

# The Girl Who Fell From the Sky

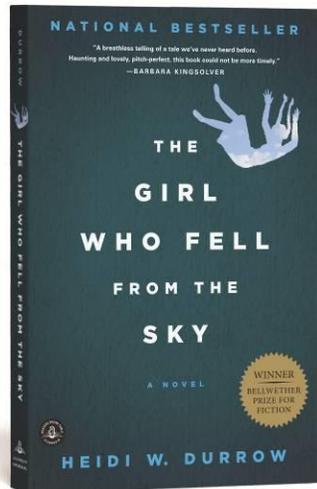
Winner of the Bellwether Prize for Fiction

By Heidi W. Durrow

"A breathless telling of a tale we've never heard before. Haunting and lovely, pitch-perfect, this book could not be more timely." - Barbara Kingsolver

"*The Girl Who Fell from the Sky* can actually fly . . . Its energy comes from its vividly realized characters, from how they perceive one another. Durrow has a terrific ear for dialogue, an ability to summon a wealth of hopes and fears in a single line."

—*New York Times Book Review*



"[An] affecting, exquisite debut novel . . . Durrow's powerful novel is poised to find a place among classic stories of the American experience."

—*Miami Herald*

"Durrow has written a story that is quite literally breathtaking. There were times when I found myself gasping out loud . . . I was pulled along each step of the way, wanting to know more."

—*Elle*

"An auspicious debut . . . [Durrow] has crafted a modern story about identity and survival."

—*Washington Post*

"A heartbreaking debut . . . Keeps the reader in thrall."

—*Boston Globe*

"Hauntingly beautiful prose . . . Exquisitely told . . . Rachel's tale has the potential of becoming seared in your memory."

—*Dallas Morning News*

"Like *Catcher in the Rye* or *To Kill a Mocking Bird* . . . A captivating tale that shouldn't be missed."

—*Denver Post*

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This debut novel tells the story of Rachel, the daughter of a Danish mother and a black G.I. who becomes the sole survivor of a family tragedy.

With her strict African American grandmother as her new guardian, Rachel moves to a mostly black community, where her light brown skin, blue eyes, and beauty bring mixed attention her way. Growing up in the 1980s, she learns to swallow her overwhelming grief and confronts her identity as a biracial young woman in a world that wants to see her as either black or white.

Meanwhile, a mystery unfolds, revealing the terrible truth about Rachel's last morning on a Chicago rooftop. Interwoven are the voices of Jamie, a neighborhood boy who witnessed the events, and Laronne, a friend of Rachel's mother. Inspired by a true story of a mother's twisted

love, *The Girl Who Fell from the Sky* reveals an unfathomable past and explores issues of identity at a time when many people are asking “Must race confine us and define us?”

In the tradition of Sandra Cisneros’s *House on Mango Street*, Jamaica Kincaid’s *Annie John* and Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*, here is a portrait of a young girl--and society’s ideas of race, class, and beauty. It is a winner of the *PEN/Bellwether Prize* for best fiction manuscript addressing issues of social justice.

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Heidi W. Durrow is the *New York Times* best-selling author of *The Girl Who Fell From the Sky* (Algonquin Books), which received writer Barbara Kingsolver’s 2008 *PEN/Bellwether Prize for Literature of Social Change*, and is already a book club favorite. *The Girl Who Fell From the Sky* has been hailed as one of the Best Novels of 2010 by the *Washington Post*, a Top 10 Book of 2010 by *The Oregonian*, a Top 10 Buzz Book of 2010 by the *Boston Herald* and named a Top 10 Debut of 2010 by *Booklist*. *The Girl Who Fell From the Sky* has been celebrated as a citywide read in Portland, OR and Laguna Beach, CA and as a campus-wide read at high schools and colleges nationwide. *Ebony Magazine* named Heidi as one of its Power 100 Leaders of 2010 along with writers Edwidge Danticat, and Malcolm Gladwell. In 2011, Heidi was nominated for a *NAACP Image Award* for Outstanding Literary Debut.

Heidi is a graduate of *Stanford*, *Columbia’s Graduate School of Journalism* and *Yale Law School*. Heidi has worked as a corporate attorney at *Cravath, Swaine & Moore*, and as a Life Skills trainer to professional athletes of the *National Football League* and *National Basketball Association*. She is a host of the award-winning weekly podcast *Mixed Chicks Chat*; and a founder and producer of the [Mixed Roots Film & Literary Festival](#), an annual free public event, that celebrates stories of the Mixed experience. She is an occasional essay contributor to *National Public Radio*.

She is also a sought-after public speaker who has spoken at *Brown*, *Exeter*, *Yale Law School* and many other universities nationwide and has also spoken at popular festivals, conferences and high schools on creativity, women’s empowerment, and multicultural and multiracial issues. She has been featured as an expert on multiracial and multicultural issues and identity by the *NBC Nightly News*, the [New York Times](#), [CNN](#), [National Public Radio](#), the *BBC*, *Ebony Magazine* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

She is the recipient of a Fellowship in Fiction from the *New York Foundation for the Arts*, a *Jerome Foundation Fellowship for Emerging Writers*, a *Jentel Foundation Residency*, and won top honors in the *Lorian Hemingway Short Story Competition* and the *Chapter One Fiction Contest*. She has received grants from the *Elizabeth George Foundation*, the *American Scandinavian Foundation*, the *Roth Endowment* and the *American Antiquarian Society*. She has also received Fellowships to the *Norman Mailer Writers’ Colony* and the *Bread Loaf Writer’s Conference*.

Heidi’s writing has appeared in *The Literary Review*, *Smokelong Quarterly*, *Callaloo*, *Poem/Memoir/Story*, the *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism*, *Ebony*, *Essence magazine*, the *Huffington Post* and *Newsday*. For more information visit: [www.heidiwdurrow.com](http://www.heidiwdurrow.com).