



## **OUTSIDE CHILD: A novel of murder and New Orleans**

### **Synopsis**

Meet Ladonis Washington, MBA, full of southern sass and a will-do attitude – a woman determined to realize her American dream despite growing up black and poor in New Orleans. As the protagonist of *Outside Child*, Ladonis must pit her upwardly-mobile ambitions against her poverty-stricken roots, as she also butts heads with her brother HeartTrouble, whose life remains trapped inside the bricks of the Magnolia Housing Project where they both lived as children.

Ladonis works in Public Relations at the Floating Palace Steamboat Company, owners and operators of America's only overnight paddle wheelers traveling today's rivers. When her friend and mentor, Tim Ganen, ends up in the blades of a Mississippi River paddle wheel, the company's CEO, Bret Collins, calls on Ladonis to persuade her hometown contacts to clamp down on the media coverage. The bad publicity could affect the outcome of the company's expansion plans. But Ladonis's immediate boss, Lamar Kasdan, VP of Public Relations, does not want his assistant to play that role – which confirms HeartTrouble's attitude about the chances for a black person to make it in New Orleans' white-run business world.

But, with the promise of advancement and an opportunity to showcase her talents if she delivers – and despite her doubts of Bret's sincerity – Ladonis reaches out to her friend, Monique, for help. Monique, a reporter for the city's most prestigious media outlet, is a Creole and a long-time rival of Ladonis. Considering her own career agenda, Monique refuses. Ladonis then sets out to thwart Monique's access to the story as well as find out what happened to Tim and stumbles onto a hotbed of criminal activity.

The only person who can help her get out of this mess is her streetwise, criminal-savvy brother, HeartTrouble, a small-time, con artist, familiar with the city's underbelly. She coerces him into the fray and the sleuthing siblings slip into a world of corruption on the other side of the tracks. Together they face death while battling their rivalry and soul-wrenching inner conflicts – Ladonis and her search for common ground inside both of her worlds; HeartTrouble's need to connect to the best part of his world.

In the end, they solve the crime...but will the city's tentacles ensare them again? The answer to that question will be found in the next two installments of Ladonis' story which follows her through Hurricane Katrina and the devastation after it.

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