



Title: The Stars and the Blackness Between Them

Author: Junauda Petrus

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Age Range*: 14 and up

Grade Range: Gr 8 Up
(Recommended by School Library Journal)

BOOK RESUME: THE STARS AND THE BLACKNESS BETWEEN THEM

BOOK SYNOPSIS

Told in two distinct and irresistible voices, Junauda Petrus's bold and lyrical debut is the story of two black girls from very different backgrounds finding love and happiness in a world that seems determined to deny them both.

Port of Spain, Trinidad. Sixteen-year-old Audre is despondent, having just found out she's going to be sent to live in America with her father because her strictly religious mother caught her with her secret girlfriend, the pastor's daughter. Audre's grandmother Queenie (a former dancer who drives a white convertible Cadillac and who has a few secrets of her own) tries to reassure her granddaughter that she won't lose her roots, not even in some place called Minneapolis. "America have dey spirits too, believe me," she tells Audre.

Minneapolis, USA. Sixteen-year-old Mabel is lying on her bed, staring at the ceiling and trying to figure out why she feels the way she feels—about her ex Terrell, about her girl Jada and that moment they had in the woods, and about the vague feeling of illness that's plagued her all summer. Mabel's reverie is cut short when her father announces that his best friend and his just-arrived-from-Trinidad daughter are coming for dinner.

Mabel quickly falls hard for Audre and is determined to take care of her as she tries to navigate an American high school. But their romance takes a turn when test results reveal exactly why Mabel has been feeling low-key sick all summer and suddenly it's Audre who is caring for Mabel as she faces a deeply uncertain future.

REVIEWS AND PRAISE

★"Petrus provides compelling depth to both Audre and Mabel while conveying the powerful message that those we love on earth remain with us through a connection that can only be described as celestial. Striking an agile balance between humor and heartbreak, Petrus delivers an immersive queer romance set in a world much like our own but touched with the slightest tint of magic realism."—*Booklist*, starred review

Updated 3.28.2024

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*Publisher suggested age range covers the wide range of readers publishers envision using the book, whether for independent reading, family sharing, group study, or in other ways. Educators have the best sense of the appropriate range for their diverse learners they work with and understand these ranges vary depending on a book's intended use.

★Readers seeking a deep, uplifting love story will not be disappointed as the novel covers both flourishing feelings and bigger questions around belief and what happens when we face our own mortality. . . . A cosmically compelling read.”—*Kirkus*, starred review

★”Petrus’s earnest debut successfully, touchingly combines elements of fantasy, bittersweet realism, and potent, affecting spirituality to tell the coming-of-age story of two complex, beautifully drawn young black women whose friendship and love draw them together.”—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

“[T]here’s a delightful queering of narrative expectations in this thoroughly sex-positive debut novel from Petrus, and the trippy flair and lush intensity will have considerable appeal.” —*BCCB*

“Be ready to lose a day once you start reading; Mabel and Audre will draw you into their worlds and not release their grip on you even after the last page.”
—Teen Librarian Toolbox

“Fearless.”—*Teen Vogue*

“Like Toni Morrison, who redrew the narrative of black experience with novels set in Midwestern small towns, Petrus is redrawing a map, creating an Eden where Caribbean, black and LGBT culture can find beauty and lushness, spirituality, history and sustenance.”—*Minneapolis Star Tribune*

AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

- A Coretta Scott King Honor Book
- A *Kirkus Reviews* Best Book selection
- A YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults Top Ten Book
- An ALA Rainbow List Book selection
- A Minnesota Book Award Finalist
- A ILA-CBC Young Adults’ Choices List selection
- A Wisconsin Just One More Page! Selection
- A Read Brave Saint Paul selection

MEDIA AND RESOURCES

- [Discussion Guide](#)
- [MPR News: 'Nothing about my book that is anything but love': Mpls. author responds to Texas book list](#)
- [Refinery 29: How 3 Banned Book Authors are Managing Their Grief](#)

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