



Saint Monkey: A Novel

Jacinda Townsend

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"[A] compelling debut...Townsend's writing [is] full of fresh turns of phrase and keen insights."
?Anaya Mathis, *New York Times Book Review*

Fourteen-year-old Audrey Martin, with her Poindexter glasses and her head humming the 3/4 meter of gospel music, knows she'll never get out of Kentucky?but when her fingers touch the piano keys, the whole church trembles. Her best friend, Caroline, daydreams about Hollywood stardom, but both girls feel destined to languish in a slow-moving stopover town in Montgomery County.

That is, until chance intervenes and a booking agent offers Audrey a ticket to join the booming jazz scene in Harlem?an offer she can't resist, not even for Caroline. And in New York City the music never stops. Audrey flirts with love and takes the stage at the Apollo, with its fast-dancing crowds and blinding lights. But fortunes can turn fast in the city?young talent means tough competition, and for Audrey failure is always one step away. Meanwhile, Caroline sinks into the quiet anguish of a Black woman in a backwards country, where her ambitions and desires only slip further out of reach.

Jacinda Townsend's remarkable first novel is a coming-of-age story made at once gripping and poignant by the wild energy of the Jazz Era and the stark realities of segregation. Marrying musical prose with lyric vernacular, *Saint Monkey* delivers a stirring portrait of American storytelling and marks the appearance of an auspicious new voice in literary fiction.

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