



★ **We Are a Haunting**

Tyriek White

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In Tyriek White's elegiac novel *We Are a Haunting*, a son's inherited grief binds him to his mother and grandmother as he discovers how to define "home" in New York.

On the brink of expulsion from school in the 2000s, Colly is disillusioned. He's spent his life in public housing; he moves, only to find himself pulled toward his origins and sharing in the same supernatural gift his foremothers had. He absorbs the care of neighbors and friends in the wake of his father and sister's emotional drifts. He also sorts through memories of his mother, Key, a doula who died of cancer. She, like her own mother, Audrey, communed with the dead. In the late 1980s, she experienced visions of a stranger who committed suicide. Later, she channeled a woman who died in a fire and helped to birth a boy whom she knew would die.

The multivoiced novel develops each wounded person in terms of their connections to the city. Their stories are linked by rhapsodic longing; they diverge in the degrees to which their ancestral traumas mount. Audrey recounts lore in the South, which bred her stoicism, all while facing her family's simultaneous losses. Amid the weight of disrepair and hard choices, the cast finds ways to heal their rifts by bearing the stories of others, knowing that pain can be alleviated when it's shared. There are vigorous details from their lives that evoke deep understanding of their problems. And as Colly is tender in recalling Key in the midst of his own experiences; his bereavement is indelible, and it overlays the book's cityscapes, both rending and buoying him.

A Black family's history becomes a salve for its wandering son in the potent novel *We Are a Haunting*.

KAREN RIGBY (May / June 2023)

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