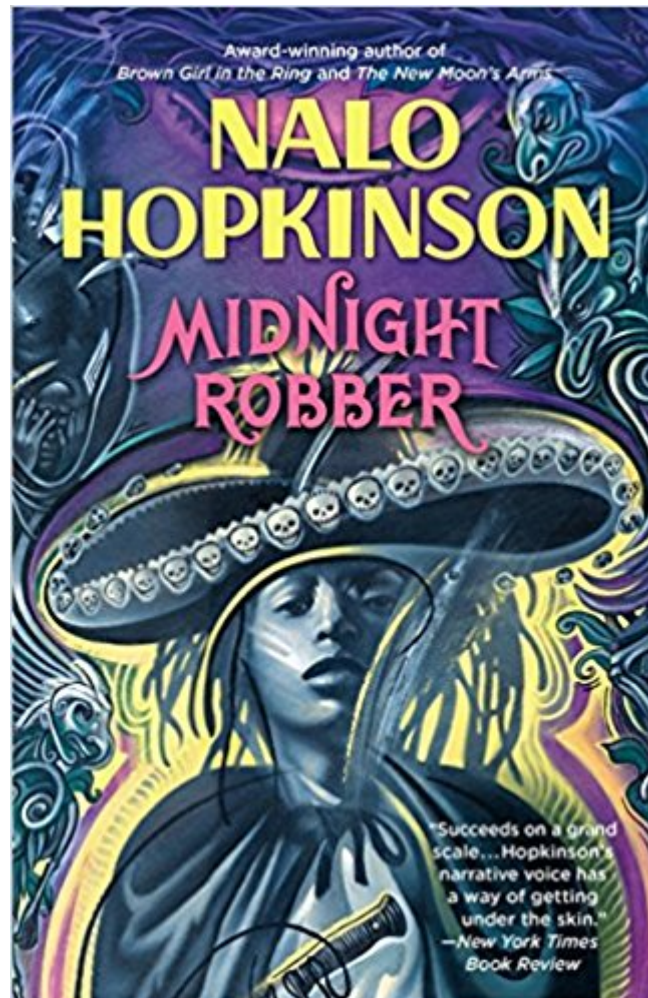




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Midnight Robber



Synopsis

It's Carnival time and the Caribbean-colonized planet of Toussaint is celebrating with music, dance, and pageantry. Masked "Midnight Robbers" waylay revelers with brandished weapons and spellbinding words. To young Tan-Tan, the Robber Queen is simply a favorite costume to wear at the festival-until her power-corrupted father commits an unforgiveable crime. Suddenly, both father and daughter are thrust into the brutal world of New Half-Way Tree. Here monstrous creatures from folklore are real, and the humans are violent outcasts in the wilds. Tan-Tan must reach into the heart of myth and become the Robber Queen herself. For only the Robber Queen's legendary powers can save her life . . . and set her free.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

With a voice and a world-building style startlingly different from the usual SF or Fantasy author, Ms. Hopkinson transports readers into an altogether different sort of future. The story is of Tan-Tan, a young girl growing up on the Caribbean-colonized planet called Touissant. There she lives in relative wealth and comfort, until her father flees the authorities, and the two become exiles in the strange, and unforgiving world of New Half-Way Tree. It is in this realm of strange creatures, and hard-bitten men and women that Tan-Tan must come of age, and discover her own story. The struggle is a long and arduous one, and persevering against all the odds will cost Tan-Tan a great deal more than she imagines. It is this struggle and her growth into adulthood that allow her to take possession of the Robber Queen myth for herself. There is so much here that is impressive. Ms. Hopkinson's skill with world building is a treat. So much of the standard fantasy and SF scenarios

and metaphors are cleared from the field, and a wealth of mythology, story telling and culture from the African and Caribbean worlds are set in place. The result is a departure from what this genre usually has to offer, a deft weaving of myth and technology a grittier and oft-times harsher world-view. The narrator's poetic voice and author's skilled use of language serve to cement the landscape and confirm that the reader has departed from the tried and true paths, into the wilds of another culture, another realm, where anything might happen. The Caribbean flavor of the language is spicy and powerful-strong and primal. These are storyteller words, delicious to read aloud and savor. And Ms. Hopkinson is able to paint her story with this language without making the read ponderous or awkward. Ms.

Midnight Robber, nominated for both the Hugo and Nebula awards, is a pretty darn good book. It's told in a Caribbean-flavoured English "patwa", which quickly reads entirely naturally, and adds a musical dimension to the prose that enhances the book greatly. The story itself begins slowly, and I think I would have severely cut (or restricted to flashbacks) the opening segments, set on the main character's home planet. But the bulk of the novel is excellent, with a convincing and involving main character, and a neat setting on an alien planet with cool aliens, and a solid plot involving the main character dealing with severe family issues and coming of age. The story is about a girl from the planet Toussaint, called Tan-Tan. Toussaint is a highly technological planet: most of the work is done by machines, and everybody (except a few resisters) has an implant which connects them to a planet-wide AI. The AI monitors everybody as well as linking them to news and such -- thus crime would seem to be difficult, and when crime does happen, the criminals are treated harshly, exiled to a primitive planet called New Half Way Tree. Tan-Tan is the daughter of the Mayor of her town, Antonio. Antonio is a serial adulterer himself, but when he catches his wife in flagrante, he flies into a rage. Eventually his actions lead to exile to New Half Way Tree -- and more or less by accident, he takes Tan-Tan with him. This whole first section is a bit slow, and not well enough integrated with the rest of the novel. Antonio doesn't seem well-portrayed -- and Tan-Tan's mother lone is both an unpleasant and unnecessary character.

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