

★ **The Maid and the Crocodile: A Novel in the World of Raybearer**

Jordan Ifueko

Amulet Books (Aug 13, 2024)

Hardcover \$19.99 (304pp)

978-1-4197-6435-6

In Jordan Ifueko's novel *The Maid and the Crocodile*, an orphaned girl fights to make a home for herself while contending with a cursed god.

In Oluwan, while trying to find employment as a maid, Sade accidentally binds herself to the Crocodile, a god rumored to eat unwanted girls and women brought to his doorstep. While dodging his charming overtures, she is hired as a curse eater by Mamadele at the Balogun Inn. There, she undertakes the unforgiving task of clearing spirit silt, the magical manifestation of people's hopes and disappointments. As she builds a home, Sade faces her past and the Crocodile's curse.

Narrating her own story, Sade is a remarkable heroine who often prefers to go unnoticed. Though she's self-effacing and humble, she has a clear voice. Her curse eating is powerful because of the beautiful, emotive songs that she improvises while cleaning. Honoring the erased but essential working class, Sade asserts her fulfillment in serving as a maid and enjoys laughter, friendship, and solidarity with other laborers and servants. She expresses understandable dismay at the discrimination she faces for her vitiligo and crushed foot but remains persistent against these projected limitations, mobilizing herself up and down stairs, across rooms and hallways, and around Oluwan.

Descriptions of cosmopolitan Oluwan place its bustle against a complex history of god-sanctioned leadership under Raybearers and Anointed Ones. There are real-world parallels to underaddressed systemic abuses, too, including child labor, class-based oppression, and violence against women. Social-climbing Mamadele is greedy and ruthless, using maternal warmth and threats to force Sade's gratitude and compliance. Each triumph that Sade, the Crocodile, and their allies experience is exhilarating and consequential.

A magical and imaginative novel, *The Maid and the Crocodile* embeds social commentary into its fantasy world, wherein a maid faces discrimination alongside the gods.

ISABELLA ZHOU (September / October 2024)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the publisher for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.