

The World So Wide

Zilla Jones

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A woman returns to her roots in Zilla Jones's entrancing historical novel *The World So Wide*, about lost love amid a revolution.

In 1983, Felicity—half Black, half white—is a renowned Canadian opera singer. Her success doesn't change her desire to join Claude, her former lover, who became deputy prime minister in Grenada's new regime after the Black Pearls of Freedom staged a coup. When she's invited to a showcase of Grenadian artists, she ends up under house arrest on the eve of yet another political takeover.

The fascinating, rearward-gazing exploration of how Felicity grew involved with the island nation's revolutionary movement focuses on her disappointments and musical ambitions. There are childhood memories in Winnipeg and reconciliations about her discovering her singing talent. She met Claude and his friends in London as an activist student. Throughout, her pain over never feeling like she belongs is sharpened by racism, colorism, and people underestimating her. Her barbs mask her self-doubts.

As she waits, Felicity excavates her regrets, as over betraying a lover. These give context to her later impulsivity and need to prove herself. Family strains further highlight Felicity's ambivalence as a second-generation daughter whose ties to Grenada differ from her mother's, but who nonetheless yearns to claim a place of her own—and carves one out in the realm of international opera. Felicity's powerful stage roles mirror her own ill-fated romances, allowing her to express through singing what she's unable to otherwise. As Grenada's political rifts meld with her broken relationships, she becomes resolved to infuse her art with her indelible experiences.

A celebrated singer contends with grief and homecoming in the candid historical novel *The World So Wide*.

KAREN RIGBY (March / April 2025)

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