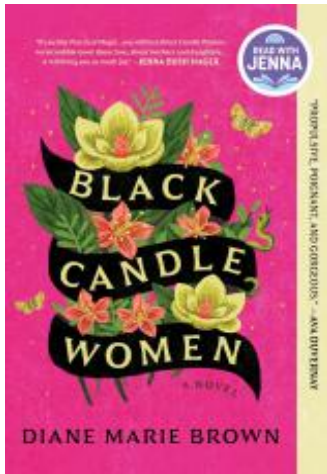


Black Candle Women

by Diane Marie Brown



About the Book

A warm and wry family drama with a magical twist about four generations of Black women, a family curse, and one very complicated year of heartache, miscommunication and learning to let go.

Generations of Montrose women --- Augusta, Victoria and Willow --- have lived together in their quaint two-story bungalow in California for years. They keep to themselves, never venture far from home, and their collection of tinctures and spells is an unspoken bond between them.

But when 17-year-old Nickie Montrose brings home a boy for the first time, their quiet lives are thrown into disarray. For the other women have been withholding a secret from Nickie that will end her relationship before it's even begun: the decades-old family curse that any person they fall in love with dies.

Their surprise guest forces each woman to reckon with her own past choices and mistakes. And as new truths about the curse emerge, the family is set on a collision course dating back to a Voodoo shop in 1950s New Orleans's French Quarter --- where a hidden story in a mysterious book may just hold the answers they seek in life and in love.

Discussion Guide

1. Victoria has structured her life in a way that supports her and her family's isolation. Did you understand why she chose to live that kind of life? If the household hadn't been shaken up by Nickie's interest in Felix, Madelyn's arrival and Willow's relationship with January, do you think Victoria would have been able to maintain this way of living forever? Why or why not?
2. Although Willow doesn't believe in the curse, she has still kept herself from being in a relationship, at least until she meets January. Why do you think she behaves this way? Why does she change her behavior when January comes into

her life?

3. After learning about Victoria's relationship with Jimmie, Augusta doesn't intervene. How would you have acted if you'd been in Augusta's position?
4. Like Augusta's mother, Victoria envisions a certain future for her daughter and tries to control her. What other patterns are passed on among the generations? Discuss how traditions and behaviors, both useful and harmful, can continue within families.
5. At several points in the story, there are four generations of Montrose women living in the same household. What impact does this living arrangement have on their lifestyles? Is it more of a hindrance or a help to have so many generations under one roof?
6. Why do you think **BLACK CANDLE WOMEN** was selected as the title for this book? How are the Montroses black candle women? Is Bela Nova also a black candle woman?
7. Which Montrose woman was your favorite? Why?
8. Discuss the family curse. Do you think Bela Nova was justified in cursing generations of Montrose women? Does your family have any superstitions?
9. The Montrose family documented much of their history in the book that originally belonged to Delilah. Why was Augusta willing to return it to Bela Nova with so much of their story inside? Is there an item that your own family passes down between generations? How does your family share and celebrate its history?

Author Bio

Diane Marie Brown is a professor at Orange Coast College and a public health professional for the Long Beach Health Department. She has a BA and MPH from UCLA and a degree in fiction from USC's Master of Professional Writing Program. She grew up in Stockton and now lives in Long Beach, California, with her husband, their four daughters and their dog, Brownie. **BLACK CANDLE WOMEN** is her debut novel.

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