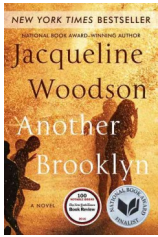


# Another Brooklyn



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The helplessness and friendships of childhood are topics that many writers have tackled. Fewer have written about African-American girlhood, as Woodson does here. The book centers on August, the intelligent young girl who leaves the lush south for the vibrant and dangerous streets of Bushwick, Brooklyn.

“For a long time my mother wasn’t dead yet.” This sentence opens the novel, which doesn’t proceed chronologically, but follows an inner lyric pulse. Throughout, the whereabouts of August’s missing mother haunt the story.

August’s family lived in Tennessee on a farm called SweetGrove land. It was inherited from her grandparents. After their uncle, Clyde, a Vietnam soldier dies, her mother begins to unravel. Soon, her father rushes north with August and her little brother to Brooklyn, his home town.

It’s summer--so for safety, August’s father locks her and her little brother, who is only five, inside their third-story apartment. They spend long summer days watching children play on the street: double-Dutch, stick ball games and splashing under open fire hydrants. A colorful parade of adults wearing dashikis and other colorful outfits weave past.

Soon, August sees and longs to interact with a trio of girls about her age: Sylvia, Gigi, and Angela. After a month or so, something terrible happens that results in their father giving August and her brother more freedom.

The four girls help each other through puberty and around a neighborhood where men often harass them. They put up a united front as their friendship becomes deeper and more intertwined.

One of the girls, Angela, also lives in a motherless household, but she is tight-lipped about where her mother is. August herself doesn’t accept what has happened to her mother, and never mentions her to her friends.

August’s father and her brother are deeply religious. Although members of a Muslim community, her father does not pressure August to wear a hijab and attend services. After a few years August’s father invites women home. August reaches out to two of her father’s girlfriends—they help fill the immense void that her mother has left.

The novel is rich in describing the waiting of childhood, waiting to grow up, waiting to make decisions for yourself, waiting to make your own mistakes. Woodson describes this well. She also brings to life the sexual awakening of young girls.

This “Brooklyn girl” novel is brief, poetic, and full of stories that linger in the mind after reading.

Posted by Dory L. on January 31, 2017

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