

## Everywhere You Don't Belong

### Gabriel Bump

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Gabriel Bump's *Everywhere You Don't Belong* is a spiraling coming-of-age tale about abandonment and perseverance that highlights the moments that made its lead—and some that nearly broke him.

A ridiculous opening fight between Claude's father and a neighborhood man sets the novel's tone. It also introduces the idiosyncrasies of his family in their South Shore Chicago home. After Claude's parents split up and, one after the other, abandon him, Claude lives with his maternal grandmother and her troubled friend, Paul. Bereft of his childhood friends, Claude feels like a misfit until he meets Janice.

But then police brutality ignites a riot that storms right past Claude's front door. Instead of being centered in the tragedy, Claude, his friends, and his family bear the rippling effects of having their homes destroyed, their innocence shattered, and of facing the devastating loss of a close acquaintance. Restlessness takes root inside of Claude, and he begins searching for a way out of his neighborhood.

Claude applies to college in secret, but life at the Missouri university he chooses proves disappointing. He becomes further disenchanted when he's tokenized at the student newspaper, *Prairie Executioner*. Tasked with combing through past issues for topics on diversity, he loses hope that the school has his interests in mind. When Janice shows up at his dorm, desperate and on the run, Claude has the push he needs to leave the school and his entire past behind.

Within the text, Claude's family dynamics are startling, presented in a way that sparks with originality. Direct, pithy sentences are packed with nuance, and the distinctive narration style is intriguing. The book invites pondering, particularly around the emphases placed on its constant speech tags.

The ripped from the headlines plot of *Everywhere You Don't Belong* draws instant interest.

TANISHA RULE (January / February 2020)

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