

How to Die in Paris: A Memoir

Naturi Thomas

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How to Die in Paris is an edgy, poetic, often darkly comic, memoir of a young middle-class black woman who escapes a tortured past in New York to pursue a new life in Europe—only to find herself broke, desperate, and contemplating suicide on the streets of Paris.

Penniless, scared, and hoping for rescue, Thomas turns to a series of unlikely male suitors: an impoverished Italian who exposes her to the reality of immigrant struggle, a fast-talking squatter who lures her into Paris's street youth culture, and a beautiful Tunisian who takes her home . . . only to introduce her to a world of pain. Each encounter awakens in her memories from her childhood—memories of the abuse and racism she experienced at the hands of her mother—and forces her to confront the darkness in her past, even as she struggles to survive in the present.

Though the trials she faces in Paris are often harrowing, Thomas is anything but self-pitying, often culling humor from gritty moments, and she finds goodness in the small blessings that come her way: a library that offers warmth and escape, a sandwich abandoned in a phone booth, the generosity of strangers, and especially, the wonder of Paris itself. Ultimately, being homeless in the City of Light frees her of the denial and defenses that have been holding her back all her life—revealing a broader world too beautiful to leave.



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