

READING and WRITING

DARK

A space for *fantasy* authors

THIS MONTH

MAGAZINE

This Month *IYAPO YAPA* invites you to a world like nothing you've ever seen before, in a WAY it has never been seen before as *Reading and Writing in the DARK Magazine* presents the prologue, along with the complete chapters 1, 2 and 4 of:

THE PROBLEMS OF IMMORTALITY

COULD YOU SURVIVE BEING IMMORTAL?

Page 5

Also:

**We revisit the thrill
packed world of:**

SURVIVING the WORST!

(Chapter 7 Excerpt)

Page 19

This Month's **CROSSWORD
PUZZLE** looks at ALL the
past RaWitD **FEATURES!**

Page 36

**News and Info about Completed and
Upcoming Projects and MORE Every Month!**

READING and WRITING in the

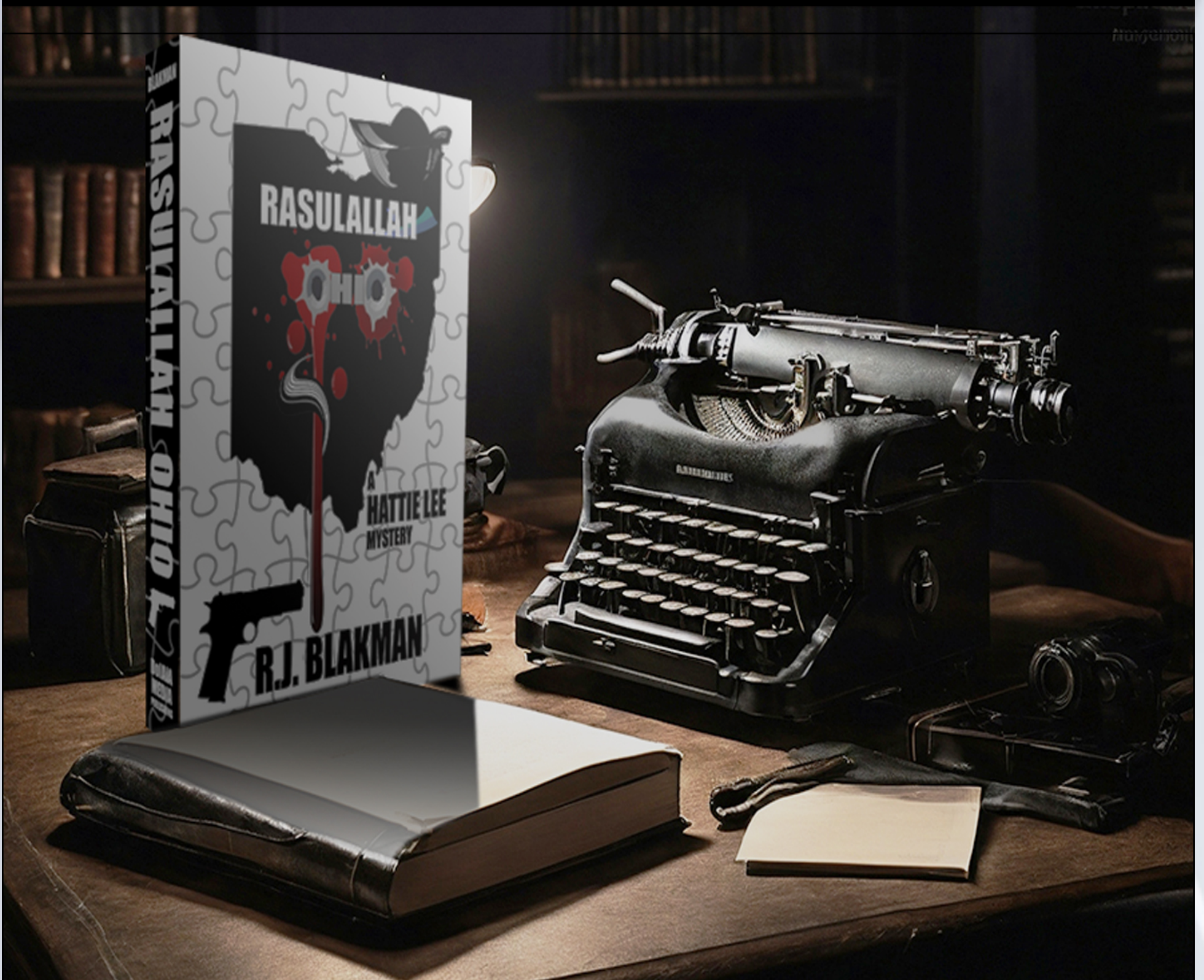
DARIK

A space for avid Black readers and Black authors

1960s Ohio

Hattie Lee and her husband Benjamin were building a good life and preparing to start a family in a town that seemed like a dream come true. In a country unsafe for Black people sat Rasulallah, an oasis hidden in plain sight.

But one night.. within less than an hour... their dream became a nightmare!
And Hattie was determined to find out why!



From R.J. BLAKMAN, author of the highly anticipated urban fantasy *The Dragons of Harlem*, comes a mystery that will make you laugh, cry, get angry and keep you guessing until the very end!

RASULALLAH OHIO: A HATTIE LEE MYSTERY

Available at: <https://iyapoyapa.com/rusulallah-ohio.html>

or click the image above for the direct link.

(Also enjoy a sneak peek at the full second chapter exclusively on the website)



AUGUST 2025 - Volume 2 / Number 2



MAGAZINE

CONTENTS

WELCOME! A Look at the Future Page 3

The Problems of Immortality (Prologue, and Chapters 1,2 and 4) Page 5

Excerpt: Surviving tthe Worst (Chapter 7 Excerpt) Page 19

August 2025 Crossword: RaWitD Features Page 36

Alright, Enough About ME! Page 49

WELCOME BACK!

Wow! It’s August already, and this month is a month of SURVIVAL!

Welcome to this month’s issue of the Reading and Writing in the DARK Magazine! I’m happy every time I put out an edition. I’m happy not just because I enjoy giving fans of my stories entire chapters and excerpts of my work, but because I feel a sense of accomplishment each time I add another issue to the roster—and always on time (the first of each month). Since publishing my first six-page newsletter in 2022, to the full-on magazine it has become, I have not missed producing an issue and I’m extremely proud of that and plan to carry on the tradition! This month you are treated to the prologue as well as the 1st, 2nd and 4th chapters of my upcoming book *The Problems of Immortality!* It is like nothing I’ve ever written before, and I must say, it is very difficult to write at times. What’s it about? All I can say is that if you’re looking for a feel-good story to give you warm fuzzies, this one isn’t it. It deals with about as existential of a crisis and anyone can go through! I’ve also included an excerpt from chapter seven of *Surviving the Worst!* So... enjoy this month’s edition, enjoy the crossword puzzle and all the rest, and I will see you next month!

Blessings to you and thank you for being a subscriber!

Iyapo



READING and WRITING in the DARK Magazine
Vol. 2 No.2
AUGUST 2025

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A Look Back and to the Future!

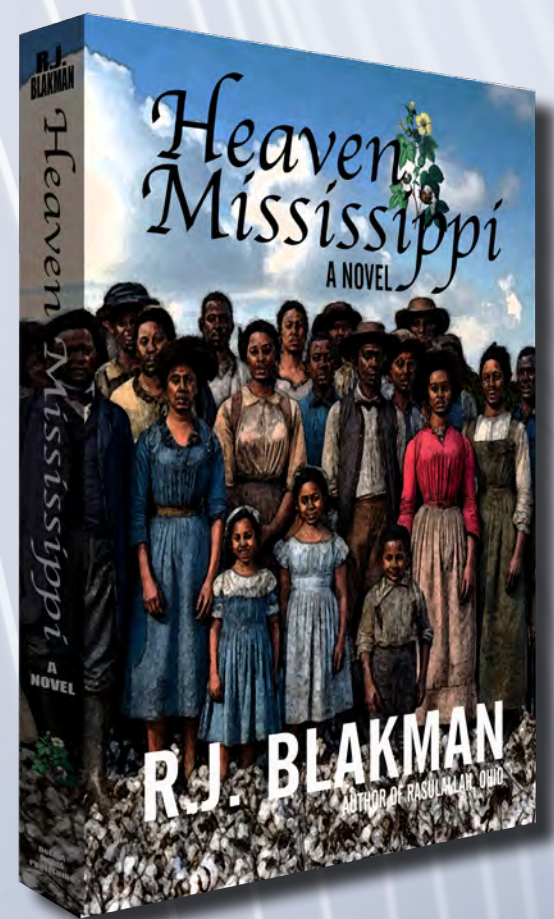
Ok, ok! Black people are sick and tired of reading and talking about our enslavement.

I get it!

So does R.J. Blakman.

There is no shortage of books and movies about the enslavement of Afrikans in America. The question becomes however, how quick should we be to dismiss a book because the main subject matter is chattel slavery as practiced in the United States? It is a tough subject that many of our people would like to just move on from and understandably so, but it is a fact of the history of our people in America. That said, *Heaven Mississippi* may not be what is considered a “traditional” book that takes place during enslavement. There are components of it that are unavoidable to highlight, else it could be argued that it would be a disservice to our ancestors who suffered, bled and died under that barbaric system.

That said, *Heaven Mississippi* is, as the reader will discover, a different kind of book. Blakman has nearly completed the novel and can’t wait to get it into the hands of readers. He is promising something different with *Heaven Mississippi*, and from the way it looks thus far, R.J. Blakman is delivering! You can read a complete chapter from *Heaven Mississippi* in the July 2024 issue of the *Reading and Writing in the DARK Magazine!* So, check back here each month for regular *Heaven Mississippi* updates. To the right is the cover reveal! (A *RaWitDM* sneak peek.)



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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!

Click the image below to enter a world of action, adventure, science and horror on Kindle



Top reviews from the United States

Amazon Customer

★★★★★ **Cornucopia of Action, Sci-fi, Mystery, Horror and Heart palpatng suspense.**

Reviewed in the United States on November 5, 2022

I love the pace of Iyapo's stories. He is a true master story weaver. This story is a cornucopia full of action, sci-fi, mystery, horror and heart palpatng suspense. The way he transitions between dramatic and comical situations are remarkable. After the daring trio's exhausting battle with vampires, out manoeuvring alans and harpes, they make it home to a well deserved rest within the sanctuary of Hevan only to be disrupted by the the Versquake. How much WORSE can it get living in a unmanageable and unpredictable dimension?

Amazon Customer

★★★★★ **Best Zombies Ever**

Reviewed in the United States on November 1, 2022

Amazon took down my review of Melanin, so I hope this stays. This is not your ordinary Zombie tale. I haven't read such inventive horror in years. Yapa really knows how to weave a story to pull you in. I had to laugh at how much fun I was having while reading it. I would recommend this author in a heart beat because all of his writings are so good.

BOOK I - COMING SOON!



THE PROBLEMS of IMMORTALITY (Prologue & Chapters 1, 2 & 4)

PROLOGUE

They had done it.

They had finally done it.

The United States was founded on violence and bloodshed, first of its indigenous people, then its own countrymen, then of the kidnapped people it enslaved, exploited, and terrorized. It got its way by becoming the biggest kid on the block and then using that position to become the quintessential bully.

The United States thought nothing of inserting itself into the affairs of other nations and telling them how they should run their countries.

The prevailing belief for far too long, perhaps even to its inception, was that it was the God given right of the United States to be the ‘nanny’ and authority for and over the rest of the world, and to tout itself as the standard by which all other countries should be measured. Its blatant hypocrisy, cognitive dissonance, and schizophrenia notwithstanding. Simultaneously, the United States as a country operated at a level of lack of self-awareness

that would have been amusing to witness had it not been so tragic.

The country easily saw the deficiencies (or what it characterized as deficiencies) of other nations—whether those shortcomings were real, imagined or manufactured by the United States itself—while wholly ignoring its own failings that in many cases far exceeded the evils and atrocities committed by those it castigated.



At one time the United States was a world leader—but it was a cruel, unjust, heartless,

merciless, sociopathic leader and knew nothing but force, violence and war as a way of dealing with other world powers and whatever they considered to be recalcitrant governments that did not want to submit to it. For a time, all the nations of the earth behaved like the cowering bullied the United States wanted to make them. But as happens with many who are bullied, eventually they straighten their back, unflinchingly look the bully in the eye, and with clenched fists say, “No more.”

That is what it came to in the days



THE PROBLEMS of IMMORTALITY (Prologue & Chapters 1, 2 & 4) Continued

of BRICS and the collapse of the U.S. dollar when the BRICS nations collectively gave the United States and by extension, the European Union, the middle finger as they moved away from the Petro-dollar.

As with any abuser and bully, when the object of their abuse and bullying is attempting to separate, they result to the only thing they know. The only thing they have ever known.

Violence.

The American century was drawing to a close, but the empire was in the position for the first time since its inception of becoming a minor player on the world stage. Something that didn't sit well at all with the power brokers at the top of the chain. So, the United States had no intention of going "gently into that good night..." as Dylan Thomas put it.

No.

If the U.S. and its cousin, the E.U. had to go, it was going to go kicking and screaming and taking others down with it, even the whole world, if need be. And for the decision makers at the top, no price was too high. No

life was above the cause, (as long as it wasn't one of their lives of course). There was no sacrifice of sons and daughters, husbands or wives, fathers or mothers, that was too much to be asked of those at or near the bottom.



The irony was that after the revolution, for a great many people they didn't notice much of a change in their standard of living. As the old saying goes, when you're already close to the bottom you don't have far to fall.

Ground troops and drones notwithstanding, the United States, though arguably dominant when it came to other countries

in terms of its military machine and nuclear arsenal, could be active in one or two, maybe even three wars at once.

However, with new alliances being made and the monetary system of the U.S. having been severely weakened, infrastructure, literally falling to pieces, along with a population that had been so lied to that conspiracy theories were the only thing they believed, having lost all faith in its government; and finally a government that was so inept and bought, paid for and blackmailed that it couldn't make a move to do the right thing if it

THE PROBLEMS of IMMORTALITY (Prologue & Chapters 1, 2 & 4) Continued

genuinely wanted to, the handwriting was on the wall.

No one knows who launched first except whoever launched first.

Ultimately, did it matter?

President Cummings of the U.S. and its allies launched nukes.

China, Russia, and BRICS nations that had advanced weaponry launched nukes, and the rest is history.

Now, ancient history.

From the launch of the first missile to the last, what God created in six days, and man developed over a course of eons was gone in the space of less than two hours.

The maniacs and sociopaths who had their fingers on the buttons that would launch nuclear hell... had turned the earth into something that now nearly resembled Mars.

CHAPTER ONE

Everyone Bell-Isle knew and loved was gone, at least for the most part to his knowledge.

The homes and businesses he once frequented had been reduced to rubble and ash. There was not a living thing in sight, no dogs or cats, birds, bees, no trees or flowers. Even the skeletons of long dead animals and people had gone to dust or had nearly completed the process of getting that way.

Bell-Isle was the only living thing in the now burned out and barren landscape—a landscape so devoid of life that it couldn't even be called a graveyard, for a graveyard had at least the echo of life.

He had had a long time to ponder how this once country, and the rest of the world, to his knowledge, had come to such a pass.

Bell-Isle stumbled around the landscape, quietly swearing at himself each time he bumped into something. After all this time one would think he'd know every rock, every crack, every dip and uneven place on the ground. But even now he still somehow managed to kick what should have been familiar rocks, or trip over his own feet. Bell-Isle “Detroit” Sanford was a tall,





THE PROBLEMS of IMMORTALITY (Prologue & Chapters 1, 2 & 4) Continued

lanky man. Distant years ago, before everything went to hell, everyone had pegged him for someone who could play basketball, and he often let others live with that illusion of him by never setting foot onto a court and having them find out the truth.

He knew everyone just thinking he could play was not only because of his height, but because he also was born in the inner city and was very dark skinned, even among his own Black peers. For as gangly as he was, he wasn't necessarily clumsy, but he was a bit awkward. Evidently, that awkwardness was something that even his constant trudging couldn't wipe away.

He had walked from Canada to Mexico several times. The same was true with his trips from the East Coast to the West Coast. In the beginning he would drive it, but then as the scenery and cities passed by him in a blur he started wondering if he might be missing something.

Or someone.

So, he started walking and had been walking ever since.



In the early days after the war that ultimately did end all wars (but not in the way the leadership of the various countries thought it would), He ran across a few survivors of the nuclear holocaust, some of whom joined him on his trek to find even more people and perhaps start society over again with the remnant. Much to Belle-Isle's dismay, eventually, the men, women, boys and girls journeying with him who didn't grow old, sick and die before ever being able to reproduce, were overcome by the toxic environment itself and succumbed to it.

He found companionship with a few animals, one in particular he remembered. A mountain lion cub he came across while walking through Montana. He named the critter, Tony'. By that time food had gotten scarce, but there was food to be had. There were enough remnants of stores and other places that there was always some ultra processed delicacy to be found. Belle-Isle found himself primarily loaded with Twinkies for when he got hungry. Which wasn't often. Twinkies were the one thing that still tasted relatively the same as they did when they first came from the factory, even after so many years.



THE PROBLEMS of IMMORTALITY (Prologue & Chapters 1, 2 & 4) Continued

So he made sure his new pet—or new friend had food and water as fresh as he could give it. Tony ended up being a companion for several years and amazingly managed to live to a decent age within the now toxic environment, but as with all living creatures, Tony eventually died. That was the natural order of things.

Belle-Isle often wondered about his sanity and if it were still intact. Given that he'd not seen another human being in so long he didn't know whether he had an actual point of reference for discussions anymore. Perhaps the fact he questioned his sanity at all meant that he was still sane.

Maybe.

Maybe not.

It was at least something to consider.

Belle-Isle made it a daily practice to either talk to himself or sing for extended periods so that he wouldn't forget how to speak. He knew the chances of that happening were slim, but he wanted to be sure. One never knew in this new normal.

He scoped around at the desolation

that had replaced the once familiar and plentiful sights he was used to oh so long ago that had once filled his eyes. One would think that after so many years, he would be used to walking these paths that were once forests, parks, cities, and streets. Sometimes he could almost still hear the traffic as it zoomed down the thoroughfare.



He looked around and allowed his mind to conjure the images of cars of all makes and models. Small ones, midsized and gas guzzling' huge. Brand new—old—so many. Sometimes it seemed, the city was like the Thomas Dolby song, where he sang, "...

I noticed something pretty bizarre. There's not a lot of people there, just an awful lot of cars."

Things didn't tend to change very much. Not anymore. Taking in the ubiquitous destruction and carnage that spread out before him, Belle-Isle shook his head and thought about the way things used to be, the way they are now and how the situation came to be what it is.

"I love you forever."

The words still echoed in his mind as clear and as distinct as if they'd been



THE PROBLEMS of IMMORTALITY (Prologue & Chapters 1, 2 & 4) Continued

spoken yesterday. Bell-Isle looked at the sky, the dingy, dirty brown of it and realized that for as clearly as he could remember Tamarra's voice, he couldn't remember what a blue sky looked like for the life of him.

Perhaps it was because his consciousness was too crowded with thoughts of her. Thoughts of Tamarra. Yes, the sound of her voice echoed in his mind—but not just her voice. He remembered vividly the depth of her clear brown eyes, the kind of eyes that made her always look as if she were seeing everything in the world with wonder, and for the first time.

Eyes that made her look as if she were always on the verge of asking a question. He could see her lips, full and soft. At times Bell-Isle would close his eyes and put two fingers to his lips and imagine feeling the touch of hers pressed against his, if only one more time. Her ebony skin was smooth and dark, kissed by the sun that loved it.

He thought about making love to her. He missed her. The way she moved, the way she moaned, the way she'd first whisper, then cry out his name. He could feel her body, he could smell

her fragrance, he could taste her.

And now—he was alone.

* * *

Even though he hadn't seen another human being in years, Belle-Isle made it his personal mission to seek out survivors of this nightmare. He trekked relentlessly, sometimes discovering he'd been going in circles, sometimes crisscrossing the landscape, sometimes having his compass steer him wrong, seeming that there was now some issue with magnetic north.

The one thing he could count on was the stars.

That was the only constant in this surreal environment.

The stars were something he could depend on.

Something he could use.

He looked at the night sky and plotted out a new direction. Hopefully one he hadn't already gone in before, and after he was finished, he opened his knapsack, grabbed a Twinkie and prepared to break the seal.

Belle-Isle stopped short and froze when he suddenly smelled it. The





THE PROBLEMS of IMMORTALITY (Prologue & Chapters 1, 2 & 4) Continued

odor was unmistakable, though he had only smelled it twice since the catastrophe. He slowly, quietly laid the Twinkie back in the bag and buttoned it. He then doused the small fire he'd been sitting in front of.

Now, everything was dark—made darker still by the fact his eyes had to adjust after quickly extinguishing the light of the fire.

The odor became stronger, and, in the distance, Belle-Isle could hear the distinct guttural growls that let him know he was not just imagining the impending danger. Beads of sweat formed at his hairline and started running down his face. It had been years since his narrow escape, and he had hoped that he would never have to deal with the same situation again.

He wanted to pray like he did when he was a little boy. Pray like he did when he testified and led prayer services at his church. But he knew it was hopeless and that his prayers would go no higher than the ceiling, as they used to say.

The odor became even more pronounced, as did the snarls—

low, guttural, and angry. He looked around to the right and left, he didn't see where the sound came from yet, but that didn't mean anything.

There were hellhounds about.

For the first time in longer than Belle-Isle Samford could remember, his deep sorrow, boredom and longing gave way—to fear.



CHAPTER TWO

Jane Kelly Pinkerton spent years building her social media following.

“Pinkylink” had become the big thing online. She started out by doing little stunts and pranks, but then went to beauty tips, and that seemed to catch on. Finally, she'd start doing political commentary as she applied her makeup, (which was about a surface level as one could get), but that resonated among her peers some of whom may have been more politically astute, and/or astute in geopolitics than she was.

It wasn't long before Jane had become the darling of conservative circles. Blonde haired, blue eyed, pretty to most, and filled with opinions, that were of course based upon talking



THE PROBLEMS of IMMORTALITY (Prologue & Chapters 1, 2 & 4) Continued

points she'd heard in her ultra-conservative circles but never bothered to deeply examine or unpack. She would speak ad nauseum about the plight of white people in the United States and how they, and wasps, (White Anglo-Saxon Protestants), were being pushed aside and attempting to be wiped out in favor of Black and brown people who were privileged beyond measure in the United States!

Jane effectively used her Pinkylink platform to spread the word! She was one of the voices of the new generation that was leading the charge to take the country back for the good people (meaning white people), who were its bedrock. Those pioneers who built the country and turned it into something great, since those pesky Native Americans weren't doing anything with the land.

She decried the Blacks and minorities who were always jockeying for the top position in the victim Olympics. She and her followers found it completely disgusting that these groups would be constantly playing that card.

Especially when, according to Jane and those of like mind, it was white people who were the hands down

victims not only in the United States but globally! How, she would lament, can a group who has done so much to bring civilization to the world and accomplished so much, be so looked down on, put upon, marginalized and maligned?



Especially when they belonged to the greatest country on the planet and sought only to bring democracy to other countries.

Whether they wanted it or not, and with violence if necessary.

News had been building, and global peace talks had been collapsing like dominos among world powers. The United States continued to want to lead and would never accept that it was like an actor or musician from yesteryear who, in their prime had the world by the balls.

That was in the glory days, at the height of their power and popularity, but had faded into obscurity and irrelevance. A celebrity that found themselves performing one embarrassing, humiliating stunt after another in a misguided bid to show the world that they still mattered but only made more blatantly manifest just how irrelevant they were; even

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THE PROBLEMS of IMMORTALITY (Prologue & Chapters 1, 2 & 4) Continued

to the point that the world was no longer even amused by the punch line they had become.

That was the United States.

The glory days were over.

That did not stop the saber rattling unfortunately. Because like a rattlesnake whose head has just been freshly cut off, it could still be dangerous if able to administer just one more lethal bite before it completely expired.

The United States was a spurned lover.

A spurned lover with NUKES!

Jane spoke about such things. But she was a true believer and lacked the cynicism that was necessary to look objectively at what was being said to her by politicians. She swallowed hook line and sinker what she was told about the greatness of her country and its subsequent return to greatness, and she parroted it back to her followers, as she'd apply foundation.

Quiet as it was kept, even if some of her own views may have deviated from those of the party and growing PAOTA (Put America On Top Again), movement, she would never breathe

a word about it out loud, lest it should hurt her numbers and cause her to lose followers, subscribers and sponsors.

So Jane was locked in.

She loved the attention, the fame, the complements and that people hung on her every word, and statement no matter how nonsensical if taken apart and examined. She was all in for the United States and knew that one day it could and would be on top again, especially under the current president Quincy Cummings. He was going to fix everything and make it so that the

streets were safe for good people like her and her kind.

After all the undesirables, i.e.. Black and brown people were kicked out, imprisoned, or squashed under foot of course.

It hadn't fully happened yet, but things were shaping up. For right now, it was up to the United States to tell other countries what to do and how to achieve peace. And Jane Pinkerton was there for it—as well as her followers.

Whatever the United States did on





THE PROBLEMS of IMMORTALITY (Prologue & Chapters 1, 2 & 4) Continued

the world stage was just fine with them. The president moved boldly forward to implement sweeping mandates, policies and executive orders that were considered by many to be draconian, but to his followers, were the way to set things right.

To make all things right in the world.

All was right, at least until the day Jane was doing a podcast and behind her, in the reflection of her camera, out her window she saw the surreal mushroom cloud that now ruled the horizon! “Oh God!” She yelled. “Oh SHIT!”

Knowing from the few documentaries she’d ever seen, and mostly from movies, that she only had mere seconds to act! She ran upstairs to her bedroom and looked at her desk in the corner! She ran over to it and started tossing things aside and off of it!

She grabbed a specific sheet of paper from off her desk and grasped it tightly in her hand as she continued scrambling to find another item.

“A pin!” She yelled as she glanced out the window at the ever growing, blindingly luminous mushroom

cloud, knowing the shock wave was not far behind. “Damn it! I need a pin!”

CHAPTER FOUR

(Chapter three still in the works)



Denzel Washington led what would be considered by most, an unspectacular life. He lived alone and hung out online with the comic book and gamer communities. He didn’t care for the blatant racism that permeated both groups and struggled with understanding why it existed in spaces where the discussions were about beings from other worlds

of all colors and anthropomorphic types, but for some reason, they just couldn’t seem to abide Black people.

Denzel wasn’t a bad looking guy.

Matter of fact, there were many women who considered him to be quite good looking, if not a bit socially awkward. The curse of the Black nerd.

He liked to date, but the women he dated weren’t into the things he was into. More than that though, was something that burned within him. He knew there was more to life than collecting comics and.



THE PROBLEMS of IMMORTALITY (Prologue & Chapters 1, 2 & 4) Continued

being a professional gamer. Yes, being a professional gamer had brought him a certain degree of fame, in certain circles, but what was he doing to change the world? To make things better?

He had stewed and stewed over this question for years, until one night it all came to a head. He decided that he knew what would change himself and everything!

One night, in the quiet of his home, with no notice from the world around him, he took the leap that would make him Indestructible!



Indestructible was unique in the world! He wasn't one of these guys or gals who donned costumes, then went around "patrolling" the streets at night, sometimes handing out sandwiches to the homeless, and other times having their own asses handed to them when confronted by someone or someones), who were bigger, stronger, and didn't see their costumes as a threat, but as a joke.

No. Indestructible was something quite different. He was the first and only, real live superhero, with actual powers!

He could fly, he was fast, bullets bounced off him, he had super sight and hearing, and he was strong!

Denzel Washington was the real deal!

He certainly was not a fan of being shot, especially when the shots were from semiautomatic weapons and/or multiple guns all at once.

When the being who was known to the entire world as Indestructible, was shot, the bullets would have no more of a killing or maiming effect on him than spitballs blown through a straw onto a brick wall. Bullets would just bounce off the man but they did hurt; they hurt like hell.

When criminals hit Indestructible with everything from fists, to brass knuckles to crowbars, he could feel it all—and all of it hurt. But there was never a chance of blood being drawn or a broken bone or anything of the sort. All the pains of contact (which only lasted as long as the contact itself) notwithstanding, Indestructible, lived up to his name.

The man was fearless (why wouldn't he be?), and the only 'super powered being' on the planet—at least as far as anyone knew.



THE PROBLEMS of IMMORTALITY (Prologue & Chapters 1, 2 & 4) Continued

Indestructible could lift a truck and he could take on hordes of men at once without any concern whatsoever as to sustaining any bodily harm. He considered himself a man of honor, thus was the reason for his power set and abilities.

Now he could make a difference in the world!

When the first nuclear missiles entered U.S. air space, Indestructible was at a loss for what to do. He had been saving lives for a few years, over nine thousand to his count, from everything from regular street thugs, to terrorists, to saving a passenger liner while in flight and guiding it safely to the ground.

He'd done it all, but now, nukes?!

He'd flown up high to get a better idea of what he was facing.

What he saw was the most sickening, demoralizing thing he'd ever seen. From his altitude and with his enhanced eyesight, he saw what looked like literally thousands of missiles at various places in the atmosphere, in route to the countries they were meant to decimate!

There was no way he was going to stop all these.

There was no way he was going to stop just the ones that were barreling toward the United States!

He closed his eyes and thought for a moment. He thought about the story of the boy and the starfish.



One night there had been a raging storm, and the next morning the beach was littered with thousands upon thousands of star fish. A little boy walked along, grabbing individual starfish and throwing them back into the ocean so they might

live. An old man who saw what he was doing walked up to the little boy, and sweeping his arms outward, said, "There are thousands and thousands of starfish out here young man... as far as the eye can see. And you're throwing them back one at a time as if what you're doing is going to matter." Without a word, the little boy leaned, picked up another star fish and threw it back into the ocean. Then he looked at the old man and said, "It mattered to him."

Indestructible opened his eyes and tightened his jaw. He was

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THE PROBLEMS of IMMORTALITY (Prologue & Chapters I and II) Continued

going to do the very best he could. Perhaps he could save someone! He scanned all the missiles. God! There were so many! He flew in the direction of the one that seemed the closest and formulated his plan. He would divert the missiles out into the upper atmosphere and into space, where hopefully they wouldn't do any harm!

He flew toward the missile that was flying toward him, when suddenly, out his peripheral vision, he



caught the gleam of an explosion! One of the warheads had gone off nearly right beside him.

Everything from that moment happened so quickly that the hero had no time to act or react! He saw the light, heard the sound and felt the shock wave, and incredible heat, that even made him feel as if he were going to burn alive!

Then everything went black.



ADAREN M. LANE

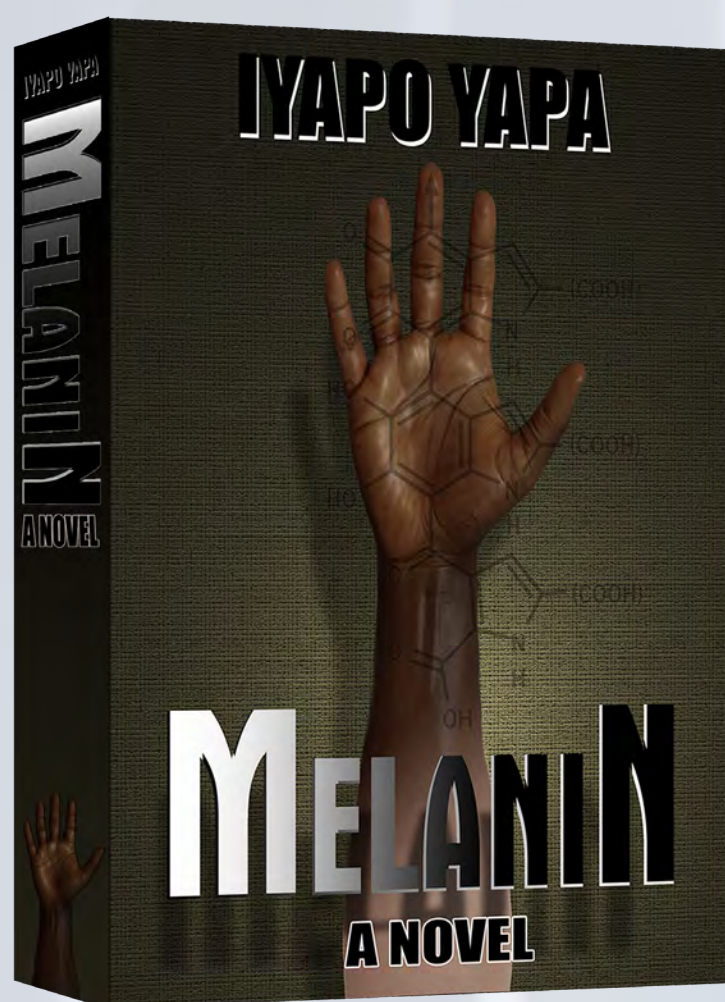
MAJOR MARJ MASON

COMING SOON!

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SURVIVING THE WORST (CHAPTER 7 Excerpt)

Belgian-French scientist Bernard Heuvelmans and Scottish-American biologist Ivan T. Sanderson, are often credited as being the ‘founding fathers’ of the field of the so called pseudoscience known today as cryptozoology. Heuvelmans wrote the book *On the Track of Unknown Animals* in 1958.

Three years earlier the work was published in French as *Sur la Piste des Bêtes Ignorées*. Though the work is regarded as one of the most influential cryptozoology texts ever written... four decades earlier in 1919 Dayle Stouffer had written an exhaustive work titled, *Unknown Creatures in the World*, and Dayle’s son Larkin Stouffer expanded the book in 1941—still over a decade before Dr. Heuvelmans book was published.

It was argued among some that *On the Track of Unknown Animals* “borrowed” heavily from the work of Dayle Stouffer and his son, but it was never brought to a consensus; an unsurprising development given the attitudes toward Black people and their work at the time. Added to that the fact Heuvelmans’s book had a large print run and access to a distribution network that was considered wide at

the time. More people were able to acquire *Sur la Piste des Bêtes Ignorées* and

On the Track of Unknown Animals, as the book likewise made its way onto the shelves of bookstores and libraries and even into a few universities worldwide for the research and study of people interested in the subject—and a few who weren’t.

On the other hand, the much earlier printed *Unknown Creatures of the World*, didn’t make it far beyond a hundred fifty copies. There were only a handful of Black publishing companies during the time when Dayle completed the first edition of his ongoing work.

None of the Black publishers dealt with the subjects of science, Black history, mathematics or even entertainment at the time, they were all one form of Christian printing company or other and only published works pertaining to the Gospel, clean living, Christian based spirituality and so on. It was by dumb luck that Dayle happened upon the son of a preacher who had a publishing company and wanted to branch out into new areas. After reading what Dayle had written, the preacher’s son agreed to print and





SURVIVING THE WORST (CHAPTER 7 Excerpt) Continued

distribute the book (slim access to distribution he had), Some of which, Dayle was certain landed in Heuvelmans and Sanderson's libraries, though if asked, neither man would ever admit it.

After the second printing (which was less than fifty copies), the publisher sadly informed Dayle that his preacher father was unaware his presses and resources were being used to print what he considered to be secular materials. He said that he'd tried to explain to his father how the search and study of these creatures would actually expand a knowledge of God's



creation. His father was adamant that the book was blasphemous and that any creatures the Lord would want us to know about would be found within the covers of the good book, and that was it. If he wanted to publish such things, he would have to purchase his own presses, type setters, paper, and supplies if he wanted to do it.

This was all said, of course with full knowledge that the young man had absolutely no way of acquiring such resources. So, it was back to printing only "Christian" materials.

That snag notwithstanding Dayle was

not dissuaded in any way to stop any of his quests, nor stop writing about them and cataloging the creatures he was able to discover.

What Unknown Creatures in the World lacked in grammatic correctness and "learned" exposition, it more than made up for in its variety, categorization, description, and any known details about creatures of myth, legend, and folklore.

It would be a few decades before Dayle's son Larkin would pick up the mantle and continue the work of expanding the volumes and get them into print (though still on an extremely limited basis).

* * *

As Larkin Stouffer lay on a cot, smoking a Lucky Strike, an edition of his and his father's book open across his stomach, he stared out the opening of his medium size tent and at the stars that filled the night sky. The day had been hot, as was typical for that part of the world, and humid—very humid—and the cool of the evening was a welcome reprieve.

There was the heat, the humidity, the mosquitoes, and some animals that would just as soon made a meal of



SURVIVING THE WORST (CHAPTER 7 Excerpt) Continued

of him and his colleagues as look at them, but even with all that, Larkin could scarcely believe where he was and was grateful for it. The sky looked no different than what he remembered in his childhood.

Starlight that was sprinkled throughout the atmosphere within the dark, moonless night was oh so familiar. The sky remained constant, but it was the only thing that was. The rest—though Larkin was well used to flora, fauna and trees surrounding him as a farm boy, there was nothing to compare with the majesty of the rainforest in the Republic of Congo.

He lay and thought about how his father had completed his studies at the Tuskegee Institute and graduated with honors. He was well versed in construction and masonry and put that knowledge to good use. Dayle, as good as his word, used the money he made from it to help his mother Mavis (Larkin's grandmother) and great auntie Bernadette with expenses, as well as taking care of himself. Any other monies were saved and used for his research and traveling. At

times he would combine the two as he would work his jobs by day and at night stalk and study unknown creatures whom some people were fearful of even talking about.

Dayle should have been on the present expedition with his wife Marjane, Larkin's mother, but three days before it was time to leave, Marjane was working out in her garden and while exiting, stepped onto a loose piece of ground causing her to suffer a severe sprain of her right ankle.



The couple had originally planned the trip to Afrika, and specifically the Congo in search of a legendary creature the natives called the Mokéle-mbêmbé. Some said it was a form of serpent, others thought the creature was a dragon of some kind. Members of the zoological community who didn't pooh pooh the existence of the creature out of hand dismissed it as superstitious savages misinterpreting some form of elephant or an extraordinarily large hippopotamus that was yet undiscovered and uncatalogued by white men. Dayle and his wife believed the creature—if it existed—



SURVIVING THE WORST (CHAPTER 7 Excerpt) Continued

might be some kind of dinosaur or an animal that was a holdover from that era, and they hoped to seek it out, catalog it and add it to their family's ever expanding book on the subject.

The expedition was something they had both planned and looked forward to for almost two years. Marjane insisted that she could still make the trip, their town doctor insisted she couldn't.

So, the non-refundable plane and travel tickets were already purchased, as well as lodging and payments to guides. Other interested parties were likewise paid in full to go. At first Marjean insisted Dayle go without her and take their son, Larkin on the expedition. She assured her husband that she'd be alright, it was only a sprained ankle after all. Besides, if she needed help, she could ask Mother Stouffer or Auntie Bernadette for assistance. Dayle didn't like the idea at all. Yes, it was only a sprain, and yes, he was committed to his work and research, but he was committed to his wife more.

He would not be going.

Dayle gave his ticket to his son and the other to another man he knew who studied strange phenomena, a man named Jordan Jacobs. Though the two men came from vastly different backgrounds, they did find a common ground when it came to the search for things outside the realm of human understanding. Jacobs, a white man, did not study unknown animals.



His sights were set higher—into the heavens. Jacobs studied what he called, “beings from outer space” and things

he called “Unknown Flying Plates” or “UFPs” for short. When the two of them first spoke, they believed each other immediately in what they claimed to have witnessed and wrote about, both men having seen their own brands of strangeness.

Jacobs had shown interest in going on the expedition but did not want to be bothered with the details of making preparations to go. However, when Dayle approached him, explained the situation with his wife and offered to give the man a readymade trip, Jacobs



SURVIVING THE WORST (CHAPTER 7 Excerpt) Continued

leaped at it.

Jacobs was a man of means. He'd acquired a substantial lump of money and property from his father upon his passing. So, money was not the reason for originally turning down the trip, it was more the bother of it.

A bother Dayle had quickly alleviated.

Though Dayle at first turned down the money offered by Jacobs to pay for the trip in full, he eventually gave in to Jacobs repeated insistence that he take it.

After all, it wasn't like, as a Black man the family couldn't use the money.

Black families could ALWAYS use the money.

The small group, including Larkin Stouffer, Dr. Kristoff Alexander, Michael Kolchak all three, experts in cryptozoology and the UFP expert Jordan Jacobs took off on their way to the Republic of Congo to see if they could locate and catalog the Mokéle-mbêmbé.

* * *

As Larkin continued casually puffing his cigarette, relaxing, and thinking about what he would be doing the next day to aid in search of the creature they sought, he was startled by the sudden appearance of someone at the front of his tent. Michael Kolchak stood at the opening of Larkin's tent and whispered, "Hey Stouffer. You awake in there?"

Larkin could make out a little of the man who stood in front of his tent and was now obstructing his view of the stars through the small opening. He grabbed an ash tray off a small table

next to his cot, Larkin took a final deep drag of his cigarette then put it out by smashing the butt of it into the ashtray and digging it around in small half twists. "Yes, I'm awake. Who is that? Mr. Kolchak?"

"Yeah, it's me. Mind if I come in for a bit?"

"Come on." Larkin said as he took the book off his stomach and swung his legs around to the side so that he was now sitting up.





SURVIVING THE WORST (CHAPTER 7 Excerpt) Continued

He sat the book on the cot beside him to the right and waited for the man to enter. Larkin was wearing only a white t-shirt and a pair of large white boxer shorts. He didn't bother to change or put something on. There were only men at this particular expedition.

Kolchak stepped inside and immediately found a seat (a rolled up duffle bag) to sit on.

Once seated, Kolchak removed a handkerchief from his back pocket and began wiping his head with it. "It's bloody hot out here." Kolchak said.

"Yes. But it's not bad as it was durin' the daylight if you remember."

"Remember?! How could I forget?! Frankly, I'm sorry I ever came out here."

"Come on Mr. Kolchak. You can't mean that. We're out here in the Congo. We're seein' things no other person from America will likely ever see, and if we're lucky we'll track down this huge animal... whatever it is and be the only people not from the Congo to have seen it. Shoot.

Most of them have never seen it to my understanding."

"Yes, I know. Kolchak conceded. "I'm just hot and tired and can't sleep."

"I know, that same thing happens to me. Bes' thing is to not think about it."

Kolchak looked at the book sitting beside Stouffer. "Reading up I see."

"As much as I could by this candlelight."

"I still find it hard to believe you and your father wrote that. I have the first volume, before you expanded it. There weren't a lot of them printed you know."

"Yes. I know."

"I guess you would. I thought it was fascinating! Especially at the beginning of the work where your father says that ONLY creatures, he has actually made contact with personally, and had the ability to study, are listed in the book. And the book has dozens upon dozens of





SURVIVING THE WORST (CHAPTER 7 Excerpt) Continued

creatures... and that was before your contributions! Simply amazing!”

“Yes. My father was definitely—” Larkin stopped speaking immediately. “Hey, do you feel that?” he finally said.

The ground shook slightly at first.

Over a course of minutes, the shaking became almost unbearable. The two men looked at each other.

“Earthquake!” Daniel Kolchak yelled.

The two men bolted from the tent, Larkin still in his present state of undress.

The explorers and native guides alike, already outside their tents, took off in all directions, seeking an open space where there was less of a chance they might have a tree fall upon them, or at the very least, having a coconut shake loose and land on one of their heads.

Dr. Kristoff Alexander saw where the guides were running and determined quickly that he didn't feel they were

going in the right direction and ran the opposite way. He found what he believed to be the most unobstructed area in the surroundings and stood motioning for others to join him. A few at first began running in Alexander's direction, including Larkin, but all stopped abruptly, still looking in the direction of Dr. Alexander, but not at him.

Instead, everyone seemed to be looking upward. A couple of the group covering their mouths and pointing.

“What's the matter with all of you?!” Alexander

yelled. Come over here where it's safe!” He then took notice of the group and the way they were looking in his direction. Slowly as if following the pointed fingers with his eyes, Kristoff Alexander turned around and saw it in the darkness.

He had always been told that the creature was the size of an elephant, and that it looked in its way like a dragon. It was some two to three times the size!

The stories of the size of the thing were wrong.





SURVIVING THE WORST (CHAPTER 7 Excerpt) Continued

The tales that it looked more like a dragon were terrifyingly right!

It was the Mokéle-mbêmbé!

Dr. Alexander didn't speak a word of Kikongo or Lingala, but he clearly understood the guide when he cried out, Mokéle-mbêmbé!!!

The thing was massive!

Every legend of the Mokéle-mbêmbé he'd ever heard said the creature was about the size of an elephant.

This monstrosity was twice as big, perhaps larger!

It didn't look like any images of dinosaurs that had been drawn as interpretations of the creature to date. The body was wide, and the neck of the thing was obscenely long, as likely, was the tail, Alexander guessed. He stood trying to figure out, through his terror, what exactly the thing was. It didn't fit the description of any dinosaurs he'd studied, though it did have some of the attributes of a brontosaurus or brachiosaurous—especially in terms of size, though in truth, either one of those sauropods would have dwarfed

the creature in front of which Alexander was standing.

The creature had no wings, at least none Alexander or anyone else could make out (not that anyone was taking that long to try and get a look). He surmised in the moment, correctly, that no animal this massive could have wings that were not readily visible, because of the sheer size the wings would need to be just to get its gargantuan body airborne and sustain it. Nor did it breathe fire (and least none that Dr. Alexander had seen in the short time in which he'd come into contact with it).



So, he suspected the monster was not a dragon—to his relief. (The researcher didn't believe in dragons anyway.) But either way, if the thing was a dinosaur, then it was sorely out of its place in time and space, and if a dragon—

same difference.

All of that being the case, Dr. Alexander had never seen anything like it. He was frozen in place experiencing equal parts amazement and fear! The creature's broad, serpentine-like head hovered some twenty to thirty feet above the

SURVIVING THE WORST (CHAPTER 7 Excerpt) Continued

the man in front of him. Alexander could hear everyone behind him scattering and running, but he, himself was transfixed by the sight of the behemoth! His thoughts were jumbled and moving at a thousand miles per hour in a thousand different directions at once. He knew he should have been running.

He KNEW it!

But his curiosity would not let him, even to his own consternation!

The creature didn't seem to notice the small figure of the man in front of it any more than one might recognize an ant in their path while strolling down the sidewalk. It didn't seem as if the gigantic animal was paying attention to anyone, which was all to the good. It had stopped when it got to the clearing in which the encampment was, no doubt mesmerized by the unfamiliar tents that were sprawled about, and the fire that was at the center of them, giving an eerie illumination to the surroundings.

Larkin looked around as he ran and took a quick mental headcount of as many of his colleagues and fellow explorers as he could, a task that even as he did it, he knew was futile in its way. There

were too many people running and hiding as best they could. He was in motion himself, and it was dark. He was fairly certain, though, he'd caught a glimpse of Jordan Jacobs—the only one of the group whose forte wasn't strange zoological creatures—as he ran off with a group of guides who seemed to, whether intuitively, or through experience, best know in what direction to go to escape the 'monster'.

From the moment he and Michael Kolchak left the tent and started running, Larkin had not even considered looking behind him, but now, feeling he'd gotten some distance

between himself and whatever the thing was that had burst into their camp, he decided to glance over his shoulder to determine where the massive creature was in relationship to the members of the group. He'd assumed the monster was not pursuing him because he didn't hear any sounds from it and more important, he no longer felt the ground quaking beneath his feet. Over his shoulder, in the distance, he could see, lit by the glow of the campfire, the enormous beast, standing still, and casually looking around. Larkin squinted in the darkness and took inventory of the mammoth creature





SURVIVING THE WORST (CHAPTER 7 Excerpt) Continued

from its head, down the front of the long neck, past the massive chest and finally around the front legs, where he could dimly see the figure of a man standing.

Larkin immediately recognized that figure of a man to be Dr. Alexander.

“Alex!” Larkin called out, as he fully turned and ran back in the direction of his colleague and the giant creature. “What the hell are you doing?! Get moving!”

As if suddenly snapping out of a trance, Dr. Alexander shot a quick glance behind him, and then back to the animal in front of him, looking at it as if it were his first time really seeing it. The head and neck of the animal slowly lurched forward, as it lifted one of its massive legs.

It was about to start walking again.

Dr. Alexander turned to run and made it an entire ten steps before the gigantic foot of the sauropod squashed him into the next life. The thing had flattened the hapless adventurer like a bug and did so without malice and with no discernible knowledge it had

even stepped on anything it shouldn't have.

Larkin looked at what was left of his colleague on the ground, as well as under the foot of the beast, and froze for a moment before turning and

joining the others in their mad dash to whatever safe places they thought they could find. Even as he ran, Larkin thought about the irony of having come to the Congo specifically to locate, confirm, and catalog this creature, and the fact that within a matter of seconds, the awe of actually seeing it was replaced with nothing less than a need for self-

preservation.

As Larkin closed the gap between his colleagues and guides, the shaking of the ground that was made by the thing made it nearly impossible to stay on his feet. Even with that, Larkin quickly caught up with the group that now, for the most part was hidden in various locations among the foliage. He found a crouching Kolchak peering out in front of him through the large leaves, inched over to the man's side, and quickly knelt beside him. It seemed that Kolchak had found a proper hiding place himself. They both sat still and quiet as the





SURVIVING THE WORST (CHAPTER 7 Excerpt) Continued

progressively less shaking earth signaled that the creature was now moving away from them and off into the distance.

“Where’s Jacobs?!” Kolchak said still looking ahead of him in the darkness.

“I’m pretty sure I saw him pair off with a group of guides. They looked like they knew where they were going.”

“Good. And Alexander? Have you seen him?! Is he alright?!”

Larkin merely shook his head as his gaze turned toward the ground.

“Is Alex dead?” Kolchak whispered.

Larkin said nothing and Kolchak took that to mean a sad, yes.

“DAMN IT! How the hell is this happening?! We’ve got to get out of here!”

Larkin could tell that his colleague was beginning to unravel, and he wasn’t quite sure what to do about it. They’d seen many a sight in their short time in the Congo. They had specifically come to see if they could find and catalogue

this very animal. But now, in the face of it, the reality—at least for Kolchak—may have been too much. As the two men stood, both of them silent, and Larkin attempted to find something he could say to the man in front of him, up walked Jordan Jacobs who had been

temporarily MIA. Having found what he felt was the most secure hiding place from the behemoth, he now stumbled in the darkness to where he could make out the low tone voices that were speaking English. He walked up to them and looked around. “Everyone alright? Damn that thing was big. Where’s Alexander?”

“Dead.” Kolchak said flatly.

“No! Are you shittin’ me?! Are you sure?!” Jacobs said in disbelief.

Both men simply nodded.

Before any of the men had a chance to say anything else, they once again felt the ground beginning to rumble. “It’s coming back!” Kolchak yelled.

“No! Wait a minute!” Larkin yelled back. “This one’s different!”

“Different?! You can feel a difference?”



SURVIVING THE WORST (CHAPTER 7 Excerpt) Continued

“Yes! And this one feels bigger... a LOT bigger!”

* * *

Marjane lay in bed moaning, eventually letting out a short, controlled scream. At least as much as she was able to control it.

She could hear her husband’s footsteps as they hurriedly came down the hardwood floor hallway, becoming louder, and emphasizing the sense of urgency of the movements of the man who was creating the sound. He stepped quickly into the bedroom, bare chested, and with his pants on with suspenders dangling down



on either side of his thighs. His face was half shaven, the other half thick with shave cream, straight razor still in hand. “Jane, what’s the matter?!” He said, breathing as if he’d just come in from running a sprint. “Your ankle givin’ you pain? Want me to go get a couple pain pills?”

“No, Dayle.” Marjane said as she sat up more straight in the bed. “Honey, you didn’t feel that?”

“Feel what?”

“It felt like... I dunno, kinda like an

earthquake, but there was something different about it. A few years back, we experienced several earthquakes on our trips near Lake Tahoe cataloging the creature in the lake. Remember? So I know what they feel like. What I just experienced, wasn’t totally like that.”

“How do you mean?”

“I – I can’t explain it. I jus’ know everything was shakin’ in a way I never felt before. Are you absolutely sure you didn’t feel that?”

“I’m sorry Baby. I didn’t feel a thing. Do you still feel it?!”

“No Honey, it lasted pretty long, but stopped while you were walking up the hallway.”

Marjane plopped her back onto the backboard of their bed and let out a long, nervous breath. She then looked sternly at her husband. “Dayle, it felt like the entire world was shakin’. Even the air, if you can imagine that. Somethin’s happening. I don’t know what it is... but somewhere out there... somethin’s happened. I can feel it.”

* * *



SURVIVING THE WORST (CHAPTER 7 Excerpt) Continued

In the silence of the night over Mannheim, Germany, few people were awake, nor aware of the flash of light that occurred above the clouds in their eastern sky. The flash came and went as quickly, but after it three creatures populated the area in which it had occurred. They did not resemble birds by any stretch of the imagination, and though they appeared humanoid, they were anything but.

After circling around for a few moments, the three beings flew off toward the horizon.

* * *

Kolchak was in a panic. “We need to get running then, if something bigger is out there!”

“Wait!” Larkin said. “Do you feel that?”

“Hell yeah I feel it! Kolchak said. “We ALL feel it! We just told you! It’s another one of those creatures whatever they are!”

“No! No! Wait!” Larkin insisted. “Yes, I feel the ground shaking from that Mokéle-mbêmbé, but there’s something else with it! Something over

it, or under it. I don’t know which and I can’t really explain it! Something is shaking besides the ground!”

“I don’t feel shit Larkin! Except that thing coming back at us, and I have no intention of ending up like—”



“I FEEL IT!” Kolchak blurted out. “I feel it too... now!”

Jacobs didn’t bother to try to finish what he was saying and shot a glare at Kolchak.

“I feel it.” Kolchak repeated this time a little more calmly. “It doesn’t feel like it’s just the

ground that’s vibrating, and t - this is... sustained. It - It’s like... like—”

“The whole WORLD is shaking.” Larkin finished.

He and Kolchak then looked up at the sky as if looking for something, but not knowing what they were looking for. Jacobs finally joined them, not knowing any more what he was doing than they did – or why. “What are you two looking at?! Are we going to run or what?!”

As quickly as things had begun, the



SURVIVING THE WORST (CHAPTER 7 Excerpt)Continued

the shaking of the world ended for the two men who were aware of it, and all that remained was the vibration of the earth, that was now nearly causing all within the vicinity of it to fight to stay on their feet. “The thing is massive!” Larkin yelled.

“It dwarfs the first one!” Kolchak added, his voice trembling.

“How can you know th—” Jacobs started to say, but immediately following the line of sight of the two men who had become immobile with their gaze transfixed upon something. Jacob turned and looked. It was another one, this one twice the size of the first. It was likely the mate, or another in its group. Logically, there was no reason to think one of these creatures could exist without more of them being around.

With each earthshaking step, the men and guides who were together did all they could to keep their balance. The men had rightly surmised that this creature was a plant eater, but it was still dangerous. The gargantuan feet of the creature had to be avoided at all costs, and from the trajectory of its path, it was coming straight toward the group. This one seeming every bit as

oblivious to the insignificant creatures close to the ground, as the one before it. “What do we do?!” Kolchak said.

“What else?! We run!” Jacobs yelled back. “Je, si hoja! Ni mamba!” the lead guide cried out suddenly.



“What the devil’s he saying?!” Kolchak said, looking over to Larkin. Larkin, without a word, slowly lowered his gaze toward the ground.

Kolchak looked down at the feet of Larkin, and at first he had trouble making out what the keen eyes of the guides had seen clearly—likely because of experience.

Larkin became a statue.

“He told me not to move! It’s a mamba.” Larkin said just above a whisper, knowing that the black mamba, that was at the moment making its way across his bare right foot, was one of the most venomous snakes on the planet. If it were to strike him, at minimum he would need medical attention within fifteen minutes of the bite. They didn’t have anything on them they could use to move the snake away, and they dared not make any sudden movements,



SURVIVING THE WORST (CHAPTER 7 Excerpt) Continued

the mamba was also one of the most aggressive of all venomous snakes.

“I can’t move, or else this mamba’s gonna strike.” Larking said in a harsh, controlled whisper. “And that thing is coming straight at us. You all need to run.”

“We’re not going to just leave you standing—” Jacobs started.

“That dinosaur or whatever it is, is coming right for us, and if you don’t clear out it’s gonna smash you sure as it did Alexander! I’ll have to think of something, but all of you need to move! NOW!”

The mamba continued to slither past Larkin, albeit by way of his foot, and the rest of the men scattered. With each step the massive beast came closer and closer, until the shaking of the ground was almost unbearable! Amid the shaking, Larkin took a moment to take his eyes off the shadow of the enormous creature that was quickly approaching him, and to see what was going on at his feet. He looked down just in time to see the tip of the snake’s tail as it glided away into the underbrush.

Larkin then quickly looked back

up just in time to see the foot of the gigantic creature coming down onto him.



YAPO YAPA'S SURVIVING the WORST

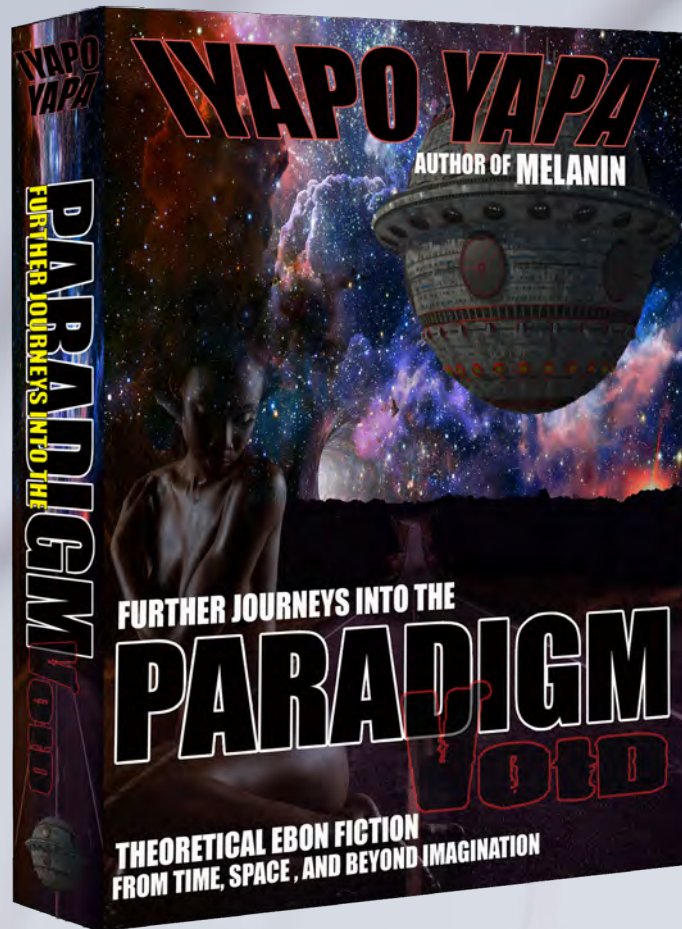
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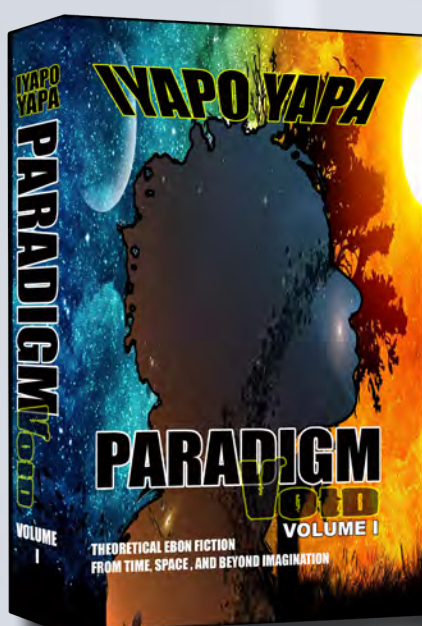


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The Redemption of
**MAXINE
ALLISON**
A NOVELLA



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**?!

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THE WAIT IS ALMOST OVER! (In editing right now!)



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**.

AVAILABLE NOW!
CLICK THE LOGO TO GO TO THE RETAILER



READING and WRITING in the

DARK

A space for avid Black readers and Black authors



Here is your AUGUST 2025 CROSSWORD Puzzle!

This month we're doing something a little different. This one may take a little back tracking, but it's not impossible to accomplish. This month's crossword puzzle is all about past features of Reading and Writing in the DARK from the first issue when it was a newsletter, all the way through to last month (July) after it became a magazine. You will need to know either what book or story was featured, or what was special about the issue. Like I said, it may take a little work, but it's very doable! So there it is! HAVE FUN!

CLICK ON THE IMAGE BELOW TO DOWNLOAD A PRINTABLE COPY OF THE PUZZLE!

AUGUST CROSSWORD PUZZLE 2025

RaWiD FEATURES!



Across

- 1) January 2025 Surviving the _____
- 3) March 2023 Further _____ into the Paradigm Void
- 7) July 2022 _____ : A Novel
- 9) June 2024 _____ House
- 11) April 2023 Global Problems Caused By Pookie, Ray Ray, _____ and all them other Black Folk
- 12) February 2023 _____ what of the CARGO?
- 14) July 2025 _____ Hill's All Night Diner
- 15) November 2024 A Peace of _____
- 17) April 2024 A Land of Lost _____
- 18) November 2022 Keepin' it a _____
- 21) August 2023 The _____ of _____ Maxine Allison
- 24) August 2022 Sci-Fi on the _____
- 25) December 2024 The Dragons of _____
- 26) June 2023 _____ of the Monkey's Paw
- 28) June 2025 The Redemption of _____ Allison
- 30) October 2022 _____ the Worst
- 34) February 2025 _____ in the Rope of Time
- 35) September 2023 The Problems of _____
- 36) October 2024 Frozen _____
- 37) April 2025 Melanin: A _____

Down

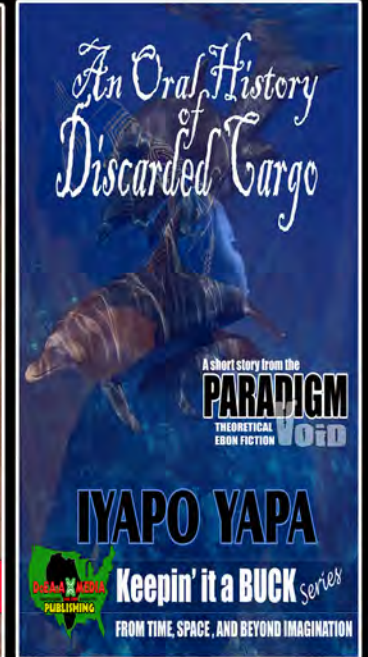
- 2) August 2024 _____ Town
- 4) July 2023 _____ Anniversary Issue!
- 5) December 2022 The _____ Tree
- 6) July 2024 _____ Anniversary Issue
- 8) September 2022 _____ Void
- 10) January 2024 _____ New Year! Issue
- 13) May 2023 Danica and Larkin: Through a Glass _____
- 16) February 2024 Lost in _____ Arms
- 19) December 2023 The _____ of Harlem
- 20) May 2024 Paradigm _____
- 22) March 2025 The _____ of Teotta T. Adams
- 23) September 2024 The _____ of the Dying
- 27) October 2023 _____, Ohio
- 29) November 2023 The _____ of Man
- 31) March 2024 Things in _____ Hidden Away
- 32) May 2025 We-_____ A.R.
- 33) January 2023 And What of the _____ ?



READING and WRITING in the

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A space for avid Black readers and Black authors

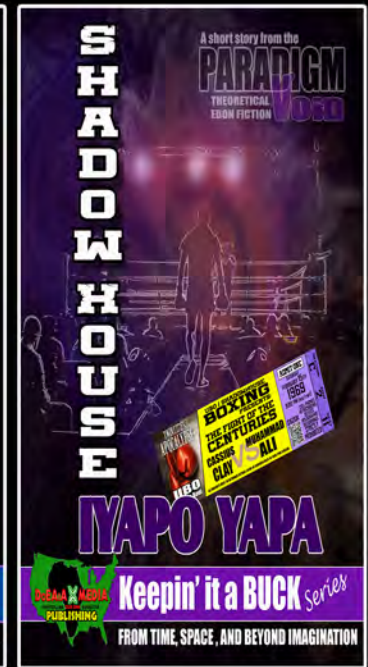
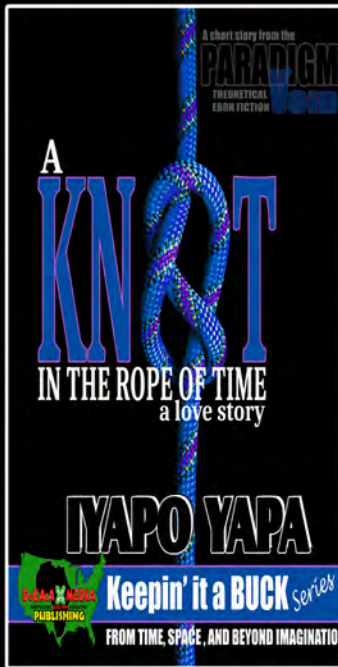


IT IS TIME TO JOURNEY INTO THE **PARADIGM VOID** ONE STEP AT A TIME.

EACH SHORT STORY IS DIFFERENT. EACH ONE THOUGHT PROVOKING & MIND BENDING.
EACH ONE ONLY **A DOLLAR!** AVAILABLE RIGHT NOW ON: **amazon**



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:

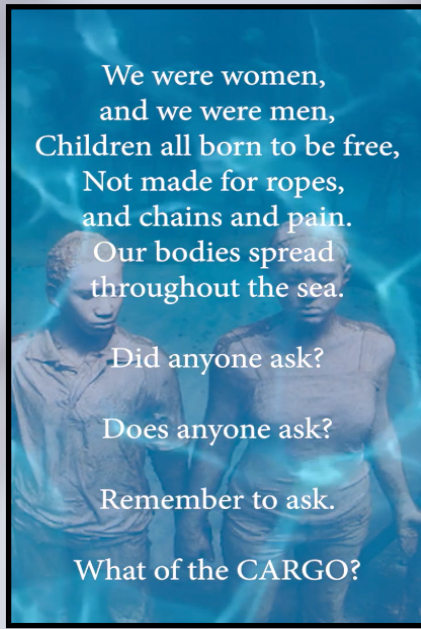
ORAL TRADITION talking books are also coming soon! Click the image to the right to hear a sample, of one of our talking books. Yes, it's still in its VERY rough form as we experiment with getting it right, but the story is still fun as all get out! So give it a listen and let us know what you think!

You can send your thoughts to: comments@iyapoyapa.com



There are now **THREE** And What of the **CARGO?** Trailers for you to watch!
 Just click on the image to view.

Original Trailer



Music Video Trailer

Full Extended Trailer



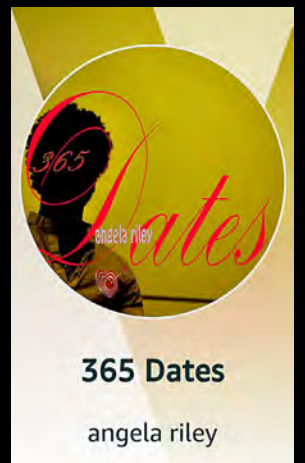
I'd like to say a big **THANK YOU!** To everyone who helped all three of my books to spend some time at number **ONE** on Amazon's **BEST SELLERS** list!



FIND AFFIRMING SELF LOVE AT:

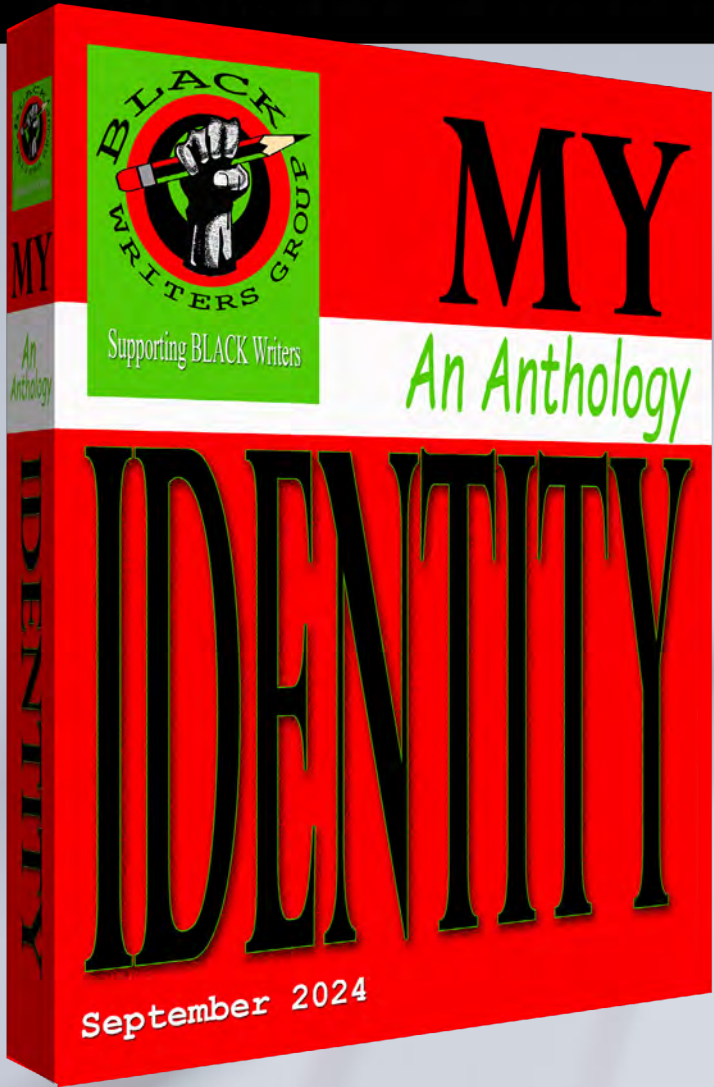


CAN LOVE SET US FREE?



COMING SOON!:





MY IDENTITY QR CODE
OR
Click the image
to the left for
the book.



Black LOVE QR CODE
OR
Click the image
to the right for
the book.



MY IDENTITY & BLACK LOVE ANTHOLOGY

Talented Black writers give you their insights in these Black Writers Group publications, *My Identity: An Anthology* and *Black Love Anthology*. The subjects, writing style and personal observations are as varied as the writers themselves. From essays to poems to affirmations to videos, they are surprising, inspirational, & even possibly unsettling. One thing is certain: after reading and experiencing these volumes, you will come away with food for thought as it pertains to Black love and identity, what they are, and what they mean.

READING and WRITING in the

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A space for avid Black readers and Black authors

So, who knew I was a cartoonist before I became a writer?

Take a minute to check out some of my work online at:

<https://iyapoyapa.com/cartoonist-illustrator.html>

or just click the image below and it will take you straight there!



Everybody needs a hobby!

Mine is playing and composing **MUSIC!**

For me, playing and composing is one of the most relaxing and fulfilling things I do with my spare time (when I HAVE

some spare time). You're welcome to check out some of

my songs at: <https://iyapoyapa.com/music.html> or

you know the deal... just click the link below. **ENJOY!**



READING and WRITING in the

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R.J. BLAKMAN

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.

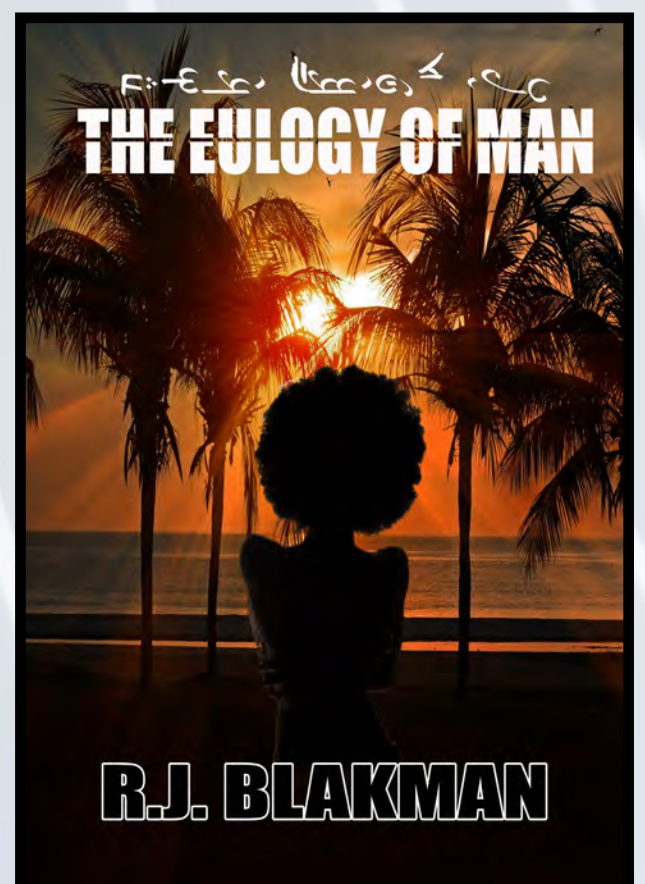
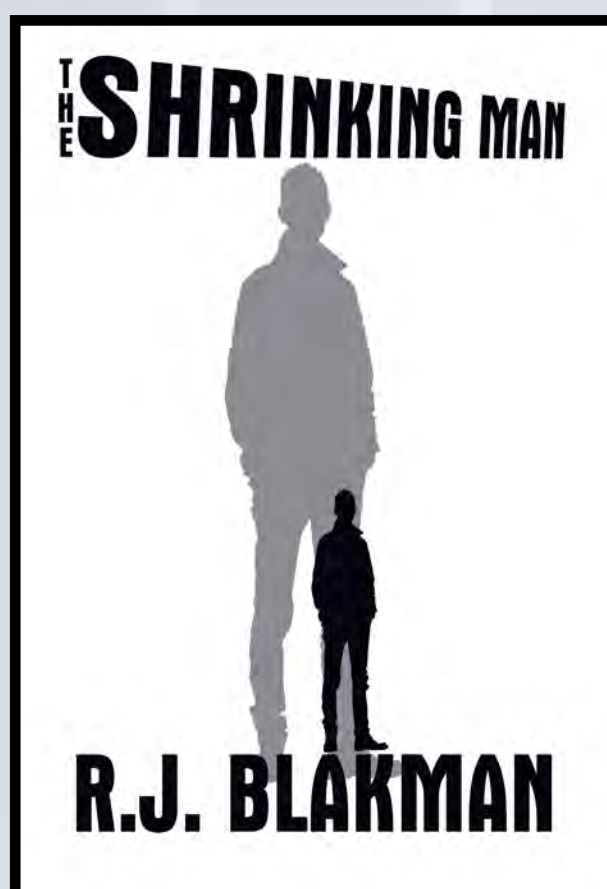
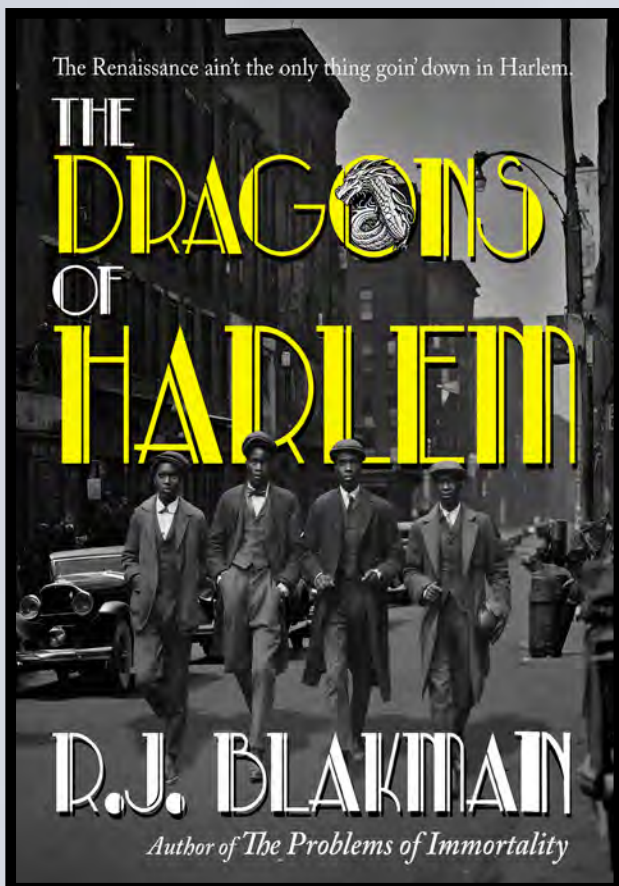
As a practice, Blakman seeks out truth and goes wherever that truth leads him, even if uncomfortable.

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 Immortality*.

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

UPCOMING BOOKS BY

R.J. BLAKMAN



ENTERTAINING,
ENGROSSING,
THOUGHT PROVOKING!

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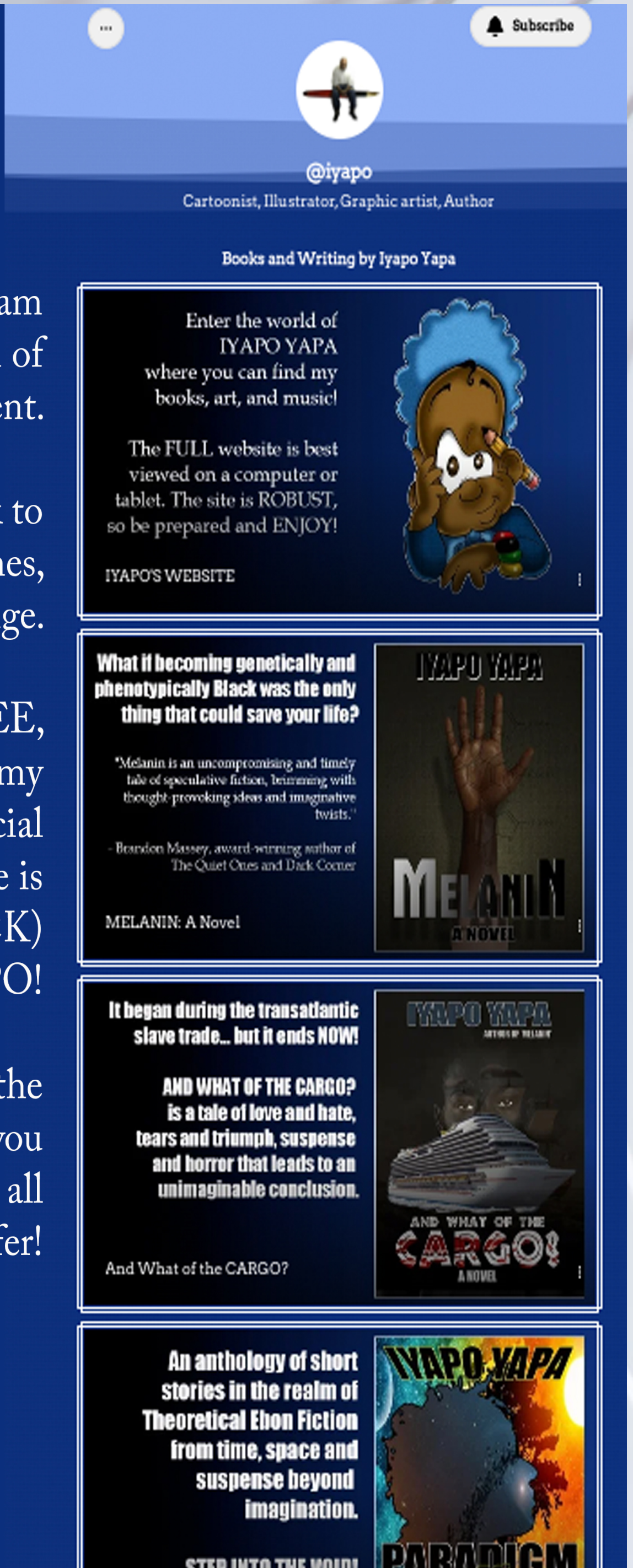
Find Iyapo at:
Linktree*

At any given time I am producing some form of ProBlack centered content.

After releasing my work to the public, sometimes, locating it can be a challenge.

But now with LINKTREE, there are direct links to my books, art and my social media presence. Linktree is your one stop (1 CLICK) shop for all things IYAPO!

Just click the image to the right and it will take you directly to Linktree and all that I have to offer!



... [Subscribe](#)

@iyapo
Cartoonist, Illustrator, Graphic artist, Author

Books and Writing by Iyapo Yapa

Enter the world of IYAPO YAPA where you can find my books, art, and music!

The FULL website is best viewed on a computer or tablet. The site is ROBUST, so be prepared and ENJOY!

IYAPO'S WEBSITE

What if becoming genetically and phenotypically Black was the only thing that could save your life?

"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 Coater

MELANIN: A Novel

It began during the transatlantic slave trade... but it ends NOW!

AND WHAT OF THE CARGO? is a tale of love and hate, tears and triumph, suspense and horror that leads to an unimaginable conclusion.

And What of the CARGO?

An anthology of short stories in the realm of Theoretical Ehon Fiction from time, space and suspense beyond imagination.

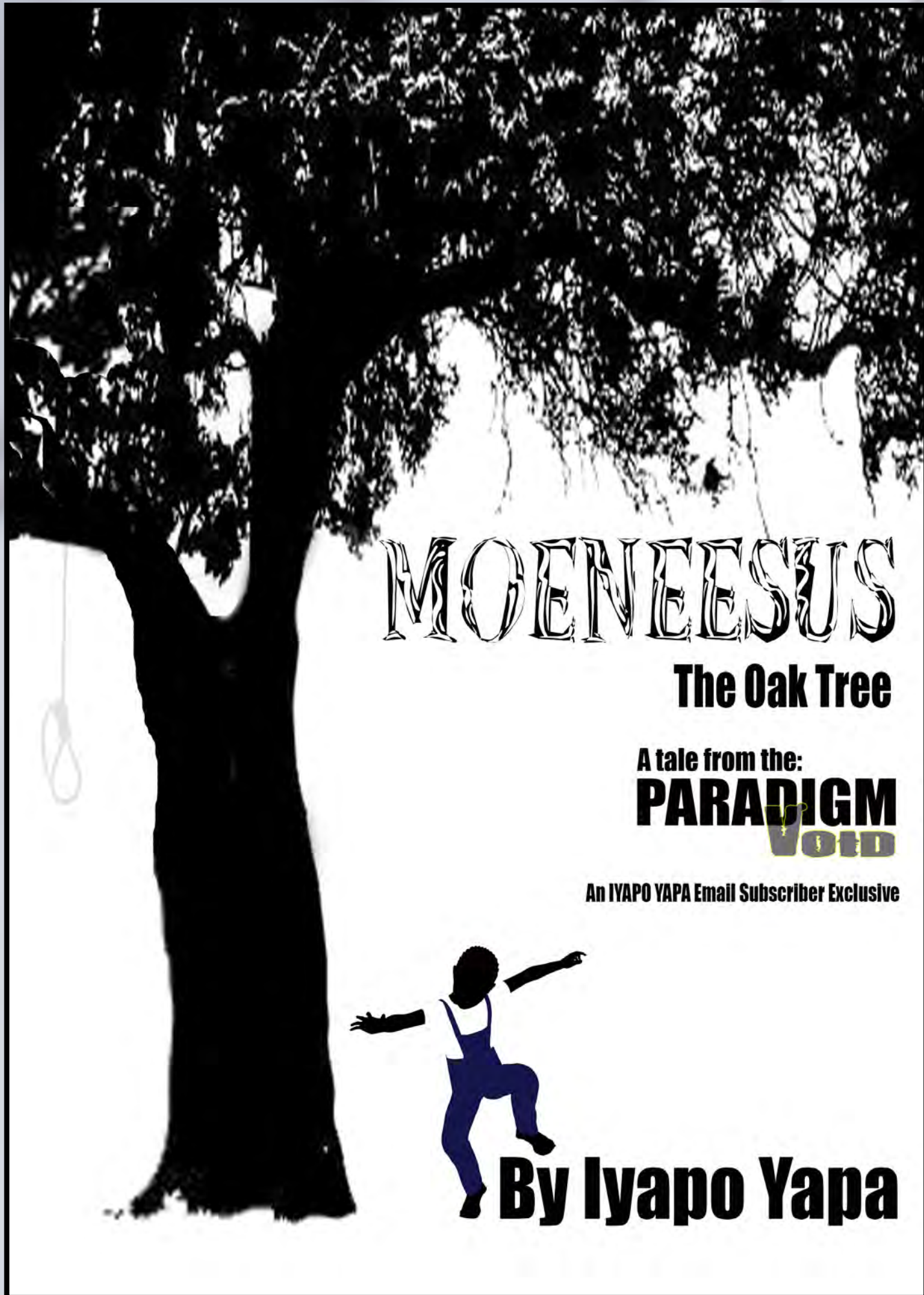
STEP INTO THE VOID!

PARADIGM

READING and WRITING in the

DARK

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If you are a **READING AND WRITING IN THE DARK** subscriber and haven't read your free copy of **MOENEESUS THE OAK TREE**, what are you waiting for?! Relax and take some time to read a great story from the the **Paradigm VOID**! It may make you smile, it may make you cry, but either way, you are going to enjoy it.

READING and WRITING in the

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Click Below For:

And What of the CARGO?



AVAILABLE NOW!

And What of the CARGO?

Buy it now on Amazon

“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

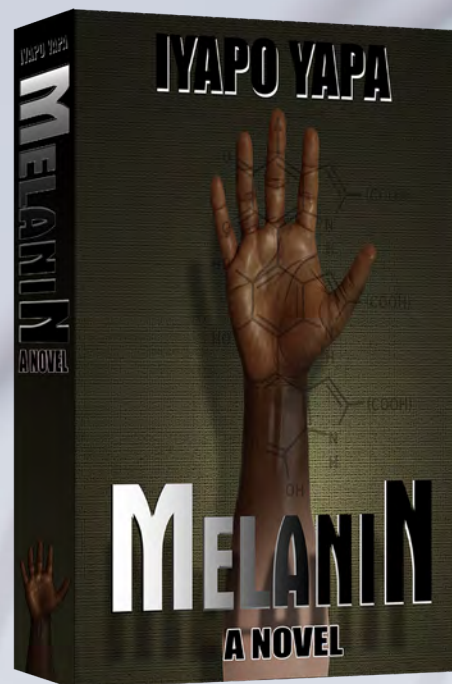
“Yapa weaves another story this time interwoven with historical references. I was on my seat with every chapter. I don't want to give it away but....revenge is sweet when served dead. And I can't get over how different each of his offerings are. Read his Vella's and you'll see what I mean. Another great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

- Amazon review

You can also read it for FREE if you have

Kindle Unlimited!

You don't need a Kindle to read it, you can download the free Kindle app from your Android Store or from the Apple Store and read Kindle content on your favorite devices!



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.

You can also read it for FREE if you have

Kindle Unlimited!

You don't need a Kindle to read it, you can download the free Kindle app from your Android Store or from the Apple Store and read Kindle content on your favorite devices!

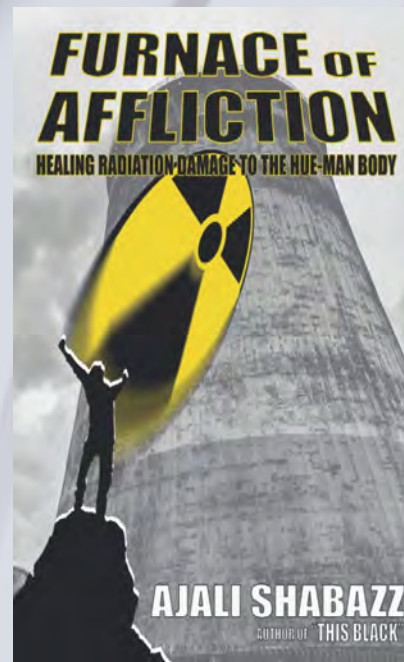
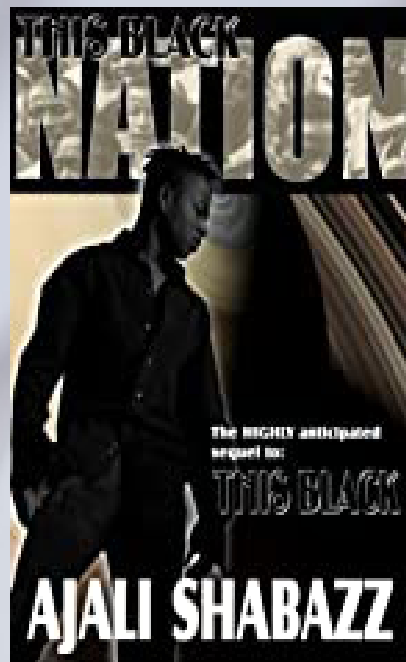
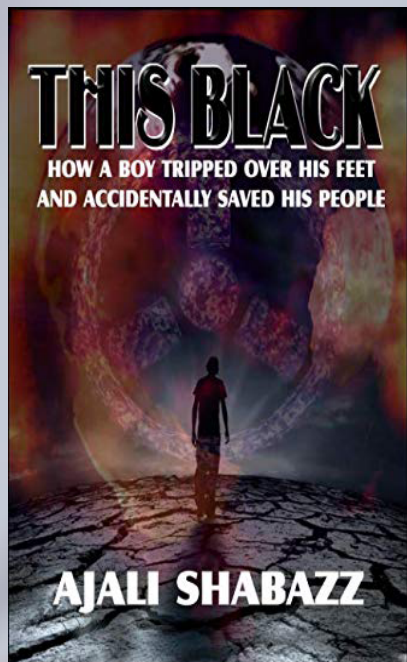
READING and WRITING in the

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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!

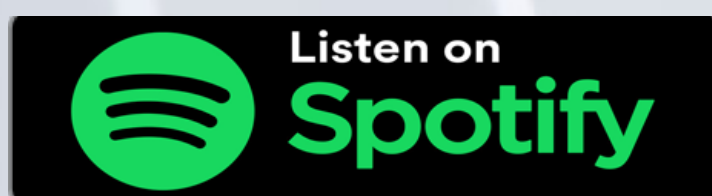
Listen to the interview on  by clicking the link below:

<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:



CLICK THIS BLOCK TO LISTEN TO THE

READING and WRITING in the

DARK

A space for avid Black readers and Black authors

podcast!







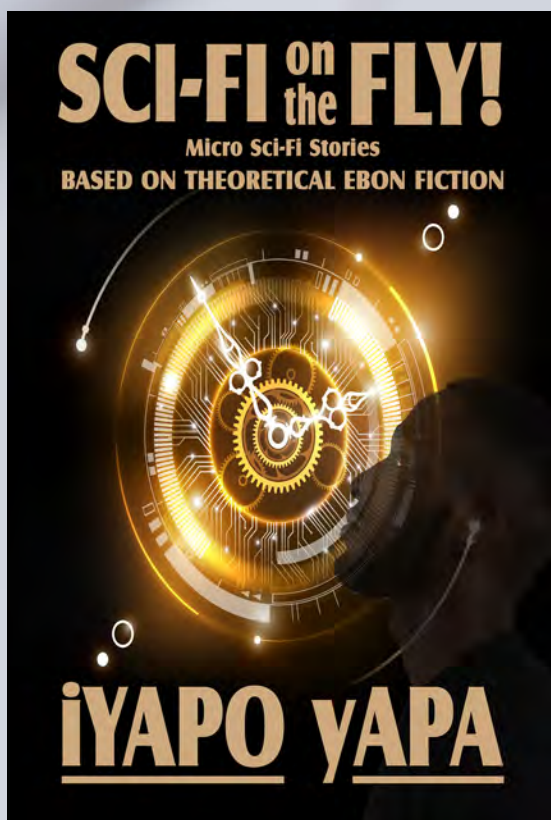
Have You Checked Out My Blog Yet?

Catch up and keep up with what I'm pondering and seeking to figure out when it comes to this interesting experience we're all having here.

My blog is the place where I talk about what's on my mind and don't worry too much about the formatting or typos - it is, pretty much, my raw perceptions and analysis of what is going on around me.



[CLICK THE LOGO ABOVE TO VISIT MY BLOG](#)



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.

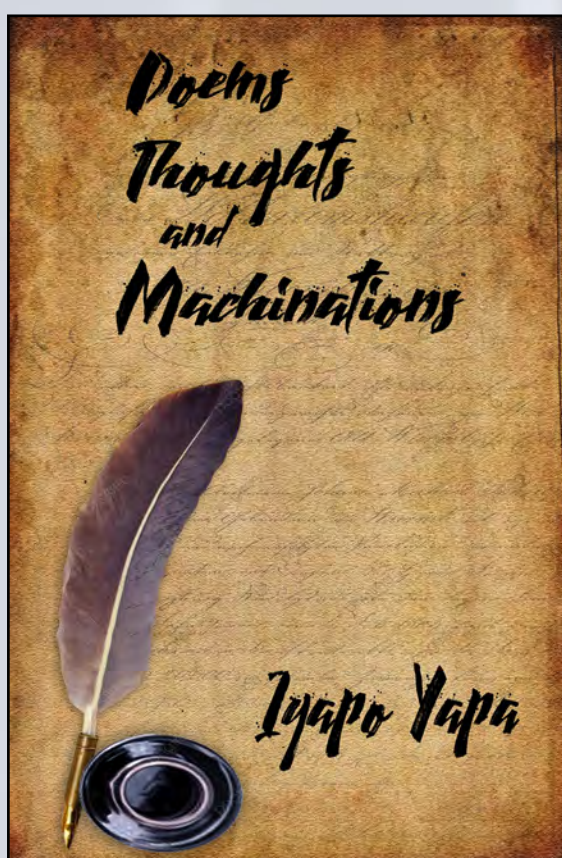


The title says it all.

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.



READING and WRITING in the

DARIK

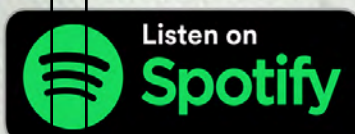
A space for avid Black readers and Black authors

Two writers
Two Mics
&
Plenty of Banter!



While Black

THE **PODCAST**



ANGELA R. RILEY

Author of *AFFIRMING SelfLOVE*

AYOKA B.

Author of *LOVE at SECOND SIGHT*

Click ANGELA to Watch or Listen on YouTube
Click AYOKA to Listen on Spotify

READING and WRITING in the **DARIK**

A space for avid Black readers and Black authors

Alright, enough about ME!

ENJOY READING & SHARING, for the first time or all over again,
THESE OTHER AUTHORS & THEIR WORK.

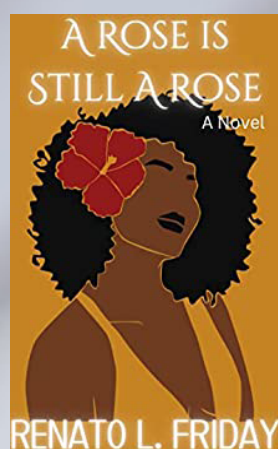


Affirming Self Love (Graphic Non-Fiction SERIES)

angela riley

SelfLOVE Meditation, Reflections, & AFFIRMATIONS Series...

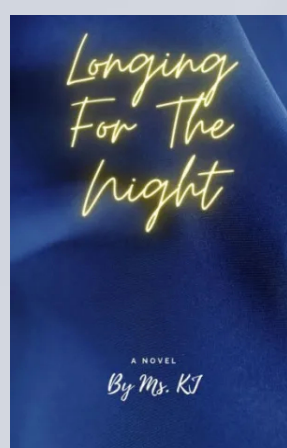
With a new book released each month, this “Graphic Nonfiction” series is filled with love for BlackUs. Each episode opens with a short essay exploring a theme such as “Following the Happy” or “Plan & Reflect” and culminates with a dynamic collection of affirmation. You’ll have a beautiful time meditating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



A Rose is Still a Rose

Renato L. Friday

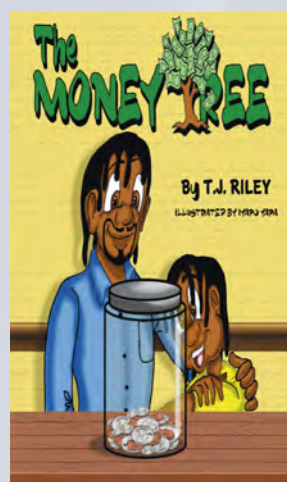
Rose thought life was going great: she was engaged, had a beautiful set of twin girls, a recent trade school graduate, and a new job right around the corner. Unfortunately, her fiancé, David, turned out to not be what she needed, and she chose to break things off. In the midst of her failing relationship, 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

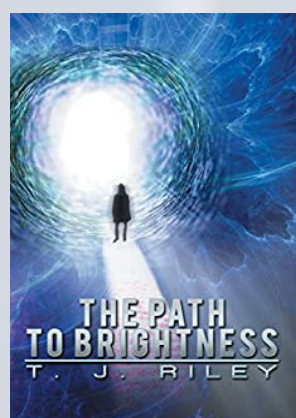
Inspired by the poem Goblin Market by Christina Rossetti, two young sisters face the trials and tribulations of the hood in this coming-of-age story about the harshness of living in South Central Los Angeles.



The Money Tree

T.J. Riley / Illustrated by Iyapo Yapa

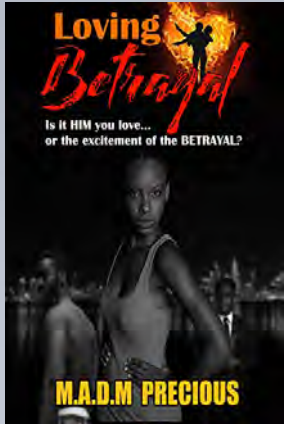
Every child wants money to buy something, right? Our hero does too. But, his father has a surprise, a Money Tree. Join the fun journey to find out how to grow your own money tree.



THE PATH to BRIGHTNESS

T.J. Riley

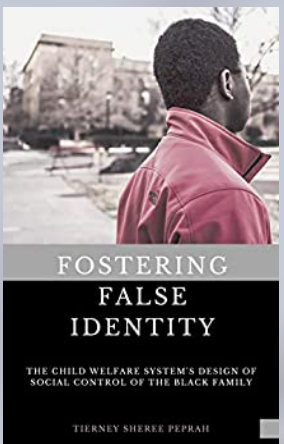
Fatima, a young woman, has a near-death experience. When she awakes from a coma and recovers, she has mystical powers. She begins to see auras and experiences life with her new abilities. For the clever character, Fatima, life is about to dramatically change. Follow Fatima's journey as she tries to convince 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

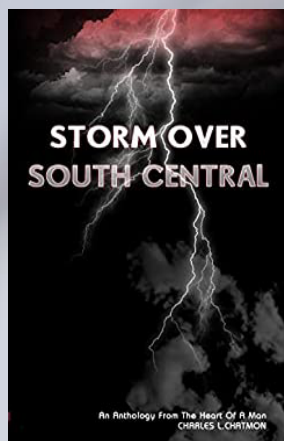
When Michelle met Michael, she thought that she found the love of her life. She was young and coming out of a bad marriage. A single parent of two children, she was scared, broke and had no self esteem. Michael seemed perfect, except for one little problem...



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.



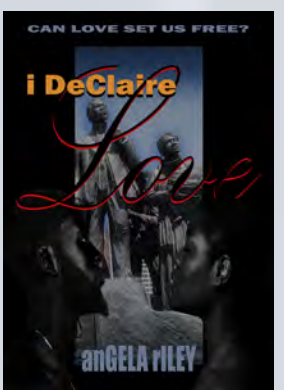
RELAY

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.

ALSO KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR THESE AUTHORS/STORIES -formally on KindleVella-IN OTHER PLACES!



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 to 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

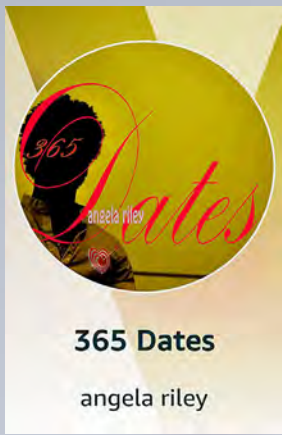
Angela Riley

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.

READING and WRITING in the

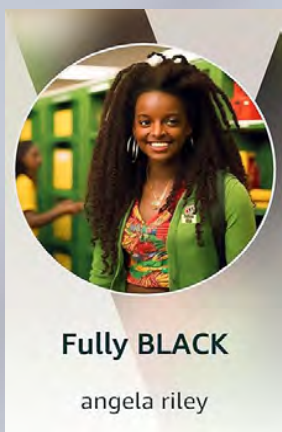
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365 Dates
Angela Riley

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!



Fully BLACK
Angela Riley

Because she is IN LOVE, talented dancer and homeschooled student Makena enrolls in the elite Fullson High to be closer to Marshall.



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!



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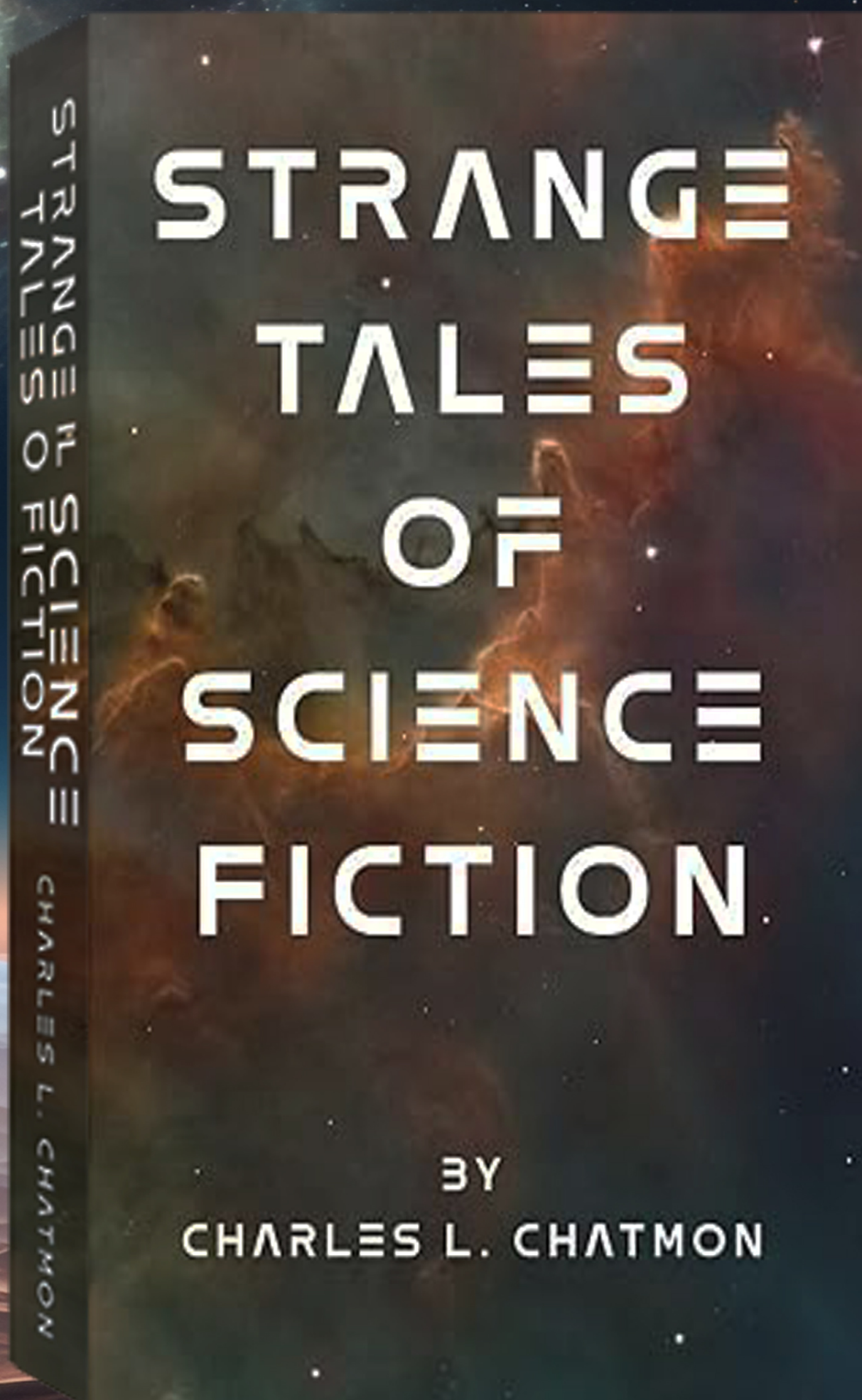
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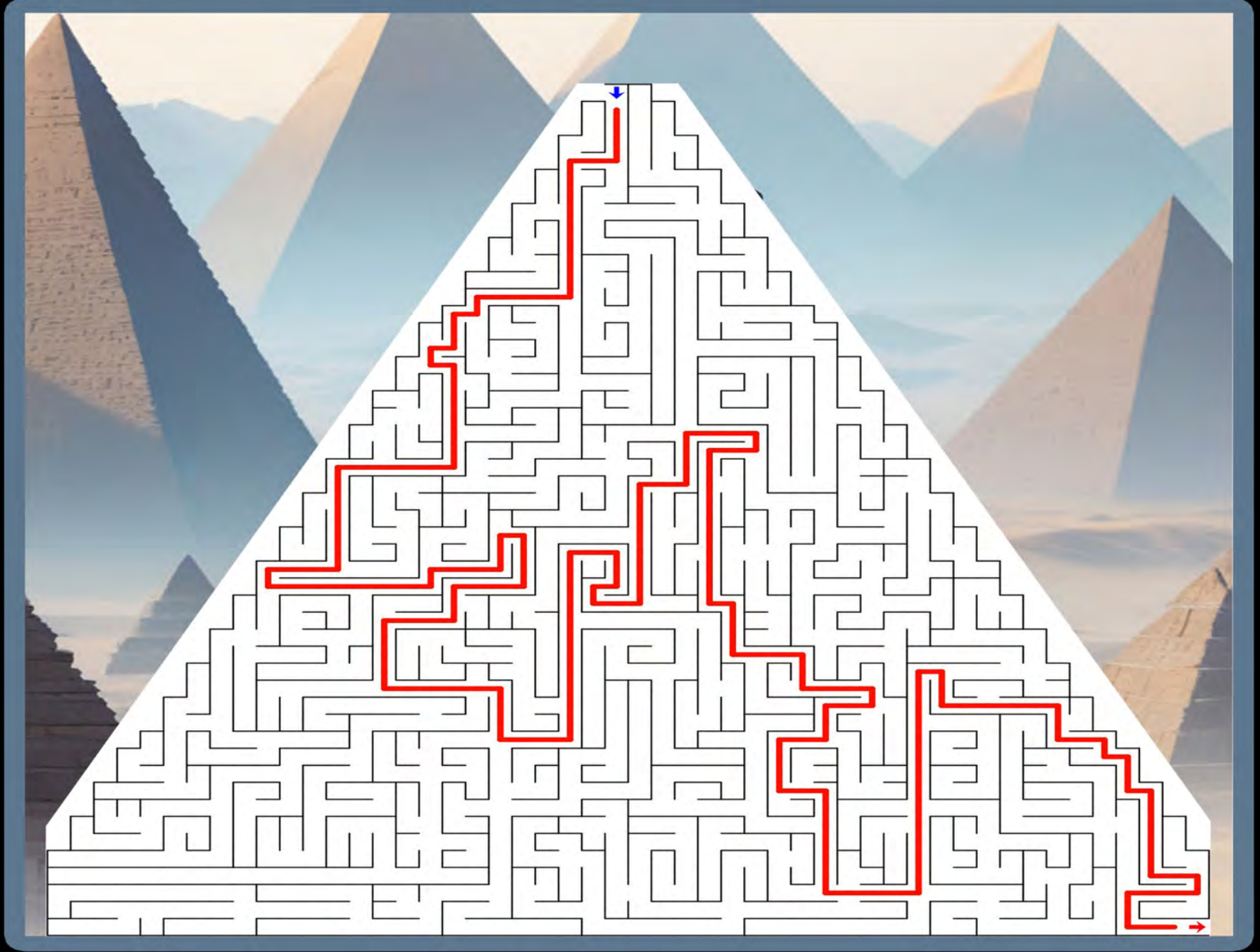
CLICK ON THE BOOK ABOVE TO PURCHASE ON AMAZON!

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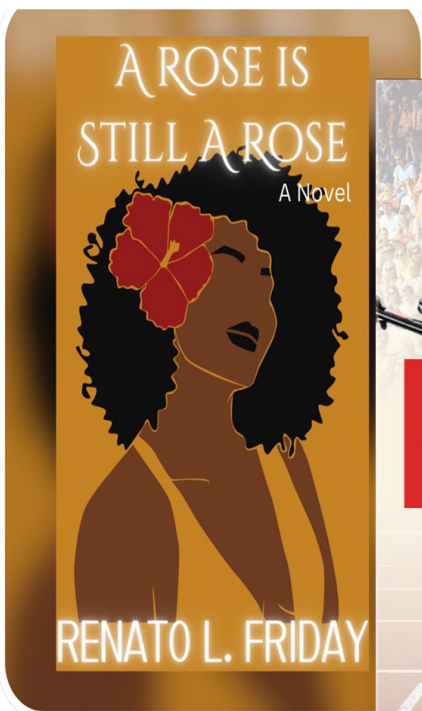
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