

READING and WRITING in the

DARK

A space for avid Black readers and Black authors

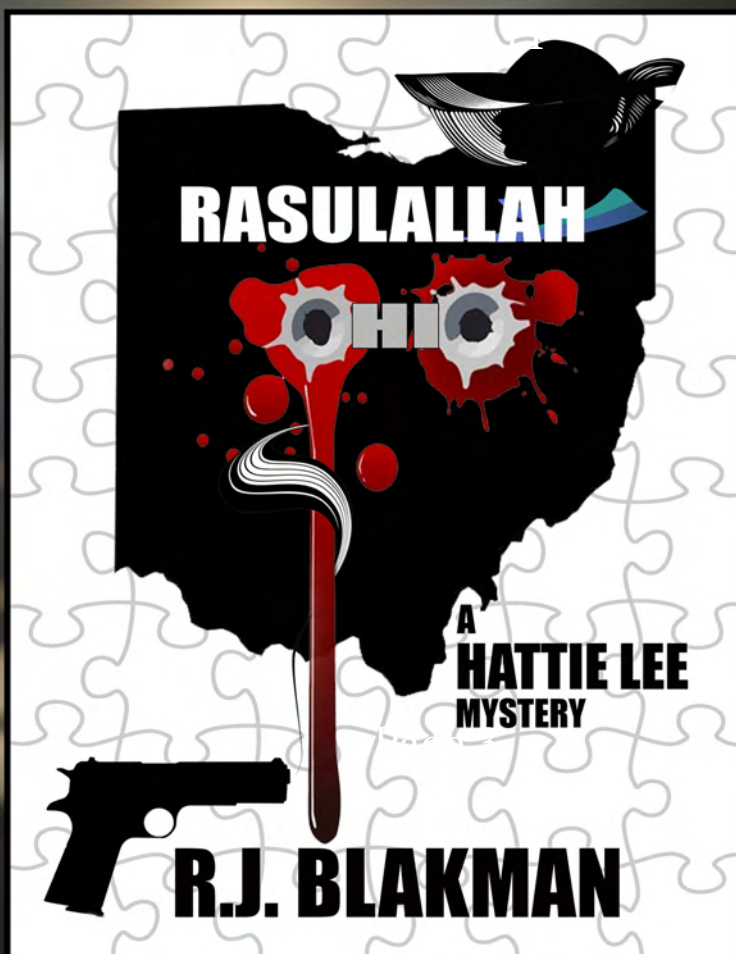
THIS MONTH:

R.J. Blakman introduces us to the world of HATTIE LEE and the MYSTERIES hidden in:

RASULALLAH, OHIO!

No ALIENS! No TIME TRAVEL! No MONSTERS!
ALL MYSTERY!

Reading and Writing in the DARK Newsletter subscriber exclusive, a FULL prologue of the upcoming novel! It's GOOD to be a subscriber!



The Complete PROLOGUE

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NEWSLETTER

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READING and WRITING in the DARK Newsletter
Vol. 2 No. 10
OCTOBER 2023

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WELCOME BACK!

Happy **OCTOBER!**

Three months away from the end of the year and MORE great things are happening! I'm working on several projects at once (as I tend to do), and each project is more exciting than the next. I have short stories that are about to come out, not the least of which is the LONG AWAITED first installment of *Tales of the Monkey's Paw*! I'm also hard at work on the second Paradigm Void book, *Further Journeys into the Paradigm Void*. The first book is in the editorial process but will be available to the public very soon. I will be following that up with—on its first round of editing—*The Redemption of Maxine Allison: A Novella*. Also this month is a sneak peek at the prologue of *RASULALLAH, OHIO*. (Yet another perk of being a subscriber to the newsletter). So, as I said at the beginning, there are big things coming up and I'm extremely excited to be bringing them to you and to get your feedback! Feedback@iyapoyapa.com is ALWAYS open...

Iyapo Yapa



BLAKMAN IS BACK MAN!

Alright! Last month the cover of this upcoming novel is plastered all over the Reading and Writing in the DARK newsletter, hailing the coming of R.J. Blakman with the prologue to *The Problems of Immortality*!

This month we get ANOTHER prologue! This time to the MYSTERY novel: RASULALLAH, OHIO!

Well... who IS R.J. Blakman?!

R.J. Blackman is a mystery writer, a writer of non-fiction and an all-around truth seeker. Blackman tries to look at things on a deeper level and whatever he finds, he tends to write about it with no sugar coating. Most of all, R.J. Blackman just happens to be... ME!

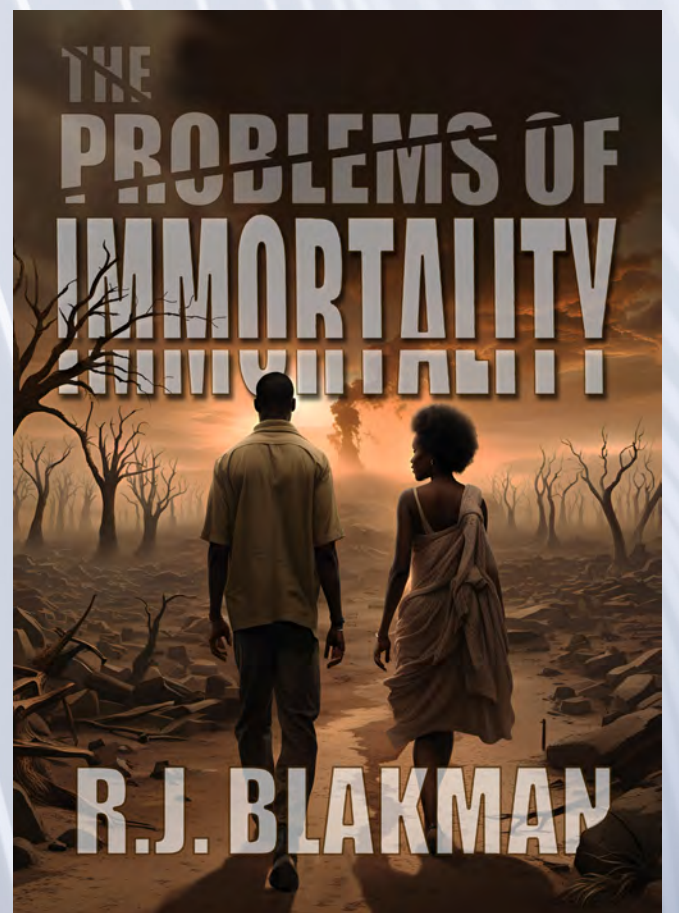
R.J. Blakman is one of the two pseudonyms I use when I want to write things that I think may not necessary line up with standard Iyapo Yapa fare. The views are pretty much the same, but R.J. may not be as heavy handed as I am. Then again, sometimes he might.

This issue gives you a glimpse into the world of R.J. Blakman and the way he writes and thinks. Sure, it will likely sound a lot like yours truly, but as you get into his work you are likely to start noticing some subtle differences in not only the writing style, but the world view - or more accurately, how Blakman approaches his world view.

Either way, I'm sure you will find his work entertaining and thought provoking and whenever you finish an R.J. Blakman work, I'm fairly sure you'll be glad you read it!

ONLY newsletter subscribers get to see these sneak peaks, so good for you! And THANK YOU!

What's that? I said I wrote under TWO pen names? Yes. Well, if you want to know what the other one is, you'll just have to poke around on my website: <http://www.iyapoyapa.com>. It's tucked hidden away in there as an Easter egg, and you 'll have to poke around to find it. There's a LOT going on my website, so you will be thoroughly entertained while you're looking around!



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What does it mean to be PRO-BLACK?

(Reprinted from UP Magazine Fall 2019 Issue)

Being Pro-Black is more than just a title, label or figure of speech – it is a way of life and a state of being. If one is truly Pro-Black, they will do what is necessary to uplift and assist Black people to move forward and do all that is crucial to have a positive affect on both themselves as individuals and to our community at large.

To be sure, the Pro-Black community is not a monolith however, We may vary in religious, political, social and personal beliefs, but with that in mind, our rallying point is the fact that we are BLACK FIRST. We love ourselves and we love our people. We desire nothing more than to see the perpetuation of our people as well as attaining peace for ourselves and our people. We don't think in terms of only our individual escape, but that of our brothers and sisters, both in this country and worldwide. We spend our time examining the culture and the system we have been born into and dedicate time to understanding exactly what the situation is and seeking a remedy for what ails us.

Even within that dynamic, many times Pro-Blacks do not see eye to eye, but our disagreements are nuanced. We are in agreement that we want to achieve peace, freedom and self-actualization, but we may have widely different ideas of how to get there.

Pro-Black people are FOR Black People.

That is a simple enough statement, but the implications of it are profound.

As Pro-Black people, our thoughts and actions are always directed toward the betterment of our people. We don't always do things faultlessly. We are only human and prone to

Imperfection, nevertheless, that does not stop us from trying. We understand that our people are caught in a trick bag and that, though we may have different ideas as to how to get out of it, the end goal is that we get out of it.

We TRUE Pro-Black people are not out here for fame, fortune or notoriety. There is a reason that we often say, "There is NO money in being TRULY Pro-Black". We know the truth of that and it doesn't matter to us because ultimately our goal is to help our people... not to enrich ourselves. For us it is not a case of some kind of blind altruism – it stems from a genuine love of self and of our people, along with the understanding of our true greatness in this world. We know we are more than what we were taught by a system created by people that hate us and want to see us wiped out (after using us for all we have).

We desire to self-actualize and to find the peace that material wealth or fame cannot deliver. We are the TRUE Pro-Blacks.

Unapologetically. Not those who claim Pro-Blackness but prove by their actions they are not. Keeping in mind that a person can CLAIM to be anything. There were women who claimed to be Anastasia (the lone survivor of the assassination of the Romanoff family – the last Czars of Russia) there are people who have claimed to be Howard Hughes; people who claim to be time travelers; aliens from outer space, and (of course) there is no shortage of people who claim to be Jesus Christ.

Does the fact they are making the claim make it true or give it any kind of weight?

Of course not... because a person can literally CLAIM anything.

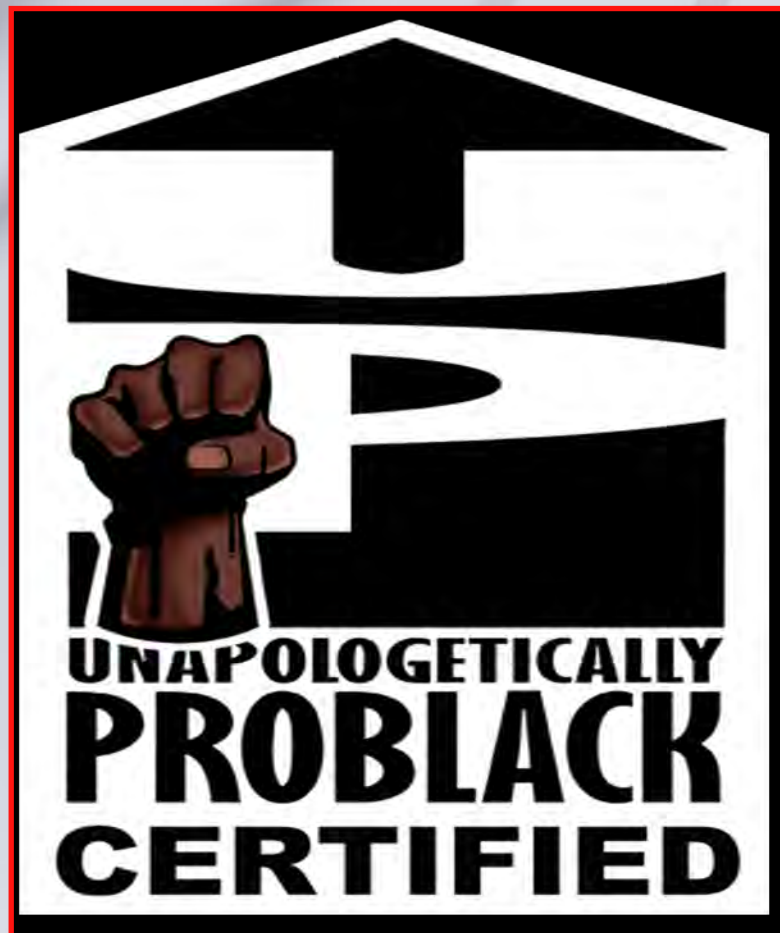
If a person or a large group of people claim to be vegan, and they are seen sneaking and eating steak three times a week... is it fair to say "See, I knew all those vegans are phonies!" No that would not be correct, because if the people are eating meat three times a week, they are obviously NOT vegans... REGARDLESS of what they claim, and therefore should not be spoken of in the context of people who truly are vegan.

So, if a man or woman is shaking their fist and claiming Pro-Blackness, though they are doing things, which are patently not Pro-Black, that just makes them misguided (at best) or outright frauds (at worst). They are NOT Pro-Black and should not be spoken of as if they are.

Then there is the issue of those who tirelessly work to shoehorn non-Pro-Black people as part of the Pro-Black community who have announced time after time, THEMSELVES that they are NOT Pro-Black. For Pro-Black people, this is the most egregious and frustrating thing of all. When we have to listen to other Black people who want to hate on and belittle the Pro-Black community by holding up examples of Black people who "talk the talk", but don't "walk the walk", but moreover... have stated ad nauseam that they are NOT Pro-Black. Why then, when the haters of our community start talking, they inevitably bequeath unto them the title of Pro-Black – a title they have made very clear they do not even apply to themselves?

There IS a GENUINE Pro-Black community, and it IS a community of Black Loving Black People who desire nothing more than the ultimate good of our community. Those who use our community for their own aggrandizement, enrichment or "come up", are beyond despicable and are NOT part of our community and should not be referred to as such.

They are outsiders, existing on their own continuum and have little to nothing to do with us. As true Pro-Blacks, it is up to us



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to lead by example and to help those who are under the spell of charlatans, liars, egotists, phonies and frauds, to look at our example and see what it REALLY means to be Pro-Black, and the reclaiming and relishing in the power of our Blackness.

There are few things that anger me as much as hearing people (usually Black), who find out something about a man or woman who they perceive as being Pro-Black and then after said person is exposed as a fraud or hypocrite, they (the anti-Pro-Black), can't wait to flock to social media in order to go into soliloquies about the fakes, and frauds and evils of, and within the Pro-Black community – basically contending that the entire Pro-Black community consists of either frauds or those who are being defrauded.

One of the curious quirks about human beings is our tendency to judge organizations, groups or communities by the worst of that community... or worse yet, people who CLAIM to be part of the group, but actually have no affiliation... or still WORSE... those who proclaim THEMSELVES that they are not part of the group, but those who are so determined to berate that group go on and unofficially graft those people in.

Whether it is a Black person claiming to be living a Pro-Black lifestyle and then being outed as living anything but... or out speaking hard against interracial marriage, only to have it discovered that their husband or wife is not Black, or those who claim to care about Black people but their stock and trade is perpetuating a manufactured gender war between Black men and Black women with the BMAS (Black Men Ain't Shit) or BWAS (Black Women Ain't Shit) narrative... these things and more are a thorn in the side of the GENUINE Pro-Black community. The fact is, that we (TRUE Pro-Blacks), despise the hypocrisy, fraud and charlatanism connected with it more than those who flock to social media to harangue it!

The reason we become furious when we (TRUE PRO-BLACK PEOPLE), hear about these fakes, is that it becomes a stain on all of us who are for real, and it makes it that much more difficult for us to do the real work at hand... that of helping our people move forward in getting out of this corrupt, unsustainable system of oppression and exploitation.

Then and only then will we grow strong and in peace as a people, and ultimately silence those who criticize our community falsely.

COMING SOON!

PRESENTLY IN THE EDITOR'S HANDS! (So don't look a ME!)



If you're needing to get your THEORETICAL EBON FICTION (TEF) fix, THIS is the place to go!

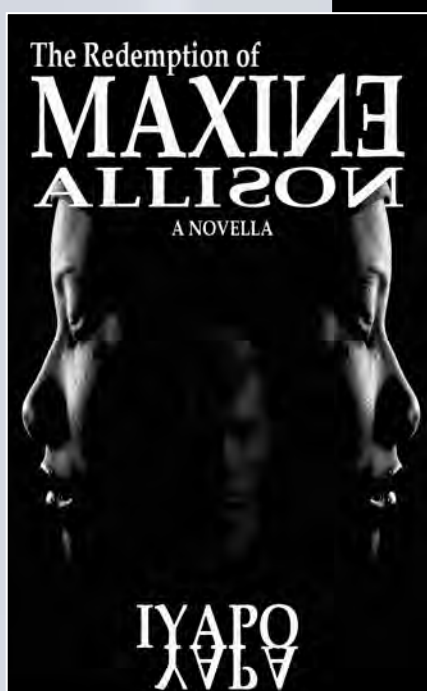
PARADIGM VOID is a collection of short stories written by Iyapo Yapa, one of the new leaders in the field of Black Science Fiction and Speculative Fiction. Each story explores possibilities and concepts that were not long ago only within the domain of the standard Sci-Fi reader.

Now, with the insurgence of Black writers of TEF, Iyapo is adding his powerful voice to the chorus, and moving at full speed to work in our people taking control of our narrative!

In PARADIGM VOID, Iyapo explores things like:

- What if somewhere in the universe numerous alien races observed earth and concluded that there is a faction on the planet that in no way should ever be allowed to reach out beyond the bounds of its own atmosphere?
- What if the universe itself started taking measures to correct and bring balance to itself in terms of justice?
- What if time slowed down nearly to a stop ... but only for YOU?

These possibilities and more are examined in "PARADIGM VOID" a collection of ten short stories in the genre of THEORETICAL EBON FICTION.



Is it BEST to DIVEST?

Maxine Allison thought so.

She'd had enough of dealing with Black men who were abusive, lackadaisical when it came to work, and just overall "losers" in her opinion. So she determined she would find herself a "white prince".

Did she find her PRINCE and lose her mind? Is he PRINCE CHARMING or is he the Prince of PERSIA?!

Has she made a monumental mistake or is a trauma she sustained from a car wreck causing her mind to play tricks on her? If she has made a mistake can Maxine ever undo her disastrous decision ... right or wrong, it seems there is no way for her to find redemption...

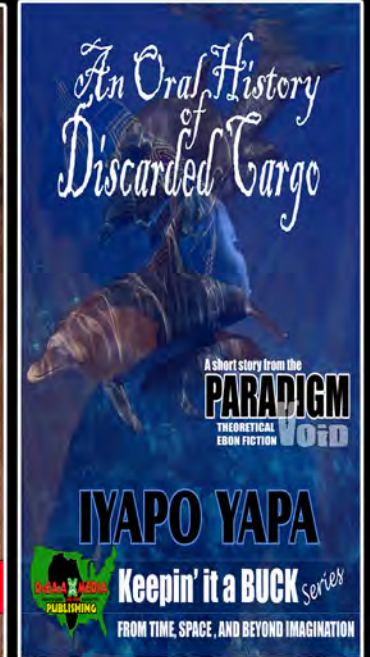
or is there?

Love, hate, secrets and deception abound in what is sure to be one of Iyapo Yapa's most mind bending and controversial books to date. Read *The Redemption of Maxine Allison* and find out why!

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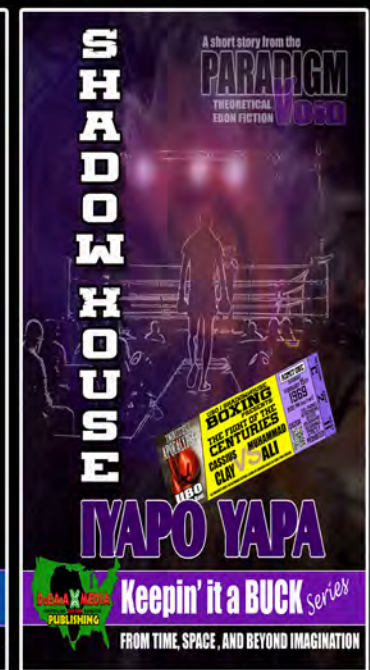
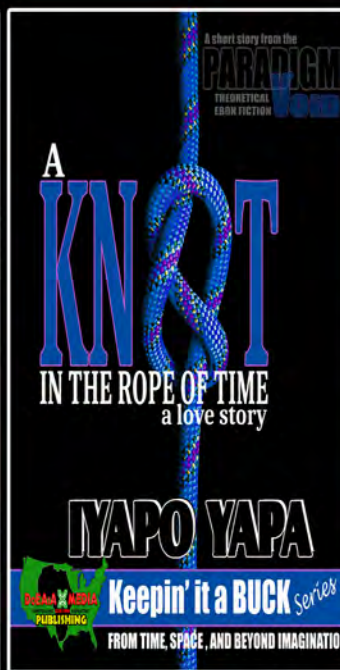


IT IS TIME TO JOURNEY INTO THE **PARADIGM VOID** ONE STEP AT A TIME.

EACH SHORT STORY IS DIFFERENT. EACH ONE THOUGHT PROVOKING & MIND BENDING.
EACH ONE ONLY **A DOLLAR!** AVAILABLE RIGHT NOW ON: [amazon](https://www.amazon.com)



Keepin' it a BUCK series



Also, Keepin' it a BUCK series TWO: Stories from Further Journeys into the Paradigm VOID is out NOW!



Also remember:

ORAL TRADITION talking books are also coming soon! Click the image to the right to hear a sample, of one of our talking books. Yes, it's still in its rough form, but the story is still fun as all get out! So give it a listen!

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Complete Prologue - RASULALLAH, OHIO: A Hattie Lee Mystery

There was only a handful of things that could get your ass thrown out of the town of Rasulallah and Hattie “Randy” Lee had done one of them.

Or so it was believed.

Tears obscured her vision as she looked around what she could make out of the bedroom as she packed her clothes. Her husband Benjamin—Benny, as she was prone to call him—standing across the room, was mostly a blur against the sunlight that shined through the window. Benjamin was also packing. She didn’t have to see him clearly to know that; under the circumstances, packing was all he could have been doing.

She knew he was still angry with her—furious in fact. Hattie told him and the committee that she had not done the thing she was accused of, but she got the feeling he didn’t believe her any more than they did. To his credit, Benjamin from that day to this did not show any outward signs of anger. He locked it away deep within and consigned it to one of the empty spaces where dark secrets dwell as they patiently await an opportunity to once again see the light of day. Even upon the reemergence of such thoughts, Hattie didn’t fear much. Benny was not the kind of man who would ever physically or verbally attack or abuse a woman, let alone the woman he loved. The thought of harming a woman was something as far from him as it would be the thought of jumping out the window next to him and expecting to fly.

No.

He was a gentle man. He was not docile by any stretch, nor was he what anyone could even remotely categorize as a ‘pushover’. Benjamin Lee was a strong man. A quiet man. A thinking man—and if only one thing more could be said about Benjamin Lewis Lee, it was that he had a deep and abiding love for his wife, and a commitment to his marriage that would make the corded cables of the Golden Gate Bridge seem frail in comparison.

Hattie wiped her eyes and continued her task silently as did her husband, nearly exactly mirroring her moves. The room was void of any organic sound from either of them. The only noises that floated in the air was the opening and closing of drawers, removal of clothes, flapping and folding shirts, dresses, blouses, and pants which became rhythmically, a sad ironic melody. As

Hattie folded her clothes, laid them neatly within the suitcase and patted them down, she would periodically look around the room as if trying to take in every crack and crease, every imperfection in the paint, caulking and molding. All the things her husband had sworn he would get around to fixing but could never quite find the time for.

“I should have just called Mr. Murdoch to fix this stuff.” she thought.

What did it matter now? They had been ordered to leave.

It was not because Benny was a lazy man these things had gone unattended, not by any measure. His very limited time was because he stayed busy with his work as an accountant and sat on several of the committees in Rasulallah, as well as a couple in the greater Black community beyond the town’s borders.

Ironically, one of the committees on which Benjamin served in Rasulallah was the very committee

which had passed judgment on Hattie and ordered them to leave the community.

Hattie closed her eyes and thought about the times she would lay in bed in this very room, reading a good romance or mystery/suspense novel while Benjamin sat downstairs unwinding from work, savoring the memory of his dinner while reading some science fiction magazine or watching the Twilight Zone if it was 9:30 Friday night.

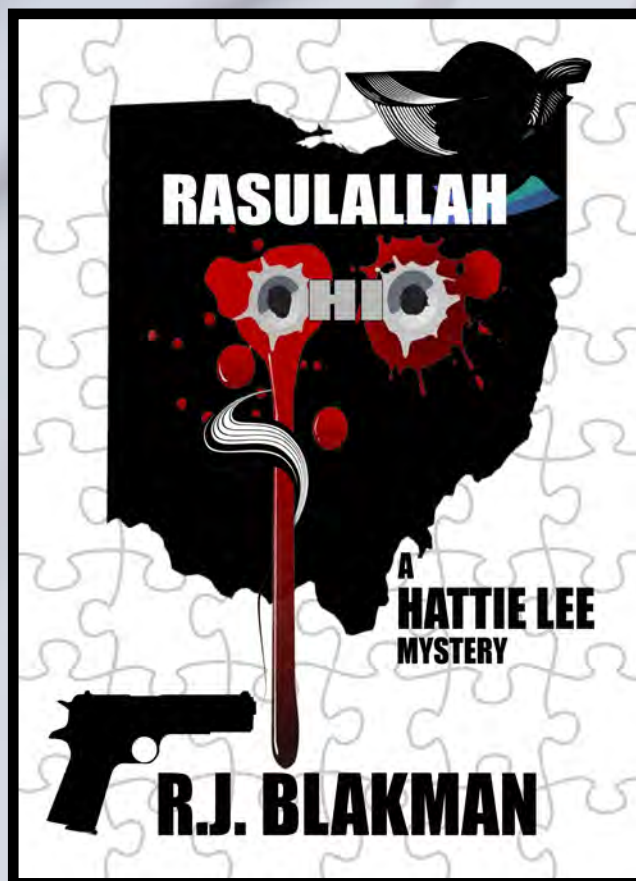
Hattie didn’t really care for those kinds of books or shows. Benjamin was not a fan of romance or mysteries. But every now and then they would meet in the middle and find something they both enjoyed together. Sometimes even stepping into the other’s territory and discovering what they had just read or seen together wasn’t so bad after all.

Perhaps.

Perhaps not.

What came to be understood by both of them was that what they were doing wasn’t quite as important as them doing whatever it was, together. The togetherness was what added the spice.

Of course, now they were packing together—not so much spice in that.



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Complete Prologue - RASULALLAH, OHIO: A Hattie Lee Mystery (Continued)

Hattie didn't mind a little alone time and quiet every now and then, but the present uncomfortable silence was a thing that gave her more anxiety than she cared to deal with. She was about to say something to Benjamin—anything—when the phone rang downstairs. Benny immediately laid down what he was about to fold and draped it over the open lid of his suitcase. He then started turning toward the door. Hattie, who was closer to the bedroom door and whose hands were already empty for the moment held one up and said, “You don't have to stop... I'll get it.” She turned slowly, taking a few steps toward the bedroom door as she listened to her husband resume his packing. Hattie walked wearily out and down the hard wood floor of the hallway. She listened to the sound of her own footsteps and the ringing of the phone as it became ever more demanding of her attention.

Even with the apprehension of who might be waiting on the other side of the line, Hattie was glad to be away from the oppressive quiet, the soundless argument left behind in the bedroom. She jostled down the staircase, holding tight the banister and picking up a little speed as she descended, “Hold on, I'm coming, I'm coming!” Hattie said as she walked over to a black rotary dial phone that sat on an end table beside a brown leather armchair. She leaned over, picked up the receiver and put it cautiously to her ear. “H-Hello?” she said still standing.

“How you holdn' up Scotty?” Were the first words to greet her ear. Hattie breathed a quiet sigh of relief when she recognized the voice belonged to her childhood friend Minnie Maubry.

Maubry.

Everyone seemed sooner or later to pronounce her name as, “Mulberry”—something that happened so often Minnie had long ago stopped bothering to correct it.

“Hey Dove. I'm doin' alright.” Hattie said.

“No, you're not. I can hear it in your voice.”

“I guess everybody in town's still talking about it, huh? I know how it is around here. If Mrs. Stanley chases some kids out of her apple trees, everybody knows about it within half an hour, so this has to be the news

of the day.”

“Yeah Honey. You know it is. Speaking of which – she doesn't believe it, her husband neither.”

“Who doesn't believe what?”

“Come on Baby, what are we talking about? Mr. and Mrs. Stanley don't believe you did it. And I heard down at the hairdresser that the town is split about half and half. Most of the men think you did, most of the women don't, and Mr. Stanley of course.”

“And what do you think Dove? What side of the line are you on?”

When next Minnie spoke, there was a hurt in her voice that Hattie hadn't heard since the day after Minnie's mother had been rushed to the University Hospital following a stroke, where later that night she passed.

Minnie's voice was thick, as if suddenly full of a gulp of water she was trying to force down, “You even have to ask me that Scotty?”

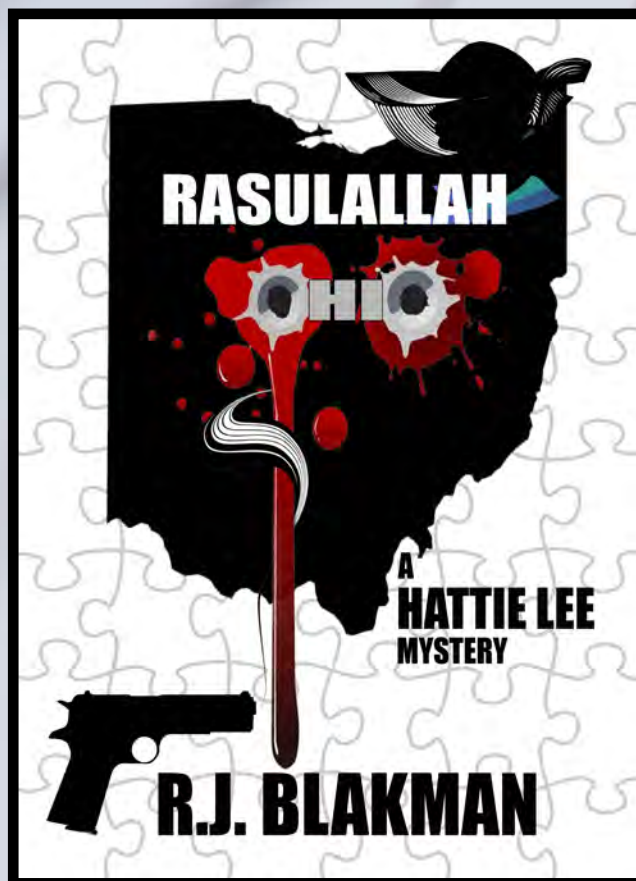
Hattie immediately knew she had made a grave error in asking such a thing of her longtime friend. Hattie could not see her own face, but she knew the color of her caramel skin had likely lightened by three shades. “Dove! Oh, I'm so sorry Honey! I'm SO sorry! You're right, I should have known better than to even ask you that – to even think it! Everything is happening so fast, and this is all so terrible and frustrating. I – I know that's no excuse, but I'm not thinking my best right now! I'm so sorry! Please forgive me!”

Except for some sniffing, there was silence on the other end of the line. To some, the question Hattie had asked her friend may have seemed harmless—perhaps even legitimate, but within the context of their friendship, the question was deeply hurtful.

“Dove? Minnie Honey, you still there?”

“I'm here Scotty. Girl, it'll take more than an insensitive ass question from an insensitive ass jackass to sink me.”

Hattie leaned back her head, closed her eyes for a moment and softly smiled as relief washed over her like a soft warm summer rain. She was glad to hear in her best friend's voice that even as she wiped her tears Minnie was likely smiling as she spoke.



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Complete Prologue - RASULALLAH, OHIO: A Hattie Lee Mystery (Continued)

“I’m on your side Scotty. Mrs. Stanley and Mr. Stanley are on your side and so are a lot of people here. We’ve already started a petition to—”

“Benny doesn’t believe me.” Hattie interrupted.

“What?! Say that again Scotty? I don’t think I heard you right.”

“Yes you did. Benny doesn’t believe me.”

Suddenly Minnie understood more clearly. Benjamin was the man Hattie vowed her life to, and him to her. They ate together, laughed and cried together, shared the same bed, made love. They were building a life together. Sure, she and Hattie had been friends since the age of the dinosaur—thick as thieves they are, but this man who lives with her and knows her intimately, if he doesn’t believe her, then well—who can she trust to stand with her?

“Scotty I’m sorry. That... well... that doesn’t even sound like Benjamin to me. Are you sure? Has he actually said he doesn’t believe you?”

“Well... no. Not in words.”

“Not in words? Then how?”

“I dunno. I can just feel it off him. You know how you can feel something off someone when you’re around them?”

“Yeah Scotty, and a lot of the time it’s true. But sometimes you gotta ask a person some things straight out. Know what I mean? You know as well as I do that half the time we don’t know any more ‘bout what’s runnin’ through a man’s head, than they know what’s goin’ on in ours. Though you wouldn’t know that to hear them tell it.”

“Maybe you’re right Dove. Quiet as it’s kept though, I don’t know if I have the nerve to even ask him. I’ve heard a lot of times when people say, ‘Don’t ask questions you don’t want the answer to’. Well, finding out one hundred percent that he doesn’t believe me is an answer I don’t want to hear.”

“You can’t run away from this Sweetie. You know that. I don’t envy you the position you’re in, but you’ve got to talk to the man.”

“He’s not talking to me.”

“Honey, Benjamin Lee don’t talk to nobody. You know he’s quiet. But you’re his wife, and the man loves you. He’ll talk.”

Hattie was silent for a moment, and then smiled slightly, “I hate when you’re right Dove.” She said.

“Oh yeah? Well, you must go ‘round doin’ a LOT-o-hatin’!”

Both women let out a stress relieving laugh.

Before Hattie or Minnie could say anything else, Hattie’s doorbell rang. “Hey Dove, someone’s at the door.” Hattie said.

“Yeah, I heard.”

“Give me a second while I go see who it is.”

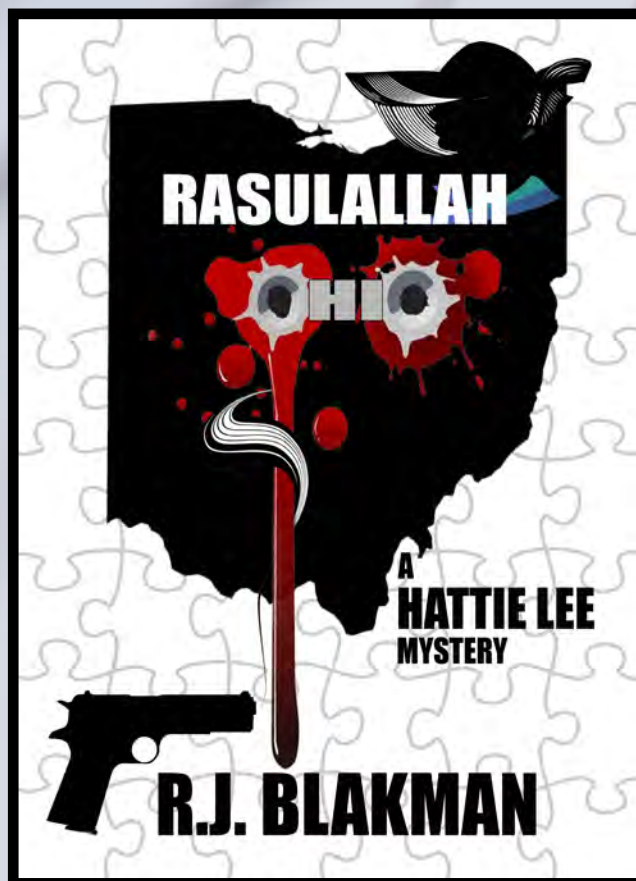
Hattie laid the receiver down on the table beside the phone and immediately thought about all the times she’d asked her husband to

request an extension cord from the phone company. As it was, they were stuck having to sit in that armchair or stand next to it when they wanted to talk on the phone. With an extension they could at least move around the rooms a little bit. She had also been after him to get another phone which would have been better yet. That way they could keep one upstairs and not have to run downstairs all the time to try to catch the phone or keep one on the outside patio. Right now, if they wanted to talk upstairs or outside, they had to take the phone and plug into one of the already live jacks at those locations, which was fine at first, but got old very quickly.

Oh, it seemed like she was always after Benjamin to do something, that never seemed to be able to get done. Maybe she would contact the phone company herself—wait that’s right—they were packing to leave.

Hattie walked over to the front door and looked through the peep hole. She then opened it fully to reveal Maybelle Jones on the other side of the screen door.

One thing was well known throughout the town of Rasulallah. When Maybelle Jones shows up on your doorstep it can only be one of a few reasons.



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Complete Prologue - RASULALLAH, OHIO: A Hattie Lee Mystery (Continued)

Someone's sick.

Someone's dead.

Someone's going to jail.

Someone's in jail.

Someone's sick in jail.

Someone died in jail.

Someone's gotten out of jail and got sick.

Someone's got sick and was going to jail but died first...

And on and on, the combinations could be endless with her. The one constant was that if she was on your porch, Maybelle will be holding a red and white checker patterned cloth covered bowl of freshly fried chicken in one hand, and in the other a fresh baked pie or cake of some kind.

What was the occasion? No one was sick, dead, in jail or on their way to jail? Hattie and her husband had been banished from the community for five years, but that was hardly a death, or even a prison sentence.

Maybelle stood on the porch smiling sheepishly, fried chicken and pie in hand obviously waiting to be invited in. "Hello Hattie, I've come to bring you a couple things." she said.

Mrs. Jones took two steps back as Hattie unhooked the latch and opened the screen door to allow her entry. "Hello Maybelle, come on in." Hattie said, "I'm sorry, I was on the telephone when you rang the doorbell. Just have a seat while I let them know I'll call back."

"Oh, I'm sorry Hattie. I didn't mean to interrupt anything. I can come back later." Maybelle said.

"No, no. Don't be silly. Just give me a moment to get off this phone and I'll be right with you."

"Alright. I brought you and your husband some fried chicken and apple pie. May I take it to your kitchen? I've only been in here a couple times, but I'm sure I remember where it is."

"Go on ahead, it's pretty much a straight line from the living room, and on the other side of the dining room."

"Ok. Thank you."

"Thank you, Miss Maybelle."

Hattie watched Maybelle Jones make her way through the large dining room on her way to the kitchen as she picked up the receiver, covering the mouthpiece with her hand for a second. When Hattie was fairly certain Maybelle had found her way into the kitchen and was placing the food she had so generously prepared and brought over, onto the counter, putting her just out of earshot, Hattie removed her hand from the mouthpiece and said in a rough whisper. "Dove, I need to get off the phone, Maybelle Jones just stopped over here, she's in the kitchen right now. I've gotta go."

"Maybelle?! What's goin' on over there? One-o-y'all sick or dyin'? You or Benjamin goin' ta jail?!"

Hattie pushed down a laugh, "Hush up Dove. I'll call you back later."

"Well, what's she over there for? What kind of pie did she bring? Or is it a cake? If it's a cake, means somebody's sick or—"

"Bye Dove."

"I'm just sayin'. If she's over there it's because she's bein' nosy. Everyone knows what a busy body she is."

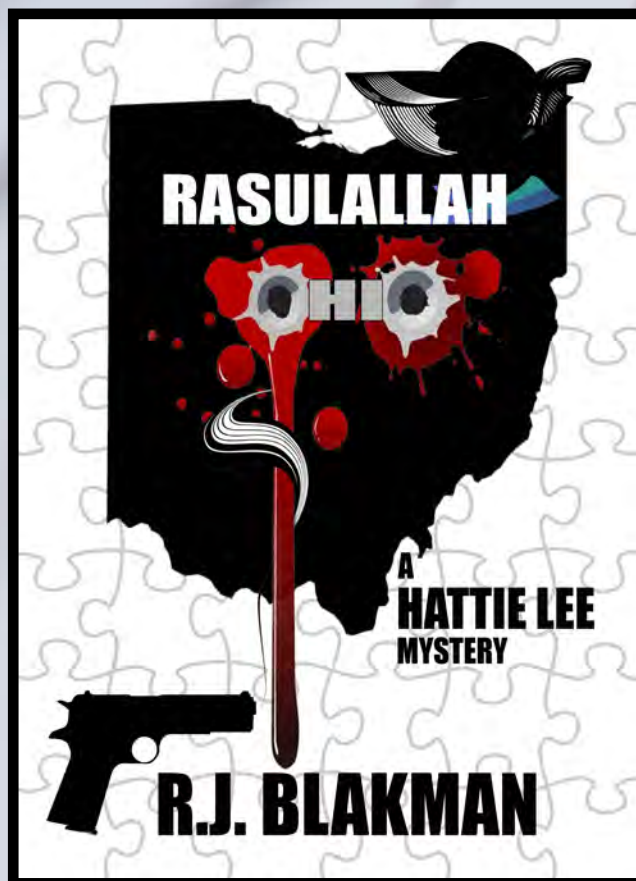
"Uh-huh. Hey Dove, how's that picture window of yours doing?"

"Oh Scotty! Let me tell you! I almost forgot! The other day I was lookin' outside and I saw Janelle Baldwin's husband and some woman I never seen before walkin' by my house, an' they were lookin' mighty cozy. I think they might be—"

Hattie smiled and shook her head. "Goodbye Dove." she said before gently hanging up the phone. Just as the phone landed back in its cradle Maybelle walked back into the living room. She was still displaying the same smile from the porch, this time with her eyebrows upturned in a way that could only be interpreted as someone feeling deep pity for the person on whom they are focused.

"Are you alright dear?" Maybelle asked.

"I've been better." Hattie said as she motioned her guest to have a seat. Maybelle found a place on the couch adjacent to the leather armchair on which Hattie had just sat. Maybelle sat up nearly straight. She was famous for her upright posture, and angled herself left,



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fingers interlocked and hands cupping her knees so that she could face Hattie.

Maybelle Jones was a pillar of the community, and she knew it. She always carried herself in a certain way that gave onlookers the impression that the woman thought she was regal. To her credit, that belief in self was contagious, as many people who met her ended up leaving her presence having the same notion. She carried herself with a kind of quiet dignity that was readily apparent, if not a little forced, and she was never seen in public dresses casually (unless of course she was attending a church picnic or some other such event.

Also, Maybelle Jones loved her earrings.

And so did Hattie.

If nothing else, the two women, Maybelle, and Hattie, had that in common. They loved earrings the way most of their counterparts' loved shoes. The earrings Maybelle would wear were beautifully crafted, looking to be handmade, tasteful, just this side of gaudy. The only person in Rasulallah who consistently wore earrings even approaching the flash of those of Maybelle Jones was Hattie.

Hattie would talk all the time about Maybelle's earrings, and earrings she had gotten, and Minnie would make absolutely no secret out of the fact that the subject could not have possibly been more boring to her. That was something she and Minnie used to joke about constantly, as she could never figure out her best friend's obsession with her earring collection. They all looked the same to Minnie, but Hattie would point out that the difference between her earrings and Maybelle's was that Maybelle's earrings always seemed to have this quality that made them look like originals that were hand made. Though admittedly, many of hers did to if viewed by someone who wasn't as deeply into earrings as she was. So, she and Maybelle had the earrings in common, but there the commonality ended. Yes, Hattie would never leave home looking frumpy or unkempt, but she in no way approached the starched and wrinkle free look of Maybelle Jones. A woman whom it seemed, never wore the same outfit twice. She knew of course that was nearly impossible, but it sure seemed that way,

especially since they didn't cross paths that often.

Hattie studied the face of her visitor. The woman looked so miserable that it was causing Hattie to feel a way. "Can I offer you something?" Hattie said, "There's some fried chicken and fresh baked apple pie in the kitchen, if you'd like something."

Maybelle tilted her head a little and gave Hattie an intense stare—the way a puppy might do when it's trying to figure something out. Eventually Maybelle said, "But I just brought some fried—" she stopped herself mid-sentence, slouched for a second, then cocked one eye as she pointed at Hattie and started giggling. "Hattie, everyone says you're a jokester! That was pretty good, you got me."

Both women laughed for a moment and as they did, a voice floated down into the living room from upstairs.

"Ran-Lee! RAN-LEE! Where's my spare shaving kit?!"

Hattie twisted so that she was facing toward and looking up at the staircase. "It's at the top of your closet. Second shelf and to the right!"

"Thanks!"

"Benjamin! Maybelle Jones is down here! She brought us some fried chicken and apple pie!"

"Hello Maybelle Jones! Thanks for the food! Somebody gettin' out of jail?!"

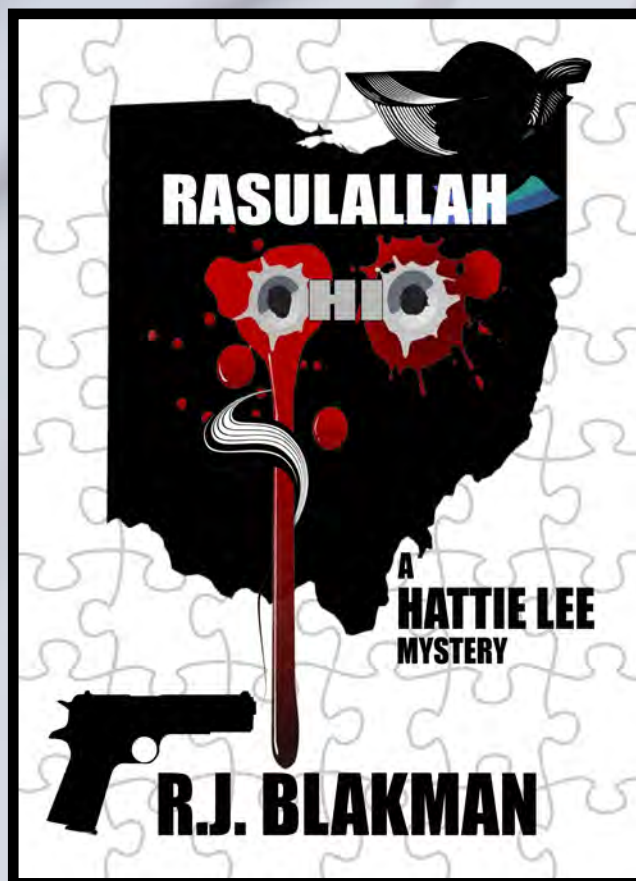
Benjamin Lee was a man of few words. When he did speak it was usually to say something important or profound.

Sometimes not.

This was a case of the latter.

Hattie moved her gaze immediately from facing the top of the staircase to meeting the eyes of Mrs. Jones.

The expression on Maybelle's face was something there was no way Hattie could have expected. Maybelle was smiling very widely, looking far more relaxed and as if she were almost about to laugh. The two women waited until they were fairly sure Benjamin was out of earshot before either of them spoke again.



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Hattie searched for a way to gracefully pull her husband's foot out of her mouth. "I'm sorry about that Maybelle. You know how men are, they're liable to say just about anything just about any time."

Maybelle could no longer hold back her laughter. "Hattie how long have you been living here? This is Rasssuulallah, Ohio!" Maybelle took special care to drag out the name of the town. "Dear, I love this town, but it is the size of a small shoe box and word about everything travels around here like people spinning round on a tilt-o-whirl. I already know what people say about me and my fried chicken and desserts. Shoot, I wear it as a badge of honor."

Hattie sat and relaxed a little into her seat, relieved that the woman sitting across from her was not offended by her husband's unfiltered comment, but knowing full well, that even though this turned out alright, she was still gonna get 'em.

"I would like to ask you something though, if you don't mind." Maybelle said.

"What might that be?"

"Ran-Lee?"

"Oh, Long story."

"Perhaps you'll tell me about it one day when you have the time." Maybelle made the statement the way most people say things without thinking them through. Hattie and her husband were about to be leaving for at least five years—if they indeed ever returned.

The same thought was going through Hattie's mind, but she attributed it to nothing more than just a casual faux pas. "Perhaps. Look, Maybelle, this has been a rough few day for Benjamin and Me, with all the ... well you know." Hattie said.

"Yes Hattie, I know. That's one of the reasons I'm here. I just wanted to let you know that I support you. Both of you. I don't believe you did what they say. And even if you did, who could have blamed you. I don't know what I'd have done if some sinister figure was skulking about outside my house, and I was home alone."

Sinister figure?

Skulking about?

Who even talks like that? Hattie thought, but then, Maybelle Jones did have a reputation for having a flair for the dramatic. "I didn't do it Maybelle." Hattie said.

"I know that Hattie... I'm just saying that even if you did—"

"I didn't!" Hattie uncharacteristically snapped at the other woman.

"Ok, you didn't, I'm sorry, I came here to help not to hurt. I don't want to upset you any more than you already are. I apologize if I was out of line. I mean that sincerely."

Hattie leaned to her left, placed an elbow on the arm of the leather chair on which she sat, and leaned her cheek into the loosely balled fist of her left hand. "I apologize too, this is all just so bad."

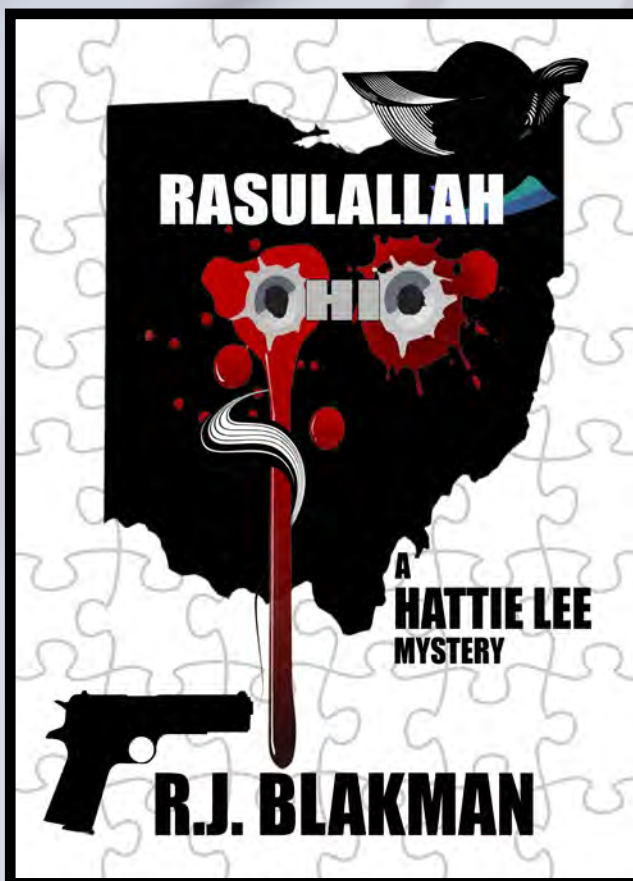
"So do you two have some kind of a plan?" Maybelle asked.

"We really haven't had a lot of time to think about anything but going before the committee, which everyone knows how that went ... and to basically find another place outside Rasulallah to move to."

Hattie reflected on the fact that she and Benjamin actually did have a far greater plan. A plan that would involve a degree of hardship for both of them, but if they could pull it off, they might get to live in Rasulallah again, and Hattie might even be able to find a way to clear her name. Hattie and her husband knew this (with the exception of the part about clearing her name), as did Minnie, but that kind of information was only for a select few.

Maybelle Jones may have seemed nice enough, but it wasn't like she was a close friend. Hell, she hadn't even earned the right to call Hattie, Randy and not Hattie. So, it was fine to talk and even discuss some of what was happening, but Hattie lived by something her mother had taught her long ago; something she was certain was taught to her mother before that: Never let anyone know what you're up to.

"... sign or anything in front of your house."



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Hattie shook her head as if coming out of a dream. She had totally stopped focusing on the woman sitting with her and missed what she guessed was an entire chunk of a conversation.

“I’m sorry Maybelle ... could you repeat that?”

“Honey, I said, if you’re going to be selling, you don’t have much time to do it. I don’t see a for sale sign or anything in front of your house.”

“Oh, we’re getting around to it. A lot is coming at us at once.”

“I understand totally.” Maybelle opened her purse without much rummaging around, and as if it were the only thing inside, she produced a business card. She then sat forward and passed it to Hattie. “Here you go.”

The card was fairly plain, though printed on what was obviously a prestige card stock said in black glossy letters. “Jones Realty a subsidiary of Mathis Property Partners, Monterey, CA: We make selling your home a moving experience. Then gave the name of the agent, Jessie R. Jones and his phone number.

“What’s this?” Hattie said as she read the card.

“It’s from a real estate agent of course. Jessie Jones. My brother-in-law. I just wanted to make sure you had this while you and your husband search for an agent if you haven’t already found one. He’s Black like us of course and he has a track record for getting the best prices on the houses he sells. And he sells them fast! So, you and Benjamin may want to give him a call. He lives in California, but he’s also licensed here in Ohio.”

“Thank you, Maybelle. I’ll be sure and let Benjamin know about your brother-in-law.”

“Ok. Good. Well, I’ve taken up enough of your time Hattie.” Maybelle stood and straightened her clothes. Hattie stood with her and both women walked toward the door.

“Well, I really do appreciate the chicken and apple pie. I’m sure me and Mr. Lee are going to enjoy it very much.” Hattie said.

“Oh, don’t mention it dear. I just wish it didn’t have to be under such sad circumstances.”

Hattie opened the front door and then Maybelle held open the screen door and stepped out onto the porch. “Well just know that I’m truly sorry for what you and your husband are going through right now, and that I’ll be praying for both of you.”

“Thank you, Miss Maybelle.”

Maybelle let go the screen door and it swung back quickly making the characteristic slap sound against the door frame that nearly all spring hinged screen doors tend to make. She then walked toward the end of the porch to go down the three steps leading to the walkway. “Don’t you forget to give Jessie a call now!” Maybelle said as she bounced lower and lower until she was level to the ground and walking out toward the sidewalk.

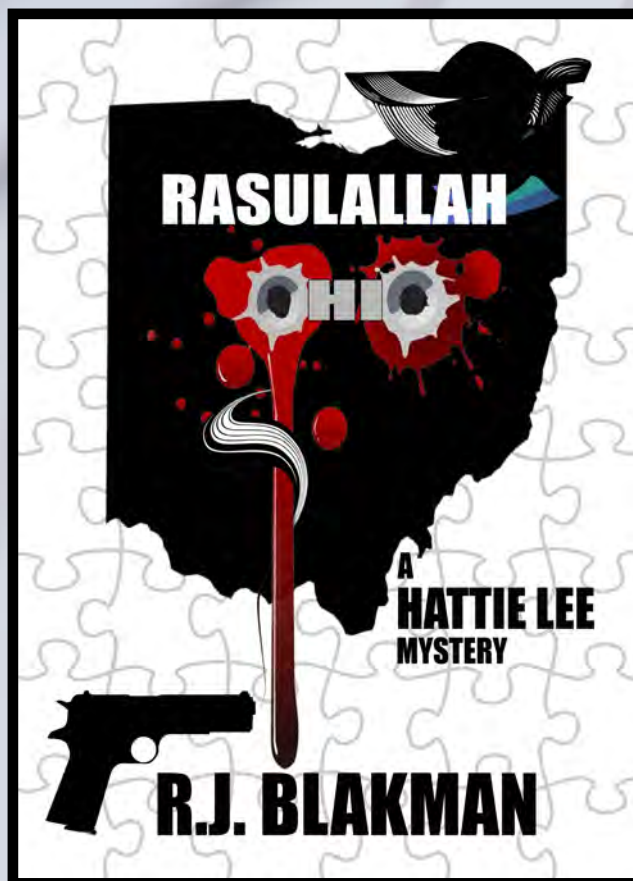
Hattie hooked the screen door more out of keeping it from knocking around with the breeze than for any kind of security, then closed the front door. Walking back into

the living room she studied the business card. Though Hattie knew she and Benjamin had no intentions on selling, something told her not to throw the card away. She walked over to the coat closet that was just over from the front door and at the foot of the stairs, and without much thought, opened the door, dug out one of her purses—it didn’t matter which—and put the card inside.

After closing the door, Hattie looked upstairs where she no longer heard the sounds of packing. Perhaps Benjamin had taken a break. Maybe it was something else. Whichever it was, Hattie grabbed hold of the round wooden ball at the end of the banister that was the beginning of her ascent back upstairs and to her own packing. Again, gliding her hand across the banister, and this time, with not quite as much pep in her movements Hattie slowly stepped upward.

She still heard nothing coming from the bedroom. Maybe Benny was finished with his packing, but that was unlikely. She crept up the wooden stairs that creaked very little and allowed her a degree of autonomy as she made her way to the top.

Hattie had never been afraid of her husband, nor was she now, but there was a kind of heaviness—an oppressiveness between them now.



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Reaching the top of the staircase, she made a right to go back down the hallway, and back to the bedroom and the task she needed to complete but cursed every moment of. As Hattie made her way down the hall, she thought about what Minnie had said to her about asking Benjamin how he was feeling and what he thought instead of making assumptions. “When I get to the bedroom,” she thought, “I’m going to ask Benny straight out what he thinks, and if he believes me.”

Hattie had taken so much time building up the nerve to ask her husband the question that she started speaking before even stepping fully into the bedroom. “Benjamin, we’ve had a lot of quiet between us and I know you’re mad and upset. But I want to know, if you—?” She stepped into the empty bedroom and wasn’t quite sure what was going on. She looked around the room to see her own, still open suitcase now sitting alone and abandoned—Benjamin’s having obviously taken flight. “Benny?” Hattie said, unnerved, as she turned and walked down the hall to the bathroom and knocked on the door, “Benny, you in there?” she said as she knocked—her knocking causing the door to open slightly revealing that the light was off, and the room was as devoid of her husband’s presence as the bedroom.

Hattie continued down the hall beyond the bathroom past a guest bedroom and to a door that sat at the top of the staircase. The door, she remembered was one of the things that sold her on the house. Instead of taking a left at the stairs to go down to the living room, to the right there was a hint of a hall which led to a door that opened to a deck. She and her husband would often use that on sunny mornings to go straight from the bedroom and outside onto the deck that sat just outside the door. They could either just sit out there relaxing in the sun, or from there they could go down a flight of stairs to the back yard if they wished, without having to go down through the living room, dining room and kitchen.

It would appear Benjamin had used that door today. Hattie didn’t even bother to go to the garage. She knew it would be empty, just like the bedroom, and just like

the bathroom. He likely left with his spare shaving kit and was on his way to a hotel or motel somewhere, so Hattie guessed. That answered her question. She would never have thought him capable of just up and leaving her, even if he didn’t believe her. But here she was.

Frustrated that she had spent most of her day in tears with seemingly no end in sight, Hattie came in from the deck and slowly closed the door behind her. She made her way back to the bedroom and sat at the side of the bed.

Everything was falling apart.

Everything.

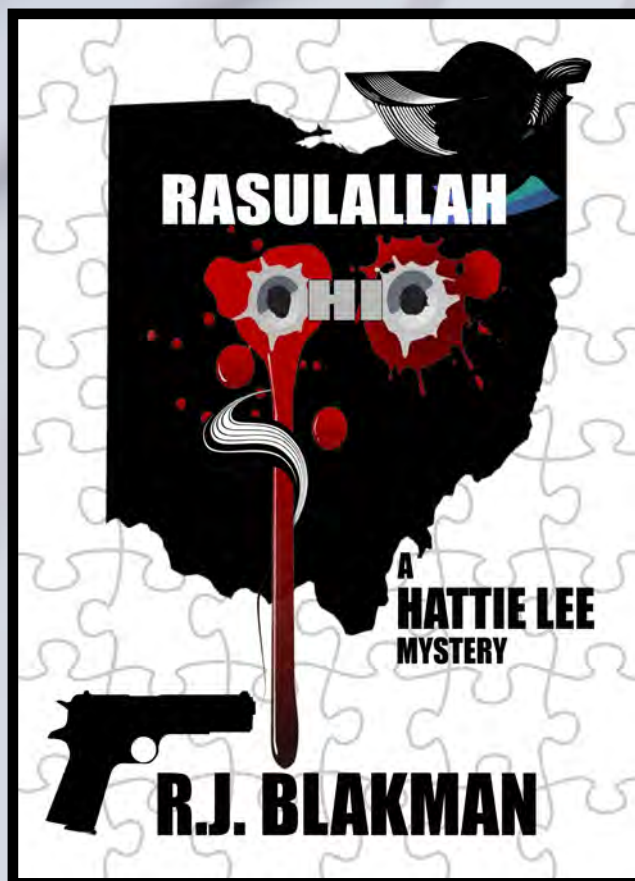
And all because of something she was accused of but was innocent of doing. Hattie raised her hands above her head and plopped backward onto the softness of the mattress. She stared at the patterns in the ceiling. She could tell by it and the subtle dimming of the room that the sun was soon to set.

Tears sliding down both sides of her cheeks in a way that almost tickled, Hattie let her mind drift back to how the whole mess started.

* * *

Four nights earlier, Hattie was upstairs in the bedroom reading one of her romance novels and thinking about how happy she would be when her beloved Benny got home. He was having to work late these nights because of inventories at the company he worked for and the balancing of books. It was something he only had to do a couple times a year. Sometimes he wouldn’t get home until two or three in the morning, but it was a very good job, with excellent benefits and a real future for her husband. He seemed to love the job and that he was using his degree to start building a family and a life; so, a few extremely late nights once or twice a year wasn’t anything to complain about.

As she read, she was vaguely aware of some noises coming from outdoors, or so she thought. She had heard similar noises fifteen or so minutes ago, but she chalked it up to raccoons running around on the deck. It happened fairly often and after learning how hard it was to run the critters off, they decided that she and her husband would have the deck in the daytime and early evening, and the raccoons could have it at night.



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What Hattie was hearing now was a little louder than the critters she heard earlier, but not by much. Still assuming it was raccoons or perhaps even some possums, which also liked visiting her deck from time to time if there was food to be found, she simply tried to tune out the dull noises and continue reading her book.

Looking over at the clock on the bedroom wall Hattie saw that it was about one thirty five in the morning. Though tired, she was determined to complete the chapter of LOVE or GLORY, she was reading to discover whether Penelope Hargrove was going to lose Lance's love forever.

She lifted the book, spread it wide on her chest and prepared to find out. After making it through about two chapters, as she watched things growing ever worse for poor Penelope—the next commotion, she heard from outside made her jump. This was definitely not the sound of raccoons or possums! The noise was very clear and disturbing. It was the sound of yelling, screaming and some kind of struggle. Hattie jumped again when there was a hard knock at her door. Wanting to ignore it, but knowing she couldn't, Hattie reached over to the nightstand and grabbed the pen and index card she always kept by her side while reading.

On the card she crossed out the previous information, then wrote down the date, time, page number and paragraph of the book (a habit she had gotten into as a young girl and grew into over the years) and slipped the index card within the pages as her bookmark. She then sat the book on the nightstand, got out of bed, put on her plush pink bathrobe, walked over to her closet to find "Freddy". She reached up to the first shelf removed a wooden box, which contained her loaded revolver, Freddy, for 'READY FREDDY. Grabbing Freddy from its resting place and stuffing it into the pocket of her bathrobe Hattie made her way toward the bedroom door. She didn't know what to expect when she got downstairs, but had learned in life for sure, that there is no such thing as a "good" phone call or knock on the door at two o'clock in the morning. Hattie walked down the hall, to the stairs and descended quickly, but cautiously, almost shuffling down to the front door.

Before reaching the door, she could see the blur of intense red and blue lights flashing in succession through the closed curtains of the living room picture window. She slowly leaned her face toward the door and looked through the peep hole. On the other side, obscured partially by the screen door, she saw the distorted face of a white police officer. She slowly opened the door with one hand, the other firmly on the loaded revolver in her pocket. When she got the door fully opened, she could see several police cars and a paddy wagon, all with lights, incessantly flashing red and blue, lighting up the area and the houses around it like obscene Fourth of July decorations. Hattie looked around at several of her neighbors standing out on their porches and on the sidewalk.

They all seemed to have their eyes trained on something just outside her field of vision. Hattie put her face closer to the screen door and looked to the right where everyone

else was looking. Eventually she could make out the form of a young Black man in hand cuffs—obviously having been beaten—and being taken to one of the police cars as he jumped and pushed against them in protest. In the darkness and through the screen she couldn't completely make the young man out yet, but she was pretty sure who it was.

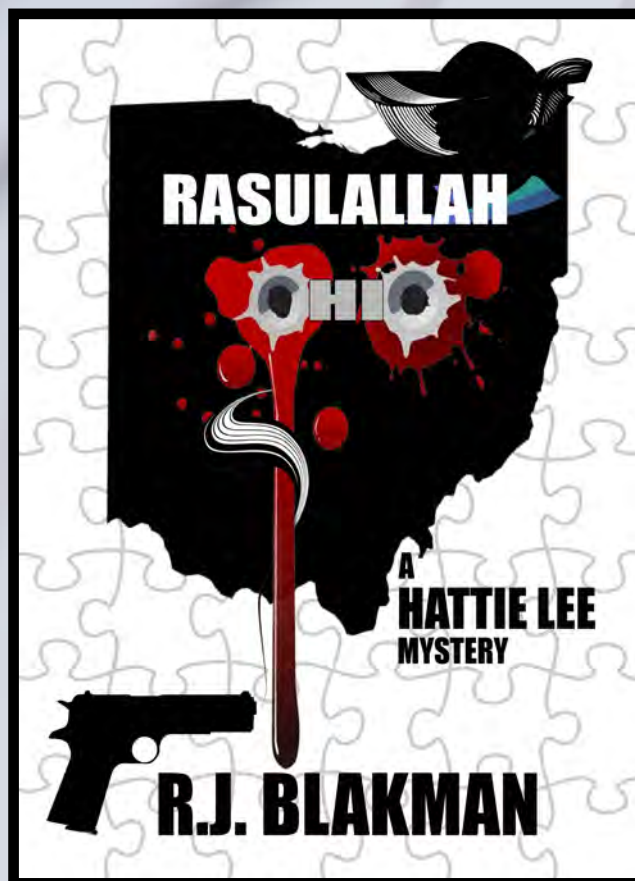
"W-what's going on out here?!" Hattie said attempting to process what she was seeing.

"Ma'am, is your name Hattie R. Lee?" the officer said.

"It is. What's going on here?! Who is that? That looks like AJ Johnson, what are you doing to him?!"

"Ma'am we're out here responding to a call from this residence saying that there was a prowler Skulking around your house. When we got here, we saw this boy running away from your residence."

"A Prowler?! Running away?! Officer, I didn't make any phone call and I'm not aware of any prowler being out around here. This is a quiet neighborhood; we don't have prowlers. As for that young man, that looks like AJ Johnson. My husband and I have known his family for years and known him since he was little.



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He's an honor student and he's on the track and field team at his school. If you did see him running, it's because he likes to run in the middle of the night because it's cooler, nobody is around and he's more relaxed after he's completed all his homework. He wasn't 'prowling around' anywhere, I can guarantee you that! I didn't call anybody, and AJ over there wasn't doing anything, so you can take him out of those cuffs and let him go about his business."

"So, you won't be filing a police report, or pressing any charges?" the cop said mechanically.

"Pressing char—? I did not call you! Let that boy go on is way!"

"I'm sorry ma'am, it's not as simple as that. Not anymore."

"What are you talking about? I already told you who he is and why he was running out here, and that I didn't call you."

"Yes ma'am, but when we got here and attempted to apprehend young Mr. Johnson over there. He started resisting and in the course of his resistance he scratched and bruised several officers. So, we'll be taking him downtown and charging him with resisting arrest and assaulting police officers."

"Wait a minute! Scratches and bruises?! I don't see any damage on your people, but y'all look like y'all done beat the hell outta that young man! That there's just a boy and a good one! You can't do this to him! He's on his way to college... you'll mess all that up for him! I did not call you!"

"Nothing we can do at this point." The cop said so unemotionally that Hattie wondered if he even had a soul dwelling within him. The cop turned and walked down the steps and out to the sidewalk.

Hattie unlatched her screen door and ran out onto the porch so she could fully see what was happening. She could now clearly see AJ's face. He was battered far worse than she had first thought and being brutalized as he was being pushed toward the back of the police car and fighting every step of the way as neighbors looked on. At one point AJ's eyes met those of Hattie who was looking in disbelief as the entire surreal episode unfolded. Finally, AJ yelled out, "Why Miss Lee?!

Why did you call 'em?! Why did you call these pigs on me Miss Lee?! You KNOW me! Why would you do this?!"

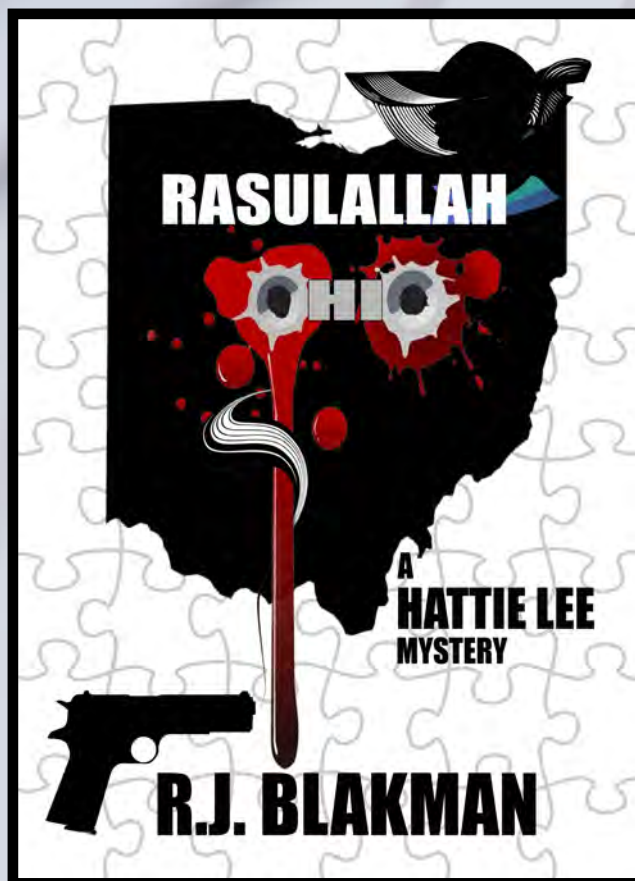
Though beaten and cuffed, AJ Johnson was still a strong young man, with powerful lungs. His words became accusations that rang in the air for all the neighbors

present to hear. Neighbors who would no doubt retreat back into their homes after the police had cleared out and do everything in their power to shut down the local switchboard with calls far and wide. With each scream, more neighbor's attention moved away from the boy who was being brutalized, and onto the woman standing on her porch, on a cool summer evening, wearing a plush pink bathrobe with fuzzy pink slippers and a loaded revolver in her right pocket.

In the distance Hattie noticed the headlights of a familiar car approaching. The car zigged and zagged around police and police vehicles, stopping with a screech in the driveway.

Benjamin jumped out of the car and ran up the driveway without closing the door. A police officer stopped him as he made his way to the front porch and asked him who he was. He responded that he was the husband of the woman on the porch, and that he lived at that residence. He then asked what was going on. "Looks like your wife here called us on this prowler, then when we showed up, she tried to say she didn't do it. You'll have to talk to her about that." The cop stepped aside, and Benjamin bounded over all three steps to the porch at once and then held Hattie by the shoulders. He looked around him, watching as they put AJ, handcuffed into the back of the squad car, and then looked back at his wife. "Ran-Lee... what have you done?! Jesus! Hattie ... what have you done?!"

To the knowledge of the onlookers, her husband and AJ Johnson, she had broken one of the cardinal rules of the town of Rasulallah, Ohio. One of the few rules that can warrant expulsion from the community. Rasulallah had its own crime, justice, court and if necessary, punishment system. No Black citizen of Rasulallah is to ever call the city police for any reason, under any circumstances—ever.



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That was four days ago. It only took two hours for the committee to come together and make the decision for the Lees to be banished from the community for five years—the maximum penalty. They were given two weeks in which to find another residence, to be packed, and gone. After which they could return if they wanted to after the five years.

* * *

Hattie lay on her back, looking at the ceiling trying to figure out what she was going to do. Trying to figure out if Benjamin had left her and was going to ask for a divorce. Trying to figure out how she was going to support herself.

Trying to figure out something.

As deep in thought as she was, Hattie could faintly hear what sounded like a car pulling into the driveway. She made out an engine turning off, then a door opening and closing. In a few seconds there was the sound of keys in the front door, the opening and closing of same, followed by footsteps going to the kitchen. She definitely made out the familiar sound of the refrigerator door opening and closing. Then after more steps around downstairs, the sound moved to the staircase and down the hallway. Hattie turned over and looked at the bedroom doorway which within a few seconds was filled with the figure of her Benjamin.

“I thought you might be hungry for something besides some dry ‘ol fried chicken, or some apple pie that don’t even have any ice cream to go with it.”

Benjamin stood at the door, slightly grinning, holding a banana split from the Dairy Queen up the street. Her favorite. Plenty of peanuts, plenty of sprinkles, just the way she liked it. “I also bought you a six pack of 7up and put it in the refrigerator.

“I thought you’d left me. Your suitcase was gone.” Hattie said, still sounding nervous.

“I’d finished packing for today. I just closed my suitcase and slid it into the closet. Come on Ran-Lee... you know I’d never leave you like that. I figured you was probably getting low, and I was right.” Hattie’s husband smiled broadly, gently sat the banana split down on a

dresser and walked over to her. He held her gently by the shoulders, looked deep into her tear filled eyes and said very slowly, very deliberately as he shook his head lazily from side to side, “Ran-Lee. Baby I’m sorry. I am so very sorry.”

Hattie, still wanting to hear the actual words, started to ask Benjamin what she had been afraid to ask since they returned from the meeting with the committee several days ago. “Benny,” she said, “Honey, I love you. I love you so much. I would never lie to you. I swear to you I didn’t—”

Benjamin did not let her finish. He lightly put his fingers over her mouth and said, “Ran-Lee. I believe you. I BELIEVE you Baby. Forgive me for doubting you ... even for one second. I know you didn’t have anything to do with what happened with the Johnson boy. And one day, the rest of this backward town is gonna know it too.”

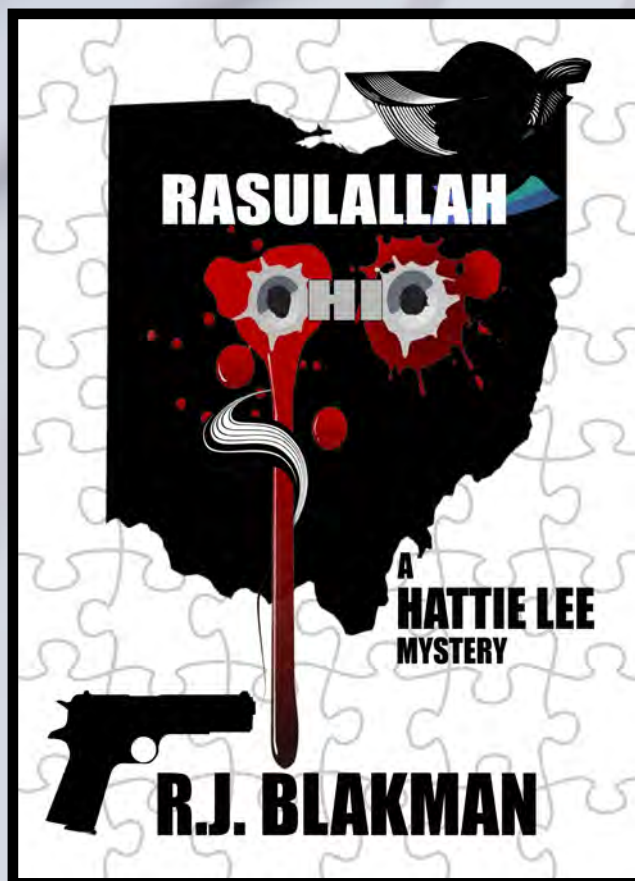
Benjamin dropped his hand away from Hattie’s mouth, slowly leaned toward her and kissed her. They kissed again, and then deeply. They kissed passionately, desperately. Wrapping their arms around each other and holding on tight as if were they to give the slightest release, one or the other would somehow float away and disappear. They held each other as if each other was all they had in the world.

“I love you hardheaded Miss Hattie R. Lee.” Benjamin said.

“Yes, you should.” Hattie said, winking at her husband and smiling wide.

They had not intended to make love tonight, too much trauma, too much confusion, too much everything—but suddenly none of that mattered. The couple kissed, sitting on the bed and then laying on the bed. Hattie was unbuttoning her husband’s shirt when the phone decided it was time for its nightly feeding. Hattie kissed Benjamin all over his face and as much of his chest as she could get to through the few buttons she had managed to undo.

“Benny, don’t you dare go answer that phone.” Hattie said breathlessly.



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Complete Prologue - RASULALLAH, OHIO: A Hattie Lee Mystery (Continued)

“Come on Baby, it might be important.”

“So is this.” Hattie giggled.

“You right about that! But just give me a minute, let me see who it is, and I’ll tell them to call back tomorrow if it isn’t important. Then, I’ll leave the phone off the hook so no one else can bother us. Ok?”

“Alright... deal. But you better hurry up!”

Benjamin gave Hattie a slow look up and down, getting that look in his eye that she knew oh so well. “Oh... you know I’m gonna hurry up!” He said as he jumped up, ran out the door and down the hallway.

Hattie again turned over on her back and thanked the Lord for how things had turned around. The situation was still the same, but now she knew her husband was on her side and believed her. They both were going to weather this storm together and she knew they were going to come out all the better for it individually and as a couple.

As promised, Benjamin wasted no time getting off the phone and back up to the bedroom where Hattie was eagerly awaiting him. She turned around and looked at Benjamin as he slumped at the doorway not moving. His energy was obviously very different from when he had bounded out of the room.

“What’s the matter? Who was that on the phone?”

Benjamin looked up at Hattie and seemed to be looking through her. “Ran-Lee, it was Minnie.”

“Dove? She still on the line? I’ll go down there and let her know I ain’t got no time for her gossip right now. But I definitely will later!”

Benjamin lifted a weary arm across the door frame to prevent Hattie from running out the room. “No ... that’s alright Ran-Lee, she’s gone.” he said.

“What? Why would she call and not even ask to talk?”

“The Johnson boy.”

“Yes, what about him? Did they send him home to Mr. and Mrs. Johnson? If anyone would know Dove would be the one to—”

Benjamin despairingly interrupted, “Minnie said, she heard on the radio that AJ Johnson died a couple nights ago in police custody. They said he hung his self in his cell. Evidently, they’re just now telling his mamma and daddy about it, and this is the first any of us knows anything about it.”

Hattie stood in disbelief for a moment, then looked at her husband with about as confused a look as he had ever seen on her face. “What?! He was alive just a couple days ago. They know that boy didn’t hang himself! Benny, he shouldn’t have even been under arrest or in a cell!” Hattie started pacing around the room speaking out loud, but to no one in-particular, “We’ve known that family several years, they are good people and AJ was a good boy! He was on his way to college!” Hattie’s eyes widened as a thought struck her that she already knew but had now taken on a new dimension. “And they think I’m the one called the police. Benny, they

think I’m the one who called the police and got their baby murdered!”

Benjamin moved away from the bedroom door, took his wife gently by the hand and walked her over to the foot of their queen size bed, where they both sat continuing to hold hands. “I know.” Benjamin said as he looked into his wife’s eyes and then embraced her.

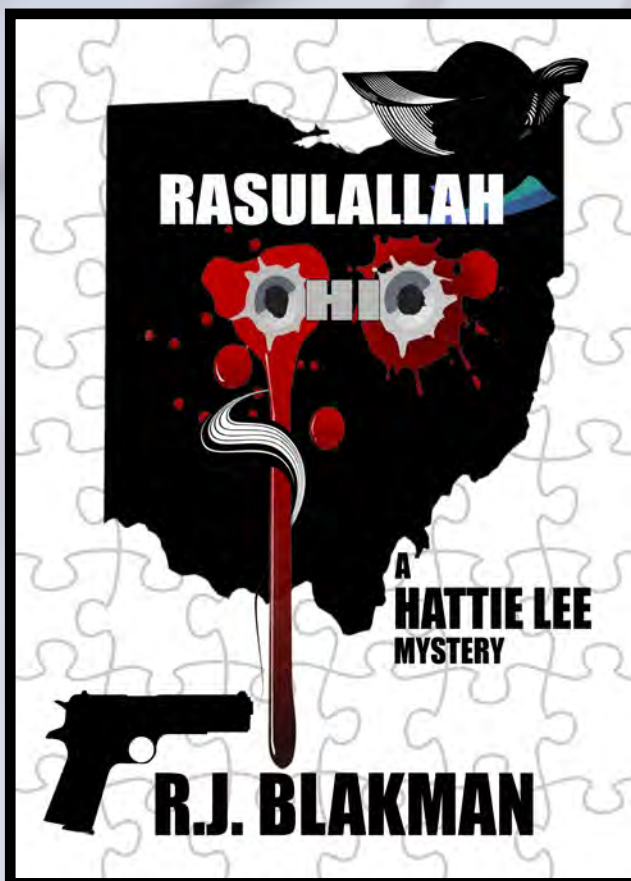
Hattie sat with her head on her husband’s shoulder, soaking it with her tears. “But I didn’t! Why is this happe—?”

Downstairs the phone rang. Out of force of habit Hattie tried to stand up so she could go answer it. She pulled back from her husband’s embrace and quickly wiped her eyes. “I’ll be back Benny. That might be Dove again.”

Firmly, but gently Benjamin grabbed Hattie by the shoulders and pulled her back to a sitting position. “Baby, that ain’t Minnie.” he said.

“Not Minnie? How can you know that? W-Who else would it be?”

“Just like the Johnsons are just now findin’ out about AJ—just like Minnie just heard about AJ.



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Complete Prologue - RASULALLAH, OHIO: A Hattie Lee Mystery (Continued)

Just like we just heard about AJ. There's a whole bunchcha' folk out here just now findin' out about AJ." Benjamin once again looked into Hattie's eyes. "That ain't Minnie, Ran-Lee."

The couple sat in silence, the sun sinking slowly turning the room into a den of subdued light and hard shadows.

Cool air blew in through the window, causing the sheer drapes to dance slowly with the breeze. Phone still ringing, seeming kind of far away in the background.

Hattie and Benjamin sat on the bed and listened to the phone as it rang downstairs, somehow sounding lonely and neglected. Of course, the sound was much louder downstairs to be sure, possibly even echoing throughout the living room dining room and kitchen, finding no one to heed its voice. Eventually after what seemed an eternity, the telephone finally gave up and there was a kind of bittersweet silence.

For a few seconds.

The sudden void of sound left by the cessation of the ringing was filled immediately by more ringing. And though the phone only had one way to ring—one mechanism by which to alert its owner someone wanted to talk, the ringing this time seemed somehow more insistent.

"Damn it!" Benjamin yelled as he stood up. "I'm going to go down there and disconnect that thing from the wall! I'll be back!"

Hattie sat on the bed, eyes filled with tears, amazed that she even had any left to shed. She watched Benjamin take a few steps toward the door, when suddenly, mixed with the sound of the telephone's incessant scream for attention, there came the stark distinctive sound of glass breaking.

A lot of glass!

"Shit!" Benjamin, who seldom swore, grunted as he turned away from the door, ran back into the bedroom and to his closet. He flung open the closet door, turned on the light which now semi-lit what had become the completely darkened bedroom. He reached to a third shelf and hurriedly took down a wooden case. He ran

over to the bed and opened the box revealing a loaded revolver. Benjamin took the weapon from its resting place and double checked to make sure it was loaded. He looked at Hattie and said, "Baby, you stay up here and stay down!" Then without waiting for a response, turned and disappeared out the room. Hattie could hear

him running down the hallway and down the stairs.

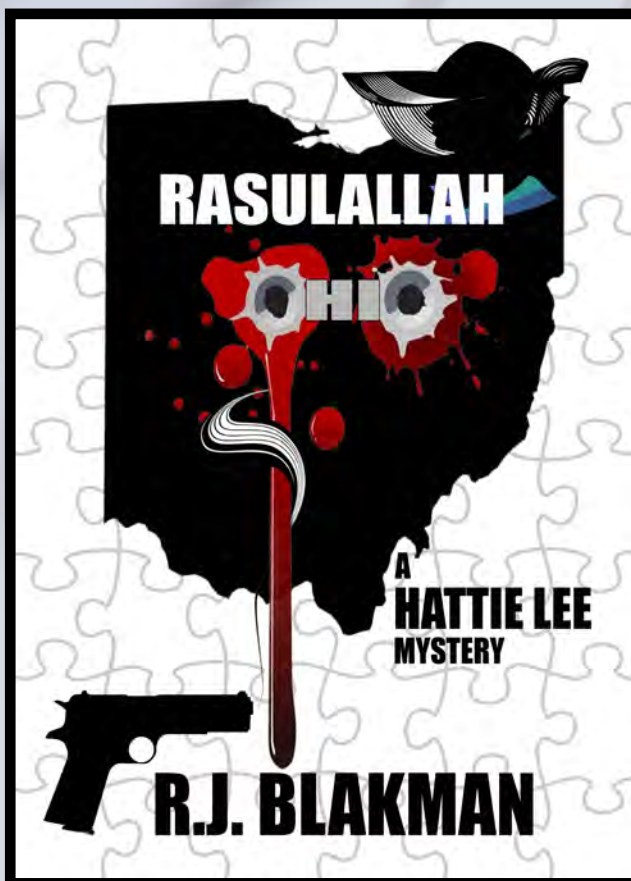
Hattie understood that Benjamin was in "protective husband" mode and had forgotten for a moment who he was married to. There was no way she was going to let her man walk into what might be some kind of danger alone. She jumped up, ran to her closet and repeated Benjamin's actions as she removed Freddy from his resting place.

As Hattie ran down the hall, she was aware the phone had paused ringing again for a second or two before resuming its unnerving crusade. She made it to the top of the staircase and had descended five steps when she saw the silhouette

of Benjamin standing in near darkness, on the left side of their picture window. The glass obviously shattered with a huge single hole in the middle of it. The phone was still ringing without rest. Benjamin looked up to the top of the stairs and signaled Hattie not to come down any further. Hattie leaned against the wall, elbows folded and tucked to her side, both hands tightly gripping Freddy the revolver, muzzle near her cheek, aimed toward the ceiling, just as Benjamin had taught her.

For several minutes Benjamin and Hattie held their places in the darkness until they were satisfied no one else was coming. They didn't turn on any of the main lights in the house, but Hattie continued to the bottom of the stairs and to the closet where she opened the door and turned on the light inside. She cracked it open just enough that they could see a little more of what was going on in the room.

There was the slight sparkle of shards of glass on the floor, and the deep reddish color, and squareness of what Hattie gathered was the brick that had shattered their picture window and sense of security.



READING and WRITING in the

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Complete Prologue - RASULALLAH, OHIO: A Hattie Lee Mystery (Continued)

Benjamin lowered his gun, pulled the curtains closed and walked toward the sound of the phone—still ringing, not resting. He stepped slowly, the sound of glass now and then crunching under his shoes. He went over to the leather couch that had the phone on the table next to it. Benjamin slowly picked up the receiver, then placed it back in its cradle, but not before making out the staticky sound of someone yelling. The only two words of which he could make out were ‘bitch’ and ‘murderer’ before mercifully putting an end to the ringing. He then lifted it once more, listened for a dial tone then disconnected the wire that married the handset to the body of the phone. Benjamin turned around and saw Hattie standing in the middle of the living room still holding her revolver in her right hand, a standard size red brick in her left.

Hattie dropped the brick, followed it with her knees and began sobbing in earnest. “Benjamin!” she cried out.

Benjamin walked quickly over to

his wife and fell to his knees on the floor in front of her. In the midst of the broken glass, in the midst of the chaos they held each other. There were few times Benjamin had ever heard Hattie crying with such abandon. He didn’t know what to do but hug her, rock her, and reassure her that he would always be there for

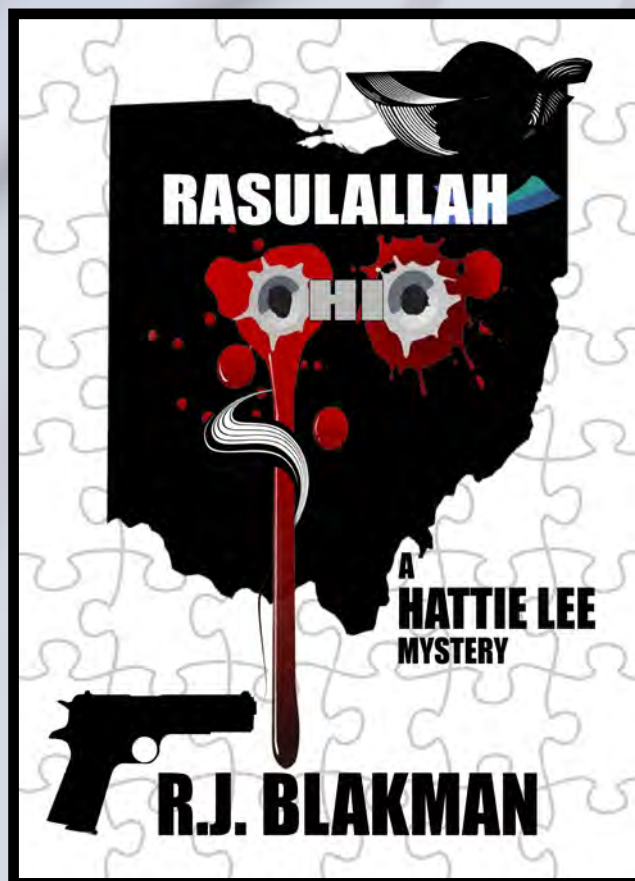
her and on her side. “Benjamin,” Hattie said, almost unintelligibly. “AJ thought I was the one who called the police. That young boy went to his grave thinking I was the one who got him murdered!”

AND SO IT BEGINS!

Mr. Blakman is hard at work on the novel (already several chapters in), and if the prologue is any indication, the reading audience is in for a roller coaster ride of emotion, mystery and probably some reflection.:

RASULALLAH, OHIO

Coming soon!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



R. J. Blakman is a mystery writer, a writer of non-fiction and an all-around truth seeker. Blackman tries to look at things on a deeper level and whatever he finds, he tends to write about it with no sugar coating.

As a practice, Blakman seeks out truth and goes wherever that truth leads him, even if uncomfortable.

He tends to like working on more than one project at a time, so while he’s hard at work on *RASULALLAH, OHIO* he is also working feverishly on his unique take on eternal life: *The Problems of Immorality*.

R.J. Blakman was born in Central America and had one sister. He currently lives in the place of his birth with his beautiful wife Maria.

R.J. Blakman can be reached by email at: rjb@iyapoyapa.com

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The Blessing of Being With a Builder

Four years ago today, I married my brilliant, beautiful, Black wife, Angela.

Full disclosure: neither I nor Angela had any idea it was our anniversary until my mother-in-law sent us messages of congratulations. Even after that, we both had to research it. After confirming that it was indeed our anniversary, we wished each other a happy anniversary, kissed, and went back to our day.

To some, that may not sound romantic, or like we don't recognize the day as being as special as it is. I don't think that's the case at all. On the contrary, I believe this is one of the most powerful expressions of our love, honor, and respect for each other. The fact that EVERY DAY is so special that we don't even recognize different ones. We often talk about various holidays—Mother's Day being one in particular—when corporations tell us we should spend the money to show our loved ones how much we care for and appreciate them. What if however, EVERY DAY is filled with love, appreciation, gifts, encouragement, and honor? What then? Anything else would seem over the top in my opinion.

When we realized we'd been married for four years, I remarked that it felt like we've only been married for a WEEK. And I MEANT it! Yes, time does fly when you're having fun, it also flies when you are with someone you love and adore, as it is with me. I can only speak for myself, but the truth is that I feel that my life—my WORLD—is SO much better and richer for having met Angela and married her. I find her to be a spectacular person and one of the best people I know (male OR female). She is truly my best friend and each day with her is better than the day before it. Incredibly, each and EVERY day, I somehow find something new to love, or admire about the woman.

We have the best mind expanding, thought provoking, paradigm shifting conversations and I find them educational ALWAYS, even when I don't agree (and we HAVE had some heated disagreements). But no matter HOW heated they get, at the end of the day we love each other, we honor each other, and we have a deep respect for each other. This is a woman I can

build with and AM building with, and the journey is a pleasure.

The photo at the bottom of the page is one of my favorite photos of us together. It was taken at a dinner to celebrate the release of my first novel *MELANIN*. What I love about the photo is that we are holding an image of the cover together and Angela is equally proud of the accomplishment. One that I consider to be OUR accomplishment. I am thoroughly convinced that were it not for meeting and marrying Angela, I would never have completed the book, let alone my second novel *And What of the CARGO?* Or my anthology series *Paradigm Void*, or my novella *The Redemption of Maxine Allison!* I'm not being humble, when I tell her how I see it, I'm not trying to make her feel good. I mean... I LITERALLY believe I would not have accomplished those things without her beside me, loving me, standing behind me, standing beside me—and standing IN FRONT of me sometimes. ANYTHING I accomplish now, I count as OUR accomplishments TOGETHER, because I recognize clearly that it is my relationship with her and the fact that we are determined to lift each other up and to see to each other's growth and development that we are successfully building.

Some of my most rewarding times is when I'm assisting Angela with HER work and watching it come to fruition and the fact that I assisted her in learning Photoshop and now her design skills have absolutely blossomed! She has a strong vision of how she wants things and sees them, and with the skills I'm helping her attain, she can make things look the way SHE wants them to! We read, critique, and edit each other's work. I provide tech support (lol), We also push each other to excellence and are constantly bouncing story ideas off each other. It is a BEAUTIFUL thing being married to another writer and creative person!

Yes, some people can build alone. Some can even succeed when the person or people close to them are of no help, but it is BEYOND a blessing when the person you are with is on your side all the way and you BOTH want to see what is best for each other!

Now THAT is the BLESSING of being with a builder!



Iyapo and Angela at a party celebrating the completion of *MELANIN: A NOVEL*

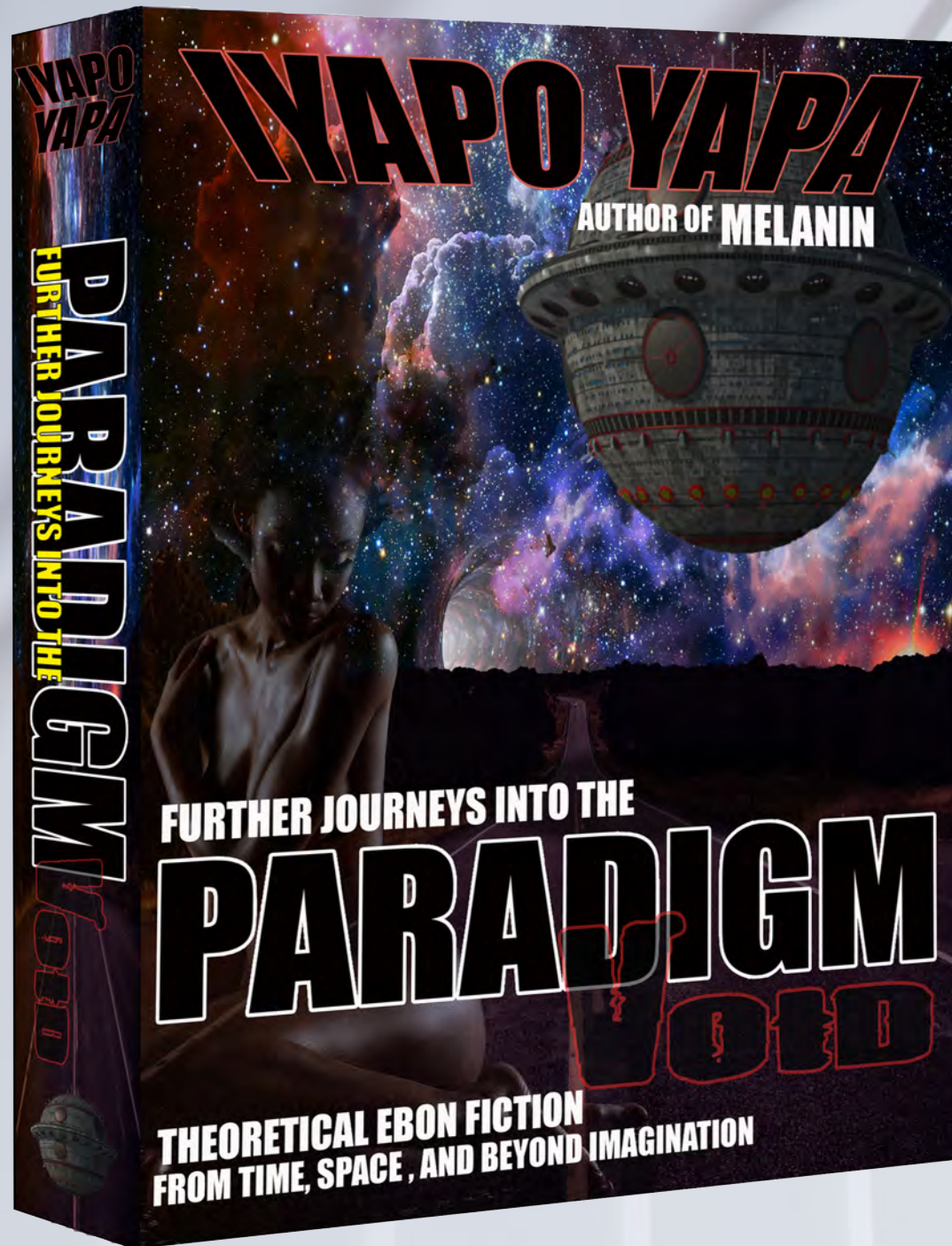
7 December 2021

READING and WRITING in the

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ARE YOU PREPARED TO JOURNEY BACK INTO THE VOID?!



The *Keepin' it a BUCK* series introduced readers to the *PARADIGM VOID*, a series of short stories in the genre of TEF: Theoretical Ebon Fiction, when everything is possible and anything can and does happen! Now it's time to journey back, and go even farther into the realm of the amazing, the unbelievable and the fantastic!

- What is life like for a person who is “unstuck” in time? One man gives his confessions.
- What if the universe, in an effort to balance itself started removing EVERYTHING that was of no use or value - to include some PEOPLE?!
- Luxury isn't always what it seems, or is cracked up to be, as one newlywed couple learns first hand.
- A comet is on a collision course with earth and there is no stopping it. One family decides to have one final family dinner together. And that's when the family secrets start coming out!

All this and MORE is coming to the new addition to the *Keepin' it a BUCK* series with, *Further Journey's into the PARADIGM VOID!*

COMING SOON

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October Word Search: And What of the CARGO?

October is here! September was a crossword puzzle based on my second novel *AND WHAT OF HE CARGO?* Those of you who have been hanging with the **Reading and Writing in the DARK Newsletter** already know the deal, but you newbies... first off, **THANK YOU** for subscribing! And here's the deal. The WORDS in the word search are also the answers to last month's crossword puzzle! So if you want to take a stab at it without looking at the answer key at the end of the newsletter, **HERE THEY ARE!** Give it a shot, and most of all... **HAVE FUN!**

[CLICK ON THE IMAGE BELOW TO DOWNLOAD A PRINTABLE COPY OF THE PUZZLE!](#)

Q Z M M L K V T G O U S R P U U S D B T Z H M Q B L L H S Z N N A M A I S H A X
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W D B H O X I B C N R L B G Z A V L W Q X A E O S S Z T B W Q R M E S C L V E N
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OCTOBER WORD SEARCH WORDS BASED ON: AND WHAT OF THE CARGO?

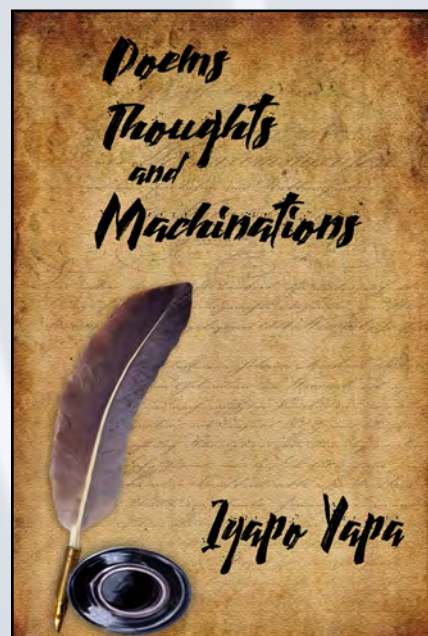
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RASULALLAH
ANDRIESE
KENNEDY
ANGUS
MBAYE
ZAHNOKA
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MARCH
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RICARDO
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ALKEBULAN
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RANDAL
KOJO
FREDDIE
IYAPO
PRAISE
MORRIS
ANGEL
RIGHTEOUS
UNIA
UNSPEAKABLE



Flash fiction is a genre of fiction, defined as a very short story. While there is no set word count that separates flash fiction from more traditional short stories, flash fiction stories can be as short as a few words (while short stories typically run for several pages). Flash fiction is also known as sudden fiction, short-short stories, micro-fiction, or micro-stories.

Got a few minutes or a good story? That's all you'll need.



The title says it all.

Sometimes I think all people wax poetic whether they write it down or not. For the most part I think everyone has times of reflection and seeking deeper meaning in things.

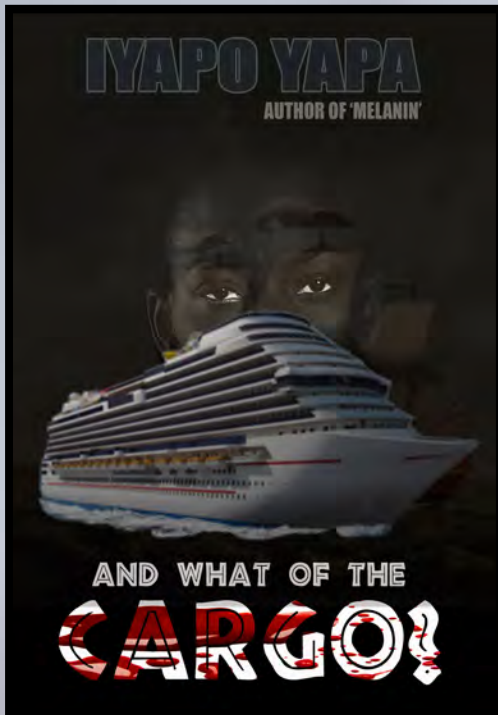
Here is where I write it down in verse and many times without traditional structure.

Always seeking.

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And What of the CARGO?



AVAILABLE NOW!

And What of the CARGO?

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“Kylah Mbaye of the Zahnoka people, lay as silently and still as she could, halfheartedly petitioning the ancestors that at least for one night she would not be spirited away and taken above deck to endure yet another in a procession of endless rapes. Another woman would have long ago given in to despair--but Kylah--in the face of such crushing odds against her and her people within the bowels of this floating nightmare, knew that eventually, this voyage would not end well... for her captors.” And so it began. AND WHAT OF THE CARGO? is a tale of love and hate, tears and triumph, suspense and horror that leads to an unimaginable conclusion.

“The Atlantic crossing, or “Middle Passage,” as it was called by European slavers, was notorious for the number of deaths incurred, averaging in the vicinity of 15-20%”

— Walter Rodney. How Europe Underdeveloped Africa

Much is rightly said and written about the enslavement and fates of Afrikans who were kidnapped from their homeland and transported to the Americas and other lands along the Middle Passage. Absent however is an expanded examination of the fate of those who did not make it through the journey. Whether victims of an inability to survive the unimaginable environment in which they were forced to occupy, or due to murders while attempting to revolt, or by simply jumping overboard, choosing death as a better alternative to chattel enslavement.

What of those ancestors in the depths of the oceans, and what of their souls and spirits. Or to put it bluntly—what of the CARGO?

What are readers saying about And What of the CARGO?

“This story is an exceptional horror tale of what happens when displaced restless souls whose spirits sought to exact restitution from those who prospered from their demise are ignored. The reunion and collaboration between the historical and modern families to bring about justice for their stolen legacy was gripping.”

- Amazon Review

“Mr. Yapa is one of the most imaginative writers out there. He handles controversial subject matter with grace and maturity. He offers powerful insight on one of the most important topics of our era: the Atlantic slave trade and modern-day racism. In this story there is retribution for evils - past and present. There is blood, dismemberment, horror, anger, rage, justice, hate, love, passion, politics, wealth, and finally reconciliation and peace. What a journey. I Loved it. And yes, it did scare me - It scared me a lot!”

- Gwen

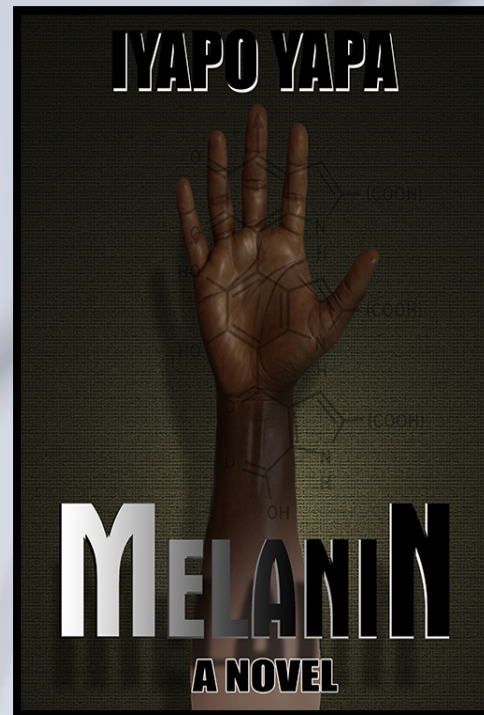
“Yapa weaves another story this time interwoven with historical references. I was on my seat with every chapter. I don't want to give it away but....revenge is sweet when served dead. And I can't get over how different each of his offerings are. Read his Vella's and you'll see what I mean. Another great book by Iyapo Yapa. A must read!”

- Amazon review

You can also read it for FREE if you have

Kindle Unlimited!

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Click Below For:

MELANIN: A Novel



AVAILABLE NOW!

MELANIN: A NOVEL

Buy it now on Amazon

Due to a series of man-made radiological catastrophes, the non-Black population of the planet becomes susceptible to a highly virulent form of melanoma and has to choose between becoming Black (phenotypically and genetically), or almost certain death.

MELANIN: A NOVEL examines a world where Black people are realizing they are once again truly free. What does it mean for Black people to be back in their rightful place, after centuries of subjugation, marginalization and terror? What does it mean for Black people to no longer be under the boot of a system put (and kept) in place to use and keep using them?

Conversely, what happens to those who have only known control and dominance for centuries as the tide is turning? How do they react to the knowledge that they are powerless to stop the turning tide as the field becomes genuinely level, and the system of white supremacy utterly collapses around them?

On top of that, is a threat to the world at large that is so horrifying no one could have imagined it!

goodreads

What are readers saying about MELANIN: A NOVEL?

“Melanin is an uncompromising and timely tale of speculative fiction, brimming with thought-provoking ideas and imaginative twists.”

- Brandon Massey, award-winning author of *The Quiet Ones* and *Dark Corner*

“Iyapo Yapa has earned a place among the great science fiction writers with Melanin. The plot twists will keep you reading long after midnight. As well the imagery is captivating. Replicating the Black experience, you are drawn into the story as if you are there.”

- T.J. Riley, author of *The Path to Brightness*

“The whole world needs to read this book!”

- M.A.D.M. Precious, author of *Michelle's Story* and *Loving Betrayal*

“Every Black person needs to read this book!”

- Gwen B

“It was exciting! I stayed up a few nights wanting to see what was coming!”

- Ayoka B.

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READING and WRITING in the

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BOOK REVIEW

FRENZIED By Brandon Massey

After reading Brandon Massey's *FRENZIED*, and I must say, Massey was in great form with this one! The story was intriguing, as was the premise. It is a pleasantly unexpected twist on the "zombie" genre!

Breathing new life into a genre that has been as saturated and overdone as zombies is no small feat, but Massey accomplishes it in grand style!

The main characters and supporting cast were well fleshed out and the descriptions of the environment were also vivid and puts the reader right in the middle of it. There are of course twists and turns, the unexpected and a few surprises that made the story anything but predictable.

One thing the author did that I really liked was to describe the internal dialog of someone who was becoming *frenzied* – that is an aspect of

zombies that I have wondered about and been wanting someone to explore for a long time. The way he did it was satisfying, though I will

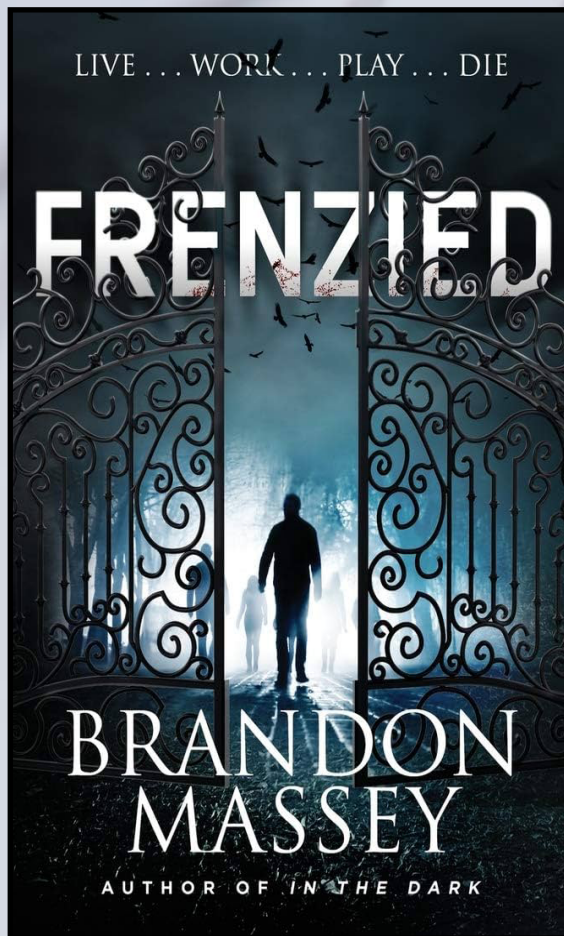
admit I wish it had stretched out a tiny bit more, to really get deep down into the character's thoughts as he or she (as not to spoil anything), made the transition.

The book began as a good read and by the beginning of the final act – for me at least – it graduated to "can't put it down" status, and I mean that literally!

I would highly recommend this book to anyone who is a fan of zombie action, or just action in general with a healthy dose of mystery and

fright thrown in!

This book deserves a sequel, I hope Massey decides to do one and continues the saga.



About the AUTHOR



BRANDON MASSEY

Click the image above to visit
Brandon Massey's website.



As Technical Director of the Afrikan Martial Arts Institute and Co-Chair of the Urban Survival and Preparedness Institute, Balogun Ojetade is th Brandon Massey sold his first short story in 1996 to a speculative fiction magazine. Three years later, he self-published *Thunderland*, his first novel. After managing to sell a few thousand copies on his own, Kensington Publishing Corp signed him to a publishing contract and republished the novel in 2002.

Since then, Massey has published up to three books a year, ranging from thriller novels such as *The Other Brother* and *Don't Ever Tell*, vampire fiction such as *Dark Corner*, and short story collections such as *Twisted Tales*; he's also edited multiple anthologies in his *Dark Dreams* series, featuring the short works of acclaimed authors from Eric Jerome Dickey to Tananarive Due.

Massey currently lives with his family near Atlanta, GA.

To stay posted on his latest book news, visit his website at www.brandonmassey.com and sign up for his free newsletter.

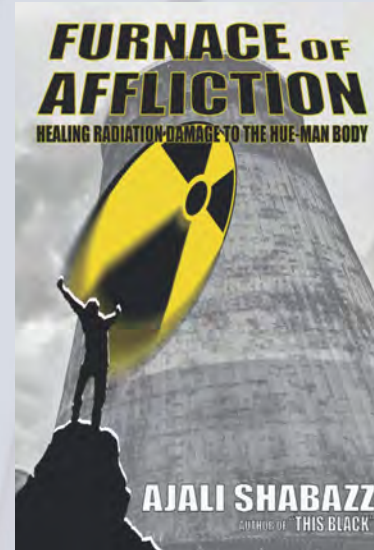
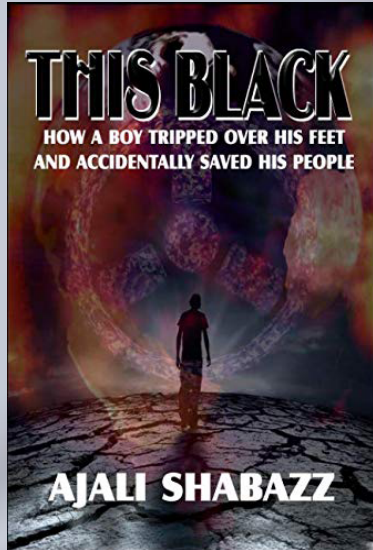
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Books by:

AJALI SHABAZZ



Author of: *This Black* - *This Black NATION* and *Furnace of Affliction!*
The Reading and Writing in the DARK Podcast Interview!

You don't want to miss this discussion with this new POWERFUL voice in
PRO BLACK FICTION in the genre of Theoretical Ebon Fiction, and Non Fiction!

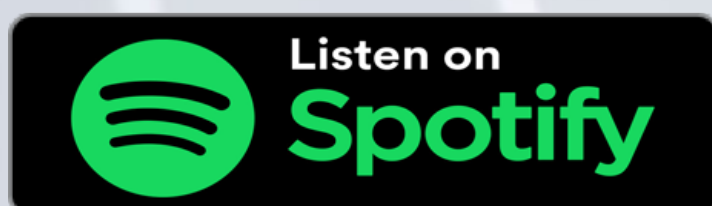
Listen to the interview on  by clicking the link below:

<https://www.spreaker.com/show/a-conversation-with-author-ajali-shabazz>



Did you know there is also a READING and WRITING in the DARK PODCAST?! Well there IS and you can tune in to it and listen just by clicking the block to the right.

You can also hear the READING and WRITING in the DARK podcast on:



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READING and WRITING in the

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The Necessity of Understanding Controlled Opposition

From IYAPO'S BLOG Sunday, 13 August 2023

I'm more convinced each day that it is IMPERATIVE that our people learn precisely what CONTROLLED OPPOSITION is. The PURPOSE for it and how it works! I am seeing THAT and materialism as our two GREATEST weaknesses and downfalls! We MUST begin thinking critically and asking QUESTIONS.

Reality of the situation: "We are existing within a system we KNOW is bent on our destruction, and those in control of it silence voices of descent at will... something that has been proven time and time again."

Critical thinking question:

Certain voices are allowed to FLOURISH in THEIR construct – given the context of the Reality of the Situation statement – can those voices (allowed and promoted by the system that is working to destroy me), be helpful or revolutionary in ANY WAY?!

Why are THOSE voices not silenced?

Those HUGE platforms SEEM to be speaking out against the SoWS. However – are those voices speaking out in terms of SEPARATION from the system? Or are they just "talking bad" about white people, clowning them or, symbolically drinking "white tears" from a cup? (Available for sale on their merch site). We laugh, we cheer, we shout enthusiastically at our screens in affirmation from the digital 'amen corner' without taking into consideration that for all the clowning and negative remarks about our oppressor, all of that is doing ZERO to bring down this system, change our position within it, or empowering us and encouraging us to separate from it. Instead the narrative leans toward asking for/begging for/demanding more "fairness and justice" within a corrupt system in order to integrate further into it? Is the ask, for more equality and the ability to take equal part in the "American Dream"?

Given the "Reality of the Situation", why would we look to those who have proven, with zero ambiguity that they detest and hate us, and they only want us around to the degree that we are controlled by them and under their boot, and that they in NO WAY view us as equals, but in the same breath say to our people, "Here, we have a religion for you because we CARE SO MUCH ABOUT YOU that we want you to live ETERNALLY in PARADISE." (Ok... you want us to live eternally in paradise, but in the meantime, you do everything you can to make life a living HELL for us HERE).

Given the "Reality of the Situation", why would I listen to those who have made war upon me and sought and continue to seek (having gone as far as to put it in writing), my downfall, but believe them when they say, "Eat this sea moss! It is a SUPER FOOD that will cure what ails you!"

"But it is BLACK people who are promoting the sea moss!" you

say?

As with weapons, drugs, cigarettes, alcohol, and any number of processed, genetically altered garbage that is doing nothing but tearing us down... show me ONE Black person who is the actual MANUFACTURER of said items. We may buy and sell them to each other in food deserts... or online (in the case of sea moss), but we don't MAKE ANYTHING. Please introduce me to the Black person with the fishing boat off the coast of Japan who is gathering the sea moss?

I'll wait.

My point is that our people unfortunately, seem to be easily manipulated by titles, fame, money, and shiny things. When (within the context of this present system), we are thinking of it BACKWARD. It is the ones with the SMALLER voices... the HIDDEN and SUPPRESSED voices we should be seeking out. Granted, that is not true in EVERY case... but I can pretty much guarantee that platforms with HUGE voices and HUGE reach are likely 99% controlled opposition. Even the great Neely Fuller HIMSELF said in an interview that he knew he was not effective. When asked by

the host why he would say that when his work is so well revered among many, Fuller said simply, "I know I'm not effective, because I'm still alive."

Let that sink in.

There is a REASON the voices like that of Ajali Shabazz, tireless freedom fighter against the devastation caused by man made radiation, had her YouTube channels – few in subscribers, relatively speaking when it comes to some – were pulled down. There is a REASON my own channel, geared toward the safety, security and sanity of our people through separation, has been in existence for over five years and still has yet to gain a thousand subscribers. No, it isn't because our channels are boring, uninformative, or lame... anyone who has seen our content can attest to that.

It is because what we talk about is SEPARATION and RADIATION and what can REALLY help our people and save and liberate Black lives and minds!

But having studied for YEARS white people have raised manipulation to an art form. They know that in suppressing a voice the masses will look and say "Look how few, likes, subs and views... they must not be about anything." And will look at a gossip channel and/or faux "Black Empowerment" channel that has over 100k to over a million subs and say, "They're so popular! They must be talking sense and telling the TRUTH!"

When it is the EXACT OPPOSITE.



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The Necessity of Understanding Controlled Opposition

From IYAPO'S BLOG Sunday, 13 August 2023

We MUST keep in mind we exist within a SYSTEM that PROMOTES or DEMOTES platforms!

Critical thinking: Is a system that has PROVEN and CONTINUES to prove it is bent on your destruction going to allow ANYTHING to get to the masses that would ACTUALLY cause a revolution and serious consideration of SEPARATING from them so that we are no longer controlled by them?!

I have a theory about reparations.

I ONE HUNDRED PERCENT think it is a debt OWED and SHOULD BE PAID!

That said. I believe that if and when our people DO get them – if EVER – it will ONLY be after, the U.S. at least, has gone to a DIGITAL CURRENCY that they have the power to completely control. Then they will be HAPPY to give it to our people. Because as per their goal, even if we HAVE the money, THEY will be in control of what we are doing with it, in terms of investment, moving around internationally, purchasing homes etc. and with 100% ability to monitor our spending and more importantly, the ability to TURN OUR MONEY OFF AT WILL. Do this... do that... don't say this... don't say that... put this thing in your body... you are only allowed to eat or drink this thing... or else we will turn your money off because you are a dissident.

Ultimately it was NEVER a case of white people not wanting us around. They LOVE having us around when we are under their boot, under their control and in their service. When was the last time you heard white people in mass dispiriting Candace Owens, Tim Scott, Billy Porter, Wayne Brady, Charles Barkley and even Snoop Dogg (who is joined at the hip with Martha Stewart)?! You DON'T. The same with weapons, drugs, money and anything else... as long as they have control of it, they have ZERO issues with it.

I will close with this:

Imagine you had an enemy who you wanted dead above all

else.

Imagine that enemy was blindfolded and walking toward the edge of a cliff that leads to a fall some 100 feet to the rocks below.

Now imagine that as your enemy is walking you realize that in front of them there are walls, rocks and boulders that would serve as obstacles between them and the edge of the cliff.

What would you do, given that you WANT them DEAD above ALL ELSE?!

You would, to the best of your ability, GET THOSE OBSTACLES OUT THEIR WAY SO THEIR PATH TO THE EDGE WOULD BE CLEAR! As the person is walking blindfolded, they are thinking they are going in the right direction because the path is so clear and easily navigated. (The obstacles represent those of us out here trying to warn about the radiation, the depravity and destructive actions that are causing our people to suffer and perish – WE are the obstacles being moved).

What if that enemy you want dead should start turning around and walking AWAY from the edge? THAT is when you would tell the blindfolded person that the most dangerous thing they can do is to remove the blindfold, and to just follow your voice and let you them lead. (Which of course, you would tell them confidently and caringly to turn around and keep walking forward – knowing you are leading them off the cliff and to the death you desire for them).

You have a platform Black person? It's harmful to you and your people... HERE! Let me move those obstacles out your way!

YOU have a platform Black person? Is it HELPFUL to your people?! No, no, we need to get you turned around! Now come the walls and boulders meant to make us turn back toward the edge... but we WON'T!

(Unless of course we choose to put the blindfold back on and trust the sound of the enemy's voice. If that's the case... see you at the bottom).



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MELANIN: A Novel NOW ON KINDLE UNLIMITED!

I know that my first novel has brought joy to those who have read it and been kind enough to take time to rate it and write reviews. AND *MELANIN* has been a ceaseless source of pride and joy for me. From the time I released *MELANIN: A Novel* it has only been available as soft cover, hard back and Kindle edition. It is my only work published through Amazon, that is not available on Kindle Unlimited.

UNTIL NOW!

To celebrate the One Year Anniversary of the publication of my debut novel, *MELANIN: A Novel* is now available on Kindle Unlimited! This means that if you have a Kindle (or any tablet or mobile device) you can (download and) open the free Kindle App and read about what hap-

pens in a world were becoming genetically and phenotypically Black is the difference between life and death.

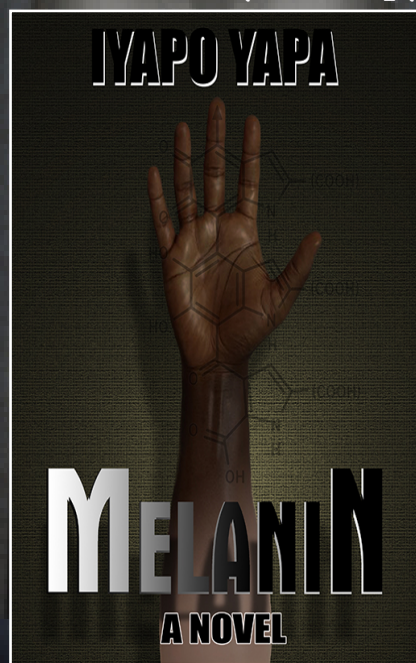
So, tell your family and tell your friends! Tell your neighbors and your colleagues! Tell your book clubs and your reading groups!

And remember you can still also get your copy of *MELANIN: A Novel*

as a soft cover or hard cover edition as well as purchasing it to add to your Kindle digital library!

I want to thank everyone for your support, well wishes and purchases! It means a lot to me to know my work is being read and appreciated! It is my goal to keep

bringing you the very best work I can produce!



Could YOU survive?!

Five years ago, a cataclysm now known as THE COLLAPSE occurred. Dimensions merged with horrific results. It is now common to see creatures of myth, legend, and nightmare along with once long extinct animals populating the landscape. Carl, LaTanya and Lester, embark on a quest to find a lost book that can't change the madness of the new normal but may assist them and others in the now nearly impossible task of: SURVIVING the WORST! Enter a world of action, adventure, science and horror on Kindle vella!

Click on the Kindle vella link below!



kindle vella



Be sure to take some time to visit my website at:

<https://www.iyapoyapa.com> - or just click the image to the right!

There are a LOT of things to see and interact with! There are also a couple special surprises hidden in the site. They aren't marked, but if you take a little time to search for them, you'll defiantly be pleasantly surprised!





Alright, enough about ME!

Below are AWESOME stories on the KINDLE VELLA platform by some authors I know!

Just click the cover art to be transported to their stories!

And remember, the first THREE episodes are FREE to read!



I DeClaire Love

Angela Riley

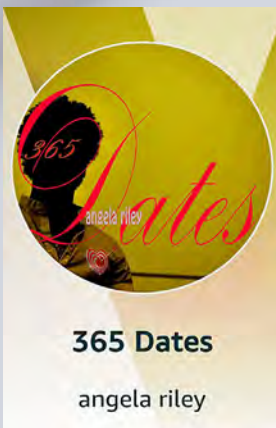
DeClaire and Tyrone meet and sparks fly. They fall in love with each other quick, fast, and in a hurry. It seems too good to be true. But is it? Is it safe to love? Are there any “good” rules when it comes to love? Do we have to fight for love? Are there always games being played when it comes to love? Is simple, sane, “old-fashioned” love out of style? CAN LOVE SET US FREE? *** New Episodes Weekly!



The Love X TamuTamu Agency

Angela Riley

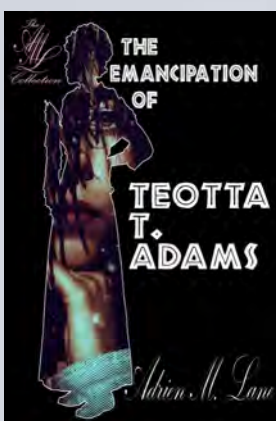
Love is natural but it ain't always easy. And Mama Tamu should know! She is a 91 year old match maker who has run “The Love X TamuTamu Agency” for FIFTY years. She has personally experienced and been a witness to all kinds of love. And, as she says, “Love is more than a notion!” Follow along as she stands up for and works to support and encourage the natural flow of Black Love.



365 Dates

Angela Riley

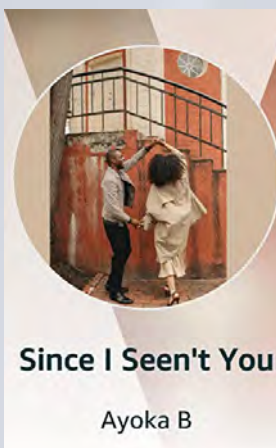
Single again, after my first divorce, one day I had a new thought: I WANT TO DATE. And... NOTHING. No one came knocking on my door to woo me. No one approached me when I was out wanting to court me. Nobody asked friends/family to be set up with me. Just crickets! So, thinking that maybe my goal was to vague--I want to date.--to make anything happen, I decided to pursue a HUGE goal of going on 365 dates. Not 3, 5, or 6 dates but three HUNDRED and SIXTY-FIVE dates. So...LET'S GO!



The Emancipation of Teotta T. Adams

Adrien M. Lane

Teotta T. Adams has it all, big house, nice car, fine clothes, and a private chef, one of the best in the world, and a successful husband. Yes, Teotta has everything. Everything except her FREEDOM! She spends her days in the lap of luxury, but inside she knows something's wrong. Her ‘husband’ is just this side of a stranger, and worse, Teotta knows even less about herself. When she finally discovers why, and the incredible truth behind it, she will long for the bliss of her lost ignorance.



Since I Seen't You

Ayoka B.

She and David met when they were 18. After a rough start, they build a friendship that would span decades: marriages, children, love and heartache. When they lose touch, she thought that she would never see him again, but she was wrong. Can men and women truly be just friends? Can their friendship withstand what life has in store?



The Match

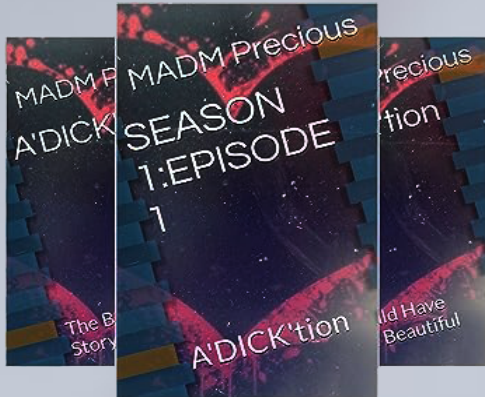
Ayoka B.

Have you ever changed someone's life? I mean in a life and death sort of way. I opened a letter that I almost threw out, thinking it was junk mail; it said that I was a possible bone marrow match for someone! I couldn't even remember being tested. The letter asked me to contact them if I was still a willing donor... what would you do?

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A'DICK'tion The Back Story

MADM Precious

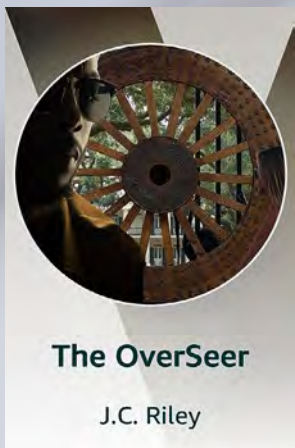
From Book 1: Sex addiction is a real thing; When Quincey finds out his wife is caught up in some things, can they save their marriage.



The Godchild Chronicles

J.C. Riley

War rocks the Planet Raosis! Pthalon Anuku is drafted onto the Anti-Terror Detail & is under constant attack. With ties to both sides of the conflict, Pthalon must choose a side in order to get him & his wife (fellow CDO Officer Raseem) safely off of Raosis. What will it take for Pthalon & Raseem to escape in one piece? Who will they rely on to help bring their ambitions to a reality? And more importantly, what kind of sacrifice are they willing to make to achieve their ultimate goal?



The OverSeer

J.C. Riley

It's nice to be up high and seeing over things, right? Welcome to the world of THE OVERSEER. Strap yourself in because it's one heck of a ride!

ALSO AVAILABLE on AMAZON and OTHER PLATFORMS!

Below are stories and books by some authors I know! Just click the cover art to purchase their book.

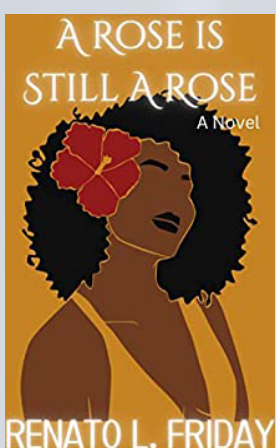


Affirming Self Love (Graphic Non-Fiction SERIES)

angela riley

SelfLOVE Meditation, Reflections, & AFFIRMATIONS Series...

With a new book released each month, this "Graphic Nonfiction" series is filled with love for BlackUs. Each episode opens with a short essay exploring a theme such as "Following the Happy" or "Plan & Reflect" and culminates with a dynamic collection of affirmation. You'll have a beautiful time meditating and reflecting on the monthly theme as you AFFIRM Self Love.



A Rose is Still a Rose

Renato L. Friday

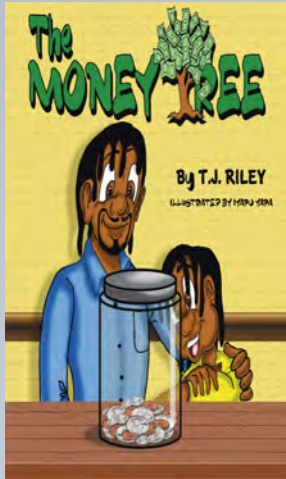
Rose thought life was going great: she was engaged, had a beautiful set of twin girls, a recent trade school graduate, and a new job right around the corner. Unfortunately, her fiancé, David, turned out to not be what she needed, and she chose to break things off. In the midst of her failing relationship, she met a man named Falcon, who ironically turns out to be her new boss. They quickly go from acquaintances to lovers, which opens up a fire pit of drama. Then comes Landon, a self-made millionaire, who is very humble about his accomplishments. He shows her all the things she was lacking while with David, and ultimately proposes. Naturally, Rose is scared to fall for Landon and accept his proposal due to David's lies and Falcon's toxic choices, but she takes a chance and allows Landon to love her the way she needs. Will her love for him forsake the feelings she's still harboring for Falcon, or will she give into temptation?



Longing for the Night

Ms. KJ

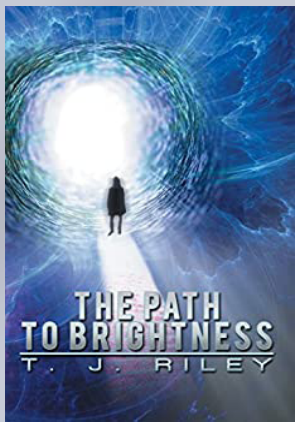
Inspired by the poem Goblin Market by Christina Rossetti, two young sisters face the trials and tribulations of the hood in this coming-of-age story about the harshness of living in South Central Los Angeles.



The Money Tree

T.J. Riley / Illustrated by Iyapo Yapa

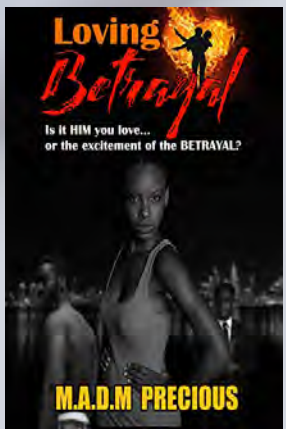
Every child wants money to buy something, right? Our hero does too. But, his father has a surprise, a Money Tree. Join the fun journey to find out how to grow your own money tree.



THE PATH to BRIGHTNESS

T.J. Riley

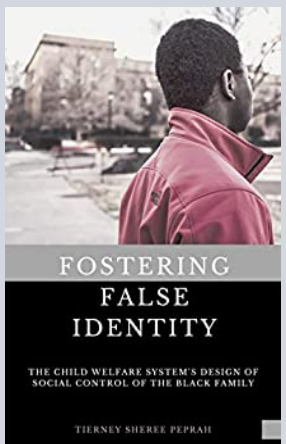
Fatima, a young woman, has a near-death experience. When she awakes from a coma and recovers, she has mystical powers. She begins to see auras and experiences life with her new abilities. For the clever character, Fatima, life is about to dramatically change. Follow Fatima's journey as she tries to convince others of the astounding esoteric knowledge she has brought back from beyond the veil. However, there are some that wish to stop her from sharing an ancient secret. A secret that will change life on earth, forever.



LOVING BETRAYAL

MADM Precious

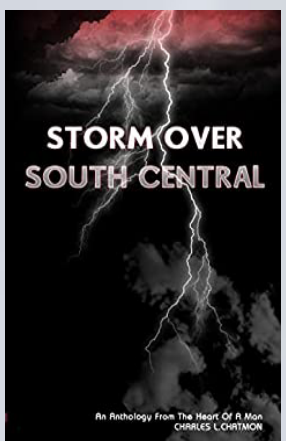
When Michelle met Michael, she thought that she found the love of her life. She was young and coming out of a bad marriage. A single parent of two children, she was scared, broke and had no self esteem. Michael seemed perfect, except for one little problem...



Fostering False Identity: The Child Welfare System's Design of Social Control of the Black Family

Tierney Peprah

THE ORGANISM OF RACISM IN THE UNITED STATES CRAFTS VARIOUS SYSTEMS MEANT TO ACHIEVE ONE OVERARCHING PURPOSE, that is to ensure that peoples and groups designated for an inferior existence pose little to no threat to the social structure of wealth and privilege that is propped up on their backs. These systems are allowed to exist, oftentimes unchallenged, by propagating dishonest descriptions of why these systems exist. Many people are without the proper means to challenge these systems, camouflaged as being charitable or in the public interest, for their unjust outcomes. In *Fostering False Identity*, the American child welfare system is explored as such a system. While the child welfare system is portrayed as a moral arbitrator in the abuse and neglect of children, in actuality this system was formulated for the specific purpose of regulating disenfranchised populations by removing children from those communities to assimilate them into White society. Thus assimilated, they are believed to pose minimal threat to the social order. *Fostering False Identity* will explore this phenomenon through a lens of Black liberation and self-determination of African families who are consistently victimized by this system.



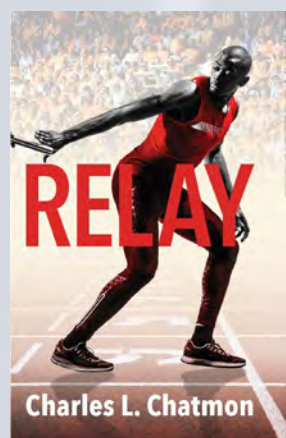
Storm Over South Central

Charles L. Chatmon

The Storm has been unleashed, which means it's time to share what's inside the much anticipated anthology by author Charles L. Chatmon.

Chatmon, a refreshing voice in the world of modern poetry and author of *The Depths of My Soul & The Voices of South Central* returns with engaging short stories and thought provoking poems.

Read *Storm over South Central* and discover the thoughts he writes about in this volume filled with verses and tales of despair, stories of hope. It will also reveal a lot about American society – its strengths, its flaws and its people. This is a literary journey you will enjoy taking.



RELAY

Charles L. Chatmon

A high school track relay team is in the hunt for their ultimate goal. When tragedy strikes, the team bands together to capture a dream they've had since childhood. Totally within their grasp, they must come together as one to achieve the final victory. Along the way, they face personal challenges that threatens to derail their dreams - and their lives.

Explore the saga of the Appleton High School varsity track team as they compete to win a championship they have worked hard for - with difficulties along the way.

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AND WHAT OF THE CARGO? A NOVEL

September Crossword Answer Key!



The Director

Benita, a desperate and out-of-work actress, had been selling her blood to stay afloat. Times were hard and getting worse until she agreed to star in a film by an unknown director named Danny West. He'd been producing mystery and horror flicks for years. Yet, no one knew it was just a front for his secret agenda.

* * *

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