



Ghost Gun

CC Eck

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A young man reckons with racism, slavery, and his family's history of trauma in the revealing novel Ghost Gun.

In cc Eck's layered novel *Ghost Gun*, a mixed-race family grapples with the complexities of intergenerational trauma and mental illness.

Elijah is about to graduate from boarding school when he and his sister Natasha are taken to Mobile, Alabama, by their mother to see their dying grandfather. Meanwhile, Elijah's father Neil is hyperfocused on the apocalypse, using his significant capital and status to purchase an underground bunker. He also cheats on his wife, Zora, with multiple women. As Elijah gets to know his family members in Mobile, his anger about racism, slavery, and his family's history of trauma at the hands of white people becomes the catalyst for a psychotic break.

The narration is distinctive and immersive as it moves between perspectives. Elijah's sections are filled with slang and cursing, often written as if he is having an informal conversation with a friend: "And, yeah, I did just use *whomever*. Because that's the kind of shit we're taught at the kind of school I attend." Neil, a hedge fund manager, speaks in a more formal, matter-of-fact way, recounting details with detachment that highlights his emotional stuntedness. And Natasha muses that the characters and story of *Anna Karenina* feel similar to parts of her own life, reckoning with the lack of love in her life, a summer camp fling, and the emotional issues between her parents.

Still, although chapters are written from different perspectives, the bulk of the story is carried by Elijah. He is intelligent and perceptive, graduating from boarding school and heading to Yale while coming to terms with the systemic racism that Black people face in the United States, which continues to affect his family. His descent into severe mental illness is compelling, and his violent anger at historical injustices has undeniable logic, so that when he considers harming a young man who is the descendant of a KKK member, he remains sympathetic.

Indeed, where it focuses on Elijah's conflicting emotions and the balance he strikes between action and thought, the book is at its most dynamic. As it progresses, tensions escalate and all of the characters' motivations come into question, moving the book toward a high-stakes, energetic ending. Emotional closure and renewed possibilities also come through this resonant finale, in which people's final thoughts reflect their growth throughout the novel.

In the provocative novel *Ghost Gun*, a family with Black heritage reckons with generational trauma, mental illness, and historical injustices.

JENNIFER MAVEETY (May 5, 2026)

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