



An Untamed State

By Roxane Gay

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An Untamed State By Roxane Gay

“Once you start this book, you will not be able to put it down. *An Untamed State* is a novel of hope intermingled with fear, a book about possibilities mixed with horror and despair. It is written at a pace that will match your racing heart, and while you find yourself shocked, amazed, devastated, you also dare to hope for the best, for all involved.”—Edwidge Danticat, author of *Breath, Eyes, Memory* and *The Dew Breaker*

Roxane Gay is a powerful new literary voice whose short stories and essays have already earned her an enthusiastic audience. In *An Untamed State*, she delivers an assured debut about a woman kidnapped for ransom, her captivity as her father refuses to pay and her husband fights for her release over thirteen days, and her struggle to come to terms with the ordeal in its aftermath.

Mireille Duval Jameson is living a fairy tale. The strong-willed youngest daughter of one of Haiti’s richest sons, she has an adoring husband, a precocious infant son, by all appearances a perfect life. The fairy tale ends one day when Mireille is kidnapped in broad daylight by a gang of heavily armed men, in front of her father’s Port au Prince estate. Held captive by a man who calls himself The Commander, Mireille waits for her father to pay her ransom. As it becomes clear her father intends to resist the kidnappers, Mireille must endure the torments of a man who resents everything she represents.

An Untamed State is a novel of privilege in the face of crushing poverty, and of the lawless anger that corrupt governments produce. It is the story of a willful woman attempting to find her way back to the person she once was, and of how redemption is found in the most unexpected of places. *An Untamed State* establishes Roxane Gay as a writer of prodigious, arresting talent.

“From the astonishing first line to the final scene, *An Untamed State* is magical and dangerous. I could not put it down. Pay attention to Roxane Gay; she’s here to stay.”—Tayari Jones, author of *Silver Sparrow* and *Leaving Atlanta*

“[Haiti’s] better scribes, among them Edwidge Danticat, Frankétienne, Madison Smartt Bell, Lyonel Trouillot, and Marie Vieux Chavet, have

produced some of the best literature in the world. . . . Add to their ranks Roxane Gay, a bright and shining star.”—Kyle Minor, author of *In the Devil’s Territory*, on *Ayiti*

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An Untamed State By Roxane Gay Bibliography

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Editorial Review

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Starred Review While we give merely cursory thought to what the kidnappings of the wealthy in impoverished nations might entail, rising star Gay exposes the full horror of this intimate crime and stealthy weapon of social decimation in her superbly written and excoriating first tale of terror and suspense. Set in Haiti, where Gay, the child of Haitian immigrants, spent her summers, the novel opens with Miami-based attorney Mirelle visiting her rich and influential parents with Michael, her white Nebraskan husband, and their baby son. The family is heading to the beach when they're ambushed by men with machine guns, who drag Mirelle away. Sharp-tongued and aggressive under normal circumstances, Mirelle is furious, though she believes this "business transaction" will be quickly completed. Instead, her proud and ruthless father refuses to pay the ransom, and she stubbornly refuses to beg. Her enraged captors retaliate with an endless siege of rape and torture. Gay contrasts the brutality of the present with the romantic past as traumatized yet stoic Mirelle remembers her and Michael's rocky courtship, unlikely love, and the reactions of their very different families. Gay is a daring and transfixing storyteller, depicting with valor and deep intent hellishly intrusive violence, shocking betrayal, and psychological devastation, the poison fruits of prejudice, injustice, greed, and desperation. Ferocious, gripping, and unforgettable. --Donna Seaman

Review

Praise for *An Untamed State*:

Longlisted for the 2014 Flaherty-Dunnan First Novel Prize

"[A] commanding début . . . Mireille's struggle to maintain a sense of self while being denied her freedom produces the novel's most powerful chapters."—*New Yorker*

"Roxane Gay's riveting debut, *An Untamed State*, captivates from its opening sentence and doesn't let go. . . . Let this be the year of Roxane Gay: you'll tear through *An Untamed State*, but ponder it for long after."—Nolan Feeney, *Time.com*

"A fairy tale . . . its complex and fragile moral arrived at through great pain and high cost. . . . Perhaps Haiti, too, is a beautiful princess, well-versed in the vagaries of men, still searching for a happily ever after."—Holly Bass, *The New York Times Book Review*

"Poignant . . . haunting . . . When Mireille is finally freed, her rocky adjustment harkens to that of the mother in Emma Donoghue's *Room*. . . . Gay writes of her homeland beautifully, describing it in the conflicting, nuanced way that will ring familiar to Americans whose parents hail from troubled lands. . . . Gorgeous writing . . . A wonderful and affecting read."—Rasha Madkour, *Associated Press*

"Gay may be working in territory many American readers know through the lyrical stories of Edwidge Danticat, but her style is wholly her own: direct, bracing and propulsive. . . . [A] smart, searing novel."—Ron Charles, *The Washington Post*

"To say that *An Untamed State* 'tells the story' of Mireille Duval Jameson - an American lawyer, wife, and new mother, who, while visiting her Haitian parents in Port Au Prince, falls victim to the wave of kidnappings plaguing that city - would be inadequate. Rather, Gay compels her readers to breathe and bleed

[it]. . . . Brutally and vividly rendered.” —Abby Frucht, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*

“Bold . . . A terrific read. . . . The character development of Gay’s protagonist, Mireille, is particularly well-crafted and nuanced; her portrayal of a woman who fights her strongest fight to resist being defeated by her captors is compelling and agonizingly felt by the reader. . . . This novel . . . will reward the reader.” —Jim Carmin, *Minneapolis Star Tribune*

“I applaud Gay’s courage: She writes candidly, vividly, and necessarily . . . You will find it difficult to resist her flawless pacing [and] sharp, clear prose.” —Ariel Gonzalez, *The Miami Herald*

“Set in Haiti, Roxane Gay’s first novel, *An Untamed State*, is a roundhouse kick to notions of privilege.” —Elissa Schappell, *Vanity Fair* (Hot Type)

“Wrenching . . . Vividly written.” —Jennifer Weiner, *USA Today*

“Clear your schedule now! Once you start this book, you will not be able to put it down. *An Untamed State* is a novel of hope intermingled with fear. . . . It is written at a pace that will match your racing heart.” —Edwidge Danticat, author of *Claire of the Sea Light*

“A gripping psychological portrait of how trauma remakes the body to respond only to itself . . . Fans of Gay’s work as an editor at The Rumpus and a columnist for Salon (among other places) will see a lush, sensual side to her writing here, turned to describe brutal facts of subjugation and punishment, the agony of waiting to be rescued and the protection of the brain.” —Ellen Wernecke, *The Onion AV Club*

“Harrowing: truly, it harrows. With iron teeth it pulls up things that do not want to be pulled up. . . . Remarkable.” —NPR

“Excellent . . . Brilliant, eye opening, and necessary. . . . Gay’s prose is direct and muscular, unflinchingly confronting the reality she’s created. . . . To call it ‘hard to put down’ is an understatement; I lost sleep over it, and won’t forget it anytime soon.” —Alison Hallett, *Portland Mercury*

“[Roxane Gay] has written one of the most unsettling books of the year. And she’s just getting started. . . . Dark, gripping . . . It’s a compelling and at times painful read that addresses the issues of economic privilege, immigration, and sexual assault.” —Tomi Obaro, *Chicago Magazine*

“A gripping tale of a young mother ensnared in Haiti’s explosive class struggle.” —Natalie Beach, *O Magazine* (“15 Titles to Pick Up Now”)

“*An Untamed State* is breathless, artful, disturbing and original. I won’t ever forget it.” —Meg Wolitzer, author of *The Interestings*

“Poised to affect anyone who reads the book. . . . Gay weaves a story that is thrilling and readable and, surprisingly, incredibly enjoyable. It is, ultimately, about survival, but walking away from the story unaffected—both the reader and the characters within—is impossible.” —Jessi Cape, *The Austin Chronicle*

“There are times when reading a novel is painful. Not because the prose is lacking or the narrative lags, but because the subject matter verges on the unbearable. Roxane Gay’s debut novel, *An Untamed State*, falls under this last category. And yet, you must read it anyway. For beyond missing out on a story of such emotional power, you will miss out, as well, on this emerging writer’s abundant talent and insight, all on

stunning display here. . . . *An Untamed State* is a rich, beautifully crafted novel, which should establish Roxane Gay as a writer who has something important to say and who knows how to say it.” —Susan Buttenwieser, *The Brooklyn Rail*

“*An Untamed State* is the kind of book you have to keep putting down because you can’t believe how good it is. Awesome, powerful, impossible to ignore, Roxane Gay is a literary force of nature. *An Untamed State* arrives like a hurricane.” —Mat Johnson, author of *Pym*

“Roxane Gay is a rockstar talent who’s already left her mark on the literary world, and her dazzling debut novel is certain to cement her place. . . . [a] haunting tale.” —Morgan Ribera, *Bustle* (“May 2014’s Best Books”)

“Riveting.” —Anjali Enjeti, *Paste Magazine* (“The Best Novels of 2014 (So Far)’’)

“[A] startling debut novel . . . There are no easy answers to be found in *An Untamed State*, and Gay, in elegant, fierce, poetic prose that evokes early-career Margaret Atwood, forces her characters to reach across all borders to find some final sense of reason. It’s a hard-won discovery, surely, but one absolutely worth the journey. This is a novel not easily forgotten.” —Tod Goldberg, *Las Vegas Weekly* (4/5 stars)

“*An Untamed State* is a harrowing, suspenseful novel about the connections between sexual violence and political rage, narrated in a voice at once traumatized and eerily controlled. Roxane Gay is a remarkable writer, an astute observer of Haitian society and a deeply sympathetic, unflinching chronicler of the compromises people make in order to survive under the most extreme conditions.” —Tom Perrotta, author of *Little Children* and *Nine Inches*

“[A] riveting debut novel . . . There is such a staggering sense of strength, confidence and integrity to Gay’s telling. . . . *An Untamed State* is a gem, blasted into beauty by the world’s harshest conditions. This gripping debut has set the table for many great works to come.” —Margaret Wappler, *Bookforum*

“[A] superbly written and excoriating first tale of terror and suspense . . . Gay is a daring and transfixing storyteller. . . . Ferocious, gripping, and unforgettable.” —Donna Seaman, *Booklist* (starred review)

“From the astonishing first line to the final scene, *An Untamed State* is magical and dangerous. I could not put it down. Pay attention to Roxane Gay; she’s here to stay.” —Tayari Jones, author of *Silver Sparrow* and *Leaving Atlanta*

“Harrowing . . . It’s terrifying, this novel, but heartbreak, because [Mireille’s] relationships are part of the dilemma. . . . I felt this powerfully.” —John Freeman, *BOMB*

“Gay brilliantly writes of the story’s external events while skillfully capturing Mireille’s internal anguish.” —*Library Journal* (starred review)

“A simmering, sometimes brutal examination of love, privilege, the meaning of home, and the horrific damage that can come to women at the hands of men. . . . It would be a spoiler to say who does the most to help Mireille out of the horrors and back into life, but there is someone. And in that memorably lovely arc, *An Untamed State* — a novel partly about betrayal by one’s own family — becomes a novel about familial redemption, too.” —Laura Collins-Hughes, *The Boston Globe*

“A harrowing and emotionally cleareyed vision of one woman’s ordeal during and after her kidnapping in

Haiti. . . remarkable . . . A cutting and resonant debut.”—*Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)

“A searing portrait of a politically and economically divided Haiti . . . Deeply felt . . . Disturbing and frighteningly resonant.”—*Publishers Weekly*

“Incredible and unflinching.”—Jessica Valenti, *The Guardian U.S.*

About the Author

Roxane Gay’s writing has appeared in *Best American Short Stories 2012*, *Best Sex Writing 2012*, *Oxford American*, *American Short Fiction*, *Virginia Quarterly Review*, *NOON*, *The New York Times Book Review*, The Rumpus, Salon, *The Wall Street Journal*’s Speakeasy culture blog, and many others including her Tumblr, roxanegay.tumblr.com. She is the co-editor of *PANK* and essays editor for The Rumpus. She teaches writing at Eastern Illinois University. She tweets at @rgay.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Nathan Ware:

Why don't make it to be your habit? Right now, try to ready your time to do the important take action, like looking for your favorite e-book and reading a e-book. Beside you can solve your trouble; you can add your knowledge by the publication entitled An Untamed State. Try to make the book An Untamed State as your good friend. It means that it can being your friend when you feel alone and beside regarding course make you smarter than previously. Yeah, it is very fortuned in your case. The book makes you far more confidence because you can know every little thing by the book. So , let us make new experience along with knowledge with this book.

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