

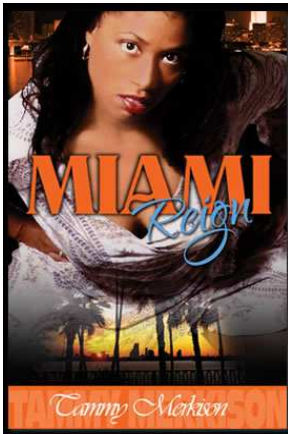
Average Girl

THE MAGAZINE

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Book Review

Miami Reign **By Tammy Merkison**



Miami Reign is the debut novel of Tammy Merkison, and I must say, it's a good read. Taken from real life drug stories from the 1980s in Miami, Merkison's central character, James "Blue" Jackson shows that sometimes even the best intentions go terribly wrong.

Like many young black men in the ghetto, Blue, named so because he's dark as night, grew up surrounded by drugs and violence. In fact, his father was killed when he tried to sell a bag of oregano masquerading as weed. Blue's older brother Willy decides early on after their father's death that drugs and violence would not be Blue's life, so "hustles" to get the money to send Blue to the best schools and all goes according to plan as Blue

lives the life of a high rolling criminal lawyer in New York, far away from his brother and strung out madre.

But when Willy's need to be a high roller leads him to steal money from the big boss' cookie jar, Blue's life is changed forever as he is forced to come to the rescue of his family.

From hot shot lawyer to drug lord, Blue learns that having it all is more costly than he ever dreamed. Merkison does a fantastic job of creating a character against the back drop of the drug world of Miami. Her ability to draw out the greed and thirst for power out of her characters is fascinating. One is not even sure if the love between Blue and his kick ass lady friend, Fran, can withstand the brutality of the reality of a world ruled by drugs and violence.

What I would have liked to have seen more of was a tighter ending. Like many works of fiction, the male character's character is salvaged but only at the expense of the reputation of the woman. Did Fran really lie about her pregnancy? Did she really have an affair on Blue? Why was her character used to create a new life for Blue?

In short, the ending left me hanging, but wanting more. I'd like to see a part two...of Fran's story. And that, Dear Reader, is the mark of a true writer: leaving the audience wanting more.

~July/August 2006 Issue, *Average Girl Magazine*; Rebekah L. Pierce; freelance writer and Editor in Chief. Visit www.averagegirlmagazine.com.