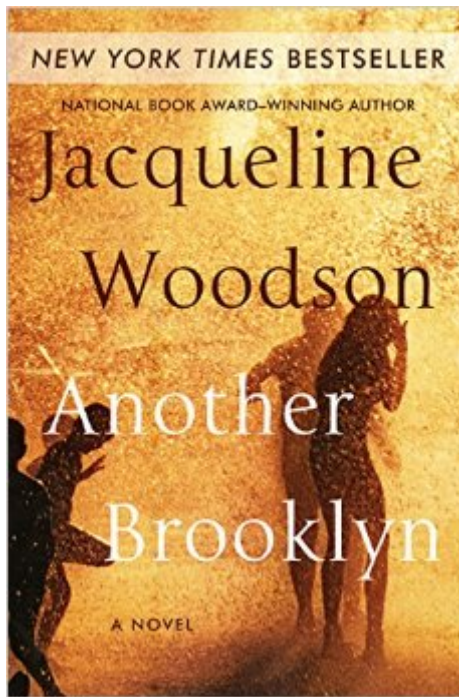


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Another Brooklyn: A Novel



Synopsis

New York Times Bestseller The acclaimed New York Times bestselling and National Book Award-winning author of *Brown Girl Dreaming* delivers her first adult novel in twenty years. Running into a long-ago friend sets memory from the 1970s in motion for August, transporting her to a time and a place where friendship was everything until it wasn't. For August and her girls, sharing confidences as they ambled through neighborhood streets, Brooklyn was a place where they believed that they were beautiful, talented, brilliant—a part of a future that belonged to them. But beneath the hopeful veneer, there was another Brooklyn, a dangerous place where grown men reached for innocent girls in dark hallways, where ghosts haunted the night, where mothers disappeared. A world where madness was just a sunset away and fathers found hope in religion. Like Louise Meriwether's *Daddy Was a Number Runner* and Dorothy Allison's *Bastard Out of Carolina*, Jacqueline Woodson's *Another Brooklyn* heartbreakingly illuminates the formative time when childhood gives way to adulthood—the promise and peril of growing up—and exquisitely renders a powerful, indelible, and fleeting friendship that united four young lives.

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Customer Reviews

ANOTHER BROOKLYN

Author Jacqueline Woodson

The opening lines of *ANOTHER BROOKLYN* For a long time, my mother wasn't dead yet. Mine could have been a more tragic story. My father could have given in to the bottle or the needle or a woman and left my brother and me to care for ourselves—or worse, in the care of New

York City Children's Services, where, my father said, there was seldom a happy ending. But this didn't happen. I know now that what is tragic isn't the moment. It is the memory. If we had had jazz, would we have survived differently? If we had known our story was a blues with a refrain running through it, would we have lifted our heads, said to each other, This is memory again and again until the living made sense? Where would we be now if we had known there was a melody to our madness? Because even though Sylvia, Angela, Gigi, and I came together like a jazz improv—half notes tentatively moving toward one another until the ensemble found its footing and the music felt like it had always been playing—we didn't have jazz to know this was who we were. We had the Top 40 music of the 1970s trying to tell our story. It never quite figured us out. The summer I turned fifteen, my father sent me to a woman he had found through his fellow Nation of Islam brothers. An educated sister, he said, who I could talk to. By then, I was barely speaking. Where words had once flowed easily, I was suddenly silent, breath snatched from me, replaced by a melancholy my family couldn't understand. Sister Sonja was a thin woman, her brown face all angles beneath a black hijab. So this is who the therapist became to me—the woman with the hijab, fingers tapered, dark eyes questioning. By then, maybe it was too late.

—Another Brooklyn— follows August as she remembers her tween and teen years in Brooklyn. Her father moved there from Tennessee when August was just eight years old. August and her younger brother used to people-watch from their apartment window. It's from there that she spotted the three girls, Sylvia, Angela and Gigi, who would become her close friends for the next eight years. August and her friends' lives are far from perfect. Yet they try to hold on to their dreams just as reality rears its ugly face on every street corner. Out in the world, they confront drugs, sexual predators, poverty, racism, prejudice, and violence while at home; they must deal with parental absence, whether it is physical or emotional. This is a story of female friendship that evolves and changes, bringing both joy and pain as the four girls transition into adulthood. The amazing thing about this book is how Jacqueline Woodson can pack so much in —Another Brooklyn— yet it has less than 200 pages. She may be economical with words, but she doesn't shortchange readers when it comes to delivering an emotional and thoughtful story of loss.

Before hip hop and rap defined inner city life, jazz was the best delineator. But the four girls coming of age in late '70's Brooklyn aren't familiar with jazz, and the top 40 really didn't get them. They

forge a protective union that doesn't protect them at all, and August (or Auggie as she calls herself later in life) manages to escape through academia. The other 3 also escape, but with consequences. This is a book that busts genres - is it an extended memory poem? An impressionistic novella of coming of age? Woodson is an award winning author, with many honors for her work as a YA author, but this, billed as an "adult" novel, could fit into that category as well as both a cautionary and comforting tale of haunting power. Lovely.

Exquisite! Such a beautifully written piece of work, that it felt like poetry, both in the flow and the content. It has an ethereal dreamy quality and is full of rich metaphors. I have been struggling with my review of this book, because whatever I seem to write doesn't really do the book justice. It is such a unique beautiful piece of writing. The story begins with August, the narrator, returning by train to visit her dying father. She catches a glimpse of Sylvia, a childhood friend and memories come flooding back to her. The ethereal quality of the book has in part to do with the fact that the narrator is looking way back on an earlier part of her life; in part that she is remembering her childhood, one in which she could not comprehend or accept the death of her mother; and thirdly the poetic quality to the writing. The idea that August thinks her mother will return and convinces her younger brother of the same, feels so honest, so real, so a part of how children really cope with the loss of a parent. Within the book, different cultural rites of death are mentioned reminding the reader that death is there, but not letting us know the actual circumstances of the mother's death until later. Once August arrives in Brooklyn with her father and brother, the father cages the children in the house worried about the dangers of the outside world. This backfires as her younger brother falls through the glass window injuring his arm in his attempts to watch the outside world. At this point, August and her brother are allowed outside to experience the world. August reminisces about her female friendships from this era in her life. She had developed a close-knit group of girlfriends who become her home, her family, and this allows her feel alive again, after feeling cooped up in their Brooklyn apartment. Together these girls feel stronger and braver. Their friendship gives them a sense of safety, of home, of togetherness that is lacking from their home environments. They grow into puberty together, date, experiment with sex. They confide in each other, things that they do not feel safe confiding to their own parents. August's mother's words about not trusting female friendships keep echoing back to her. "Don't trust women, my mother said to me. Even the ugly ones will take what you thought was yours." August learns how this can be true as the friendships begin to slip and in some cases fracture. However, for a time, the friendships are a beautiful thing and allow the girls to

feel powerful in a world where they are vulnerable, on account of being female, minorities and poor. This reflection is of Brooklyn in the 1970s in a neighborhood that is turning from white to black. While August finds comfort in her friendships, her father finds comfort in religion. It is a stunning look at this place and time period, the struggles these girls faced as they came of age and the hope and courage needed to face it. I highly recommend this to everyone.

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