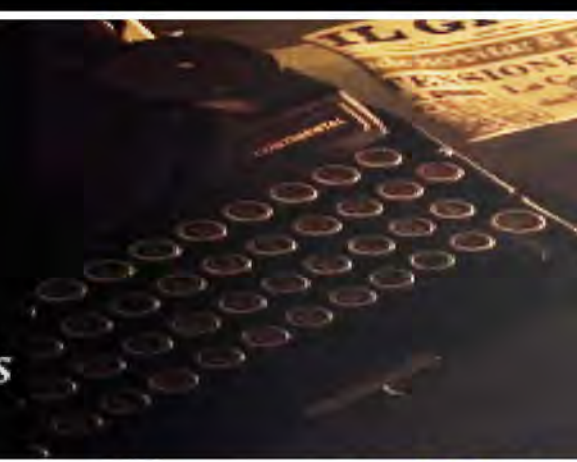


READING and WRITING in the

# DARK

*A space for avid Black readers and Black authors*



## THIS MONTH:

## MAGAZINE

We take you on  
The Semi-Autobiographical Journey  
of R.J. BLAKMAN in...

# SHRINKING MAN

The complete prologue through Chapter 11.

Page 5

## FEATURE:

Welcome **BLACK** to Saturday  
Morning!

How Iyapo Yapa plans to bring back  
the magic of Saturdays, but **THIS** time,  
featuring **BLACK** people!

Page 38

**Also:**

**This Month  
CROSSWORD  
PUZZLE!**

Page 36

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

READING and WRITING in the

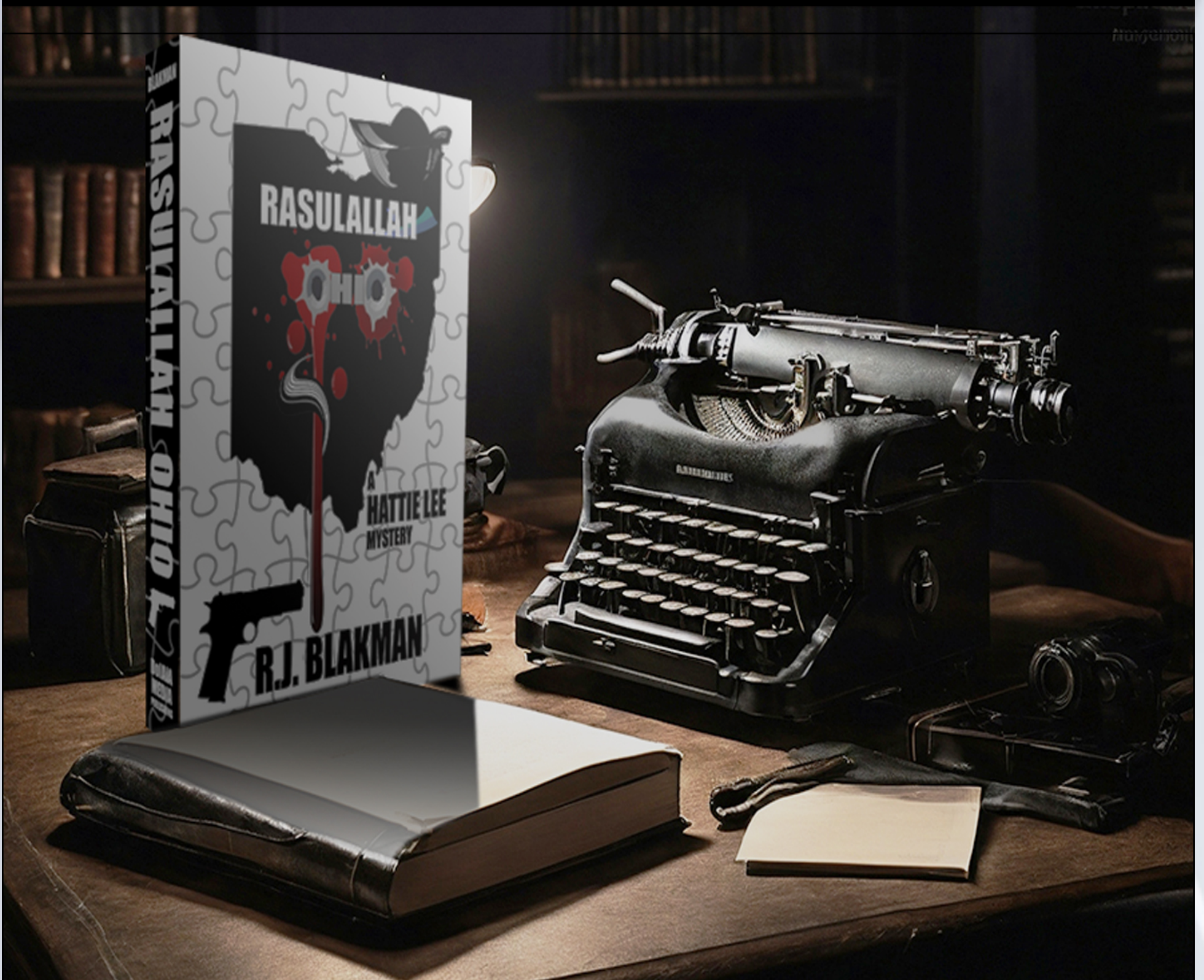
# DARIK

*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)



# MAGAZINE

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### WELCOME BACK!

#### WELCOME TO FEBRUARY!

This month I'm giving you something slightly different. The prologue and first ELEVEN chapters of the semi-autobiographical story of R.J. Blackman, *Shrinking Man*. The chapters are all in their rough form, where things will either be added or taken out, but you get to get a little window into the ground floor of how this particular book is being developed.

Speaking of development, there is also an article about a new venture affectionately called, Welcome BLACK to Saturday morning! You may or may not be able to guess what the article is going to be about from the title, but you'll see when you read it.

I hope you enjoy the story and, as you've come to expect, you'll find a puzzle (this month it is a CROSSWORD), and links to my work and the work of other Black authors! ENJOY!

Blessings to you and thank you for being a subscriber!

Iyapo

#### A Look Back and to the Future!

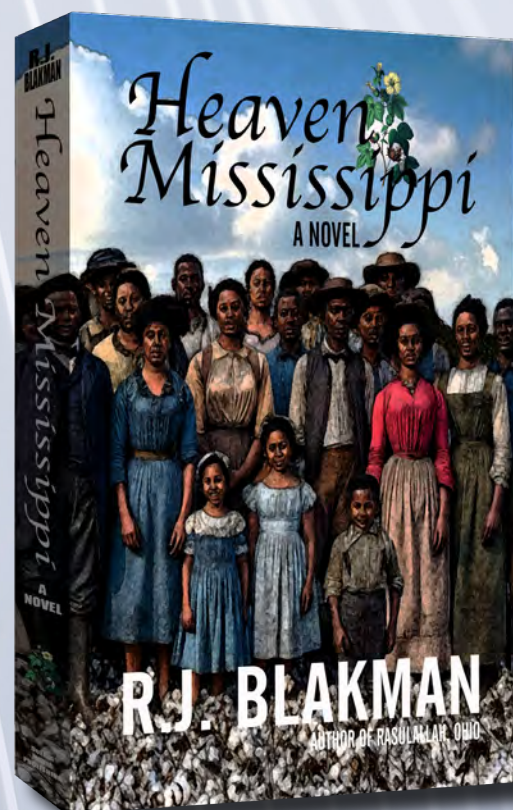
Ok, ok! Black people are sick and tired of reading and talking about our enslavement.

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 *Ra WitDM* sneak peek.)



READING and WRITING in the DARK Magazine  
Vol. 2 No. 8  
FEBRUARY 2026

Iyapo Yapa  
Writer/Layout/Editor-In-Chief

Angela Riley  
Copy Editor

Iyapo Yapa  
Layout/Design

Iyapo using Leonardo AI  
Graphics for Cover and some  
other additional graphics.

READING and WRITING in the

# DARIK

*A space for avid Black readers and Black authors*

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 SHRINKING MAN -The Complete Prologue thru Chapter 11

### PROLOGUE

For me, the magic of youth was that everything—everything—was some kind of adventure.

Or at least could be.

Youth is what caused me to explore the world without even realizing I was exploring. It was about exploring the world beyond me and exploring the world within me. Everything was new, and everything was fascinating. I believed that anything was possible because I had yet to learn that everything isn't necessarily possible. I watched Superman take off, fly, land, and bounce bullets off his chest, and didn't once take into account that the man of steel had the quintessential dad body.

That didn't matter though—he was Superman, and he could FLY!

Unfortunately, a lot of kids around America found out they couldn't.

The hard way.

In those days, I believed wholeheartedly that a jolly, rotund white man in a red and white suit could gallivant around the world in one night, pulled in a magic sleigh by eight equally magical flying reindeer (each of whom I could name by the way), and deliver toys to good little girls and boys all over the world! I had zero doubt that this same rotund man could make his way down a chimney to gain access to the living room, the Christmas tree and so on. No matter that some of the houses lived in had no chimneys—that was a mere formality. Santa was the spirit of Christmas after all, he could do just about anything.

I fully believed that the jolly old elf could see me as I slept and knew when I was awake. He knew when I was bad or good—and ol' Santa did it old school, without any modern mass surveillance equipment, facial recognition or geo-positioning! Santa was one bad mother, in that way.

Yes, of course, there were some of my friends whose parents were from odd religions who would insist to me that there was no such thing as this





## THE SHRINKING MAN -The Complete Prologue thru Chapter 11 (Cont.)

Santa Clause person—that he was something someone, or a group of someones, just made up--but still, I had no doubts, my faith could not be shaken—not even slightly.

I would not be swayed by a group of three-foot heretics who didn't know what they were talking about!

My parents told me there was a Santa Clause. All the adults I knew, and authority figures said it was true. Heck! Even the news people on T.V. said it was true and showed his flight path on Christmas Eve! They were getting their information straight from NORAD (the North American Aerospace Defense Command)! That was the government for pity's sake! It was official and HAD to be true, or else, it wouldn't have been on the news!

If ALL of them were saying it was true, how could it NOT be?! Why would they all collude against me and lie?! Oh YES! Santa and his reindeer, the elves, the toyshop (where they eventually updated and taught the elves to work with chips, L.E.D. screens, and other electronics and other tech so they could build video game systems and such) were very

real, and I believed if for no other reason than my mom and dad said so, and they would never lie to me!

Well... Mom wouldn't anyway.

My little non-believing friends never took into account the fact that even they didn't consider how incredibly cruel and manipulative it would be to start out a child's experience in this world and this thing called life by building it upon something that could turn out to be so overtly and demonstratively false!

No one would do that to an impressionable child whose only source of truth and knowledge was the grown-ups and authority figures whom they looked up to and respected!

Besides, if Santa were not real, who was eating the cookies and drinking the milk I'd leave out on Christmas Eve night and the magical feed that I made at school out of oatmeal and glitter and did my level best to throw on the roof for the hungry, globetrotting reindeer?!

Through the week, it seemed nigh impossible to pull myself out of bed,



## THE SHRINKING MAN -The Complete Prologue thru Chapter 11 (Cont.)

knowing that I must get dressed, only to leave the familiarity and relative safety of my home. Upon completion of my task of dressing and grooming, I'd have breakfast—or not, depending on if any were available—then walk a couple blocks to a huge, cold, impersonal brick building, where my single goal was to beat a bell. The only saving grace of the place being that what awaited there were games of kick ball, hopscotch, tag and its natural outgrowth—freeze tag—along with monkey bars, foot races and comradery with friends, all enjoyable pursuits which were somehow strangely accomplished without the need for a single battery or screen.

That was the point of the thing after all, this school thing—though there were those pesky interruptions, which were signified by bells that would demand that the little folk adjourn themselves to rooms with uniform rows of desks and chairs, a black chalk board that always seemed to be smeared with the remnants of white and sometimes colored chalk, no

matter how much the teacher at the front attempted to sponge it clean.

These interruptions to daily play consisted of mundane things like instructions on reading, writing and mathematics. Before all that however would all stand dutifully beside our desks, hand over heart, pledging allegiance to a country.

“I pledge allegiance to the flag, of the United States of America.”

I pledge allegiance to the flag, of the country that kidnapped, enslaved, tormented, raped, tortured, terrorized, marginalized, stole the identities of, maligned, misrepresents, and murdered my people (and continues to do so—).

“And to the republic for which it stands—”

And to the wealthy, white landowners, who will gladly and without hesitation send me to war as cannon fodder, or otherwise use my body, talents and industry to enrich themselves while crushing me and mine under their boot—



## THE SHRINKING MAN -The Complete Prologue thru Chapter 11 (Cont.)

“One nation—”

One nation of people who are determined that those like me remain at the very bottom of a caste system that separates us by the color of our skin and shuts us out of any substantial or substantive benefit of the very system we are forced to participate in—

“Under God—”

What god? Whose god? Are you referring to the same god you worshiped on Sunday morning, after having lynched, burned and raped Black men, women, boys and girls on Saturday evening?—

“Indivisible—”

Indivisible, after, of course shutting out the niggers.

“With liberty—”

With liberty for the non-Black American elite—

“And justice for all.”

And justice for no one, as my people are terrorized by the so-called justice system as we are exposed to it when breaking little or no laws—while the

elite who run roughshod over the law, are completely shielded FROM it. Therefore, the intent was never justice in any form for any one.

When it came to history class, I sat through—struggled through American history. I learned much about the honesty of white people as exhibited by the “father of the country”, George Washington, who chopped down a cherry tree, and when asked by his father if he did it, boldly proclaimed, “I cannot tell a lie.” In later years, I would wonder if the adult Washington was as truthful with the 123 Black people whom he was enslaving<sup>1</sup>.

I learned about a great man—the white man who “freed the slaves”! Abraham Lincoln—the so called, great emancipator. It didn’t matter that Lincoln said, “If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it... what I do about slavery and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union...”<sup>2</sup> of course, I was never taught that



<sup>1</sup> Of the 317 enslaved people living at Mount Vernon in 1799, a little less than half (123 people) were owned by George Washington himself. Another 153 belonged to his wife Martha via her first husband.

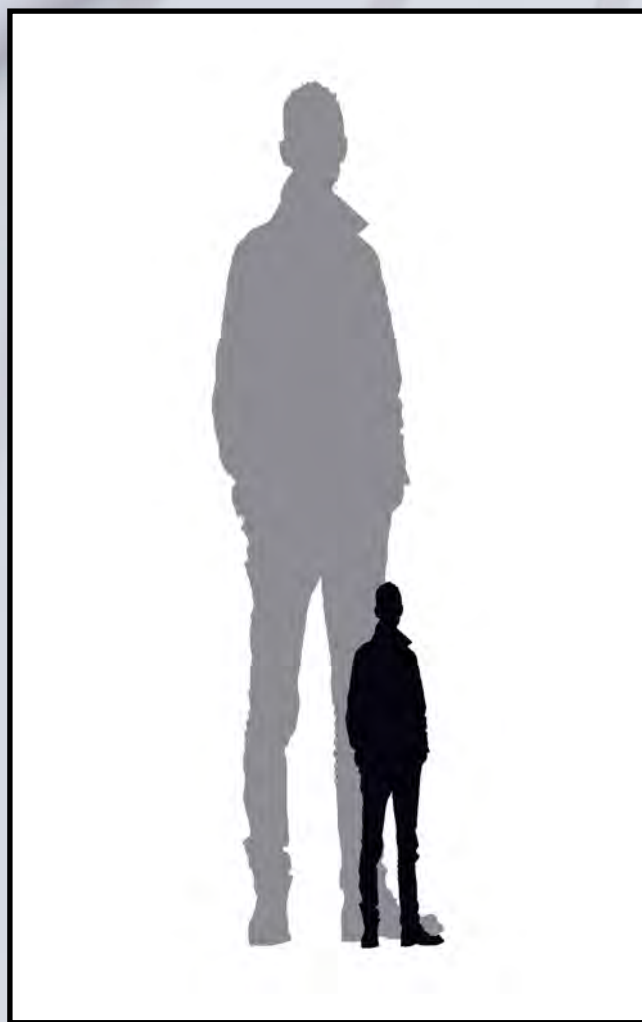
<sup>2</sup> Library of Congress document: <https://www.loc.gov/resource/mal.4233400/?st=text>



## THE SHRINKING MAN -The Complete Prologue thru Chapter 11 (Cont.)

in school. That tidbit of reality was something I'd learn years later, on my own.

I had no way of knowing that in the coming years, a book would be published titled, Abraham Lincoln, Vampire Hunter, from which a movie was made into a big budget, special effects extravaganza of the same name. A movie that with its blood sucking, shape shifting creatures of the night, and title character performing superhuman feats with his mighty ax, was about as historically accurate as what I was taught in school as a boy.



To their credit, one of the teachers found me to be quite exceptional when it came to writing and art. One of them even considered me to be a prodigy. Unfortunately, all that I was able to do remained confined to a bubble of sorts, for I had neither the ability nor resources to reach beyond the hood in which I lived and more often than not, remained sheltered within the safety of his home to actively avoid.

There was fun to be had everyplace I looked, and Saturday mornings were magical! There were cartoons a

plenty and sugar, with a little bit of cereal to hold it together.

Froot Loops, the opiate of the young masses.

I watched commercials with wide eyes especially around Christmas time and gawked at the toys! Toys! Toys! Hot Wheels! GI JOE with the Kung Fu grip! Major Mat Mason! Stretch Armstrong! EZ Bake Ovens! (Shoot! I wanted to make myself some sweets!)

In later years the toy commercials would be replaced by my best friend Clark and me looking at his brother's stash of Playboy magazines. Frankly there was little to no difference between watching the toy commercials and looking at the nudie magazines. Since my family was so poor it equated to the same thing as the images in the magazines.

I could see it all... but I could never have any of it... but... a boy can dream!

All things being equal, I'd probably been better off getting the GI Joe, or the EZ Bake Oven than any of the



## THE SHRINKING MAN -The Complete Prologue thru Chapter 11 (Cont.)

naked airbrushed honeys. At least I'd have know what to do with the oven.

### CHAPTER 1 (Young Love)

I was always a romantic at heart.

I fell in love an angel named Roberta and was determined to marry this girl of my dreams. Her skin was deep dark brown and flawless. Her eyes were big and clear and curious. The only time they'd become small was when she'd squint as she smiled or laughed. Her smile melted me every time I saw it—same thing for each time I heard her laugh. At some point I decided that we'd run around enough, and we needed to make things official.

So, I asked her to marry me, and she said yes.

All the arrangements were made, and my wedding day was fast approaching, and everything was ready—except the ring.

I tried and tried to get one with the meager money I had. I went to a couple places looking, but no luck. She knew I didn't have a lot of money, but that didn't matter to Roberta. She love

me—and I loved her, but I wanted her to at least have a nice ring, being that she had agreed to be my wife, even knowing that I was broke.

Eventually it was the eve of my wedding day, and I still had no ring for which to put on the finger of my betrothed, and I became desperate.

I knew where I could get a ring that I felt was worthy of my beloved; it was expensive and had a large diamond that shimmered like nothing I'd ever seen before. There was no way I would ever be able to afford such a thing ... so I say to my shame—

I stole it.

Of course, since I had the thing in my pocket and made my way to the wedding, I'd gotten away with it. Of course, I felt guilty for doing such a thing, and knew I would be giving my fiancé a stolen wedding ring. Of course, I was a bundle of nerves, wondering if I were going to be caught ultimately.

I didn't get caught though. I got away clean.



## THE SHRINKING MAN -The Complete Prologue thru Chapter 11 (Cont.)

The wedding went as planned, I kissed my bride, and all in attendance were happy for Roberta and me, (Watkins was her maiden name).

I must admit that in the passing years I felt guilty when my mother would search in vain for her missing ring (not because she cared so much for it, but because at one point she wanted to pawn it).

I never told her what happened to it.

And perhaps I did when I got much older. I'd like to think I did.

I didn't even mind losing the money I lost in the toy machines, trying to get a ring. Or the five boxes of Cracker Jack I purchased hoping to get lucky but getting other plastic prizes instead. All I know is, it brought a big smile to Roberta's face as she flashed it and showed it off to the other girls on the playground. The boys all patted me on the back, congratulating me, before we all ran to play kick ball.

I had friends, both Black and white. We'd play all the games I'd named and more. There was one kid I managed to bond more closely too though, as I'm guessing tends to happen with everyone. His name was Clark. Black

kid. Fastest runner in elementary school. I could never outrun him. There was the crew Clark, Thomas, Barry and me. Thomas and Barry where the white kids and Clark and I were the Black ones. In all candor—I knew our skin colors were different, as I'm sure they also did, but it genuinely seemed not to matter.

When I married my sweetheart Roberta, it was Barry who performed the ceremony, Clark was my best man and Thomas was a witness. Roberta had her own set of bride's maids and witnesses. We stayed married for the rest of the school year, then

her parents moved to another school district and broke up the family. I never saw her again after that, but I sometimes wonder where she is, what she's doing and what became of her life.

## CHAPTER 2 (Across The Tracks)

Imet Dana when we were in elementary school. This was well after mine and Roberta's marriage and become distant (not distant because we no longer loved each other mind you... but distant literally, when her parents moved out of the school district).



## THE SHRINKING MAN -The Complete Prologue thru Chapter 11 (Cont.)

It took several months and about thirty or so kick ball games for me to get over the pain of no longer being able to meet my wife on the playground and play hop scotch for a minute before leaving with the fellas to play a real man's sport—dodge ball, or “smear the queer”. Hey, we weren't playing on grass, it was a hard tar playground that was about as unforgiving as they came if you crashed a knee, elbow or head onto it. We were rough and tumble, but we weren't idiots, because at nine and ten years old, we were... wait a minute... nine and ten?

Ok... I withdraw the idiot part.

Anyway, it was after Roberta left that I decided I was ready to give love another chance. So—there was Dana Dobbins. She was this deep brown that kind of shined in the sun... just like her braided hair her mother would always put colorful snaps and hair bobbles in. She was always dressed “girly”, and had no interest what so ever it seemed in being a tom boy. None of that withstanding—she seemed to have her eye on me from the very beginning.



I always thought it was my sparkling personality she was drawn to—or the fact I was the best artist in the class, and the best writer.

Perhaps it was because of the diamond ring Roberta pushed under all the girls noses after the wedding. I never gave it much thought until this moment, but was Dana—that little minks a gold digger? Was she looking for a nine year old sugar daddy?

Was I even old enough to be a sugar daddy?

Youth is so confusing!

I would never get the chance to find out, because before we could get together for a first date by the slide or monkey bars, my family moved.

The next time I saw Dana Dobbins was my first day as a high school student. I had walked to school my whole life, now I was taking the city bus. (On nice days I'd walk home... took about a half hour to forty five minues depending on how fast I was walking). I'd take the money I didn't use for bus fare and stop at White Castle, which was on the way, grab a couple sliders and munch on them until I reached home sweet home.

## THE SHRINKING MAN -The Complete Prologue thru Chapter 11 (Cont.)

This first day I rode the bus and sat all the way at the back as I was prone to do. I always wondered why there was such a fuss put up by my people about sitting back there. Shoot... that's where the best seats were. Anyway, at one stop a girl stepped onto the bus and she looked very familiar. She sat toward the middle on a seat by herself, and I stared at her so hard that to this day I don't know how she didn't turn around from feeling my eyes on her! After a few minutes I realized why she looked so familiar. It was her! It was Dana Dobbins!

And man oh man had she filled out!

The best part? That filled out young teen was crazy about some ME! I never cared to make a move on her back in the day, but I was definitely going to make a move on THIS day! I saw my stop coming up and Dana stood and rang the bus driver before I could make my way to the pull. She stepped out, as did I and then I started in.

“Dana Dobbins.” I said, trying my best to sound as cool as I thought I looked with my Afro that never quite wanted to blossom Jackson 5 style,

but was still adequate. I had on my first day of school, new outfit. Bell bottom jeans, silk shirt with large collar that would get me airborne with a strong enough wind, light brown patten leather jacket, which buttoned up, but also had the obligatory patten leather belt tied around the middle (I let it hang of course—tying it would have looked uncool. afro pick with the required Black power fist molded into the top. The ensemble was topped off (or bottomed off, depending on how you looked at it), with a pair of brown platforms shoes that definitely gave me some much-needed height.



Dana recognized me immediately. She smiled wide and hugged me.

So far so good.

“Ohhhh, don't you smell nice!” she said after releasing the hug.

“It's Hi' Karate.” I said. Leaving out that it was my dad's aftershave. I was determined to use it on my first day. Hi Karate was an aftershave that came with Karate instructions for how to fight off women. I just had to use some of that!



## THE SHRINKING MAN -The Complete Prologue thru Chapter 11 (Cont.)

The walk to the high school was about two blocks from the bus stop, so as we waited for the light to change, I was confident in the knowledge that for at least that two blocks, I had Dana all to myself. It was time for me to lay my best rap on her. I was fairly well practiced, having gotten advice from my peers. You know—the ones who know little or less about women than I did.

The one thing I knew for sure was that we would be stepping into a wide world of brains, and jocks and everything in between. I needed to plant my flag as quickly as possible. I knew we wouldn't be in the same home room, but I held out hope that we would have several classes together, at least that way I could bogart a seat next to hers.

I spoke to her self-assuredly because of what I learned over the summer.

I also took on the attitude that there is no such thing as a girl being “out of my league”, an attitude I carried into adult hood. And finally—I learned about Babe Ruth, the baseball player. The player they called the “Home Run King”. What did I learn? The fact that he struck out more than he hit! Then how, you might ask, did he

become the home run king?! Because he swung at almost everything! Sure he struck out more, but when he hit the ball, it was over the fence!

Lesson learned!



As we walked. I talked—man, did I talk! I had confidence of new clothes and a new attitude—an attitude that taught me that there was absolutely no reason to be nervous about talking to girls, and that they were every bit as nervous as me. I was throwing out my best lines, as we walked under the trees that grew to the right of the sidewalk, on a

perfect autumn day. Things couldn't have been better, I was casting and she was biting!

She talked to me in that way that interested girls talk—to know—a little flirty, giggling—you know. And of course, I'd laugh (maybe a little too hard) at something she said and just have to steady myself due to her brilliance. Of course, it was just an excuse for me to place my hand briefly on her arm or back to create a physical connection.

So far so good.



## THE SHRINKING MAN -The Complete Prologue thru Chapter 11 (Cont.)

We were about halfway to school, when I was saying something brilliant—or what I considered in my own, teenage, raging hormone, untucked shirt, mind, to be brilliant. When my soliloquy was cut short by Dana, screaming an abrupt—  
”Ewww!”

### CHAPTER 2 (Milo’s Inferno)

We stopped on the sidewalk and a little stunned, I asked her what the problem was. She looked up, then looked at me and pointed. ‘What?’ I asked again as I put my hand where she was pointing. I love my dad.

I love my mom.

They’re both gone now. My mother—as you can probably guess—was my hero. I feel the same way about her as pretty much everyone who had a good mom feels about their dear sainted mothers. We all say it, we all think it, and we all mean it.

My father?

Well, that’s a bit more complicated. I loved the man... even admired him in some ways. When I was younger,

he was a drunk, and a mean one. Made hobbies out of beating on my mom, and us when he got the mind to. The two worst things I saw him do to mom was when he locked her out the house in broad daylight without a stitch of clothes on. The

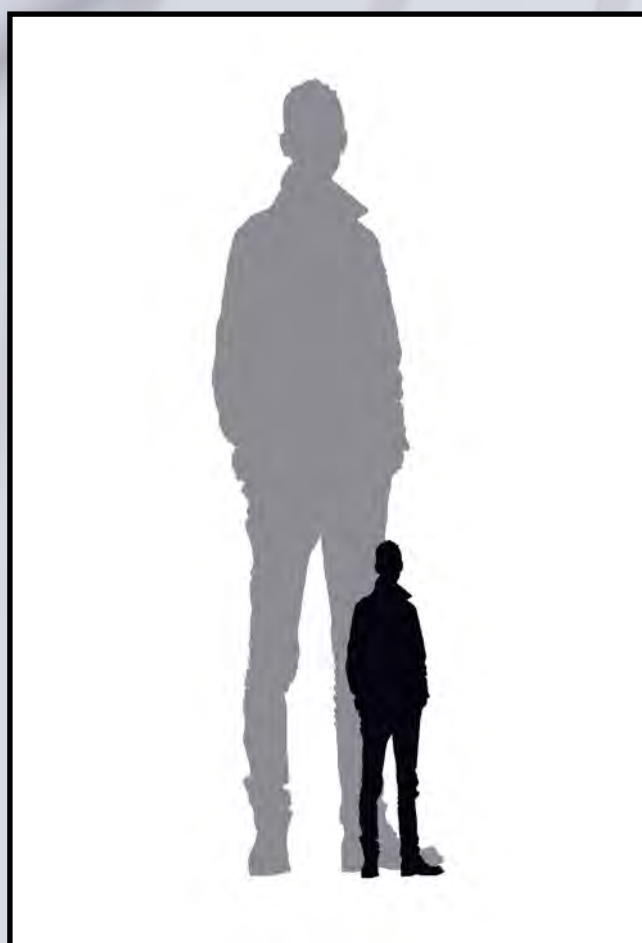
other was when he got drunk and was choking her out, then pulled a gun on her.

I called the cops on him a couple times, and he never knew it was me. He blamed Eddie once, cussed him out and threatened to kill him if he ever did it again, (all while Eddie denied committing the deed.) It wasn’t until years later that I found out

about that incident, and I finally set my father straight.

I’ll never forget when I got some years on my and confronted him about the hell he put my mother through (and by extension Eddie and myself). He told me he only remembered pushing her a couple times, but he never beat her.

I was certain my mother would have been glad to know that, given that she carried the pain of a broomstick that was broken over her back in one of his drunken rages.





## THE SHRINKING MAN -The Complete Prologue thru Chapter 11 (Cont.)

Good to know that was all her mind.

I didn't feel completely seen when I was in high school—but who does? The jocks I guess, and their cheerleader girlfriends.

But us average fellows?

Not so much.

Well, I take that back.

In retrospect I realize that it was true, the teachers saw me in passing, I was all but invisible to the pretty girls, and even the average students—my peers—seemed unaware of my have to say I was equally oblivious to theirs). It would be untrue to say that I went completely without notice, however. There was a group who saw me and saw me in all my glory as if a glowing aura shined around me and a raging flame of fire was over my head. They not only noticed me—but they saw me! That would of course be—

the bullies.

They saw the HELL outta me!

The irony of it wasn't lost on me, even at that young age. It was a time when

most children desire to be seen, to be validated, to have their existence acknowledged. I received none of that from my peers, with the exception of course of the afore mentioned bullies. It seemed that trend would play out later in life, as technology grew and evolved—as human beings entered the information age and the world of social media became a thing.

I continued with my writing art and music. I'd produce lavish, layered, content dense pages for the public to consume and give me feedback on. I'd interact with individuals and comment on their work on their respective

platforms even as I jumped up and down, waving figurative flags as I yelled, "HERE I AM! HERE I AM!"

Did I attract admirers of my work?

Some.

But when I would check my comment sections, it would be loaded down with either bots, sex ads, someone trying to sell me something, or trolls.

Once again, I was only visible to those who I'd have preferred couldn't see me.





## THE SHRINKING MAN -The Complete Prologue thru Chapter 11 (Cont.)

In those days I was neither a fighter nor a lover, and I had little desire for the first, and no understanding of the mechanics of the second. I couldn't understand then, nor in my adult life can I understand the psychology of bullies. Oh sure, I've heard psychological breakdowns of them my entire life, but that still doesn't help me understand them at all.

I'm fairly certain that my inability to understand them is tied directly to the fact that I'm unable to relate to them on any level. I can't relate to their motivations, world view or the way they move in the world. I can't relate to people living on this planet who, in my observation, feel that when a man and woman came together and made love, thus creating a human being, that somehow, they did that, the mother carried the child to term, they fed and clothed the child and eventually sent it out into the world, for what?

To serve as an object for another person to abuse for absolutely no reason?

Again, I can't relate to that mindset. I couldn't relate to it as I was bullied

and watched others be bullied in the classroom and on the playground, and I can't relate to it now as I am bullied and watch others be bullied by supervisors at the job, heads of corporations and elected officials. Where the fuck do these people come from?!

Who... or better yet... WHAT raised them?!

I guess I should have known what my experience at my new school would be, given what happened on my first day. On that day I was giving my books, assigned to a room and I attempted to blend in as best I could. By happenstance there

was a thunderstorm that day, so at lunch time we weren't allowed to go out to the playground. The only alternative they had for us was not the gym (since the lunchroom WAS the gym), we could stay at the lunch tables and talk among ourselves, play tick tac toe or whatever. Before long the entire lunchroom was loud, and the students had become unruly to the point where the principal told everyone to stop talking and to take out homework or something they could do in solitary silence. But he did not want to hear a single word or see anyone talking.





## THE SHRINKING MAN -The Complete Prologue thru Chapter 11 (Cont.)

That was it.

He had spoken.

The lunchroom became quiet enough to hear a pen drop, which was fine by me. It was my first day and I didn't know anyone, so I had no one to talk to anyway. I pulled out a sheet of paper and a pencil and began to draw. I heard something hit the floor. A girl who was sitting across from me had dropped her pencil and it rolled over to my side. Of course I bent over, picked it up and handed it to her. She whispered "Thank you." And I smiled and whispered back, "You're welcome."

As it turns out, the principal and teachers had been walking around the lunchroom like the Gestapo making sure no one was talking. The girl's back was to the principal, and I was facing him, so he looked at me and saw my mouth moving when I whispered my "Your welcome." He pointed to me, and tersely said, "You. Get up and go stand against the wall." I gathered my things and did as I was told. I stood against the wall with the other hardened criminals who had dared to speak after King Leopold II had delivered his draconian decree. There

was still about fifteen minutes left for lunch and we were made to stand for the entire fifteen minutes, unmoving, in silence as other students looked at us, some shaking their heads, others giggling.



The time I was in front of an

auditorium of students as I delivered a speech, only to find out afterward that my pants here unzipped the entire time and my tighty, whitey Fruit of the Looms were very visible, was the most embarrassing, mortifying events in my life.

This line up ran it a close second.

When it was a couple minutes from the bell to end lunch, the principal showed up behind what looked like a curtain, and everyone turned to their left. I didn't quite know what was happening, but I followed suit. I figured we were going to be scolded and told that when the Burgermeister said to shut up, that meant that us unruly thugs needed to shut the fuck UP! And try not to breathe too loud.

As we went to the back, I began hearing a whacking sound that I



## THE SHRINKING MAN -The Complete Prologue thru Chapter 11 (Cont.)

thought I recognized but wasn't sure off, until I got close to the front of the line. Each child was bending over and receiving the just due for their outright rebellion. When I got to the front, I awkwardly assumed the position I had never had to take from the time I was in kindergarten to that day, and waited for the punishment I'd earned for my politeness.

WACK!

I remember that the whack I received from a grown white man who was two and a half times my size was hard, and it hurt. I can honestly say that I don't

remember whether I cried or not (I probably did). If I did, it was more out of what I considered to be the injustice of it that the pain to my rear end.

So without even knowing the details of the incident, they knew something had gone terribly wrong and an injustice had been done.

In hindsight, I remember how much the environment felt like a prison to me than a school, and the principal saw himself as the warden. As an adult, I understand now.

In an environment where all the authority figures were white, including the principal and vice principal, over a student body that was some 99% Black, and in the hood, he basically saw all of us the same and had it stuck in his mind that we were just unruly

thugs. So, when he saw my mouth moving, he didn't bother to try to see why or what was going on... he didn't see ME in my individualism or humanity... all he saw was another unruly nigglet thumbing their nose at his to be unquestioned white authority.

I remember very distinctly that the next day I received messages

from teachers at my old school saying that they had heard what happened. (How they knew about it, I haven't a clue). All the messages basically said the same thing, they told me how sorry they were that that happened to me and that none of them believed for a second that I did anything to deserve it.

The outpouring of sympathy was based upon the teachers knowing me, and watching me grow up at their school, and having my brother Eddie and myself as students. We were



## THE SHRINKING MAN -The Complete Prologue thru Chapter 11 (Cont.)

never the least bit of trouble (we knew we'd BETTER not be, or we'd have to face the wrath of Mamma. Trust and believe, neither of us wanted that EVER.)

I have to admit that the messages and notes of sympathy took some of the sting out of it for me. Back at my other school the teachers thought well of me, and I was big.

But because of that day, and the swat... I shrank a little.

**CHAPTER 4 (Not the Content of my Character)** From the age of twelve, I developed a ritual I'd observe on the night of December 31st. I'd ring in the New Year by drawing something, anything, to mark the occasion. It became a tradition that followed me throughout my life. Drawing had always been my thing, something I enjoyed from a very young age. But it wasn't until I discovered cartooning that I realized how much I truly loved it. I remember being a child, scribbling out stories and filling pages with illustrations, lost in a world of my own making.

One of my elementary school teachers, Mr. Francis Campbell,

noticed my work. He taught math, of all things, but somehow he recognized something special in me. He must've seen something that others didn't, because he made it his mission to help me get my work published. The only problem was that I didn't have much

in the way of supplies. I came from a single-parent home, and my mom could barely make ends meet. But I didn't let that stop me. When I stumbled upon a stash of old punch timecards, I saw an opportunity to practice my cartooning. They weren't perfect, but they worked.

Then, Mr. Campbell stepped in. He must've realized that I was

using whatever scraps I could find to make art, and he started paying for my supplies out of his own pocket. It felt like a dream—having someone believe in me so much that he was willing to invest in me. Eventually, I had written and illustrated several children's books, and my stack of comic books grew to be nearly waist-high.

That's when Mr. Campbell decided to take the next step. He was going to get my work into the world. He started calling publishers in Ohio, talking about the young boy who had written





## THE SHRINKING MAN -The Complete Prologue thru Chapter 11 (Cont.)

and illustrated his own books. I was nervous, but excited, hoping that this would be my big break. Every time Mr. Campbell spoke about my work, the publishers seemed to get more and more interested, especially when they found out how young I was. They'd ask for samples, and Mr. Campbell would send them, brimming with optimism.

We'd drive from publisher to publisher, sometimes for hours, after getting permission from my mom and the school. It felt like we were so close. With each call, the excitement grew. At first, the publishers were thrilled. They couldn't wait to meet me. I was just a kid, but they seemed to believe that having a child author would be a huge deal for their press. I thought this was it, my moment. But then, after we met in person, something would always change. The smiles that greeted us at first would fade, their warmth turning into something forced and uncomfortable.

They'd say how wonderful my work was, how talented I was, but then the words would always follow: "It's just not what we're looking for right now." And just like that, my dreams would

shatter. Every time, I'd go home, feeling my excitement drain out of me. I'd have to face my mom and my brother and tell them that nothing had come of it. I'd go upstairs, shut the door behind me, and start drawing again. There was nothing else to do.



I didn't understand it. I thought my work was good enough. I didn't know why they weren't interested. Mr. Campbell didn't give up, though. He kept calling publishers, kept taking me to meetings, but the results were always the same. And with every rejection, I could see him becoming more and more discouraged, too.

Finally, on the last trip, we sat in his car outside my house, both of us quiet. I had my portfolio on my lap, feeling the weight of it like it was filled with rocks. For the first time, I noticed Mr. Campbell's face was flushed, his eyes tight with frustration. He was angry, and I could see it. I turned to him, trying to offer some comfort, thanking him for everything he'd done, even though nothing had worked out. I even said that maybe my work just wasn't as good as we thought it was.

That's when he lost it.



## THE SHRINKING MAN -The Complete Prologue thru Chapter 11 (Cont.)

He looked at me, his face red and full of emotion, and said, “You are the most talented child I’ve ever seen! You deserve to be published, and the only reason they won’t publish you is because of the color of your skin! Don’t you ever let anyone make you think your work isn’t good enough! It’s better than a lot of the junk I’ve seen out here! Don’t let this ever cause you to give up!”

I sat there, stunned, trying to make sense of what he was saying. I understood it on some level, but I didn’t quite grasp the weight of it. Not yet. It was like an introduction to something I wasn’t ready for—something bigger and bleaker than I could have imagined. In that moment, I couldn’t fully comprehend what Mr. Campbell was telling me, but I knew that his words weren’t just about me. He was talking about the world, and how it would see me—how it would judge me—not for my talent, not for the content of my character, as Dr. King dreamed, but for the color of my skin.

And that, I realize now, was the beginning. My introduction to something that would follow me for the rest of my life.



There are times when I look back and think about that little boy. The one who was so wide and clear eyed. The little boy who thought everything was possible, because he was taught that anything was possible. I think about the little boy who grew up in a world where people were just people. Sure, we all looked different, but at the end of the day, we were all basically the same, and the only thing that could hold a person back was themselves.

When I think about that little boy—the one who was the epidemic of “young, gifted and Black”, who thought he actually lived in a meritocracy, and thus

thought it was him or his work that wasn’t measuring up. When I think about him coming home after each defeat, after each rejection, going directly to his room and working even harder, honing his skills even sharper only to be rejected again and again, and ultimately blaming himself and his work for not being good enough.

Now knowing what I know, and that it was never him or his work, but a system that was put in place centuries before he was born, that was designed specifically to prevent children like him moving upward or shine a spot



## THE SHRINKING MAN -The Complete Prologue thru Chapter 11 (Cont.)

light that would reveal the meritocracy of his counterparts to the world.

I think of a white man named Francis Campbell who saw past my color and tried to push me through but found that he was up against greater forces from his own people than he may have first anticipated.

I think back to the time when I realized that there was something that trumped my talent and that, at least back then, I had no power or knowledge base to overcome it, thus shaping my life and setting the precedent for the life of struggle that would be my experience as a Black man within what I discovered was a global system of white supremacy.

It was then, that for the first time, I shrank several inches in my spirit.

And I shed a tear.

### CHAPTER 5 (Sitting in His Nowhere Land)

I don't remember how old I was the first time I saw the animated movie Yellow Submarine, but I do remember vividly the way I felt when the movie got to the sequence where the Fab

Four (that's the Beatles), met Jeremy Hillary Boob, aka the Nowhere Man.

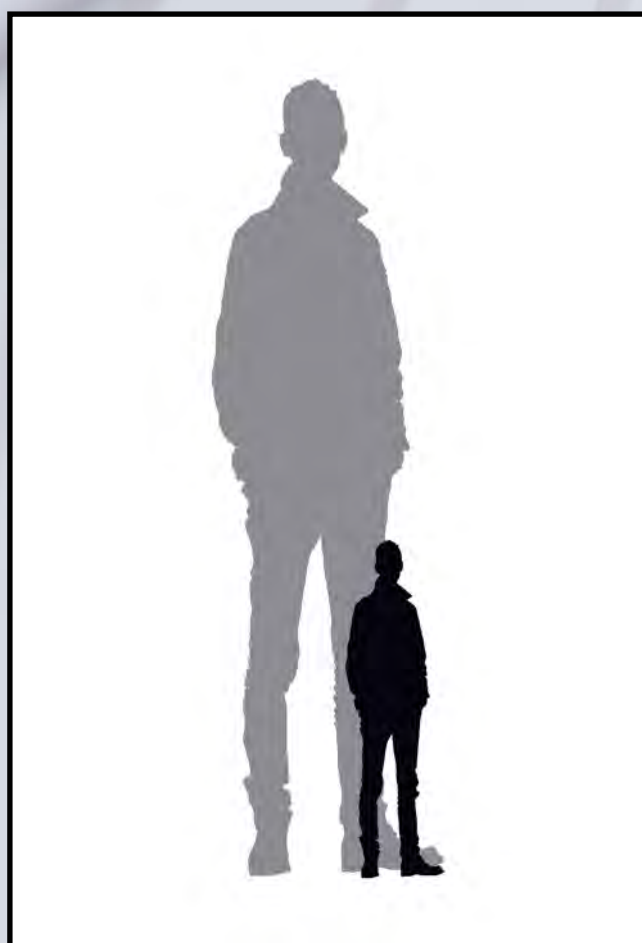
Jeremy was a writer, artist, scientist, philosopher among his many other talents. He was a character I immediately identified with. He was constantly creating something or other, but there was no one to see it. He was the only one within the entire landscape, so everything he did, everything he said, anything he made was only for him and him alone.

When John, Paul, George and Ringo found him, he was hard at work, and explaining

to the quartet what it was he did with his time. However, they very quickly saw that there was no one to share his accomplishments with, so they belted out the song:

“He's a real nowhere man,  
Sitting in his nowhere land,  
Making all his nowhere plans,  
For nobody.”

Jeremy filled his time with writing, creating, thinking, hypothesizing, the problem is, he has created this body of work, he has a world of knowledge



## THE SHRINKING MAN -The Complete Prologue thru Chapter 11 (Cont.)

and love in his heart and head, but absolutely no outlet for it. Yes. He creates and does the things he does for the sheer enjoyment and fulfillment of it, but as Billy Dee Williams said to Diana Ross in Mahogany,

“Success is nothing . . . without someone you love to share it with.”

The lyrics and visuals hit me like a ton of bricks. Especially at the end of the song where he is left spinning alone in circles, surrounded by a white environment—literally nothing, and he is crying. The group is about to leave, but Ringo (Ringo Starr), looks back and feels sorry for the little guy, so he goes back to him and says:

Ringo: “Hey, Mr Boob! You can come with us if you like.”

Jeremy: “You mean you’d take a nowhere man?”

Ringo: “Yeah, come on. We’ll take you somewhere.”

To this day, just the thought of that line “Yeah, come on. We’ll take you somewhere.”, its implications and the context cause me to feel deeply

emotions. In that moment I saw a character who now had an outlet for his creativity, thoughts and visions. He was now able to share and to grow as he learned from his environment and those around him.



### CHAPTER 6 (A Little older Love!)

It’s interesting.

When we think about puppy love and teenage heartbreak, it’s looked back upon with a kind of nostalgia. I even laugh at ourselves as I consider the melodrama of it all... the heartbreak of it all... the end of the worldness of it all.

I met the “girl of my dreams”, and it always, for whatever reason, would go sideways, and my reaction to the crash and burn would always be the same, “Oh dear God... I’ll never love again!” You know... like the closing lyric of the Dionne Warwick/Burt Bacharach song:

*What do you get when you fall in love?  
You only get lies and pain and sorrow  
So for at least until tomorrow  
I’ll never fall in love again...*



## THE SHRINKING MAN -The Complete Prologue thru Chapter 11 (Cont.)

Then of course, there's the begging and the pleading.

That's something we guys to the first go round, or possibly even several before we realize that the begging and pleading has basically the same effect as giving a diabetic an ice cream sundee cover in sprinkles.

We have no idea that it has the exa...

Along with a glass of over sweetened Kool-Aid to wash it down with.

We have absolutely no idea that not only was what we were doing counterproductive but damaging to our own physiques and sense of self-esteem.

Eventually we grow out of it... if we grow up more than chronologically. There's a name for those of us who don't, I think they're called stalkers. We who matured past that have difficulty understanding why any man would do such a thing. The legal document we want our names on are marriage licenses... not restraining orders.

That said.

We live and learn; we grow up and think that those are the worst hurts we'll ever have to endure.

Then we get married.

I was married once, to a woman who I found we had one major thing in common.

We were both in love with her.

Don't get me wrong. It wasn't bad, as marriages go, but jeez. When we broke up, that was really... I'll say... interesting.

I think that breakups work the same way as leaving a job you don't

like.

You walk into the office and give your two weeks' notice (if you give one at all), then you're outta there! To your soon to be ex-boss and your colleagues it seems like it all came out of nowhere. But what they don't know is that you've been looking for something new for the past eight months. Then after finding it (and actually even before), you began separating yourself mentally from your place of employment, so that by the time you physically leave, you've already been gone for several months.





## THE SHRINKING MAN -The Complete Prologue thru Chapter 11 (Cont.)

Same thing for marriages. It's never hell!  
just out of the blue.

That said, I loved Black love back when it was just—love.

Now I hear it said that Black love is radical. I long for the day when it isn't. Whether that love is man to woman, brother to sister, parent to child, or any of the various combinations. What does it mean when something as natural as loving one's self and one's people is called a radical act? A revolutionary act.

God help us.

Please don't ever let us get to the point that bathing ourselves is considered radical or revolutionary.

That said... I guess I was talking about marriage before I so rudely interrupted myself.

In looking for a mate, I've learned at long last, that happiness with the person you are destined to walk this path with isn't based upon finding the one man or woman who is going to make your life pleasant.

It's more about avoiding the millions who would make your life a living

So when looking at odds and the laws of averages, each one of us pretty much has our work cut out for us. It isn't impossible though. I know many brothers and sisters who have found each other and are enjoying their lives together. I'm looking forward to a time when I will have that same kind of bliss. In the meantime however, I'm going to work on myself. You know, fix me up.

New paint coat.

A couple of improvements here or there.

I'll do my best to be prefab for some lucky lady.

Not one of these guys they meet and say, "Oh, this is PERFECT." Then after the purchase say, "Ok... I need to take this wall out, add a room here, put in some new windows..." you know the deal.

### CHAPTER 7 (New to Teen)

When I was a teenager, I should have solved world peace. Ended world hunger and cured every form of disease. Why should I have done that when I was a teenager?





## THE SHRINKING MAN -The Complete Prologue thru Chapter 11 (Cont.)

Because when I was a teenager, that was when I knew every friggin' thing!

Which, I suppose, is what made me like every other teenager.

Funny, when I was that age I'd dress to rebel, to show my independence and so on, without taking into account that within peer groups, teenagers were for the most part, the only people who expressed their individuality but doing their level best to be like everyone else in their peer group.

I'd love to say that I didn't give a rip about being accepted. That, that type of thing didn't matter to me, but it did. It was an age of racing and raging hormones and walking around with our shirts perpetually untucked—as if the girls passing us in the hallways didn't know why we all wore that same uniform.

I myself wasn't able to confidently tuck in my shirt until my second year of high school. In high school I wanted a girlfriend—I guess most guys do. I of course went and asked how to get one from the ultimate authorities on how to do it.

Other guys with no girlfriends, some of whom were twice as clueless as I was. The one thing I realized that I needed to get on a team! I noticed that the rougher the sport, the prettier the girls!

Baseball.

Pretty.

Track.

REAL pretty.

Basketball.

Hot.

Football.

Drop dead gorgeous...  
FINE!



I was on the golf team.

I quickly learned that golf was a kind of anti-sport. Not only did I not get a pretty girl friend, but the plain ones avoided me like the plague.

It wouldn't be until years later that I realized that there was no such thing as a girl (or by this time), a woman being out of my league. I approached it the way Babe Ruth approached baseball. The reason he was called the home run king, was because he swung at everything. He struck out



## THE SHRINKING MAN -The Complete Prologue thru Chapter 11 (Cont.)

more than he hit, but when he hit, it was out of the park. So, call me Babe... cause that was me.

I saw things the way a child sees things, and of those things I saw, I perceived them as a child. I knew I didn't look like those around me—but I didn't think anything of it.

### CHAPTER 8 (The Fire This Time)

I guess I can honestly say that in a way, it was the bullies who taught me to draw, to write and to play instruments. If not for them, I'd have been outside playing or something. Getting some sunshine and throwing or kicking some ball. But so that I didn't have to worry about someone snatching me up and attempting to staple my arm, or having a big kid grab me from behind while another kid pepper sprayed my point blank, then walk off laughing as I coughed, teary eyed, wiping a ceaseless stream of snot on my sleeve... I elected to say in the house where I felt safe.

While there I'd draw, write, play my guitar and so on. I started drawing when I was five, it kicked into high

gear when I was nine or ten and found myself in the house with nothing to do but create friends on paper. By the time I was sixteen, I had written and illustrated a stack of children's books and comic books that stood about waist high on me from the floor.



Thanks you little terrorists... I couldn't have done it without you.

My work was my pride and joy, and in a way, many of the characters I'd created were friends of mine. They were my creations. A part of me, and I was extremely proud of them.

My brother and I went to the same school, and we were in some of the same classes together. He was only a year older than me.

When I got home from school I walked in and greeted everyone as I always do, then I bolted up the stairs to take out my art and writing materials.

Sure, James Baldwin wrote *The Fire Next Time*, unfortunately he didn't know anything about the fire THIS time, and he definitely never met my older brother..



## THE SHRINKING MAN -The Complete Prologue thru Chapter 11 (Cont.)

### CHAPTER 9 (The Verdict)

Obviously, Trayvon Martin somehow deserved to be gun down in the street by someone who was stalking him (after the police clearly told him NOT to engage), but Trayvon smoked weed. Therefore, he absolutely deserved to end up as a chalk outline.

As I watched, and ate some French fries, my cell phone rang.

“Hello?”

“Hey dude... you see that shit?”

“What? The verdict or the talking heads who are rambling about it?”

“All of it.”

“Yeah. I’m watchin’ somethin’ about it right now.”

“What do. You think?”

“Come on man. I know you didn’t call to ask me that. You KNOW what I think... and frankly... I know what YOUR conservative ass thinks about it.”

“You don’t know what I think.”

“I don’t?! Negro! You think dude was justified in what he did and that he should have never even gone to trial. You think he’s a hero because people are sick and tired of feeling endangered and harassed by all these deranged people out here! In other words, either they need to go to the workhouses, or if they’d rather die then they’d better do it and decrease the surplus population.”

“Been watchin’ A Christmas Carol I see.”

“Alistir Sim version.”

“Yeah... that’s the best one.”

“So... did I nail it. Is that what you think?”

“Yeah, pretty much.”

“I knew that because, as you know, I used to BE you. Always ready to take the side of anything that was against my own people in favor of those who put us in this predicament.”

### CHAPTER 10 (Sublime Self-Hate and Erasure)

I don’t know the time or date when I realized I was a cynic. All I know is that at some point I came to the stark realization that I had become one.





## THE SHRINKING MAN -The Complete Prologue thru Chapter 11 (Cont.)

I was a cynic... and I despised my cynicism.

But more than that—I gained loathing for those who turned me into one.

I left the church, with its superficiality, hypocrisy and outright cruelty—though I never left God, my Creator, I need to be clear on that. Interestingly, my severance from the church ran consecutively with my separation from the conservative movement and Republican party. I was never a Democrat. Never have been, never will be. I'm not even what I would consider, a "liberal". I am fully atheistic in my politics (or lack thereof).

I was at one time a political animal. I never missed Rush Limbauh. I was listening to Laura Ingram when she was just a voice on the radio and not a Fox News talking head. Same thing for Sean Hannity. Back then, I thought Michelle Malkin was brilliant (Michelle Malkin was Candace Owens before Candace Owens became Candace Owens). I watched as conservative attorney Jay Sekulow first came on the scene as the lead attorney for 700 Club televangelist

Pat Robertson's newly formed ACLJ (American Center for Law and Justice), the conservative answer to the ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union). The organization fought to keep prayer in schools as well as the 10 commandments and the term

Christmas in schools, public spaces and in government buildings. I cheered on the Black conservatives like Armstrong Williams and Larry Elder.

Oddly, throughout that entire sorry, brainwashed, self-hating, self-effacing period of my life, I'd never heard of Thomas Sowell. I didn't learn about him until I

become "conscious". Now, knowing what I know about him, I have zero doubt that back in that day, I would have considered him a great intellect, quoted him constantly and pulled him out of my ass each and every time I got into a conversation with a Black Democrat or liberal.

Oh, when I think of the conversations (many of them heated), with family, friends and acquaintances, in my staunch defense of a party to which I sought desperately to belong and deluded myself into thinking I did, only to finally accept the undeniable,



## THE SHRINKING MAN -The Complete Prologue thru Chapter 11 (Cont.)

undisputable, undyeable truth... that to them I was and would always be, a nigger. James Baldwin said it better and more eloquently than I ever could:

*“It comes as a great shock... to discover that the flag to which you have pledged allegiance... has not pledged allegiance to you. It comes as a great shock to see Gary Cooper killing off the Indians, and although you are rooting for Gary Cooper, that the Indians are you.”*

### CHAPTER 11 (A World of Lies)

I was once asked if I found a bottle on the beach, rubbed it and a genie appeared, declaring that he would grant me one wish, and only one, what would I wish for?

At the time I was asked the question, I had already put so much thought into it in past years that I was able to answer definitively and without hesitation.

I wouldn't wish for money.

I wouldn't wish for love.

I wouldn't wish for fame.

I wouldn't even wish for world peace and an end to war.

My answer was:

“My wish would be simply to know the truth The truth about EVERYTHING.”



My belief then and now is that if one knows the truth, then everything else is possible. There are reasons that people (especially people in positions of authority) do everything in their power to keep people from knowing the truth.

Back when I was young and naïve, on the whole,

I would believe what was told to me and trust the person or source until I was given a reason not to. Now, when it comes to corporations, organizations and especially the government and politicians my default position is: *“If they're speaking, they're lying, and if they're telling the truth, it is in the service of a lie.”* So to that degree—through I watch and listen to a lot of political commentary and even watch speeches and things like the Democratic and Republican conventions. I don't believe any of it any more than I believe that a man

## THE SHRINKING MAN -The Complete Prologue thru Chapter 11 (Cont.)

can fly and lift a building while I'm watching a Superman movie. For me, political theater is exactly that: THEATER. A show I watch purely for the entertainment value of it. After becoming a political atheist, I found myself better positioned to analyze politicians, left, right and center, along with their pundits.

So it began with Santa Clause and ended here. I can't help but wonder if the entire thing isn't a set up. The whole Santa Clause thing. We got from school, out parents and the government that Stanta was a real thing. Then we were taught an "American History" that was just this side of Alice in Wonderland and finally end up with broadcasts that are literally nothing more than propaganda thinly disguised as "news".

Truth is the thing that gives us the ability to make informed decisions and determine the best course of action based on the circumstances and situations at hand. How does one accomplish that in a world of lies?

How do I interpret the world in presently exist?

The world is Ohio and I am tasked with navigating around in it. If I

receive any aids at all, the tools I am given are a road map and a compass. The problem is, that the roadmap is of Georgia and was altered to say it is an Ohio map. And the face of the compass was printed backward and upside down, and the magnet inside is not affixed to a fixed point.

THAT is the world we are tasked with moving around in, and castigated, maligned and ridiculed if we are unsuccessful in our efforts.

At some point, after one realizes they've been duped (which many never come to the understanding of), we realize that we'd have been infinitely better off if we hadn't been told or given anything at all, and just figured things out on our own. At least that way, there was a better path to discovering real truth.

TO PROTECT AND SERVE:

I once heard a woman say that when it comes to organizations, government entities, or even individuals, one should never, ever pay attention to their declarations, mottos or mission statements. She said to look at what they do and their consistent outcomes.



READING and WRITING in the

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## THE SHRINKING MAN -The Complete Prologue thru Chapter 11 (Cont.)

It is those consistent outcomes (she emphasized “consistent”), that will show you and tell you what the mission is.

One of the most accessible examples is the police force. Their motto is “To Protect and Serve”. However, when Black people take that statement and attempt to reconcile it with the overall actions and outcomes, we run into a paradoxical quandary and are unable to make sense of it. However, if the paradigm were to be shifted and their motto became:

“To Harass, Terrorize and Gun Down Unarmed Black People” suddenly, all their actions would immediately line up and make sense to us.

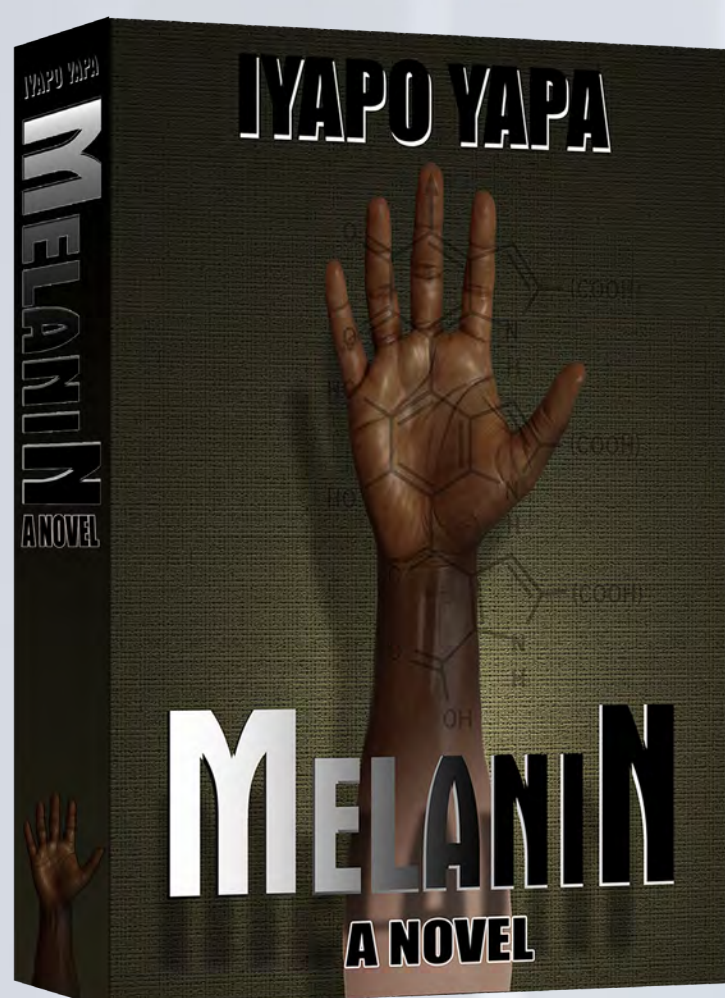
So the ultimate question becomes, how does one navigate a world of lies?



READING and WRITING in the

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After two years,  
*MELANIN: A Novel* finally  
has a trailer!  
(And it's an exciting one too!)  
You can check it out now by  
clicking  
the image above!

Click the image on the left to  
purchase the novel!

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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**?!

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

**or is there?**

Love, hate, secrets and deception abound in what is sure to be a hit, as Adrien M. Lane brings you her mind bending and controversial debut novella. Read *The Redemption of Maxine Allison* and find out why!

**THE WAIT IS ALMOST OVER! THE FINAL EDIT HAS BEEN COMPLETED!**



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**.

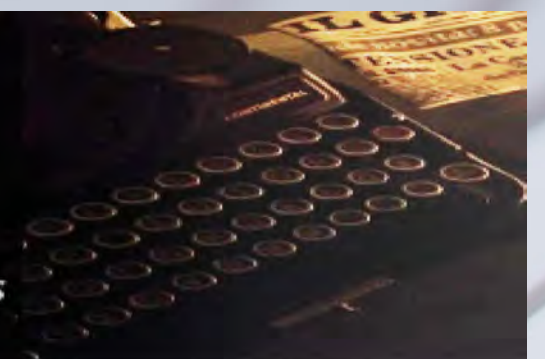
**AVAILABLE NOW!**  
CLICK THE LOGO TO GO TO THE RETAILER



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## FEBRUARY 2026 CROSSWORD PUZZLE!

This month's puzzle is a **CROSSWORD**, and all the questions pertain to this month's feature story offering, so if you don't read it, you won't be able to answer most of the questions... but you can sure **TRY!** In **ANY** event...  
**HAVE FUN!**

The solution to last month's puzzle, is at the back of the magazine as usual.

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

# FEBRUARY 2026 CROSSWORD PUZZLE



# SHRINKING MAN



## SHRINKING MAN CROSSWORD CLUES

### Across

- 2) The author was \_\_\_\_\_ years old when he first started drawing.
- 3) Book by Ralph Ellison that inspired the R.J. Blakman book: \_\_\_\_\_ man.
- 5) The first person to ever call the author “nigger”? \_\_\_\_\_
- 7) Aftershave the author used, that belonged to his father. The aftershave came with instructions for how to fight off women. HI \_\_\_\_\_.
- 12) The author felt unseen by everybody and every group except one, the \_\_\_\_\_.
- 16) What did the author’s father blame his brother for, but actually the author did it? He called \_\_\_\_\_.
- 17) Name of the girl the author married on the playground when they were children. Roberta \_\_\_\_\_.
- 19) Book title: \_\_\_\_\_ man.
- 21) In elementary school, the author was humiliated and punished with corporal punishment by the principal of the school for saying “You’re \_\_\_\_\_” to another student.
- 22) Fictional character the author was lied to about by everyone thought his early childhood. \_\_\_\_\_ Clause.
- 24) What cartoon character from the movie “Yellow Submarine”, did the author identify with? The \_\_\_\_\_ man.
- 25) What young man was gunned down, but obviously deserved it because he was reported to have smoked weed? \_\_\_\_\_ Martin.
- 26) Burger place the author would stop at on his way back home from school. White \_\_\_\_\_.
- 27) Name of the math teach he tried zealously to get the author published when he was young. Francis \_\_\_\_\_.

### Down

- 1) Why did the author say he should have solved world hunger and cured diseases when he was a teenager? Because he KNEW everything \_\_\_\_\_ thing!
- 4) What punishment did the author receive on his first day at his elementary school? A \_\_\_\_\_.
- 5) What approach did the author take to approaching women? The style of \_\_\_\_\_ Ruth.
- 6) Political affiliation before “seeing the light” and becoming a political atheist \_\_\_\_\_.
- 8) Singer of the song, “I’ll never fall in love again.” Dionne \_\_\_\_\_.
- 9) In high school, what team was the author on? The \_\_\_\_\_ team.
- 10) First girl the author met on his first day of high school. Dana \_\_\_\_\_.
- 11) What made Dana scream while the she and the author walked to school. Bird \_\_\_\_\_.
- 13) “If they’re speaking they’re lying, and if they’re telling the truth it is in the \_\_\_\_\_ of a lie.”
- 14) Author of Rasulallah, Ohio, and writing semi-autobiographical book: R.J. \_\_\_\_\_.
- 15) Author of the sci-fi book from which R.J. Blackman’s title is borrowed. Richard \_\_\_\_\_.
- 18) To the author, politics is now just a \_\_\_\_\_.
- 20) The author was forced to recite the pledge of \_\_\_\_\_ when he was young, but his inner voice learned something very different.
- 23) What did the author ironically give credit to his bullies for? His many \_\_\_\_\_.
- 24) Government agency that would track Santa Clause each Christmas Eve since 1955? \_\_\_\_\_.
- 25) “To Protect and Serve” would be more accurately put as, To Harass and \_\_\_\_\_, when it comes to Black people.



## WELCOME BLACK TO SATURDAY MORNING!

I remember Saturday mornings when I was a child, and the excitement I'd feel when turning on the television to be treated to some new animated cartoon. I was a child of the Hanna Barbera era (as can be seen in my cartooning style to this day).

There were also Warner Brothers cartoons thrown in for good measure, but it was HB that absolutely dominated and owned Saturday morning. Even

as I wrote this, I took a moment to research what is happening on television on the “big four” (CBS, ABC, NBC and, FOX), to my surprise, there is no Saturday morning cartoon lineup on ANY of the networks anymore.

My wife quickly pointed out that part of the reason is because of things like Cartoon Network, (which barely shows cartoons anymore), Nickelodeon and such—with which I agree, but for

an old school guy like me, it was still jarring.

I feel bad for today's children who can't have that same experience (minus the sugary cereal that had us bouncing off the walls). My goal is to bring it back... with a TWIST!

My idea is to recreate the feel of watching an old school Saturday morning lineup, including commercials (without the sugary cereal that had us bouncing off the walls), and to help an older

generation to rediscover and a new generation to discover what it was like, and how comforting that kind of dependable cartoon fare could be.

The twist in the plot is that this Saturday morning lineup—Welcome BLACK to Saturday Morning!—is exactly what the title implies, welcoming BLACK to Saturday morning! Sure there were things like the Jackson Five cartoon back in the day, along with the *Harlem Globetrotters*, *Rickety Rocket* and of course *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids*.



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## WELCOME BLACK TO SATURDAY MORNING! Continued

But those cartoons were few and far between, and even then, the Black characters were basically, overall, stereotypical versions of what white people thought Black people were.

When I watched cartoons as a child and even as I watched with my own children, it was still a domain dominated predominantly by white people.

*Welcome BLACK to Saturday Morning!* is meant to have a lineup featuring

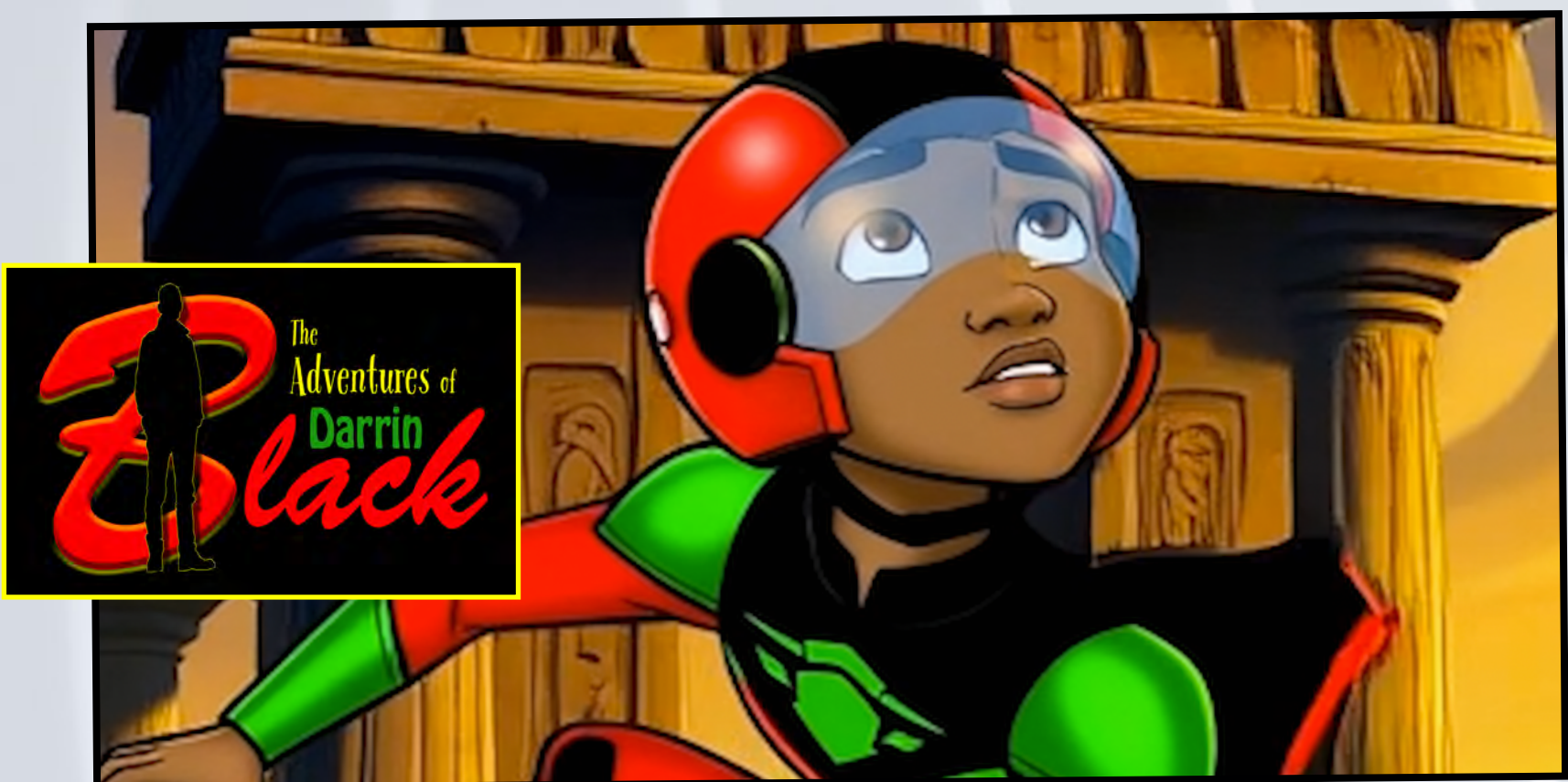
Black people and in a way that shows us and allows us to experience us the way we are BY our people.

I won't give away too much here, but just know, this is an exciting project and *The Adventures of Darrin Black*, referenced in last month's issue, is the center piece along with *Skoolhouse*

*Soul* and other surprises! So, keep your eyes peeled, and *Welcome BLACK to Saturday Morning!* is coming your way! More details as they develop.



## ACTION and ADVENTURE has a NEW NAME!



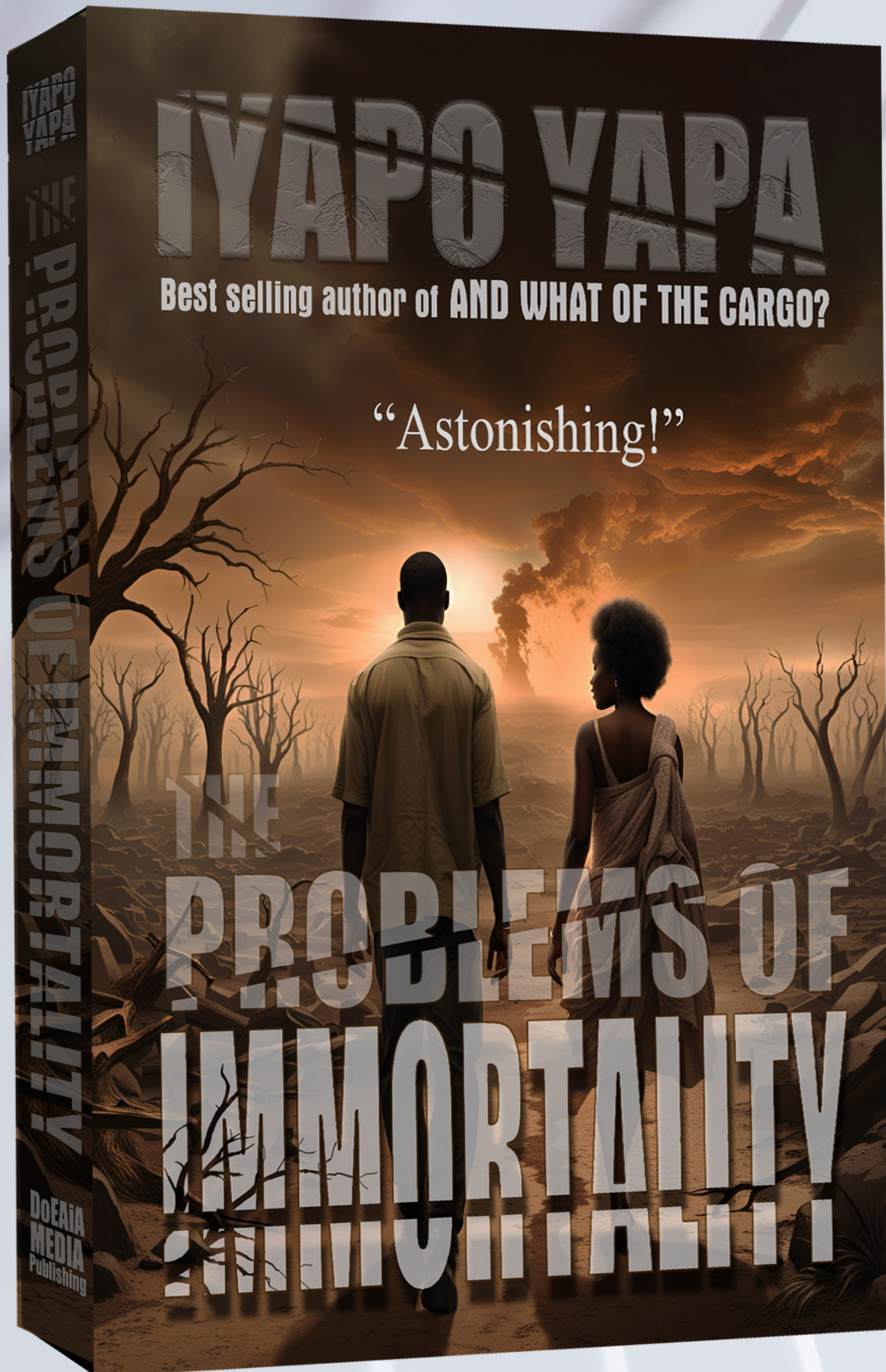
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**IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A BOOK THAT TAKES A BOLD AND UNFLINCHING  
LOOK INTO THE EYES OF EXISTENTIAL DREAD... YOU'VE JUST FOUND IT!**



**IYAPO YAPA invites you to a world like nothing you've ever  
seen before, in a WAY it has never been told before !**

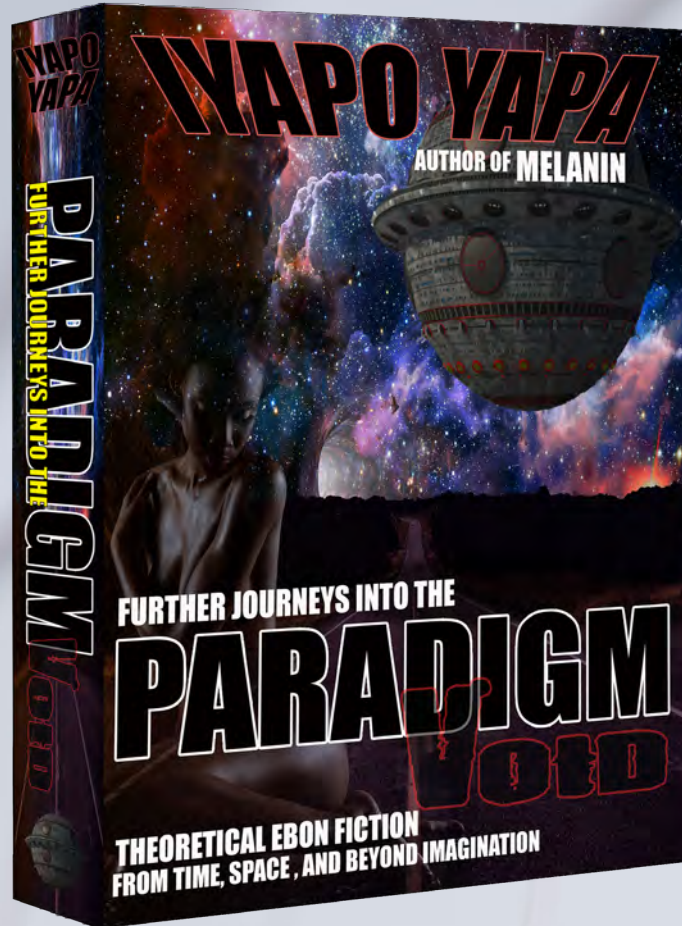
**COMING SOON!**

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ARE YOU PREPARED TO JOURNEY BACK INTO THE VOID?!

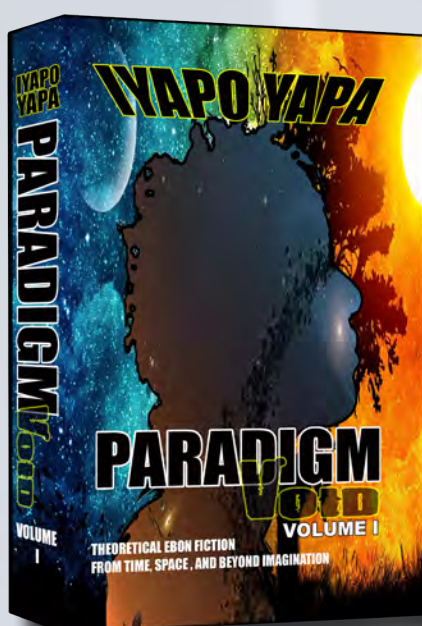


## COMING SOON

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

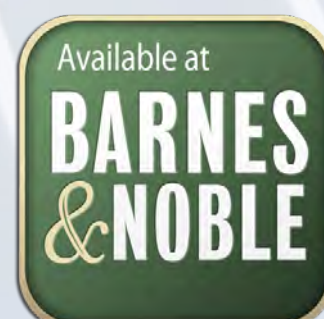
- What is life like for a person who is “unstuck” in time? One man gives his confessions.
- What if the universe, in an effort to balance itself started removing EVERYTHING that was of no use or value - to include some PEOPLE?!
  - Luxury isn't always what it seems, or is cracked up to be, as one newlywed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

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



## RIGHT NOW!

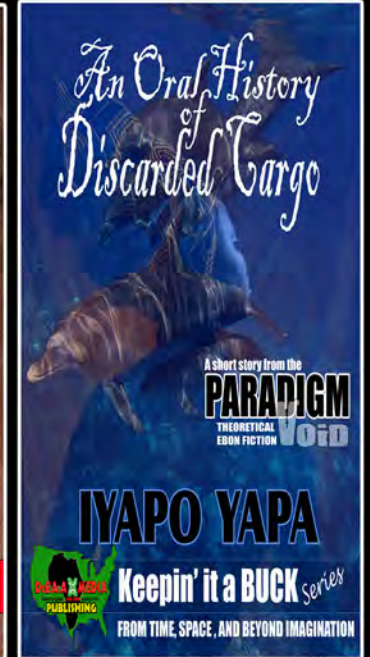
Stories from Time, Space and Beyond Imagination,  
**Paradigm VOID Volume I** is available.



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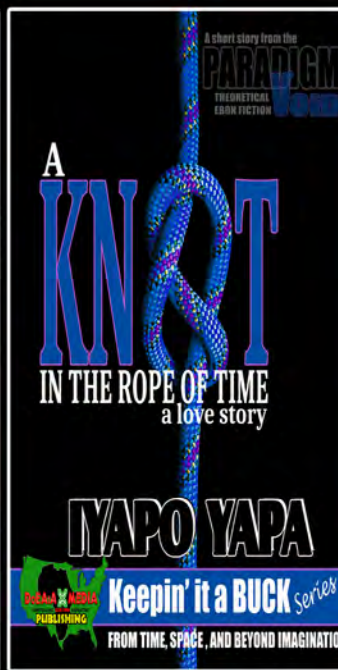


IT IS TIME TO JOURNEY INTO THE **PARADIGM VOID** ONE STEP AT A TIME.

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



## 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](mailto:comments@iyapoyapa.com)

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**DoEAIa MEDIA PUBLISHING is on the MOVE and taking control in 2026 with even more of the spectacular Pro-Black content our people have been longing for!**

**Check out the catalogue for 2026!**



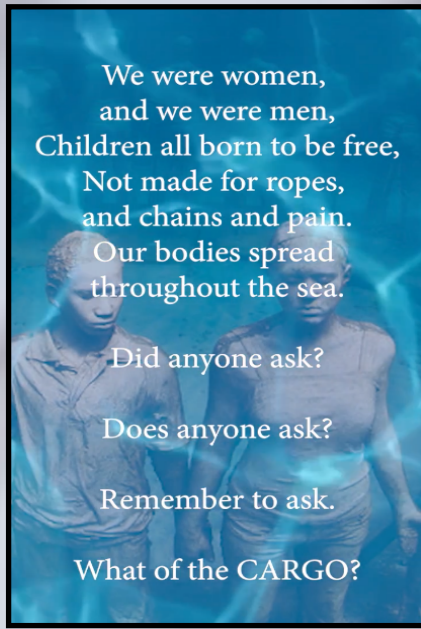
Scan the QR Code or click the image to the left to view the catalogue.

**CONTROLLING OUR NARRATIVE!**



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



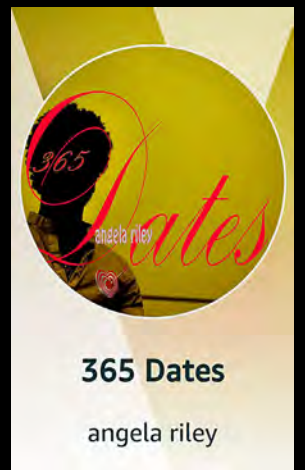
I'd like to say a big **THANK YOU!** To everyone who helped all three of my books to spend some time at number **ONE** on Amazon's **BEST SELLERS** list!



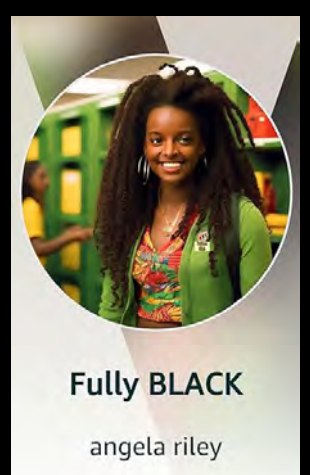
FIND AFFIRMING SELF LOVE AT:

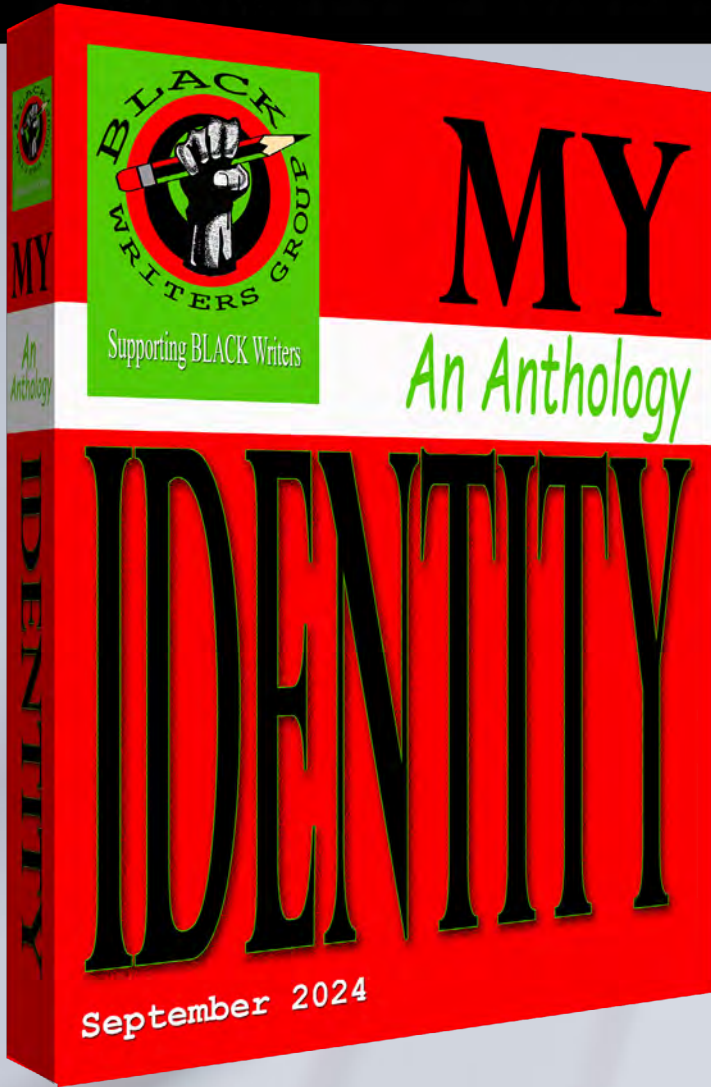


CAN LOVE SET US FREE?



**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.

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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 fullfilling 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!



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## R.J. BLAKMAN

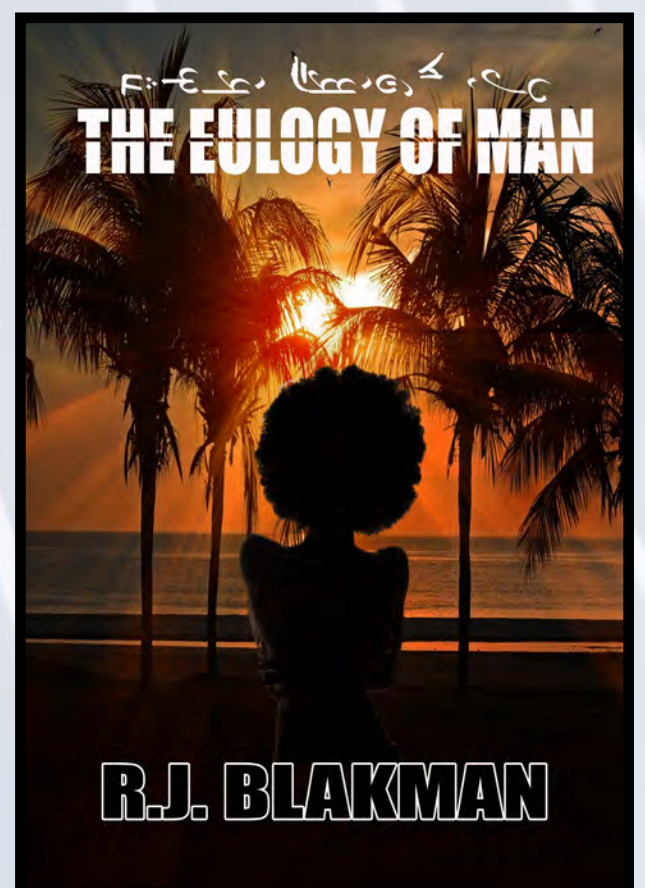
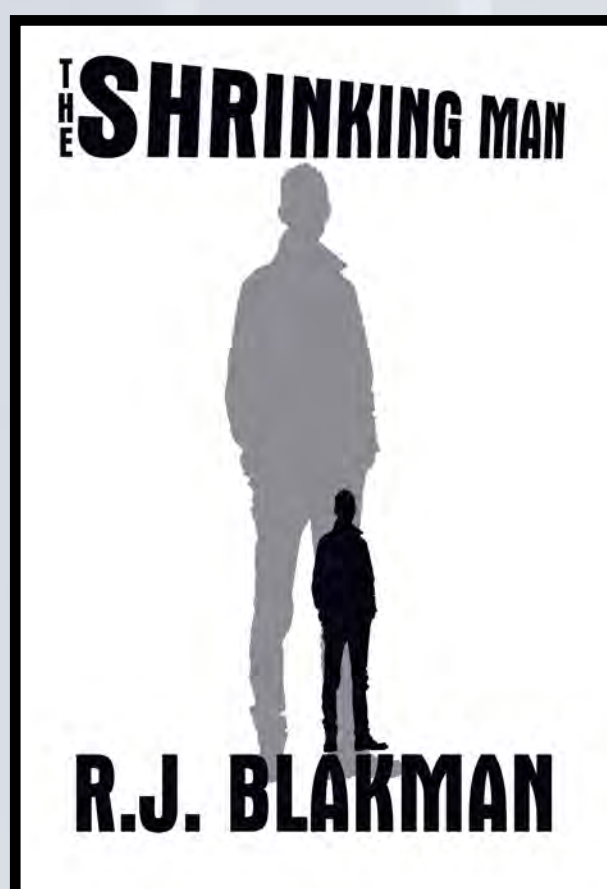
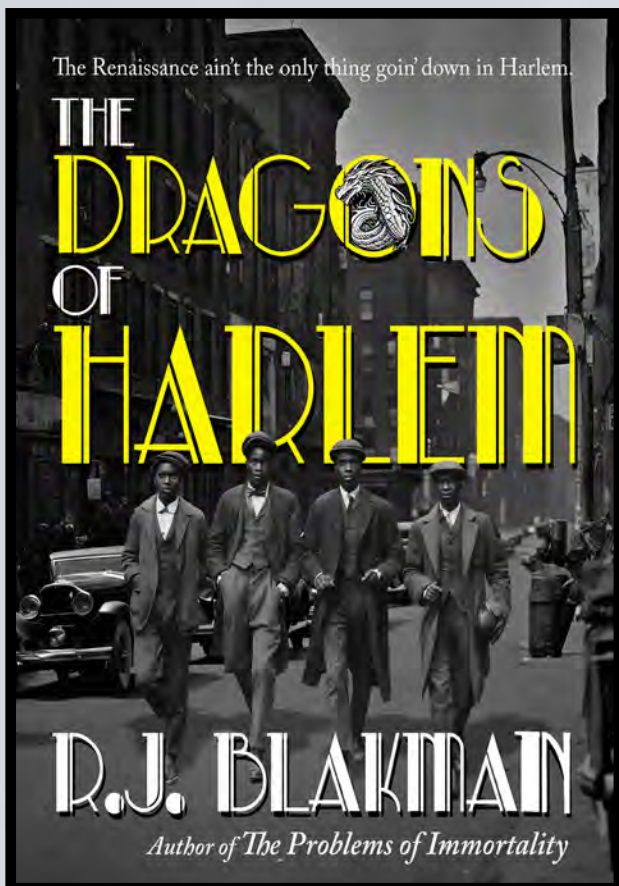
R. J. Blakman is a mystery writer, a writer of non-fiction and an all-around truth seeker. Blackman tries to look at things on a deeper level and whatever he finds, he tends to write about it with no sugar coating.

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](mailto: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!

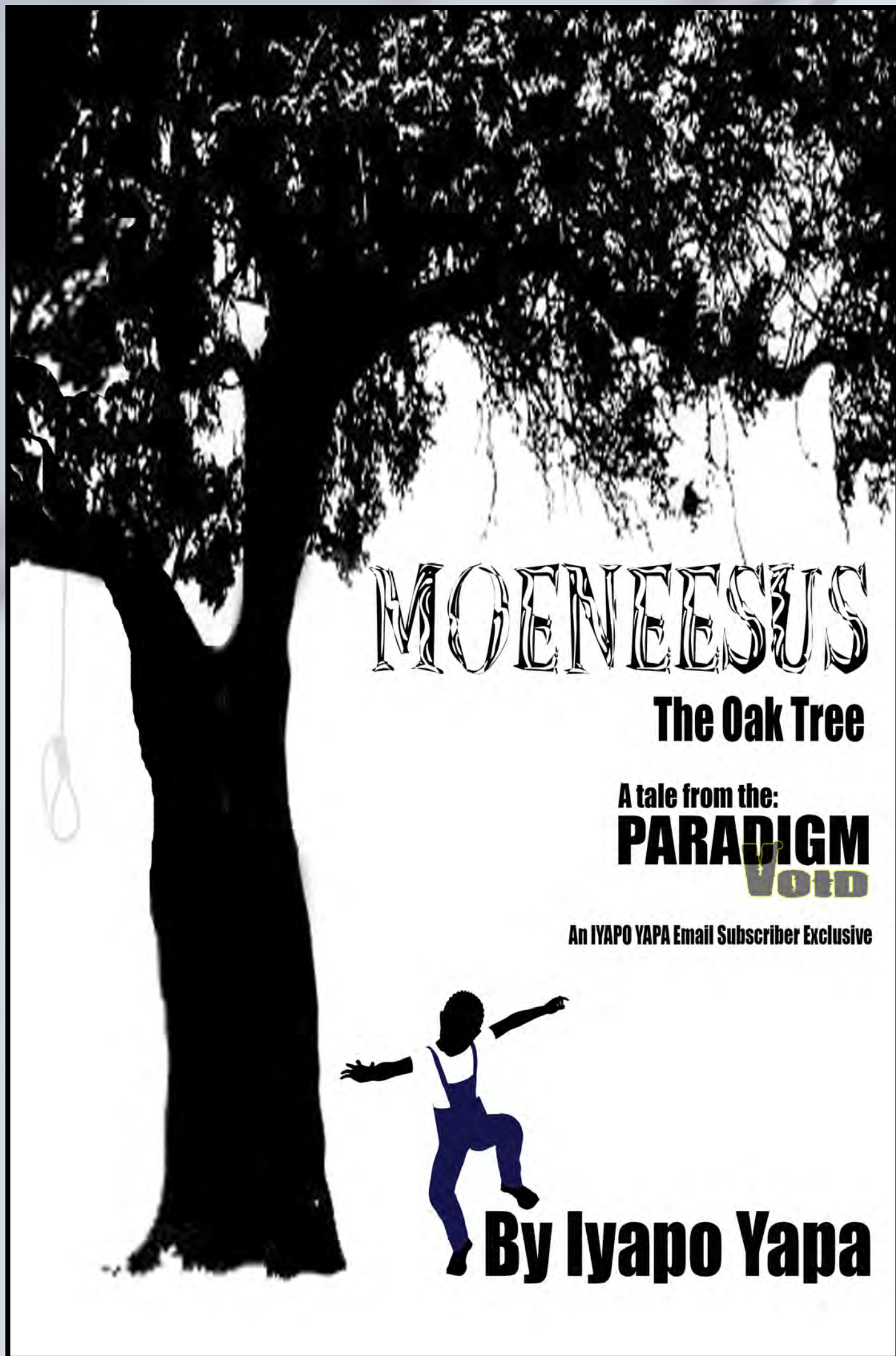
The image shows a screenshot of an Instagram profile for @iyapo, a cartoonist, illustrator, graphic artist, and author. The profile bio reads "Cartoonist, Illustrator, Graphic artist, Author". Below the bio, the posts are categorized as "Books and Writing by Iyapo Yapa". The grid contains four promotional cards:

- Top Card:** "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" with a cartoon character illustration.
- Second Card:** "What if becoming genetically and phenotypically Black was the only thing that could save your life?" with a quote from Brandon Massey and the book cover for "MELANIN: A NOVEL".
- Third Card:** "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." with the book cover for "AND WHAT OF THE CARGO? A NOVEL".
- Bottom Card:** "An anthology of short stories in the realm of Theoretical Ehon Fiction from time, space and suspense beyond imagination." with the book cover for "PARADIGM".

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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.

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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

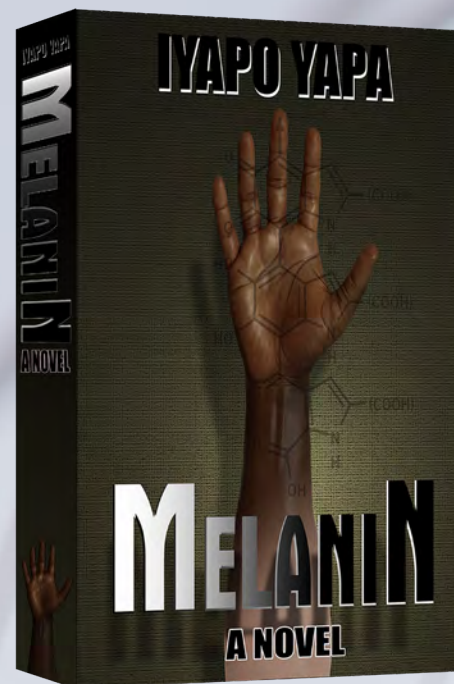
“Yapa weaves another story this time interwoven with historical references. I was on my seat with every chapter. I don't want to give it away but....revenge is sweet when served dead. And I can't get over how different each of his offerings are. Read his Vella's and you'll see what I mean. Another great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

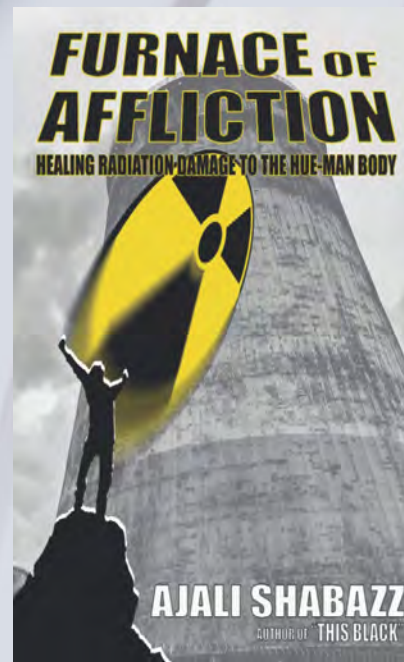
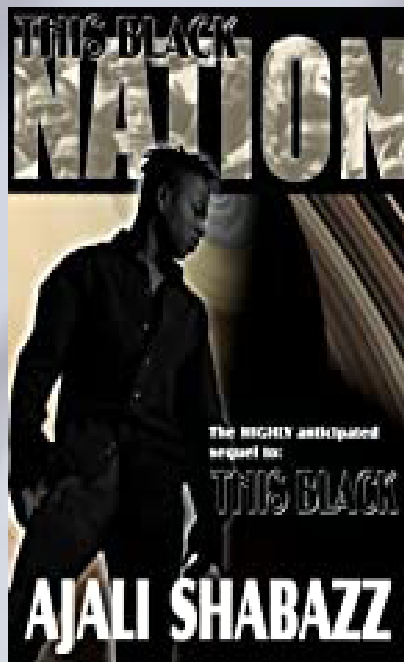
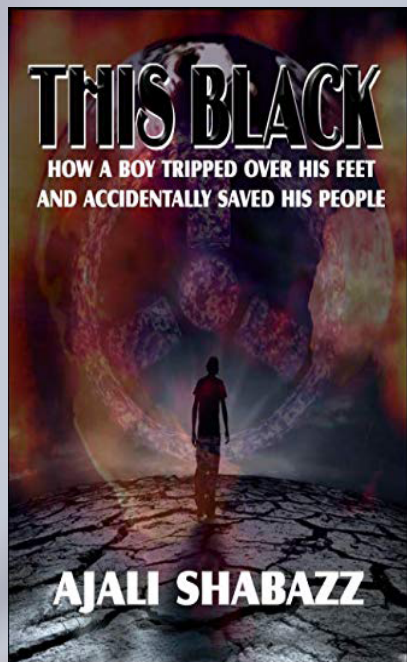
READING and WRITING in the

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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!**

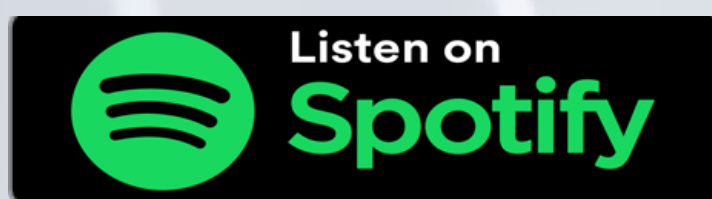
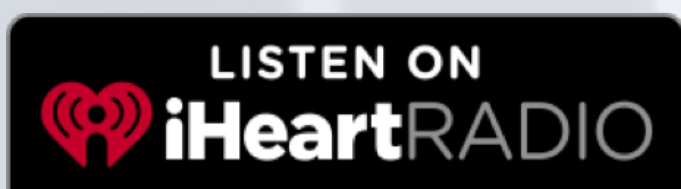
You don't want to miss this discussion with this new POWERFUL voice in PRO BLACK FICTION in the genre of Theoretical Ebon Fiction, and Non Fiction!

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!







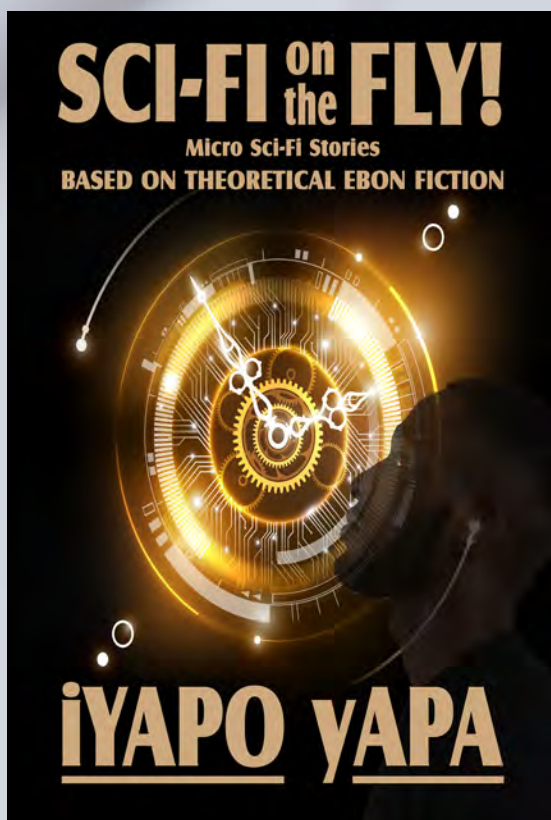
## Have You Checked Out My Blog Yet?

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.

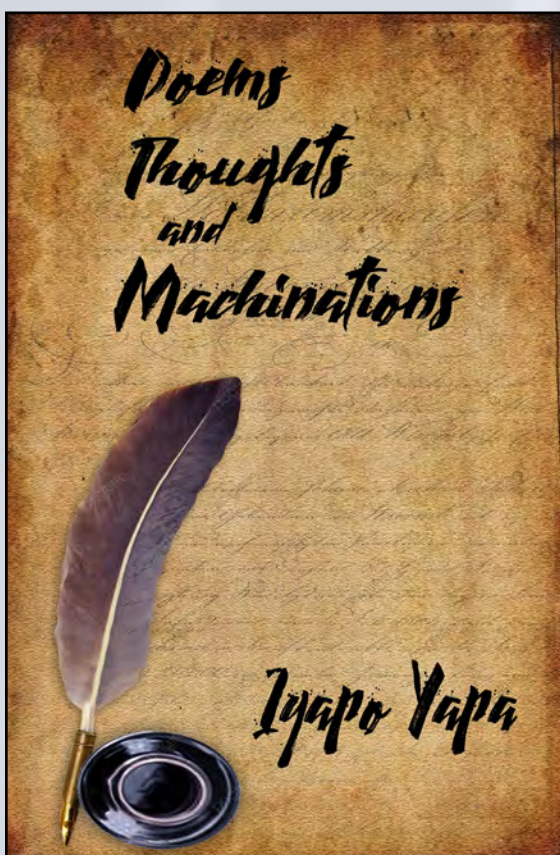
Got a few minutes or a good story? That's all you'll need.

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

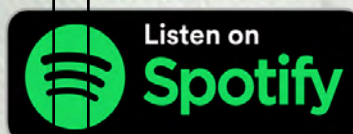
*A space for avid Black readers and Black authors*

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**

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## Alright, enough about ME!

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

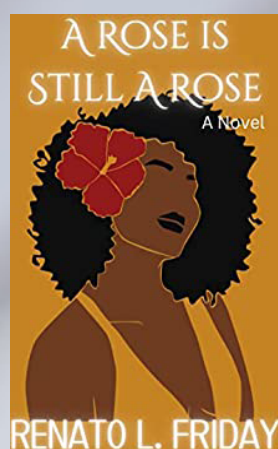


### **Affirming Self Love (Graphic Non-Fiction SERIES)**

angela riley

#### **SelfLOVE Meditation, Reflections, & AFFIRMATIONS Series...**

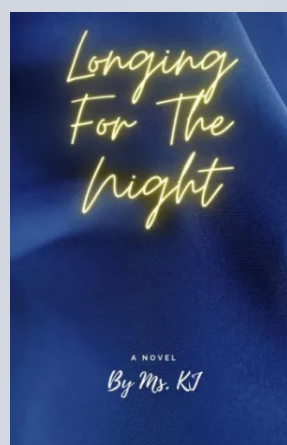
With a new book released each month, this “Graphic Nonfiction” series is filled with love for BlackUs. Each episode opens with a short essay exploring a theme such as “Following the Happy” or “Plan & Reflect” and culminates with a dynamic collection of affirmation. You’ll have a beautiful time meditating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



### **A Rose is Still a Rose**

Renato L. Friday

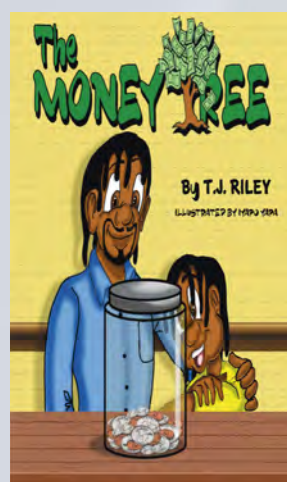
Rose thought life was going great: she was engaged, had a beautiful set of twin girls, a recent trade school graduate, and a new job right around the corner. Unfortunately, her fiancé, David, turned out to not be what she needed, and she chose to break things off. In the midst of her failing relationship,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

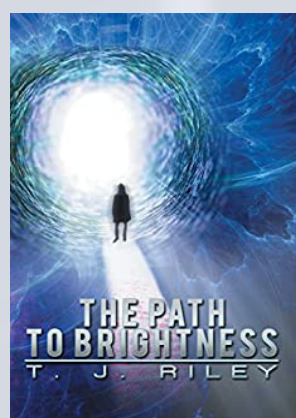
Inspired by the poem Goblin Market by Christina Rossetti, two young sisters face the trials and tribulations of the hood in this coming-of-age story about the harshness of living in South Central Los Angeles.



### **The Money Tree**

T.J. Riley / Illustrated by Iyapo Yapa

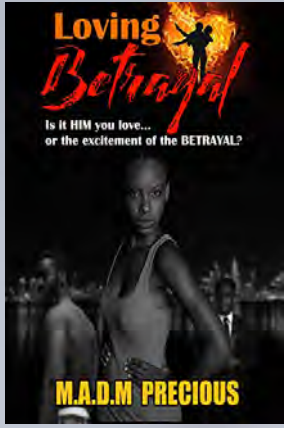
Every child wants money to buy something, right? Our hero does too. But, his father has a surprise, a Money Tree. Join the fun journey to find out how to grow your own money tree.



### **THE PATH to BRIGHTNESS**

T.J. Riley

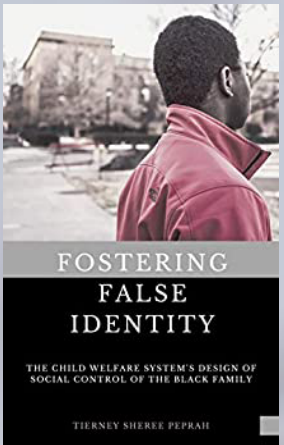
Fatima, a young woman, has a near-death experience. When she awakes from a coma and recovers, she has mystical powers. She begins to see auras and experiences life with her new abilities. For the clever character, Fatima, life is about to dramatically change. Follow Fatima's journey as she tries to convince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

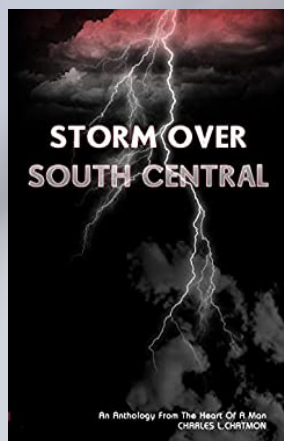
When Michelle met Michael, she thought that she found the love of her life. She was young and coming out of a bad marriage. A single parent of two children, she was scared, broke and had no self esteem. Michael seemed perfect, except for one little problem...



### 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.



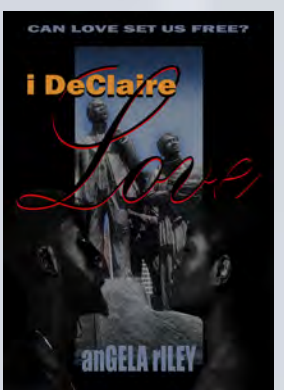
### RELAY

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!



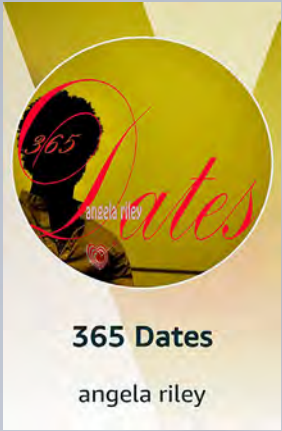
### The Love X TamuTamu Agency

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.

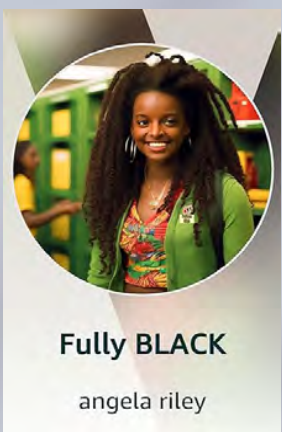
# READING and WRITING in the **DARIK**

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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.

[BACK TO CONTENTS](#)



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!

**UP**  
UNAPPROPRIATELY  
PROBLACK  
CERTIFIED

**FURTHER JOURNEYS INTO THE PARADIGM VOID**  
THEORETICAL EDGEM FICITION  
FROM TIME, SPACE, AND BEYOND IMAGINATION

I have always enjoyed SciFi and what is now called "speculative fiction", but missing from the genre was any real representation of our people within those landscapes. Certainly, there are the Octavia Butler, Stephen Barnes and Tananarive Due out there, as well as the Brandon Montoye's lovely horror and suspense, and now, new on the scene is April Shabazz and others. But still, our people have been woefully underrepresented in the genre. When we are present, we are listed in the category of "Minorities"—a category I have rejected. Why? Because just as with the much celebrated, fictional "Black Panther" the term was coined by a white man (Black Berry Home, exactly how did THAT happen?!). It is odd and disturbing to me that every other race seems to have the ability to control their own narrative and terms pertaining to them, but when BLACK people seek to do so, it's seen as some kind of a problem. That said, part of being Unapropriately Black, or PRO Black means that we seek our own terms and control of our own narrative, future and direction, thus, I use the term "THEORETICAL EDGEM FICITION" to describe much of my work.

**Books by IYAPO YAPA**

**MELANIN**  
A NOVEL

**PARADIGM VOID**  
SHORT STORY COLLECTION

**The Redemption of Maxine Allison**  
NOVELLA

**And What of the CARGO?**  
NOVEL

**INTERCEDERS**  
NOVEL

**FURTHER JOURNEYS INTO THE PARADIGM VOID**  
THEORETICAL EDGEM FICITION

**WE STORY A.R.**  
IMAGINE A WORLD...  
with the "LANIN" UNIVERSE

**Books by & ABOUT BLACK US!**

**in the works**

READING and WRITING in the  
**DARIK**

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Every three years the Hunter's Moon casts its warm mystical glow on one select person bestowing the power of time travel. After suffering a recent loss and living in a make-shift tent, Drew Boyd didn't have much hope for his future until he felt the warm glow of the Hunter's moon. Now he's on a journey, time shifting in and out of new adventures.

<https://buymeacoffee.com/ysbooks/the-hunter-moon-tales>

Unlock All My  
**AudioBooks**  
For the low price of a cup of coffee



READING and WRITING in the

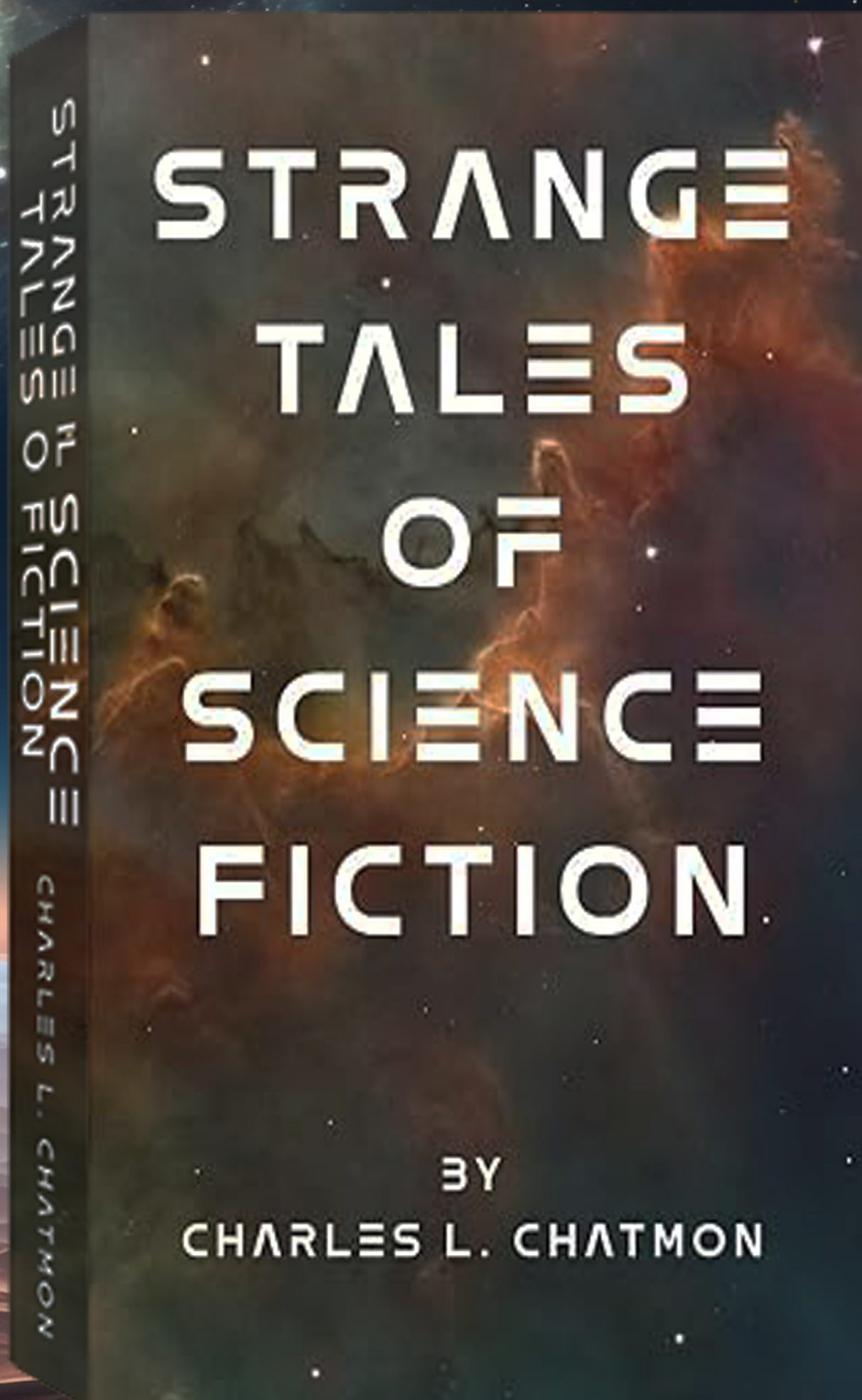
# DARIK

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**STRANGE TALES OF SCIENCE FICTION IS AVAILABLE NOW!**

In this anthology of weird tales of sci-fi, you will discover:

Who would have thought an alien species of warriors would have the fight of their lives against an army from earth? What's going on behind the walls of a movie studio that looks suspicious? Why are two highway patrol officers chasing after a stranger escorted by a couple up the California coast? What is up with a man who suddenly turns invisible and how it changes his world - plus, who are the men from a corporation chasing after him?



**CLICK ON THE BOOK ABOVE TO PURCHASE ON AMAZON!**

READING and WRITING in the

# DARIK

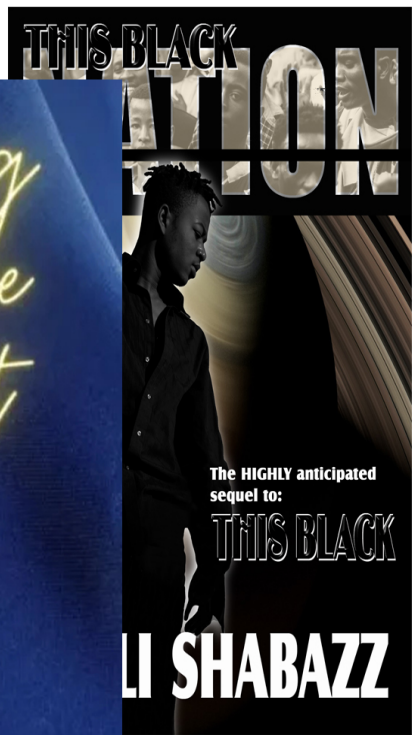
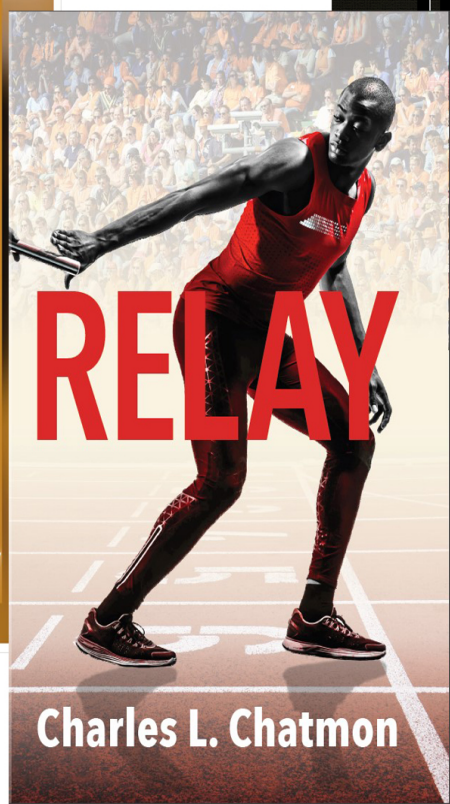
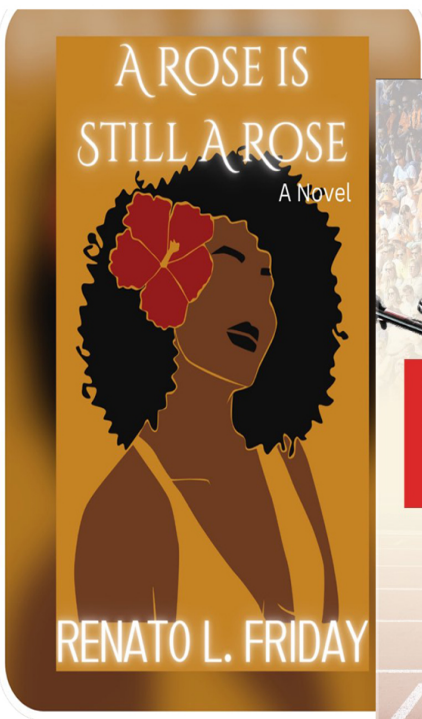
A space for avid Black readers and Black authors



In 2026 adventure gets a new name...and it's **BLACK!**



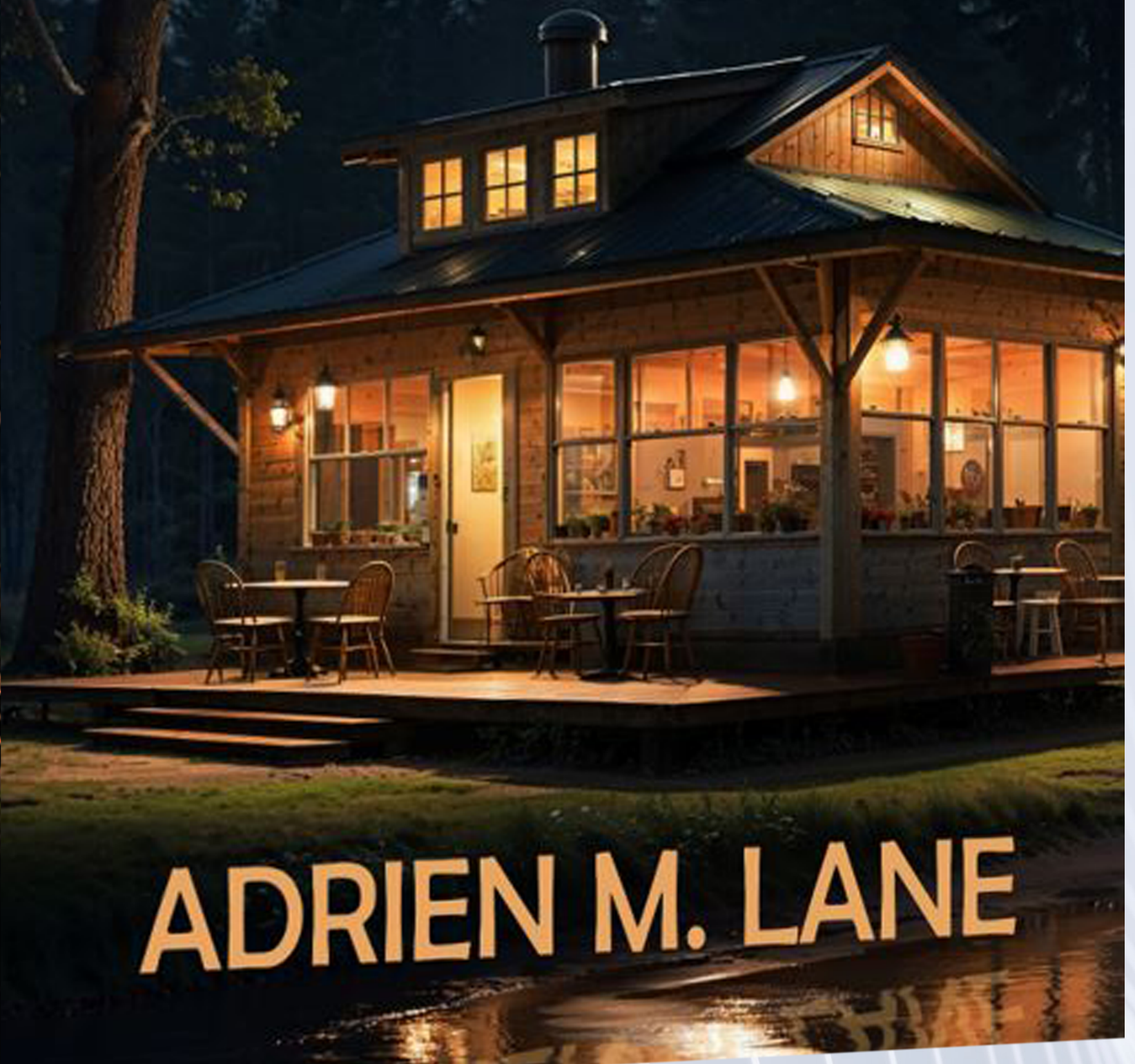
**YOUR JANUARY 2026 MAZE!**



# Coming Soon!

*The AH Collection*  
*Chand Hill's All Night Diner*  
DOEAI MEDIA PUBLISHING

## Chand Hill's ALL NIGHT DINER



### ADRIEN M. LANE



BE SURE TO VISIT IYAPO YAPA ON THESE OTHER PLATFORMS!