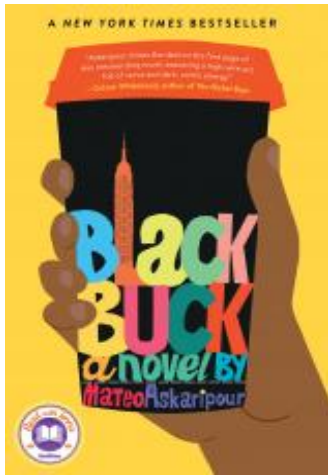


# Black Buck

by Mateo Askaripour

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## About the Book

**For fans of *Sorry to Bother You* and *The Wolf of Wall Street* --- a crackling, satirical debut novel about a young man given a shot at stardom as the lone Black salesman at a mysterious, cult-like and wildly successful startup where nothing is as it seems.**

*There?s nothing like a Black salesman on a mission.*

An unambitious 22-year-old, Darren lives in a Bed-Stuy brownstone with his mother, who wants nothing more than to see him live up to his potential as the valedictorian of Bronx Science. But Darren is content working at Starbucks in the lobby of a midtown office building, hanging out with his girlfriend, Soraya, and eating his mother?s home-cooked meals. All that changes when a chance encounter with Rhett Daniels, the silver-tongued CEO of Sumwun, NYC?s hottest tech startup, results in an exclusive invitation for Darren to join an elite sales team on the 36th floor.

After enduring a ?hell week? of training, Darren, the only Black person in the company, reimagines himself as ?Buck,? a ruthless salesman unrecognizable to his friends and family. But when things turn tragic at home and Buck feels he?s hit rock bottom, he begins to hatch a plan to help young people of color infiltrate America?s sales force, setting off a chain of events that forever changes the game.

BLACK BUCK is a hilarious, razor-sharp skewering of America?s workforce. It is a propulsive, crackling debut that explores ambition and race, and makes way for a necessary new vision of the American dream.

## Discussion Guide

1. Before you read *BLACK BUCK*, how did you define a salesperson? Now that you've read the book, has your definition changed? If so, how?
2. Discuss the author's note at the beginning of the novel and the tips addressed to the reader throughout. What do you make of Buck's advice? And why do you think Mateo Askaripour chose to structure the novel this way --- almost like a business memoir or sales manual?
3. When Darren reverse closes Rhett at Starbucks, everything changes (13?14). What does Rhett see in Darren in that moment? Why is Darren reluctant to accept Rhett's job offer to work at Sumwun? Have you ever been afraid to pursue a new opportunity in your own life?
4. Discuss Darren's relationship to Ma, Soraya and the "gargoyles" (Jason and Wally Cat), and how those relationships change when Darren begins working at Sumwun. How does his professional success impact his closest relationships? Have you seen anything similar happen to yourself, friends or loved ones?
5. What is the culture like at Sumwun? What are the various rituals and hierarchies? Discuss the way Darren ("Buck") is treated compared to his colleagues as well as the ways people at the top, like Rhett and Clyde, engage with race.
6. [Spoiler] How does Darren recalibrate after Ma dies? What harm does he cause to himself and others?
7. Discuss the media's relationship to Darren --- from his first TV appearance on "Rise and Shine, America" to Bonnie Sauren's coverage of him. What are the narratives they create for him, and how does he fight back?
8. In interviews, Askaripour has mentioned that he didn't set out to write a satire; in fact, it took him a little while to get on board with the idea that his novel could be, at once, earnest and satirical. Discuss what this means. In what ways is this novel satirical? In what ways is it earnest?
9. Discuss the origins of the Happy Campers and its quick success. What does Brian offer Darren, and vice versa? What did you make of the lessons that Darren put his early members through --- from the subway car entertainment to the dine and dash? What, if anything, did these scenarios teach Brian, Rose and the rest of the crew?
10. Discuss the criticism of the Happy Campers from the White United Society of Salespeople and the media. How do they try to thwart the Happy Campers' mission? Why do they feel threatened by the Happy Campers' success?
11. "The turns in this story are half absurd, half jaw-dropping, and a whole heaping of crazy" (305). What did you make of the big reveal that opens Part V? Did you see it coming, or was it a surprise?
12. [Spoiler] Darren hurt many people in his life, especially Mr. Rawlings, whom he never had the opportunity to apologize to. What do you think of the measures his grandson, Trey, took to exact revenge on Darren? Did Darren deserve it?
13. Discuss your feelings toward Darren, and how they might have changed, over the course of the novel. Despite his worst actions, do you think he's ultimately redeemed?

## Author Bio

*New York Times* bestselling author Mateo Askaripour wants people to feel seen. His first novel, **BLACK BUCK**, takes on racism in corporate America with humor and wit. Askaripour was chosen as one of *Entertainment Weekly*'s "10 rising stars to make waves," and **BLACK BUCK** was a "Read with Jenna" Today Show Book Club pick. Most recently, he was named as a recipient of the National Book Foundation's "5 Under 35" prize. **THIS GREAT HEMISPHERE** is his second novel. He lives in Brooklyn.

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