

## ★ **Parable of the Sower: A Graphic Novel Adaptation**

**Octavia E. Butler**

**Damian Duffy**

**John Jennings, Illustrator**

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Octavia E. Butler's classic science fiction novel *Parable of the Sower* has been adapted into graphic novel format by Damian Duffy and John Jennings.

In the bleak America of the 2020s, Lauren Oya Olamina, a young black woman, resides with her family in a gated California community that serves as a refuge from the violent, chaotic world outside. When the community's security is breached, Lauren's family is killed. She moves north with traveling companions to search for a better life. Faced with physical challenges and moral dilemmas, she develops and refines her philosophy/religion, Earthseed, and founds a new community based on its tenets.

Lauren is unique and complex, perhaps best shown by her "hyperempathy," through which she feels pain when those around her feel it. She's also an independent thinker, compiling a guide to her new belief system based on the ideas that "God is change" and the destiny of humanity is "to take root among the stars."

A multitude of meaty topics add depth. Lauren's world is dystopian, but not classically post-apocalyptic. Here, the drivers of civilization's demise are not exchanges of nuclear missiles, but the scarcity of natural resources and a kind of corporate wage slavery. Lauren's hyperempathy is the product of her mother's addiction to a drug, Paraceto, and her journey bears many similarities to the modern day experiences of immigrants fleeing war-torn countries. Earthseed is handled in a realistic and satisfying way; Lauren's companions challenge her with intelligent questions, forcing her to clarify her concepts.

Duffy and Jennings have done justice to Butler's work, losing none of the story's richness and adding an exciting visual element that makes the reading experience even more visceral and engrossing.

PETER DABBENE (January / February 2020)

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