



47th Street Black: A Novel

Bayo Ojikutu

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The prize-winning debut of an incendiary new voice in contemporary American fiction, **47th Street Black** is the story of JC and Mookie, whose rise in the gangster-driven ghettos of Chicago is as swift as it is brutal.

In the early sixties, 47th street is the heart of black Chicago, where recent migrants from the South come to move up in the world. JC and Mookie are high school dropouts, playing stickball in the street when they stumble upon the dead body of the area's black liaison to the mafia. Where others would run, Mookie sees opportunity, and in no time he and JC are working for Salvie, the local boss. Within a year, they are the most infamous figures on 47th Street, best friends and partners with flashy cars, clothes, and women.

As they alternate telling their stories, the balance of power shifts: smooth, charismatic Mookie becomes the de facto leader and small, violent JC the enforcer—roles that send JC to jail for a murder they commit together. In the 15 years he's away, JC gains an education and a resentment he can't control, while Mookie gains power over the entire South Side. By the time JC is paroled, both the neighborhood and the two men's lives are on an inexorable path to an explosive confrontation with simmering injustice.

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