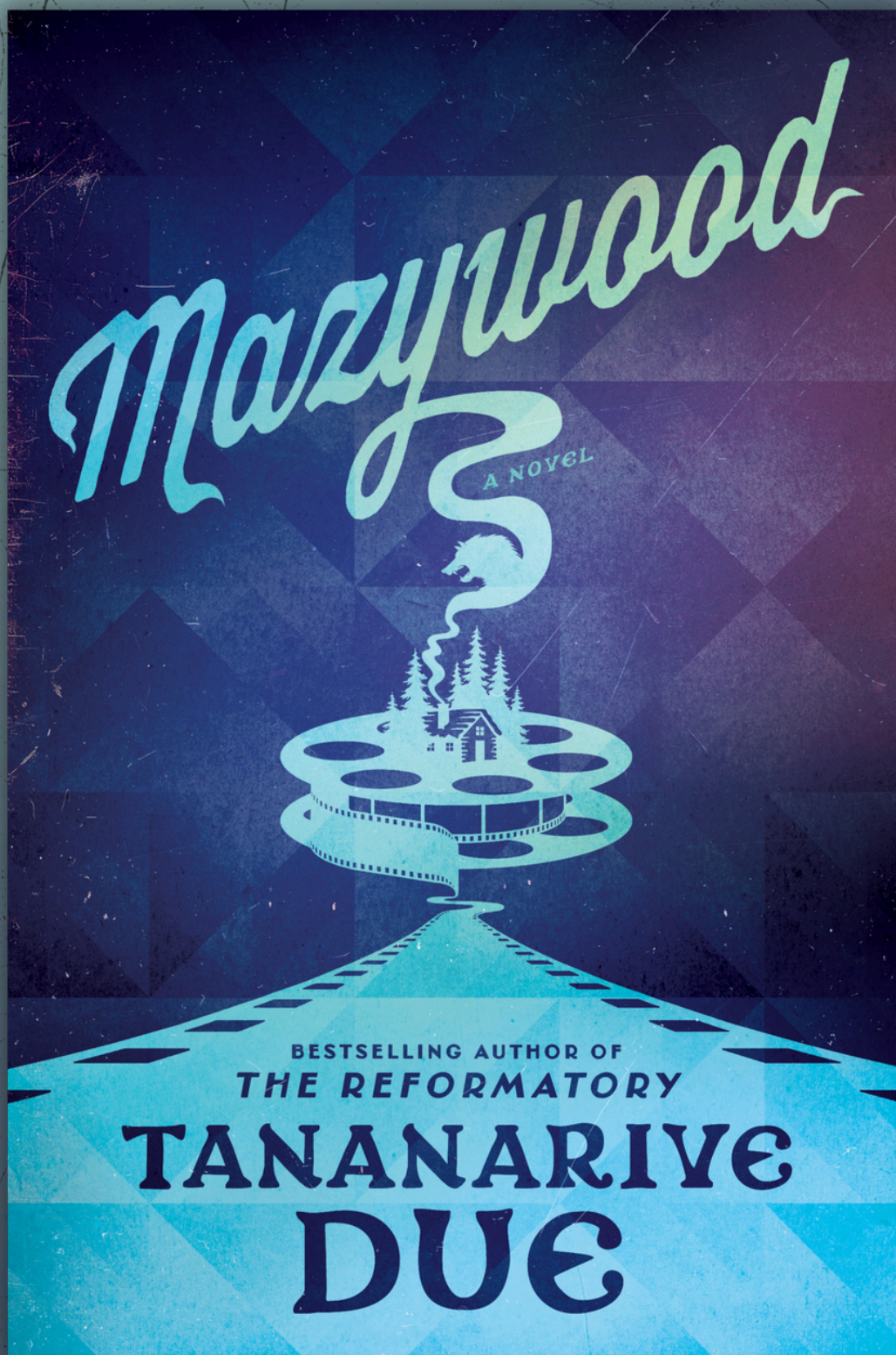




BOOK CLUB KIT

Dear Reader,

Mazywood came to me in pieces.

After pitching and working in Hollywood for more than twenty years with my husband and collaborator, Steven Barnes, we have written an episode of "The Twilight Zone" for Jordan Peele, episodes of the Horror Noire anthology movie on Shudder/AMC+, and we recently co-directed our first short film, *The Keeper*, adapted from a feature script that we also published as a graphic novel, illustrated by Marco Finnegan.

We have encountered racial barriers in New Hollywood, too. One executive asked after a pitch to adapt my novel *The Good House*, "Do the characters have to be Black?" Another executive started our meeting with the dismissive question: "Isn't Black Horror just a fad?"

These experiences inspired the character of Johnny Washington, a Black director trying to return to his own voice after making sacrifices for the sake of his career—similar to the way his grandmother made devastating sacrifices for the sake of hers.

After reading historian Donald Bogle's *Bright Boulevards, Bold Dreams: The Story of Black Hollywood* and other works, I fell in love with talented pioneers like Lena Horne, Dorothy Dandridge, Sammy Davis Jr. and Hattie McDaniel, who faced obstacles I can barely imagine today. What they experienced was a true horror story.

While *The Reformatory* begins with deprivation and terror that deepens as the story goes, *Mazywood* begins with the joy of a young Black girl, Mazelle Washington, becoming a Hollywood star. I had a blast writing scenes with classic stars like Charlie Chaplin, Clark Gable and Lena Horne—but the terror creeps in as she realizes what she is trading away for her fame.

In her rage and disappointment, she summons a creature that will terrorize even her own progeny for generations. And I love a good creature story!

I hope you will enjoy reading **Mazywood** as much as I enjoyed writing it.

Tananarive
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Author Instagram: @tananarivedue
#Mazywood



Photo ©Melissa Hibbert

AUTHOR Q&A

What inspired you to write this story?

Two things: I love survival horror in the wilderness and I love stories of Black entertainers in Old Hollywood. During the original COVID pandemic, I started watching survival reality shows wherever I could find them. I was fascinated by the idea of being forced to hunt for food, or build shelters, or make fire, and how difficult that lifestyle is when you're removed from the comforts of modern society. I will watch any horror movie set in the woods, or the snow, especially if there's a creature involved.

Secondly, I used to keep a copy of Donald Bogle's ***Bright Boulevards, Bold Dreams: The Story of Black Hollywood*** in my home library, and I got caught up in reading about Lena Horne and Dorothy Dandridge and these icons I admire so much but did not know much about. The juxtaposition between the outward glamour and their struggles against racism fascinates me. I consider every one of those stories to be a minor miracle.

These two seemingly unrelated interests came to a head when I was invited to write a short story for an anthology called ***Other Terrors: An Inclusive Anthology***, marginalized horror stories (edited by Vince A. Liaguno and Rena Mason), and I discovered Johnny's childhood encounter with his famous grandmother—and a mysterious creature—in a story called "Incident at Bear Creek Lodge," which won a World Fantasy Award. As sometimes happens with a short story, I didn't think the story was over. I still had questions about where that creature had come from, and how it had become such a family secret. I followed up with "Return to Bear Creek Lodge" in Ellen Datlow's ***Christmas and Other Terrors***. Also, during the recent WGA strike in Hollywood, my husband, Steven Barnes, and I wrote a contemporary survival horror script called *Bear Creek Lodge* that introduces Johnny as an adult and contains the seeds of the contemporary story. All of those inspirations combined later became ***Mazywood***.

In addition to being a novelist, you're also a screenwriter and now a director (with your short film *The Keeper* you co-wrote and co-directed with Steven Barnes). Did any true-life Hollywood experiences help inspire *Mazywood*?

Absolutely! The weird silences when executives don't want to answer a question directly and the discomfort with the topic of race were based on meetings I've attended. I was at a pitch meeting for my novel ***The Good House*** when the executive said, "Do the characters have to be Black?" And that's a fairly common attitude, even when no one will say it aloud. Oddly, it's easier for white writers and directors to cast Black actors in "color blind casting" than it is for Black creators to tell their own stories. And what feels like racism isn't always overt, which is why I intentionally made the microaggressions more subtle. Based on my own experiences after nearly thirty years of pitching and working in Hollywood, I definitely saw parallels between the obstacles Mazelle Washington faced and those that still remain.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Mazelle Washington is a complicated character. Do you see her as a victim or a villain? Or both?
- What does Scout represent in the story?
- What was the cause of Mazelle Washington's ultimate downfall?
- Should Johnny have done more to preserve his grandmother's legacy like his wife, Tasha, wants to?
- What could Mazelle Washington have done to save her career?
- What kind of future do you think will await Imani?

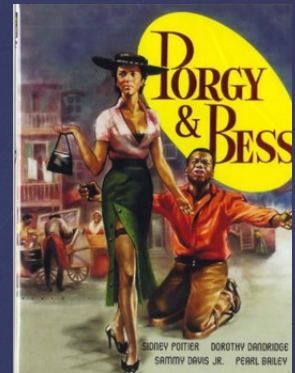
FURTHER READING:

- *The Queen of Sugar Hill: A Novel of Hattie McDaniel* (ReShonda Tate)
- *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies and Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films* (Donald Bogle)
- *Bright Boulevards, Bold Dreams: The Story of Black Hollywood* (Donald Bogle)
- *Hollywood Black* (Donald Bogle)
- *Dorothy Dandridge: A Biography* (Donald Bogle)
- *Lena Horne* (Donald Bogle)
- *Gonna Do Great Things: The Life of Sammy Davis, Jr.* (Gary Fishgall)
- *Hattie: The Life of Hattie McDaniel* (Carlton Jackson)
- *Oscar Micheaux: The Great and Only* (Patrick McMilligan)
- *Oscar Micheaux and His Circle* (Pearl Bowser, et al.)
- *Our Gang* (Julia Lee)
- *Richard E. Norman and Race Filmmaking* (Barbara Tepa Lupack)
- *Hattie McDaniel* (Jill Watts)
- *The Life and Work of Oscar Micheaux* (Earl James Young)
- *The Black Guy Dies First: Black Horror Cinema from Fodder to Oscar* (Robin R. Means Coleman & Mark H. Harris)

FURTHER WATCHING:

INDEPENDENT RACE FILMS (MADE FOR BLACK AUDIENCES):

- Within Our Gates (1920) Oscar Micheaux
- Body and Soul (1925) Oscar Micheaux
- Murder in Harlem (1935) Oscar Micheaux
- Birthright (1939) Oscar Micheaux
- The Flying Ace (1926) Richard E. Norman
- Harlem Rides the Range (1939) Richard C. Kahn
- Broken Strings (1940) Bernard B. Ray
- The Scar of Shame (1927) Frank Perugini
- The Blood of Jesus (1941) Spencer Williams
- Son of Ingagi (1940) Richard C. Kahn



HOLLYWOOD FILMS:

- Stormy Weather (1943)
- Carmen Jones (1954)
- Cabin in the Sky (1943)
- The Green Pastures (1936)
- Porgy and Bess (1959)
- Hallelujah (1929)



MAZYWOOD MOJITO

Ingredients:

5-6 mint leaves
2 ounces white rum (or substitute bourbon for a Kentucky mojito)
1 ounce fresh lime juice
½ ounce simple syrup
Ice
Sparkling water or club soda
Lime slices (garnish)



Directions:

- Lightly muddle the mint in the bottom of a cocktail shaker until aromatic; be careful not to break the mint leaves. Add rum or bourbon, lime juice, syrup and a bit of ice. Shake.
- Strain into a glass filled with ice. Finish with a splash of club soda and garnish with mint and lime slice.

BLOODY MAZY



Ingredients

1 1/2 oz Vodka
4 oz Tomato juice
1/4 oz Worcestershire sauce
1/4 oz Lemon juice
1/4 oz Lime juice
1/2 tsp Prepared horseradish
A few dashes of Tabasco
Celery salt and black pepper to taste

Directions:

- Fill a glass with ice. Combine ingredients in a separate pitcher and stir vigorously. Pour mixture into a glass and garnish with olive, a lemon wedge, and celery stalk.