



Black Marks

Kirsten Dinnall Hoyte

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“In this wonderfully intelligent novel, Kirsten Dinnall Hoyte explores a young woman’s complicated struggle to come to terms with her fractured past. Full of vivid characters and lovely sensual details, *Black Marks* transports its readers effortlessly between the many worlds Georgette inhabits. A splendid debut.”

—Margot Livesey, author of *Banishing Verona*

“*Black Marks* is an absorbing, highly imagined, and beautifully written novel. Kirsten Dinnall Hoyte rewards her readers with a brilliant interweaving of stories that capture a young woman’s movement into and out of different worlds as she searches for identity and attempts to make sense of her life.” —William Julius Wilson, author of *The Declining Significance of Race*

Black Marks is the story of Georgette Collins, who wakes up one day in her early thirties to discover she had no past. Everyone has had the experience of not quite fitting in at some point in their lives, but Georgette has grown up in between worlds: black and white, gay and straight, wealthy and working class, West Indian and American.

Throughout, Georgette tries to piece together these fractured worlds from her grandmother's stories and her own fragmented memories, but she cannot make sense of her experiences. Each reinvention of herself is more disastrous than the last. Now, Georgette, an African-American librarian, is completely isolated; she is floating, unable to make connections with family, friends, and colleagues. Many mornings she wakes to find a man in her bed with no idea how he got there. Days are spent in a self-created bubble, which both protects her and separates her from others.

The narrative weaves back and forth in time, through Georgette's childhood in Jamaica to her teenage immersion in Boston and New York nightlife, and into the reclusive silence of her adulthood, of the library. The story's ambiguities remind the reader that there are not always easy answers for why one person may suffer, and neither are there always identifiable paths to recovery. Although depression and sadness play major roles in Georgette's life, her first-person voice is intelligent, funny, and capable of both warmth and irony.

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