

bad behavior mary gaitskill

Bad Behavior Mary Gaitskill: Exploring the Complexities of Desire and Morality

bad behavior mary gaitskill is more than just a phrase; it encapsulates the essence of Mary Gaitskill's acclaimed short story collection, **Bad Behavior**. This collection dives deep into the intricate and often uncomfortable territories of human desire, power dynamics, and emotional vulnerability. Gaitskill's writing is renowned for its raw honesty and unflinching portrayal of flawed characters navigating complicated relationships. For readers and critics alike, **Bad Behavior** stands as a seminal work that challenges conventional narratives about intimacy, morality, and personal boundaries.

The Essence of Bad Behavior in Mary Gaitskill's Work

Mary Gaitskill's **Bad Behavior** is not simply about characters acting out in socially unacceptable ways. Instead, it's a nuanced examination of how personal histories, emotional wounds, and societal pressures shape human behavior, often leading to what might be labeled as "bad." The stories delve into themes of loneliness, power imbalances, and the pursuit of connection, even when that pursuit leads to pain or self-destruction.

Understanding the Characters' Complexity

One of the most compelling aspects of **Bad Behavior** is Gaitskill's refusal to reduce her characters to stereotypes or villains. They are deeply human—flawed, contradictory, and often desperate. For example, the characters' actions may involve elements of manipulation, cruelty, or self-sabotage, but these behaviors are portrayed within the context of their emotional landscapes. This approach invites readers to empathize rather than judge, fostering a richer understanding of why people sometimes engage in "bad behavior."

The Role of Desire and Power

Desire is a central motif throughout **Bad Behavior**. Gaitskill explores how desire is not always pure or straightforward; it can be intertwined with pain, control, and a quest for validation. The power dynamics in her stories often appear in intimate relationships, where the lines between consent, coercion, and emotional need blur. This exploration adds layers of tension and moral ambiguity, prompting readers to reflect on the complexities of human connection.

The Impact of Mary Gaitskill's Writing Style on Portraying Bad Behavior

Gaitskill's prose is notable for its clarity and precision, which stands in stark contrast to the messy emotional content of her stories. This stylistic choice amplifies the emotional impact, making the characters' experiences feel immediate and visceral.

Raw and Unfiltered Dialogue

The dialogue in **Bad Behavior** is often stark and unvarnished, mirroring real conversations that can be awkward, painful, or brutally honest. This technique helps to dismantle romanticized notions of relationships and exposes the underlying tensions and vulnerabilities that define Gaitskill's characters.

Use of First-Person Narratives

Many stories in the collection use first-person narration, allowing readers intimate access to the narrator's thoughts and motivations. This perspective creates a sense of immediacy and personal involvement, making the characters' "bad behavior" more relatable and less alienating.

LSI Keywords and Related Themes in *Bad Behavior* Mary Gaitskill

When discussing **bad behavior mary gaitskill**, it's helpful to consider related themes and keywords that frequently arise in conversations about the collection. These include:

- Power dynamics in relationships
- Sexual desire and vulnerability
- Emotional trauma and recovery
- Human connection and isolation
- Consent and manipulation
- Flawed characters in literature

These themes reflect the multifaceted nature of Gaitskill's storytelling and underscore why

Bad Behavior continues to resonate with readers who seek depth and complexity in literary fiction.

Why Bad Behavior Mary Gaitskill Remains Relevant Today

In an era where conversations about consent, power, and emotional health are more prominent than ever, Mary Gaitskill's *Bad Behavior* offers a prescient look at how these issues manifest in everyday life. The stories challenge readers to confront uncomfortable truths about human nature and the ways in which people cope with their vulnerabilities.

Insights for Readers and Writers

For readers, *Bad Behavior* provides a mirror reflecting the messy realities of intimacy and identity. It encourages empathy for people whose actions might otherwise be dismissed or condemned. For writers, Gaitskill's work serves as a masterclass in character development and truthful storytelling—showing how to handle sensitive topics with care and nuance.

Impact on Contemporary Literature

Mary Gaitskill's influence extends beyond her own work. Contemporary authors often cite her as an inspiration for writing boldly about sexuality and emotional complexity. Her fearless exploration of "bad behavior" has paved the way for more honest and diverse narratives about human relationships in modern literature.

Tips for Approaching Bad Behavior Mary Gaitskill's Stories

If you're new to Mary Gaitskill's *Bad Behavior*, here are some tips to enrich your reading experience:

1. **Read with an open mind:** The stories can be provocative and challenging, but they reward readers who embrace their honesty.
2. **Focus on character psychology:** Pay attention to the motivations and emotional states driving the characters' actions.
3. **Reflect on the themes:** Consider how power, desire, and vulnerability interact throughout the collection.

4. **Don't shy away from discomfort:** The stories often make readers uncomfortable, but this discomfort is part of the intended impact.
5. **Engage in discussions:** Sharing interpretations with others can deepen your understanding of the complex issues raised.

These approaches can transform reading **Bad Behavior** from a simple literary exercise into a profound exploration of human nature.

Mary Gaitskill's **Bad Behavior** remains a seminal work that pushes boundaries and invites readers to examine the shadowy areas of desire and morality. Its enduring relevance and emotional depth continue to captivate and challenge audiences, marking it as a touchstone in contemporary literary fiction.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is 'Bad Behavior' by Mary Gaitskill about?

'Bad Behavior' is a collection of short stories by Mary Gaitskill that explores complex human relationships, desire, power dynamics, and emotional vulnerability.

When was 'Bad Behavior' by Mary Gaitskill first published?

'Bad Behavior' was first published in 1988.

What themes are commonly explored in Mary Gaitskill's 'Bad Behavior'?

The stories often delve into themes such as sexuality, power, intimacy, loneliness, and the darker aspects of human behavior.

How is Mary Gaitskill's writing style in 'Bad Behavior' described?

Mary Gaitskill's writing in 'Bad Behavior' is noted for its raw, candid, and psychologically insightful prose, often blending emotional intensity with sharp social observation.

Are the stories in 'Bad Behavior' interconnected or standalone?

The stories in 'Bad Behavior' are standalone but share common themes and a similar tone, creating a cohesive exploration of human behavior.

What impact did 'Bad Behavior' have on Mary Gaitskill's literary career?

'Bad Behavior' established Mary Gaitskill as a significant voice in contemporary literature, known for her unflinching portrayal of complex emotional and sexual relationships.

Is 'Bad Behavior' by Mary Gaitskill considered controversial?

Yes, some of the stories in 'Bad Behavior' were considered provocative due to their explicit exploration of sexuality and power, which challenged societal norms.

Which story in 'Bad Behavior' is the most famous or critically acclaimed?

The story 'Secretary' from 'Bad Behavior' is one of the most famous and was adapted into a well-known film, highlighting themes of BDSM and unconventional relationships.

How does 'Bad Behavior' reflect feminist perspectives?

'Bad Behavior' offers nuanced feminist insights by portraying female desire and agency in complex, sometimes transgressive ways, challenging traditional gender roles.

Where can I find 'Bad Behavior' by Mary Gaitskill to read?

'Bad Behavior' is available at most bookstores, online retailers, and public libraries. It can also be found as an e-book on platforms like Kindle and Apple Books.

Additional Resources

Bad Behavior Mary Gaitskill: An In-Depth Exploration of the Controversial Collection

bad behavior mary gaitskill stands as a compelling and provocative work in contemporary American literature. Published in 1988, this collection of short stories thrust Mary Gaitskill into the literary spotlight, showcasing her unflinching exploration of human desire, power dynamics, and emotional vulnerability. The title story, "Bad Behavior," alongside others in the collection, delves deeply into themes of sexuality, manipulation, and alienation, marking Gaitskill as a distinctive voice unafraid to confront the darker undercurrents of modern relationships.

This article aims to provide a thorough analysis of Bad Behavior by Mary Gaitskill, investigating its thematic complexity, stylistic nuances, and cultural significance. By examining the intricate character studies and the psychological realism embedded in the narratives, we uncover why this collection continues to resonate with readers and critics alike. Furthermore, this piece will contextualize Bad Behavior within the broader spectrum of late 20th-century American fiction, highlighting its influence and ongoing relevance.

Understanding the Thematic Core of Bad Behavior Mary Gaitskill

Mary Gaitskill's *Bad Behavior* is renowned for its candid portrayal of flawed characters navigating emotional and sexual landscapes fraught with ambiguity and tension. The collection's thematic core pivots around the exploration of "bad behavior"—a concept that transcends mere moral judgment to interrogate the complexities of human impulse and relational dysfunction.

Sexuality and Power Dynamics

One of the most salient themes in *Bad Behavior* Mary Gaitskill is the intricate interplay between sexuality and power. Gaitskill's stories do not shy away from depicting explicit sexual encounters, but these serve as more than mere titillation. Rather, they function as a lens through which the characters' vulnerabilities, desires, and need for control are examined.

For example, in the titular story "Bad Behavior," the protagonist, a writer, navigates a fraught relationship marked by emotional manipulation and sexual tension. Gaitskill's narrative style captures the oscillation between dominance and submission, highlighting how sexual interactions often mirror broader struggles for agency within personal relationships. This nuanced portrayal challenges traditional dichotomies of good versus bad behavior, instead presenting a more fluid and psychologically complex understanding.

Alienation and Emotional Isolation

Another critical theme running through *Bad Behavior* Mary Gaitskill is the pervasive sense of alienation experienced by her characters. Many of the stories feature protagonists grappling with loneliness, unable to forge meaningful connections despite their intense yearning for intimacy. This emotional isolation is frequently compounded by the characters' engagement in "bad behavior," which serves both as a symptom and cause of their estrangement.

Gaitskill's depiction of alienation resonates with readers who recognize the paradox of modern relationships—where proximity does not guarantee closeness, and where communication often fails to bridge emotional divides. The stories capture the struggle to reconcile inner desires with external realities, contributing to a broader commentary on contemporary human experience.

Stylistic Features and Literary Techniques

Mary Gaitskill's writing in *Bad Behavior* is marked by a distinctive style that blends raw emotional honesty with literary precision. Her prose is deliberate and evocative, often

employing a first-person narrative perspective to immerse readers in the intimate consciousness of her characters.

Language and Tone

The tone throughout *Bad Behavior* Mary Gaitskill is often stark and unvarnished, yet it maintains a lyrical quality that underscores the emotional intensity of the narratives. Gaitskill's dialogues are sharp and authentic, capturing the nuances of interpersonal communication and miscommunication. This linguistic approach enhances the realism of the stories, making the characters' experiences palpable and relatable.

Characterization and Psychological Depth

Gaitskill excels in creating complex, multifaceted characters who defy simplistic categorization. Her protagonists often embody contradictions—simultaneously strong and vulnerable, assertive and uncertain. This psychological depth is a hallmark of *Bad Behavior*, enabling the exploration of themes such as self-destructive tendencies and the search for identity.

Through detailed interior monologues and vivid scenes, Gaitskill invites readers to confront uncomfortable truths about human nature. The characters' "bad behavior" is not portrayed as inherently evil but as an expression of deeper emotional conflicts and survival mechanisms.

Contextualizing Bad Behavior in Contemporary Literature

When *Bad Behavior* Mary Gaitskill was published, it entered a literary landscape that was beginning to more openly explore sexuality and gender politics. Gaitskill's work contributed to a wave of feminist literature that challenged conventional narratives about women's experiences, particularly in relation to desire and agency.

Comparison with Contemporary Authors

Gaitskill's thematic focus and narrative style have often been compared to writers such as Joan Didion and Raymond Carver, who similarly dissected the complexities of American life with precision and subtlety. However, Gaitskill's explicit engagement with sexuality and power places her work in a unique position within this canon, bridging literary fiction and discussions around sexual politics.

Impact and Legacy

Bad Behavior Mary Gaitskill has influenced a generation of writers who seek to portray the intricacies of human relationships without resorting to idealization or moralizing. The collection's candid portrayal of marginalized voices and taboo subjects has paved the way for more open conversations in literature about desire, consent, and emotional trauma.

Moreover, Bad Behavior remains a touchstone in academic discourse, often cited in gender studies and psychological analyses due to its rich thematic material and innovative narrative techniques.

Pros and Cons of Bad Behavior Mary Gaitskill

To better appreciate the collection's strengths and limitations, it is useful to outline some of its key pros and cons:

- **Pros:**

- Unflinching exploration of complex human emotions and sexuality.
- Masterful character development with psychological realism.
- Evocative and precise prose that engages readers deeply.
- Contributes significantly to feminist and contemporary literary discourse.

- **Cons:**

- Explicit content may be challenging or uncomfortable for some readers.
- The sometimes bleak and raw portrayal of relationships might not appeal to those seeking uplifting narratives.
- Non-linear or fragmented storytelling in some stories can be demanding to follow.

Why Bad Behavior Mary Gaitskill Remains

Relevant Today

In an age where conversations around consent, power imbalance, and emotional health are increasingly prioritized, *Bad Behavior* Mary Gaitskill resonates with renewed urgency. The collection's nuanced treatment of sexual politics and personal vulnerability offers valuable insights into the ongoing dynamics that shape intimate relationships.

Furthermore, Gaitskill's refusal to sanitize her characters' imperfections invites readers to engage with literature that reflects the messy realities of life. This authenticity is perhaps the greatest strength of *Bad Behavior*, ensuring its continued relevance for contemporary audiences and future generations.

Through its examination of desire, control, and alienation, *Bad Behavior* Mary Gaitskill challenges readers to reconsider their assumptions about morality and human behavior, making it a vital work within both literary and cultural contexts.

[Bad Behavior Mary Gaitskill](#)

bad behavior mary gaitskill: [Bad Behavior](#) Mary Gaitskill, 2025-07-08 National Book Award finalist Mary Gaitskill's classic debut collection from the 1980s—powerful stories of dislocation, longing, and desire Now towering and inevitable in its influence on writing by and for young urbanites, *Bad Behavior* heralded Mary Gaitskill's arrival on the literary scene and her establishment as one of the sharpest writing talents of her time, or any time: exquisitely funny and startlingly honest; bold and eye-opening on relationships, sex, and the erotic. Set in Manhattan's Lower East Side and peopled with artistic freelancers and intelligent sex workers, smug yuppies and love-torn masochists, *Bad Behavior* depicts a world equally cruel and tender, where romance and danger go hand in hand. Gaitskill delivers unforgettable stories of a disenchanted and rebellious urban fringe generation groping for human connection.

bad behavior mary gaitskill: [Bad Behavior](#) Mary Gaitskill, 1988 This collection of nine stories by Avery Hopwood Award-winner Gaitskill marks the debut of a promising and provocative new voice. These are tales of sexual obsession, drug addiction, the darkest sides of human relationships. Several of the stories feature young women working as prostitutes. Gaitskill's characters possess a curious combination of wit and naivete. When asked about her career a character in *Connection* answers, I want to work at Dunkin' Donuts when I get out of school. I want to get fat. Or be addicted to heroin. I want to be a disaster. Gaitskill has a fresh and original ability to reproduce the rhythms of unhappy talk, from intellectual hookers to unfulfilled veterinarians. Her observations of the details are acute: A radio emits horribly optimistic fiddle music. On a New York street a character eyes with disaffection and contempt the neatly hatted and booted, dyed and moisturized strangers marching toward her. Comparisons to Tama Janowitz are inevitable, but Gaitskill's humor is more subtle and her writing has a precision and depth than can charge a dreary setting with significance. *Bad Behavior* is about bad behavior and more. Writing about human nature at its most perverse and hopeless, Gaitskill has created an intimate and almost beautiful series of images.

bad behavior mary gaitskill: [Mary Gaitskill's Bad Behavior: Bookmarked](#) Joanna Novak, 2022-10 In the latest volume in Ig's acclaimed *Bookmarked* series, award-winning author JoAnna Novak draws on the themes of Mary Gaitskill's *Bad Behavior* - power, desire, identification, and misidentification - to explore the sudden termination of a two-decade-long friendship and the blurred borders of artistic influence.

bad behavior mary gaitskill: Because They Wanted To Mary Gaitskill, 2012-03-13 A collection of startling and breathtaking stories about people struggling with the disparity between what they want and what they know. A New York Times Notable Book A man tells a story to a woman sitting beside him on a plane, little suspecting what it reveals about his capacity for cruelty and contempt. A callow runaway girl is stranded in a strange city with another woman's fractiously needy children. An uncomprehending father helplessly lashes out at the daughter he both loves and resents. In these raw, startling, and incandescently lovely stories, the author of *Veronica* yields twelve indelible portraits of people struggling with the disparity between what they want and what they know. *Because They Wanted To* is further evidence that Gaitskill is one of the fiercest, funniest, and most subversively compassionate writers at work today.

bad behavior mary gaitskill: *Veronica* Mary Gaitskill, 2005 The friendship between Alison, a young woman struggling with her ruined career as a fashion model, and Veronica, an older eccentric and proofreader, survives Alison's return to the world of fashion and Veronica's battle with AIDS.

bad behavior mary gaitskill: *This is Pleasure* Mary Gaitskill, 2019 This book originally appeared, in slightly different form, in *The New Yorker* (newyorker.com) on July 8, 2019--Copyright page.

bad behavior mary gaitskill: *Don't Cry* Mary Gaitskill, 2017-07-06 'An Old Virgin' describes a nurse's obsession with her forty-three-year-old patient's virginity; in the urban fable 'Mirrorball' a man steals a girl's soul during a one-night stand; 'College Town 1980' follows a group of listless young people adrift in Ann Arbor, debating the meaning of personal strength at the start of the Reagan era; 'Folk Song' opens with a list of newspaper headlines before dissecting the lives of the characters behind the features, including a murderer who gives a prime-time interview and a woman from San Francisco attempting to break a world record by having sex with one thousand men. Full of jagged, lived emotion, broken people and powerful, original writing, *Don't Cry* is a testament to Gaitskill's formal range and incomparable excavation of character.

bad behavior mary gaitskill: *Bad Behavior* Mary Gaitskill, 1988

bad behavior mary gaitskill: *Two Girls, Fat and Thin* Mary Gaitskill, 1991-02-27 Reissued to coincide with the paperback publication of *Because They Wanted To*, this captivating novel shimmers with dark intensity and wicked wit. In a stunning synthesis of eroticism, rage, pathos, and humor, Gaitskill's fine storyteller's pace and brilliant metaphors (*The New York Times Book Review*) create a haunting and unforgettable journey into the dark side of contemporary life and the deepest recesses of the soul. 336 pp. National print ads & publicity. Copyright © Libri GmbH. All rights reserved.

bad behavior mary gaitskill: *The Mare* Mary Gaitskill, 2015-11-03 Following her National Book Award-nominated *Veronica*, here is Mary Gaitskill's most poignant and powerful work yet—the story of a Dominican girl, the Anglo woman who introduces her to riding, and the horse who changes everything for her. Velveteen Vargas is eleven years old, a Fresh Air Fund kid from Brooklyn. Her host family is a couple in upstate New York: Ginger, a failed artist and shakily recovered alcoholic, and her academic husband, Paul, who wonder what it will mean to “make a difference” in such a contrived situation. Gaitskill illuminates their shifting relationship with Velvet over several years, as well as Velvet's encounter with the horses at the stable down the road—especially with an abused, unruly mare called Fugly Girl. With strong supporting characters—Velvet's abusive mother, an eccentric horse trainer, a charismatic older boy who awakens Velvet's nascent passion—*The Mare* traces Velvet's journey between the vital, violent world of the inner city and the world of the small-town stable. In Gaitskill's hands, the timeless story of a girl and a horse is joined with a timely story of people from different races and classes trying to meet one another honestly. *The Mare* is raw, heart-stirring, and original.

bad behavior mary gaitskill: *The Michigan Alumnus* , 1989 In v.1-8 the final number consists of the Commencement annual.

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extraordinarily diverse and vital body of fiction, particularly in the decades since World War II. Recent authors have benefited from the struggles of their predecessors, who broke through barriers that denied women opportunities for self-expression. This reference highlights American women writers who continue to build upon the formerly male-dominated canon. Included are alphabetically arranged entries for more than 60 American women writers of diverse ethnicity who wrote or published their most significant fiction after World War II. Each entry is written by an expert contributor and includes: ^L^DBLA brief biography ^L^DBLA discussion of major works and themes ^L^DBLA survey of the writer's critical reception ^L^DBLA bibliography of primary and secondary sources

bad behavior mary gaitskill: Surviving Sexploitation Sandra Stevens, 2018-08-07 Sandra Stevens's parents wanted their daughter to attend private Catholic schools they could not afford so her mother and father cooked up a scheme. They would buy a motel called The Morocco and rent rooms by the hour in order to pay their child's tuition. The unwholesome effects such an environment can have on a child - who, as an adult, would eventually succumb to the siren call of easy money - is the subject of *Surviving Sexploitation: The World's Shortest Memoir*. With a 'Prostitutes Are People Too!' message, Ms. Stevens offers a story of recovery, hope, and, ultimately, survival. We all have stories to tell. No matter how challenging the start, Sandra Stevens encourages all survivors of child abuse to let their voices rise above the din.

bad behavior mary gaitskill: Today I'm Yours Mary Gaitskill, 2015-05-24 A Vintage Shorts "Short Story Month" Selection It was the first autumn of the Iraq War, when Ella saw Dani again. "Today I'm Yours" is a story of seduction and layered memory, a love affair fifteen years past but not forgotten—from the author of the National Book Award nominated and National Book Critics Circle Award finalist *Veronica*. Mary Gaitskill is widely acclaimed as a caustically sharp observer of American culture high and low, of bodily temptations and sensual intelligence. A selection from Gaitskill's story collection, *Don't Cry*, a New York Times Notable Book. An eBook short.

bad behavior mary gaitskill: SEX AND ALL THAT Mary Scriver, 2014-02-25 Cultural arrangements for human relationships are heavily coded for sex identification, generatively, economics, disease, violence, families and war. So many new discoveries (birth control, Viagra, in vitro conception, mosaic genetics, surrogate mothers, equal pay for equal work, global population mixing plus edgy media influence and the shift from binaries to spectrums) that much needs to be rethought.

bad behavior mary gaitskill: Lost Cat Mary Gaitskill, 2020-07 'Last year I lost my cat Gattino. He was very young, at seven months barely an adolescent. He is probably dead but I don't know for certain.'

bad behavior mary gaitskill: A Study Guide for Mary Gaitskill's "Tiny, Smiling Daddy" Gale, Cengage Learning, A Study Guide for Mary Gaitskill's *Tiny, Smiling Daddy*, excerpted from Gale's acclaimed *Short Stories for Students*. This concise study guide includes plot summary; character analysis; author biography; study questions; historical context; suggestions for further reading; and much more. For any literature project, trust *Short Stories for Students* for all of your research needs.

bad behavior mary gaitskill: Spy, 1989-10 Smart. Funny. Fearless. It's pretty safe to say that *Spy* was the most influential magazine of the 1980s. It might have remade New York's cultural landscape; it definitely changed the whole tone of magazine journalism. It was cruel, brilliant, beautifully written and perfectly designed, and feared by all. There's no magazine I know of that's so continually referenced, held up as a benchmark, and whose demise is so lamented --Dave Eggers. It's a piece of garbage --Donald Trump.

bad behavior mary gaitskill: Men's Society Men's Society, 2018-05-08 In the complicated modern world, not every man is born with those necessary things he should know or have. Let the minds behind the successful Men's Society brand instruct you in everything about being a man that they forgot to teach you in school. With the Men's Society, you'll learn the skills that every man needs to impress those around him and stand out from a crowd. Whether you want to mix a martini,

build a campfire, or pack the perfect outfit for a weekend getaway, this collection of must-know skills will make you the impressive specimen that everyone wants to be around. Other skills taught in this book include: Basic knowledge of wine, beer, and liquor How to get what you want from a barber, and fix your hair and beard if you don't How to avoid, withstand, and cure a hangover How to deescalate a fight before it starts Important books, films, and musicians to know in order to impress a date Six things every man should do with his hands, including cook an omelet, build a fire, and more. The Live Well series from Rock Point invites you to create a life you love through multiple acts of self-discovery and reinvention. These encouraging gift books touch on fun yet hardworking self-improvement strategies, whether it's learning to value progress over perfection, taking time to meditate and slow down to literally smell the roses, or finding time to show gratitude and develop a personal mantra. From learning how to obtain more restful sleep and creating a healthy work/life balance to developing personal style and your own happy place, the Live Well series encourages you to live your best life. Other titles in the series include: Progress Over Perfection; Find Your Flow; Be Happy; Seeking Slow; Finding Gratitude; Eff This! Meditation; The Joy of Forest Bathing; Find Your Mantra; It Had to be You; Genius Jokes; The Calm and Cozy Book of Sleep; Beating Burnout; Ayurveda for Life; Choose Happy; and You Got This

bad behavior mary gaitskill: The Talented Ribkins Ladee Hubbard, 2018-08-07 Winner of the Rona Jaffe Foundation Writer's Award Winner of the William Faulkner, William Wisdom Prize An INDIE NEXT pick Hurston/Wright Legacy Award Nominee A family with superpowers stumble in their efforts to succeed in life in this "original and wildly inventive" novel about race, class, and politics—based on a W.E.B. Du Bois essay (Toni Morrison) At seventy-two, Johnny Ribkins shouldn't have such problems: He's got one week to come up with the money he stole from his mobster boss or it's curtains. What may or may not be useful to Johnny as he flees is that he comes from an African-American family that has been gifted with superpowers that are a bit, well, odd. Okay, very odd. For example, Johnny's father could see colors no one else could see. His brother could scale perfectly flat walls. His cousin belches fire. And Johnny himself can make precise maps of any space you name, whether he's been there or not. In the old days, the Ribkins family tried to apply their gifts to the civil rights effort, calling themselves The Justice Committee. But when their, eh, superpowers proved insufficient, the group fell apart. Out of frustration Johnny and his brother used their talents to stage a series of burglaries, each more daring than the last. Fast forward a couple decades and Johnny's on a race against the clock to dig up loot he's stashed all over Florida. His brother is gone, but he has an unexpected sidekick: his brother's daughter, Eloise, who has a special superpower of her own. Inspired by W. E. B. Du Bois's famous essay "The Talented Tenth" and fueled by Ladee Hubbard's marvelously original imagination, The Talented Ribkins is a big-hearted debut novel about race, class, politics, and the unique gifts that, while they may cause some problems from time to time, bind a family together.

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