



Wild Women and the Blues

Denny S. Bryce

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Immersive and exciting, Denny S. Bryce's novel *Wild Women and the Blues* is set between Chicago's 1920s jazz scene and a film student's present.

In the 1920s, nineteen-year-old Honoree dances as a chorus girl in a speakeasy. She's a far cry from where she wishes to be, though, so she jumps at the chance to audition at a deluxe nightclub. She nabs the job. While the city holds promises of success for her, it has a darker underbelly, and is run by ruthless racketeers and gangsters. In 2015, while working on a film project, Sawyer uncovers unsettling truths after interviewing now elderly Honoree.

The novel is brilliant at blending significant themes, including of racism, poverty, and criminality. The status of Black people in the Roaring Twenties, and in Sawyer's time, is covered, as is the limiting nature of depression. But this is also an entertaining story. It involves a murder mystery after a Black man is killed in a chilling manner; it includes a shifty romance between Honoree and a childhood friend.

Honoree is intriguing. Ambitious and strong-willed despite her difficult childhood, she is determined to achieve success. She draws inspiration from Josephine Baker and Florence Mills; despite her tough exterior, she is devoted to those she considers friends. She surrounds herself with memorable people, including Ezekiel, her enigmatic, loyal love interest. Exhilarating performance scenes honor the sights and sounds of 1920s Chicago, as do Honoree's exciting encounters with artistic notables, including Louis Armstrong and Oscar Micheaux.

A film student proves to be a persistent researcher, though his work forces him to face his own pain, in *Wild Women and the Blues*, a vibrant novel that gathers elements of Chicago's jazz past together.

EDITH WAIRIMU (March / April 2021)

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