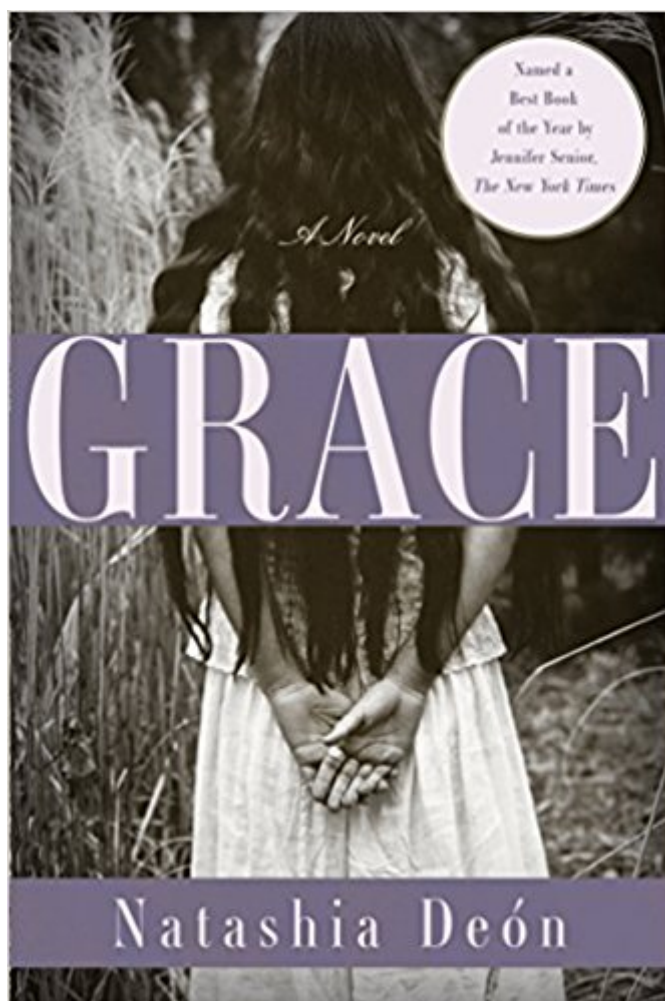


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Grace



Synopsis

Named a New York Times 2016 Best Book of the Year by critic Jennifer Senior. For a runaway slave in the 1840s south, life on the run can be just as dangerous as life under a sadistic Massa. That's what fifteen-year-old Naomi learns after she escapes the brutal confines of life on an Alabama plantation and takes refuge in a Georgia brothel run by a gun-toting Jewish madam named Cynthia. Amidst a revolving door of gamblers and prostitutes, Naomi falls into a love affair with a smooth-talking white man named Jeremy. The product of their union is Josey, whose white skin and blond hair mark her as different from the others on the plantation. Having been taken in as an infant by a free slave named Charles, Josey has never known her mother, who was murdered at her birth. Josey soon becomes caught in the tide of history when news of the Emancipation Proclamation reaches her and a day of supposed freedom turns into one of unfathomable violence that will define Josey's life and her lost mother's for years to come. Grace is a sweeping, intergenerational saga featuring a group of outcast women during one of the most compelling eras in American history. It is a universal story of freedom, love, and motherhood, told in a dazzling and original voice set against a rich and transporting historical backdrop.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

With her debut novel, *Grace*, Natasha DeFina has announced herself beautifully and distinctively. Her emotional range spans several octaves. She writes with her nerves, generating terrific suspense. And her style is so visual it plays tricks on the imagination; did I just watch that scene? Or did I read it? Ms. DeFina is not merely another new author to watch. She has

delivered something whole, and to be reckoned with, right now

Ms. Deon's real and rare ability to make reading a felt, almost physical experience of terror, rage, identification, sorrow. Ms. Deon is a graphic and unsparing storyteller. In Grace, Ms. Deon explores, with psychological acuity and absolutely no mercy, what the institution did to slave women; specifically, how it deprived them of the most basic chance to love, delight in and protect their own children.

New York Times, Jennifer Senior; [An] immersive tale; You'll believe every word. People; [A] haunting portrait of slavery, love and violence. Newsday; Put this one on your summer saga reading list. KQED Arts; This book is well worth any emotional turmoil it puts you through--especially at this particular moment in our country's history. PureWow, Book Club Pick; In vivid, haunting prose, Deon looks at one such line of women; mother, daughter, granddaughter; to tell the stories that must be told. A profound work of heart and grace. The Root; Deon's novel is timely; she captures the eerily familiar violence of the slavery era, and the ways in which the promises of the Emancipation Proclamation turn hollow. Lithub; "We are looking forward to Grace because it's a multigenerational story about strong women in one of the darkest eras of American history." Redbook; Gripping and deeply affecting, Grace is an examination of injustice, violence, love, legacies, and survival. BuzzFeed; Deon creates a world of perpetual sexual danger that feels authentic in a stomach-turning way; though not a historical text, her writing has an authority and truth that gets to the heart of the ugliness. It feels viscerally real. Grace features some of the most harrowing and vivid depictions of slavery that one is likely to encounter in any media; literature, film, television or anything in between; The ever-present fear of assault feels poignant, especially in a social climate more poised to address this kind of female oppression than arguably ever before in history. Grace's matter-of-factness about this threat of harm and the idea of control through sex feels a relevant now as it ever was. It seems that Deon, by shaping so much of her character's experiences by sexual threat, is making a statement about how women are forced to carry themselves in the modern world; Grace is a chilling, uniquely visual reminder of how wrong we've been, how wrong we continue to be, of the strength of those who fight against constant oppression. Spectrum Culture; In a summer filled with highly anticipated debuts, Natasha Deon's Civil War era novel, Grace, is among the most visceral and wrenching. A multi-generational story of black mothers and daughters surviving unspeakable

violence and degradation during the darkest period of our nation's history

history. [Coast Magazine](#); Initially what sets Grace apart is aesthetic: Naomi tells her own story, and witnesses Josey, as a ghost. What stuck with me about this novel, though, is its questioning of what redemption and justice would mean in this context. Naomi finds resolution, but this remains an unsettled and unsettling, literally haunted, debut. [The Globe and Mail](#); Stowe, Morrison and others have proven that the slave novel is the great American novel, and it's an exorcism of sorts. Add Natasha DeFina to this list, as once again it locates exquisite poetry in the realm of American racial sin. DeFina insists upon a racial reckoning, right here and now. She hears the jazz of American anguish, the agony of diminished chords and syncopated beats; she riffs on the pain of antebellum America with haunting lyricism and pulse-quickenning suspense. Hers is a stunning new voice in fiction, unstinting yet sentimental, and her story bleeds with immediacy and longing. Like James Baldwin, who insisted that artists must confess in order to tell the whole story; to vomit the anguish up, DeFina has come to bear witness . . . Reading Grace is a pungent reminder of our history, an immersion into betrayal and immorality, love and redemption. Like all great novels and Grace is very much a great novel; the story tantalizes us with all things possible, despite grim assessments and tragic tropes, because even the worst of history can still be told through the best of language. With language there is poetry, and where there is poetry, there is humanity. [Clyde Fitch Report](#); This is a violent but important story about mothers and daughters, and a dark chapter in American history. [Bookish](#), summer recommended read; A novel of subtle daggers; Grace is a spellbinding debut about race, the abiding bond between mother and child, and the tenebrous question of how the dead remain. [Ploughshares \(online\)](#), summer recommended read; Naomi's emotional narration of the captivating novel reminds us of the power of motherhood and the idea of freedom. [Elite Daily](#); If the expression of natural-born storyteller hasn't yet gone to the glue factory, then [this novel] take[s] the nag out for a fresh canter;. Still, once you settle into [this] novel, a sign takes shape overhead: Quiet Please. [People Reading](#); [R]ight from these first few pages, DeFina demonstrates a gift for terror by telegraph; overall the suspense doubles, marvelously. [Brooklyn Rail](#); Grace is a moving story about the bonds of mother and daughter in the most difficult of circumstances. [ReadHerLikeAnOpenBook](#); DeFina's powerful debut is a moving, mystical family saga . . . The book provides penetrating insight into how

confusing, violent, and treacherous life remained in the South after the Emancipation Proclamation, and how little life improved for freed slaves, even after the war. The omnipresences of Naomi's ghost renders the story wide-angled, vast, and magical. Deón is a writer of great talent, using lyrical language and convincing, unobtrusive dialect to build portraits of each tragic individual as the sprawling story moves to its redemptive end. Publishers Weekly, Boxed and Starred Review; There are moments of love in this harsh, affecting first novel, but the story mostly conveys the taking of personal freedom and human dignity. The presence of the apparition is fanciful, but it works well in bringing resolution to an imbalanced set of happenings. Library Journal; In her gripping debut novel, Deon, awarded a PEN Center USA Emerging Voices Fellowship, among other honors, dramatizes alliances formed by women in a violent place and time with adroit characterizations, a powerful narrative voice, and the propulsive plotting of a suspense novel; Deon stays in control of her complex material, from its clever parallel structure to the women's psychological reactions to relentless tension. Readers will ache for these strong characters and yearn for them to find freedom and peace. Booklist, Starred Review; [T]his is a brave story, necessary and poignant; it is a story that demands to be heard. This is the violent, terrifying world of the antebellum South, where African-American women were prey and their babies sold like livestock. This is the story of mothers and daughters; of violence, absence, love, and legacies. Deón's vivid imagery, deft characterization, and spellbinding language carry the reader through this suspenseful tale. A haunting, visceral novel that heralds the birth of a powerful new voice in American fiction. Kirkus, Starred Review; One of those rare novels so assured, so beautiful and so singular in voice that it almost seems besides the point to say it's a debut (and yet it is). Natasha Deón's Grace is a powerfully telling tale of two generations of women and those in their lives over a nation-defining period of American history. This is when slavery was fought for and ended on this very ground. This is also when tribulation and hardship did not just end because slavery finally did. The sparks of determination, resilience, aspiration, hope, and, grace (yes), all burn, even against great odds, helping light the way. Set 150 years and more ago, Grace carries resonance and meaning for us today. I can't wait to put this in readers' hands. Rick Simonson, Elliott Bay Book Company, Seattle; Natasha Deón's gorgeous debut is not only a piercing and unwavering exploration of slavery and its legacy, but also a fierce insistence that we honor and acknowledge the ghosts that haunt our America today. Like all important, classic books, Grace makes a story we think we know, the story of our country and its people, dazzling and new. This is not a book anyone is going to be able to put down; or

forget." #151; Dana Johnson, author of *Elsewhere*, California, nominee for the Hurston/Wright Legacy Award "The ghost narrator in *Grace* articulates how she feels when she falls in love: Filled. It is precisely how this flawlessly constructed novel will leave you. With muscular prose whose poetry is unforced, Deon lights a fire under the feet of her characters, women and men consumed by their fidelity to each other and untamed by their circumstances, who charge through history at the speed of thought. Deon makes the case anew that the facts of the past can only be understood by training an unflinching gaze upon the human beings who survived its horrors and proves on every page that only a consummate writer is equal to the task." #151; Ru Freeman, author of *A Disobedient Girl* and *On Sal Mal Lane*;#147; Natasha Deon "a superlative, gorgeously written debut grips you by the throat, exploring a teeming, post-Civil War world where the emancipation of slaves can be anything but freedom, violence is as casual as a cough, and love between a mother and a daughter can transcend even death. Scorchingly brilliant, this is one novel that already feels like a classic." #151; Caroline Leavitt, New York Times Bestselling author of *Is This Tomorrow* and *Pictures of You*;#147; People will compare this book to *Twelve Years a Slave*, *Cold Mountain*, and *Beloved*, and those are fair comparisons for the kind of time and place here, and the evocation of the south 150 years ago. But reading it, I thought of murder ballads, those songs of melancholy and injustice. Natasha Deon "a genius lies, in part, in writing a book that sustains a murder ballad "a intensity for hundreds of pages and gets into your bones like a song." #151; Rebecca Solnit, author of *Men Explain Things to Me* and *The Faraway Nearby*;#147; *Grace* is a swirling wild ride into the sheer terror of slavery and the aftermath, a deep travel into the inexhaustible spirit of survival of her characters, and an eye into fields and forests which remain unforgettable. The women and men in this novel transcend all notions of what we "ve read before, and their bravery is tempered with a melancholy so deep it remains long after the last page." #151; Susan Straight, author of *Between Heaven and Here*

Natasha Deon is the recipient of a PEN Center USA Emerging Voices Fellowship and has been awarded fellowships and residencies at Yale, Bread Loaf, Dickinson House in Belgium and the Virginia Center for Creative Arts. Named one of 2013 "s Most Fascinating People by L.A. Weekly, she has an MFA from UC Riverside and is the creator of the popular LA-based reading series *Dirty Laundry Lit*. Her stories and essays have appeared in *The Rumpus*, *The Rattling Wall*, *B O D Y*, *The Feminist Wire*, and *You: An Anthology of Second Person Essays*, among others. She has taught creative writing for Gettysburg College, PEN Center USA, and 826LA. A practicing

lawyer, she currently teaches law at Trinity Law School. Learn more at natashiadeon.com.

One of the best historical fiction books I have had the pleasure to read. Emotional, thought-provoking, tear jerker. A must read.

Give yourself a blessing. Read this book! The story is powerful, the writing is glorious and transcendent. It's the kind of story that will stay with me, popping up at odd moments. I haven't been this moved by a book in quite a while. The story simmered with underlying tension and fear. But, remember, the title is *Grace*, and there is much of that throughout, with an ending that births Hope. Just a few lines that touched me: "Hazel's my guide, my light in darkness, one of them start that like a handful of little moons were shrunk to pebbles, then flung to heavens where they sat." "Her skin is still smooth and it's charcoal black--a color only God could paint and make look right." "It's been said that justice is getting what you deserve. And mercy is not getting the bad you deserve. Grace is getting a good thing, even when you don't deserve it." "So, I don't know how many generations on American soil you got to live before you're called 'American,' or if English has to be your first language." "You cain't be black and angry and not be punished for it." "They wear their oranges and yellows and bright blue garments like they been saving up a rainbow since Africa." "His shoulder hang from hope removed, his once joyful face a blank expression." "Brittle sycamore leaves cartwheel across the yard in celebration." "I'm covered in sky. It passes over us in a baptism of colors: blues, whites, and the yellow sparkle of sunshine." "Her hair that was all pinned up this morning's been danced loose on the sides..." "It's been over four years since the end of the Civil War and the folks are still angry, Confederate flags still fly."

Amazing novel by a first-time author Natasha Deon. This is a sweeping epic about the relationships between women in the violent years leading up to and during the Civil War. The abuse, violence and tragedy inflicted on the female characters - and their reactions - have an unsettling familiarity about them. This powerful story is a reminder of all that has not changed - or changed enough - in the last 150 years. I want everyone to read this book - women and men - to give them insight to lives that they might otherwise never know or understand. Deon's story defies the stereotypes of Antebellum life and brings to life the impossible challenges for black women in the South. This book is the antidote to *Gone With the Wind*!

It's brilliant. The writing in this novel is astonishingly good. Natasha Deon, in my opinion, is in her

own category. The work is truly inventive on multiple levels. She does so much with the narrative voice, using metaphors and similes I've never seen before. They're unique to these people, and this world. And every voice is distinct. You know who's speaking without attributes. And beyond that accomplishment, the story is so deeply emotional and satisfying. And it feels so well researched. Certainly one of the most impressive debuts, if not THE most impressive I've ever read.

I highly anticipated this book. I tried so hard to win it on Goodreads, but no such luck. I bit the bullet and purchased it. Thankfully, used. It didn't meet my expectations even halfway. I see a lot of great reviews for it, and to each his or her own, but I don't think we read the same book! It's very hard to keep up with the storyline and who is doing what. I found it a very confusing read.

I'm half way through the book now and can barely stand to put it down.

This book became better with every page - until the very last one - where I sat stunned and moved to tears before I could even write this. Such a heart wrenching yet beautiful book. I don't think I have the words to do it justice - all I can say is read it.

I have not read a book this good in a long time. I want to sit down and read it all over again. I was hooked from the very first sentence. Not only is the story line interesting but Natasha's writing style is something to be admired. Her character's reflections are thought provoking and have left me mulling over their words for days. I have recommended this book to all my friends. Congratulations to Natasha Deon!

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