



No Parachutes To Carry Me Home

By Maisha Z Johnson

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No Parachutes To Carry Me Home By Maisha Z Johnson

Maisha Z. Johnson's elegant meditation on human difference, *No Parachutes to Carry Me Home*, opens with an epigraph from June Jordan's *On the Black Family* -- we came and we come in a glory of darkness around the true reasons for sharing our dark and our beautiful name. As though in direct response to this testament, readers are introduced to the compassionate speaker of the opening poem *Sacrifices* who will guide us through the book and the life of its protagonist. This neighbor-- the book's witness-- describes the unsmiling stone face of an angel on her stoop and the anonymous sacrifices that are lit and left at the angel's feet. She concludes: i like to imagine these sacrifices as somebody's secret -- someone who spends his evenings making promises to his family. nights, asking my angel for the same. The narrator of *No Parachutes* is not a shadow spying from behind the curtains, but a woman who goes forth each day to imagine the suffering of others not so different from her own. We partake in one initiation after another, as she moves from the loss of a young girl's magic marble to her first sexual experience with another woman. Throughout there is a dialogical tension between external and internal reality which the speaker must true the way one true's the bubble in a level or the sharpness of a blade. i knew the answer to the true or false question, and i knew my answer-- the two were not the same. From mr. lowell's religion class, st. mary's high school And she knows that her answers are not without consequence: god sat at the edge of my desk, her gray dreadlocks dipped in ink black as my pupils There is a humorous counterpoint, a leitmotif that runs through the book, surely the voice of the superego reminding the narrator how she might be perceived by others. These poems are all titled the people say and the people say things like black girls don't do yoga. The people say black girls don't kiss dogs. Black girls don't have eating disorders. And yet we know, like the speaker in the poet's chosen epigraph by Gwendolyn Brooks from a song in the front yard, Maisha Z. Johnson will not be shaped by what the people say, nor will she be detoured by her own mistakes. She will move from the front yard, from the boredom of the beautiful, to the untended out back. I've stayed in the front yard all my life. I want a peek at the back Where it's rough and untended and hungry weed grows. A girl gets sick of a rose. Gwendolyn Brooks, a song in the front yard She will explore her parental homeland with nostalgia and curiosity. i wish this map would show where the queer girls go. in places of pretending those girls don't exist, they hold each other somewhere, perhaps in plain sight. A reader cannot help but love the narrator of this first powerful collection of poems as she enters one life, then another, from

Trinidad to Oakland, and approaches each with her great gifts of simple clarity , lyric beauty and humility-- me, carrying only my gentle breath beneath loose jeans and a baggy black sweatshirt. Sandra Alcosser, poet, A Fish to Feed All Hunger and Except by Nature

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No Parachutes To Carry Me Home By Maisha Z Johnson Bibliography

- Rank: #4041945 in Books
- Published on: 2015-06-29
- Original language: English
- Dimensions: 8.50" h x .27" w x 5.50" l,
- Binding: Paperback
- 106 pages

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Maisha Z. Johnson is writer and editor living in Oakland, CA. She has an MFA in Poetry from Pacific University and she studied creative writing at San Francisco State University. Maisha works at the intersections of creative arts, healing, and social change. She's also the author of *Through Your Own Words: 51 Writing Prompts for Healing and Self-Care*, as well as three poetry chapbooks: *Split Ears*, *Uprooted*, and *Queer As In*. Her work has been published in numerous journals, nominated twice for a Pushcart Prize, and won awards and competitions including Literary Death Match, The Lit Slam, and the Leo Litwak Award.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Bessie Barrett:

Why don't make it to be your habit? Right now, try to ready your time to do the important action, like looking for your favorite publication and reading a e-book. Beside you can solve your long lasting problem; you can add your knowledge by the e-book entitled *No Parachutes To Carry Me Home*. Try to make the book *No Parachutes To Carry Me Home* as your buddy. It means that it can to be your friend when you sense alone and beside that course make you smarter than in the past. Yeah, it is very fortunated for you personally. The book makes you more confidence because you can know almost everything by the book. So , we should make new experience in addition to knowledge with this book.

Lois Bottoms:

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Ronald Malone:

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