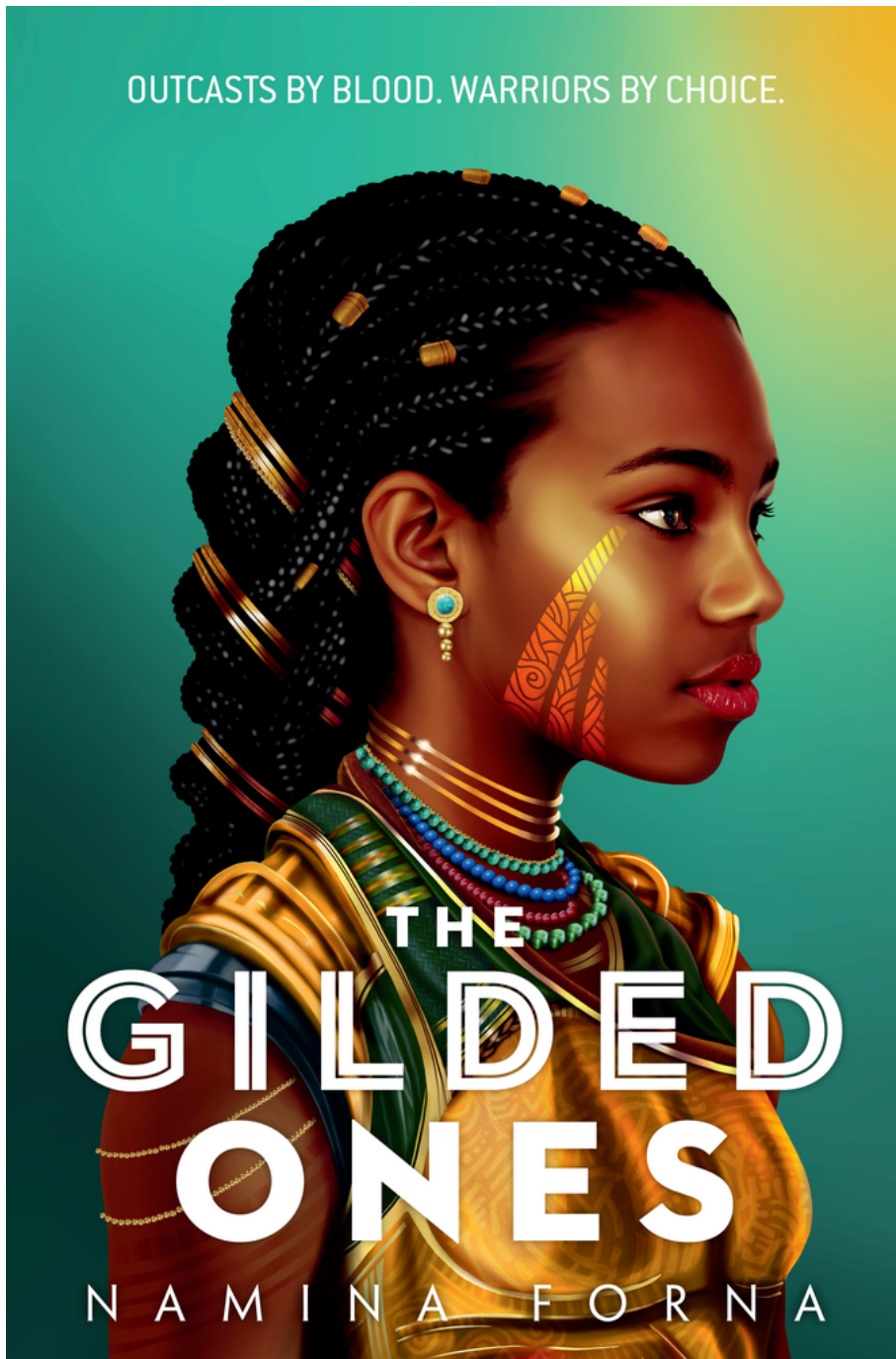
Tarisai has always longed for the warmth of a family. She was raised in isolation by a mysterious, often absent mother known only as The Lady. The Lady sends her to the capital of the global empire of Aritsar to compete with other children to be chosen as one of the Crown Prince's Council of 11.

If she's picked, she'll be joined with the other Council members through the Ray, a bond deeper than blood. That closeness is irresistible to Tarisai, who has always wanted to belong somewhere. But The Lady has other ideas, including a magical wish that Tarisai is compelled to obey: Kill the Crown Prince once she gains his trust.

Tarisai won't stand by and become someone's pawn—but is she strong enough to choose a different path for herself?

THE GILDED ONES

NAMINA FORNA



Sixteen-year-old Deka lives in fear and anticipation of the blood ceremony that will determine whether she will become a member of her village. Already different from everyone else because of her unnatural intuition, Deka prays for red blood so she can finally feel like she belongs.

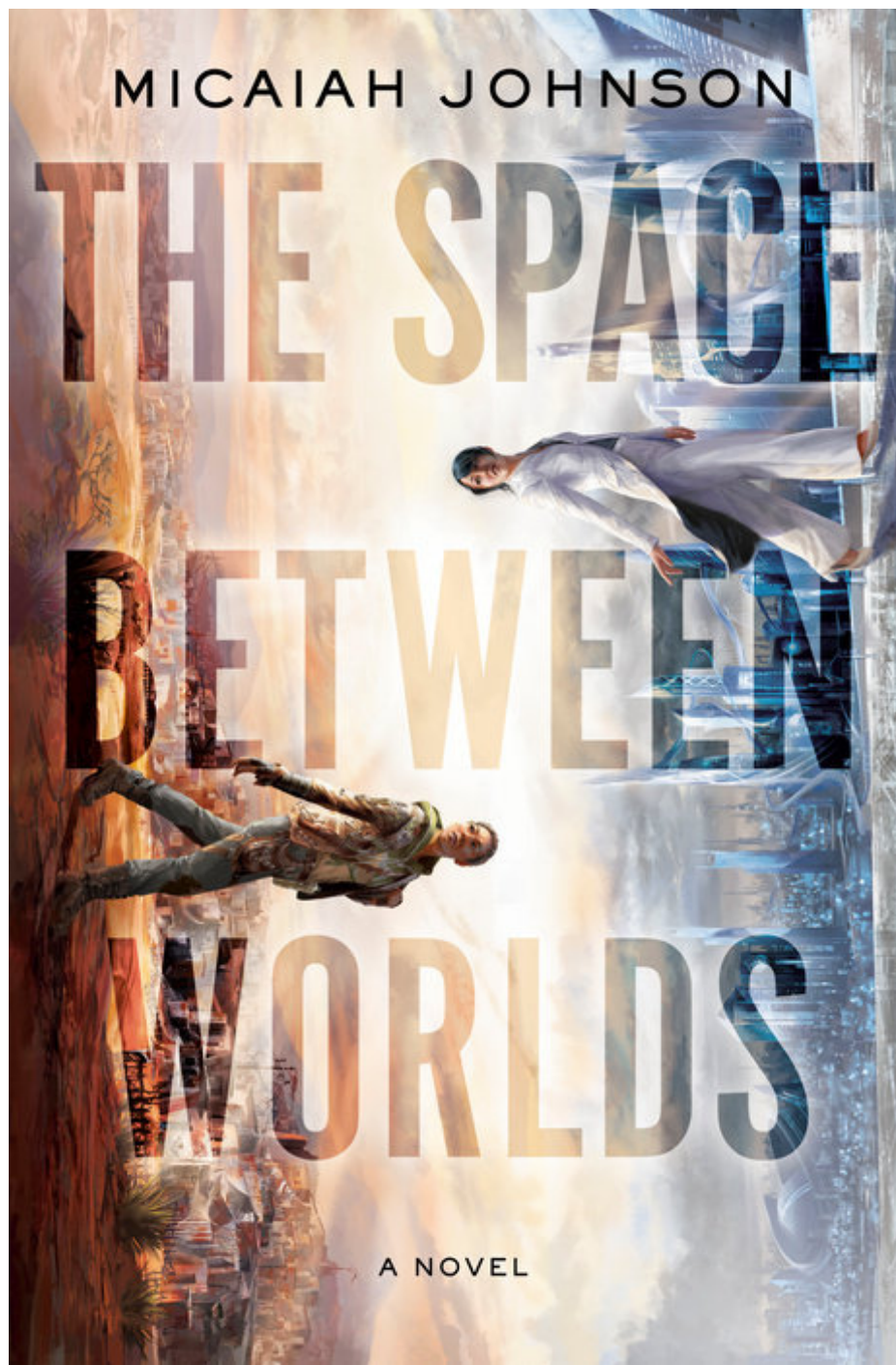
But on the day of the ceremony, her blood runs gold, the color of impurity--and Deka knows she will face a consequence worse than death.

Then a mysterious woman comes to her with a choice: stay in the village and submit to her fate, or leave to fight for the emperor in an army of girls just like her. They are called alaki--near-immortals with rare gifts. And they are the only ones who can stop the empire's greatest threat.

Knowing the dangers that lie ahead yet yearning for acceptance, Deka decides to leave the only life she's ever known. But as she journeys to the capital to train for the biggest battle of her life, she will discover that the great walled city holds many surprises. Nothing and no one are quite what they seem to be--not even Deka herself.

THE SPACE BETWEEN WORLDS

MICAIAH JOHNSON



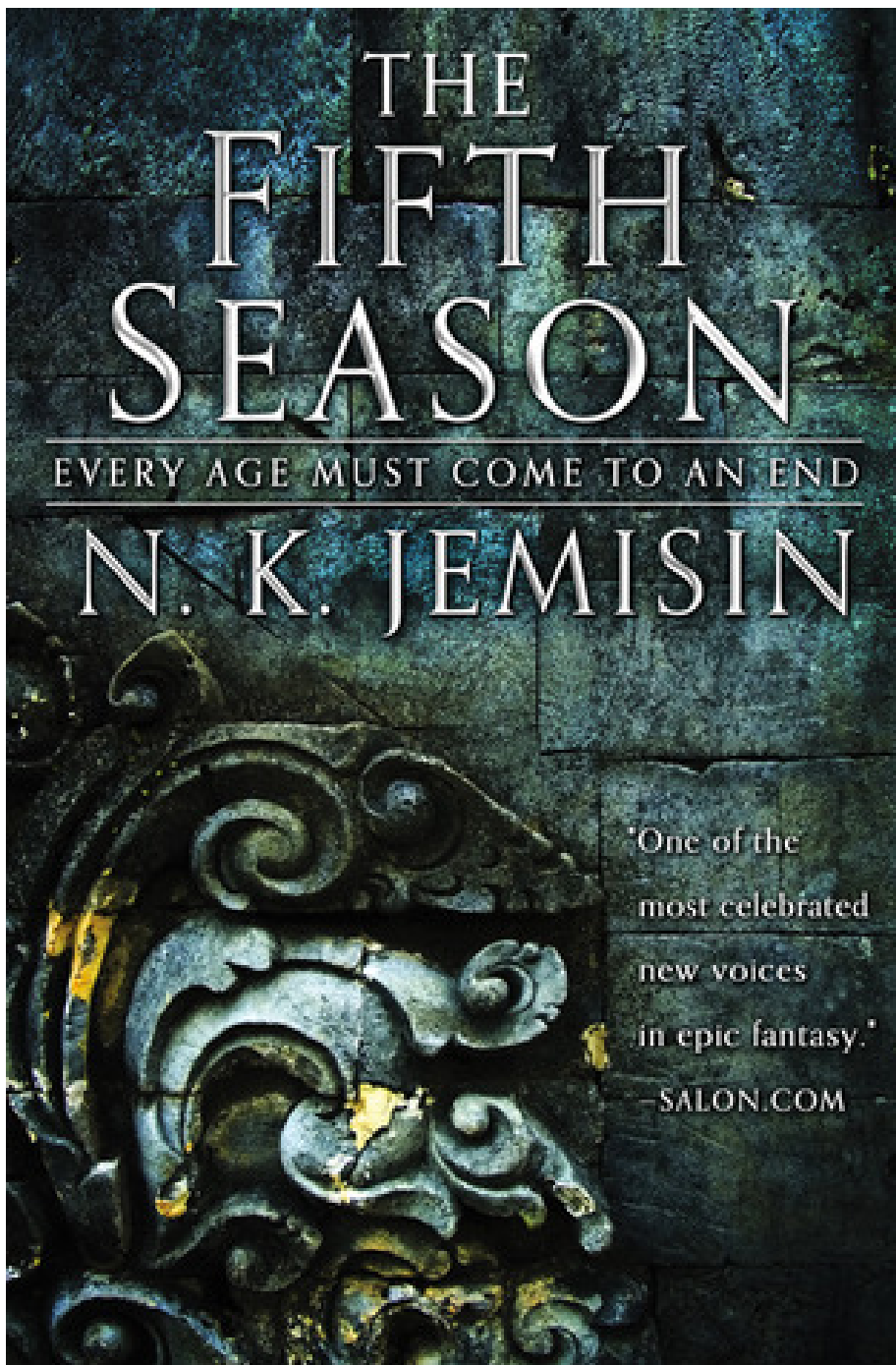
Multiverse travel is finally possible, but there's just one catch: No one can visit a world where their counterpart is still alive. Enter Cara, whose parallel selves happen to be exceptionally good at dying—from disease, turf wars, or vendettas they couldn't outrun. Cara's life has been cut short on 372 worlds in total.

On this Earth, however, Cara has survived. Identified as an outlier and therefore a perfect candidate for multiverse travel, Cara is plucked from the dirt of the wastelands. Now she has a nice apartment on the lower levels of the wealthy and walled-off Wiley City. She works—and shamelessly flirts—with her enticing yet aloof handler, Dell, as the two women collect off-world data for the Eldridge Institute. She even occasionally leaves the city to visit her family in the wastes, though she struggles to feel at home in either place. So long as she can keep her head down and avoid trouble, Cara is on a sure path to citizenship and security.

But trouble finds Cara when one of her eight remaining doppelgängers dies under mysterious circumstances, plunging her into a new world with an old secret. What she discovers will connect her past and her future in ways she could have never imagined—and reveal her own role in a plot that endangers not just her world, but the entire multiverse.

THE FIFTH SEASON

N.K. JEMISIN



This is the way the world ends. Again.

Three terrible things happen in a single day. Essun, a woman living an ordinary life in a small town, comes home to find that her husband has brutally murdered their son and kidnapped their daughter. Meanwhile, mighty Sanze -- the world-spanning empire whose innovations have been civilization's bedrock for a thousand years -- collapses as most of its citizens are murdered to serve a madman's vengeance. And worst of all, across the heart of the vast continent known as the Stillness, a great red rift has been torn into the heart of the earth, spewing ash enough to darken the sky for years. Or centuries.

Now Essun must pursue the wreckage of her family through a deadly, dying land. Without sunlight, clean water, or arable land, and with limited stockpiles of supplies, there will be war all across the Stillness: a battle royale of nations not for power or territory, but simply for the basic resources necessary to get through the long dark night. Essun does not care if the world falls apart around her. She'll break it herself, if she must, to save her daughter.

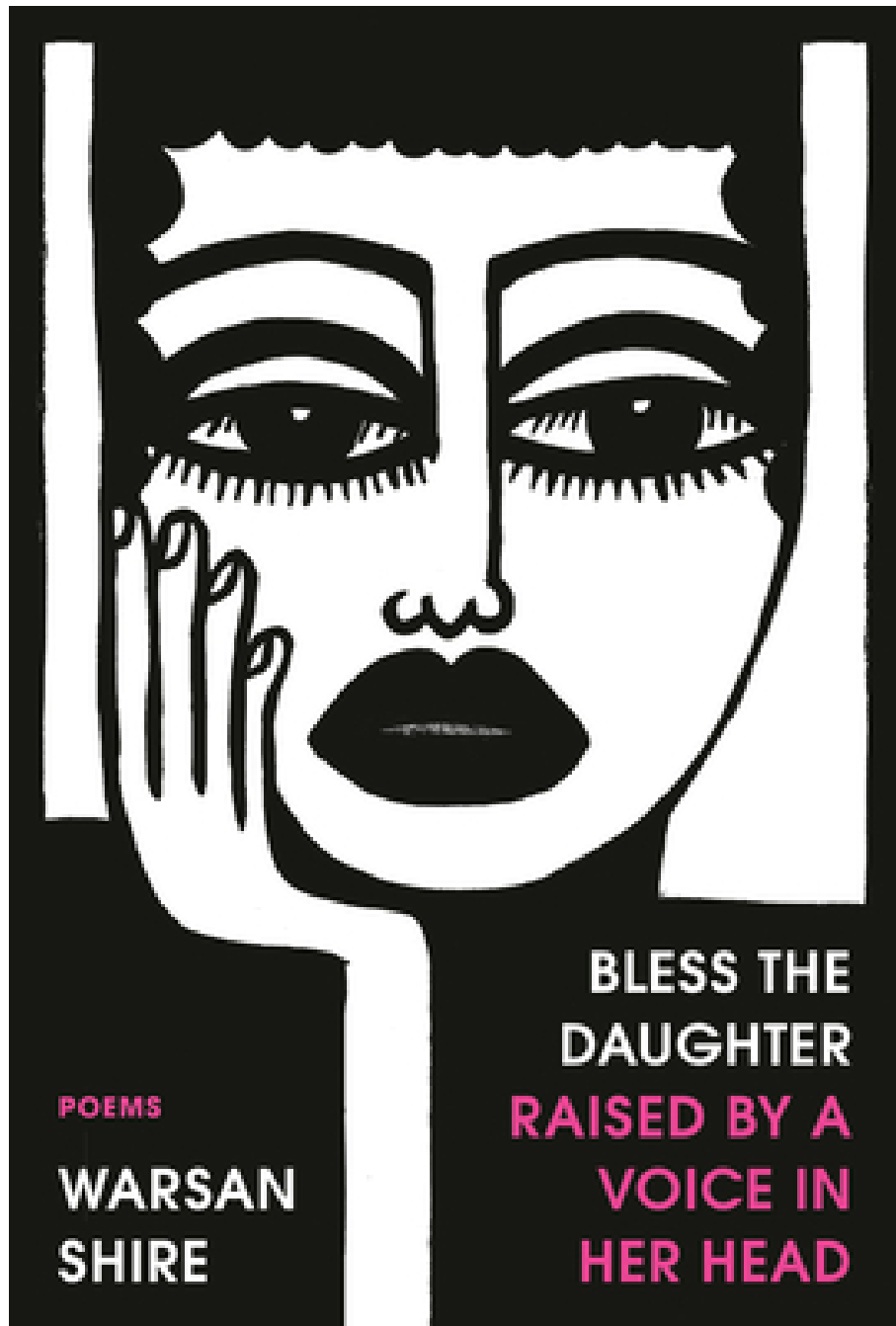
BMW'S "WHAT SHOULD I READ NEXT?"

POETRY



BLESSED THE DAUGHTER RAISED BY A VOICE IN HER HEAD

WARSAN SHIRE



Warsan Shire introduces us to a young girl, who, in the absence of a nurturing guide, makes her own stumbling way towards womanhood. Drawing from her own life and the lives of loved ones, as well as pop culture and news headlines, Shire finds vivid, unique details in the experiences of refugees and immigrants, mothers and daughters, Black women, and teenage girls. In Shire's hands, lives spring into fullness. This is noisy life: full of music and weeping and surahs and sirens and birds. This is fragrant life: full of blood and perfume and shisha smoke and jasmine and incense. This is polychrome life: full of henna and moonlight and lipstick and turmeric and kohl.

BLACK GIRL, CALL HOME

JASMINE MANS



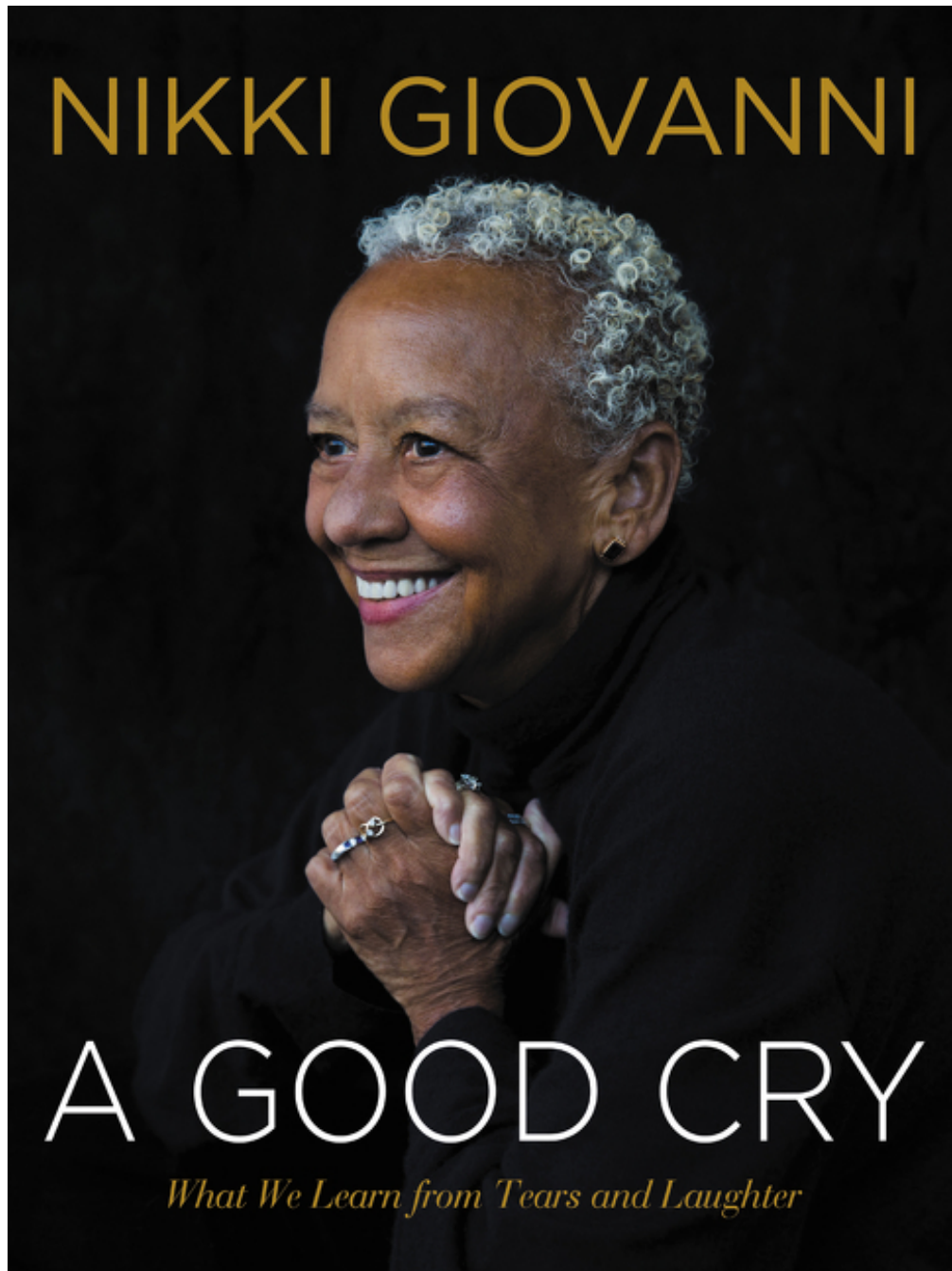
From spoken word poet Jasmine Mans comes an unforgettable poetry collection about race, feminism, and queer identity.

With echoes of Gwendolyn Brooks and Sonia Sanchez, Mans writes to call herself—and us—home. Each poem explores what it means to be a daughter of Newark, and America--and the painful, joyous path to adulthood as a young, queer Black woman.

Black Girl, Call Home is a love letter to the wandering Black girl and a vital companion to any woman on a journey to find truth, belonging, and healing.

A GOOD CRY: WHAT WE LEARN FROM TEARS AND LAUGHTER

NIKKI GIOVANNI



One of America's most celebrated poets looks inward in this powerful collection, a rumination on her life and the people who have shaped her.

The poetry of Nikki Giovanni has spurred movements, turned hearts and informed generations. She's been hailed as a firebrand, a radical, a healer, and a sage; a wise and courageous voice who has spoken out on the sensitive issues, including race and gender, that touch our national consciousness.

As energetic and relevant as ever, Nikki now offers us an intimate, affecting, and illuminating look at her personal history and the mysteries of her own heart. In *A Good Cry*, she takes us into her confidence, describing the joy and peril of aging and recalling the violence that permeated her parents' marriage and her early life. She pays homage to the people who have given her life meaning and joy: her grandparents, who took her in and saved her life; the poets and thinkers who have influenced her; and the students who have surrounded her. Nikki also celebrates her good friend, Maya Angelou, and the many years of friendship, poetry, and kitchen-table laughter they shared before Angelou's death in 2014.

I SHIMMER SOMETIMES, TOO

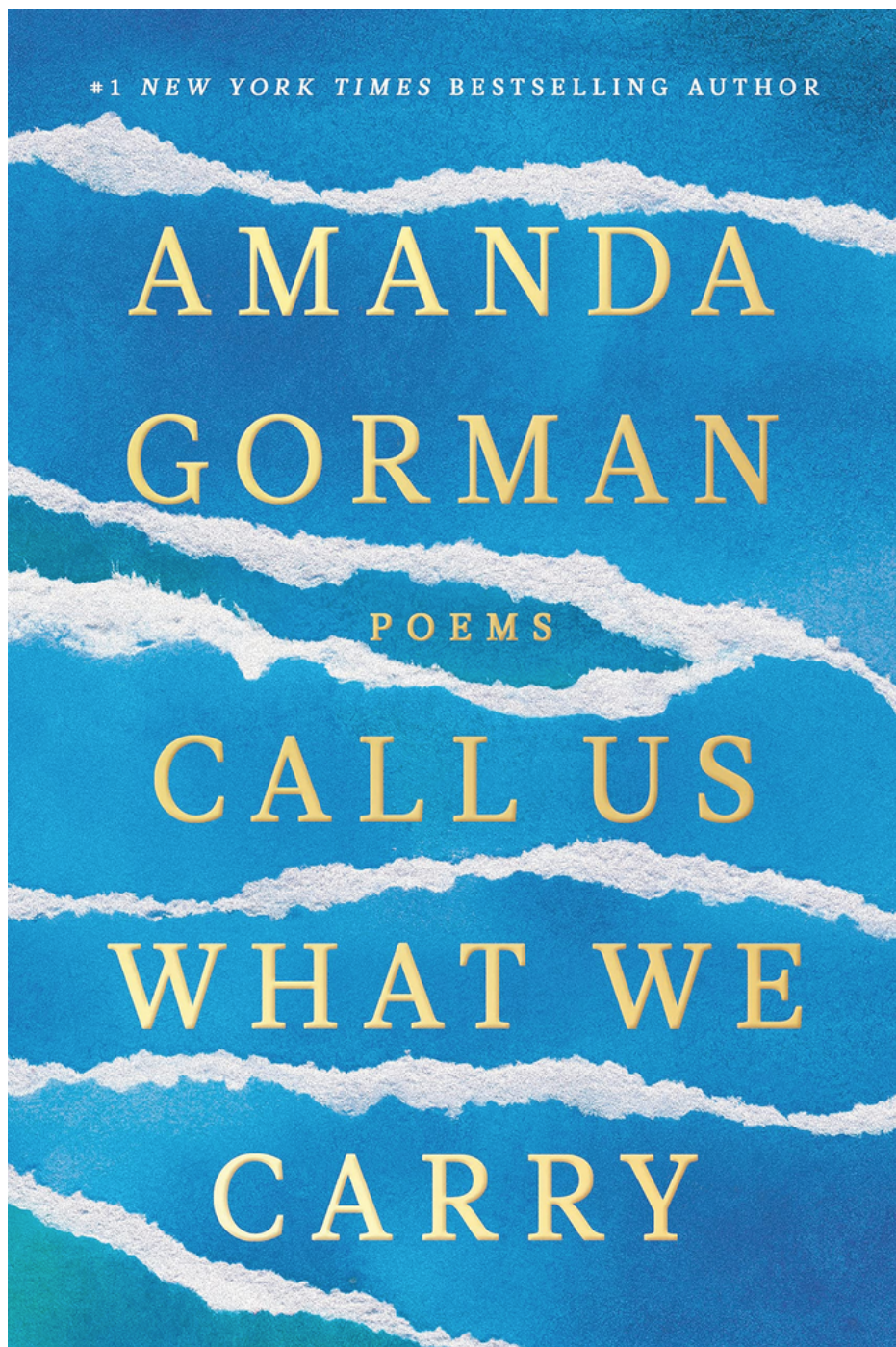
PORSHA OLAYIWOLA



Porsha O's debut poetry collection soars with the power and presence of live performance. These poems dip their hands deep into the fabric of black womanhood, pulling out all of its threads. This book establishes Porsha O firmly in the lineage of black queer poetics, pulling equally from Audre Lorde and Danez Smith. This is a book of gentle breaking and inventive reconstruction. This is a book of self-care, and community-care--the pursuit of building a world that will keep you alive.

CALL US WHAT WE CARRY

AMANDA GORMAN



Formerly titled "The Hill We Climb" and Other Poems, Amanda Gorman's remarkable new collection reveals an energizing and unforgettable voice in American poetry. Call Us What We Carry is Gorman at her finest. Including "The Hill We Climb," the stirring poem read at the inauguration of the 46th President of the United States, Joe Biden, and bursting with musical language and exploring themes of identity, grief, and memory, this lyric of hope and healing captures an important moment in our country's consciousness while being utterly timeless.