



Black Widow: A Novel (Nikki Turner Original)

By Nikki Turner

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#1 bestselling author Nikki Turner returns with an explosive new novel about a woman at an emotional crossroads—and the men left in her wake.

Isis Tatum knows firsthand the way love can mess up a person. After all, she saw her mother drive a truck through the home of her father's mistress before killing her dad. And ever since Isis was a teenager, her love life has been a series of disasters: Her first sweetheart was executed by the state of Virginia, and her next lover was sent to jail for murder. Now Isis is a successful jewelry designer, but she remains a failure with men. When she meets Logic, a Las Vegas high roller who treats her like a princess, Isis reckons she's finally struck gold—literally. Logic sees to it that her custom pieces of jewelry are seen on the hottest rap stars and pro athletes.

But when this Mr. Right ends up in jail too, Isis starts to believe that she's cursed, that she's a true Black Widow. Always one to roll with the punches, she embraces her life and walks bravely down all its twisted paths, taking her business to unprecedented heights while letting the men who dare to get involved with her take their chances.

"Few writers working in the field today bring the drama quite as dramatically as Nikki Turner. . . . [She's] a master at weaving juicy, 'hood-rich sagas of revenge, regret, and redemption."

—Vibe.com

"Turner [takes] street literature to the next level, further proving that she is indeed 'The Queen of Hip-Hop Fiction.' "

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Black Widow: A Novel (Nikki Turner Original) By Nikki Turner Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #690992 in Books
- Brand: Turner, Nikki
- Published on: 2008-04-29
- Released on: 2008-04-29
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.00" h x .64" w x 5.20" l, .49 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 285 pages

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Nikki Turner, Queen of Hip-Hop Lit, is the bestselling author of *Heartbreak of a Hustler's Wife*, *Natural Born Hustler*, *Relapse*, *Ghetto Superstar*, *Black Widow*, *Forever a Hustler's Wife*, *Riding Dirty on I-95*, *The Glamorous Life*, *A Project Chick*, and *A Hustler's Wife*, and editor of and a contributing author to her Street Chronicles series. She is also editor of the Nikki Turner Presents line and has collaborated with hip-hop heavyweights such as 50 Cent, Dana Dane, and Styles P.

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Chapter 1

The woman was snapped out of her daze by a loud, irritating voice.

"Phoebe Cross!" a man's voice boomed.

Isis sat in the waiting room at the state police headquarters. She was slow to respond to the false name-her sister's, actually-that she had given to the Department of Corrections so that she could be approved to witness the execution of her man, David Davis. It had been five years since the events that caused her man to be convicted of first-degree murder. Five years of letters, phone calls, and Saturday-morning visits. Appeal after appeal had been filed to prevent his death sentence, and every single one had been denied. Today would be his final day on Earth.

Her auntie always used to say that there was more than one way to bake a cake, and not only was her auntie a master baker but also she never told a lie. In the state of Virginia, friends and relatives of an inmate weren't allowed to witness the execution of their loved one, although the victim's family can have a front-row seat and watch the convicted accuser be put to death. But if anyone thought that the state of Virginia's fucked-up laws were going to keep her from watching Dave take his last breath and sharing the last bit of air with her man, then they had shit really fucked up. Isis had told Dave that she would be there for him until the end. And by all means, she intended to do just that! Dave was her first everything: her first kiss, her first date, her first boyfriend. She had even lost her virginity to him.

It had been love at first sight for the couple. Though she had been only fifteen at the time they met, if it had been up to her, she would have married Dave the first time she laid eyes on him. Everyone said that it was only puppy love, but she was convinced it was real love from the start-that kind of real love Mary J. Blige sang about.

On their very first date, Isis and Dave made a pact. They agreed that they would stay together until death. And although such a thing was strange for a fifteen-year-old girl, Isis meant every solitary word it. She felt that kind of commitment toward him. It didn't matter that Dave was locked up on death row for most of their relationship. Isis was one of those rare chicks-rare people, for that matter-who always kept their word. If she said it, she meant it.

It was 7:15 pm, and there she sat, waiting for it all to be over. Everything that they had planned was out of the window, because of one foolish mistake.

"Phoebe Cross," the man called again.

"That's me," Isis said, quickly wiping her hands across her eyes. She rubbed her cold arms, trying to warm up a little, which made her think about how years ago, when things were good, she used to stroll through her high school hallways wearing Dave's Avirex jacket. It had been too big for her and had practically swallowed her up, but it hadn't mattered because she'd been sporting her man's jacket and had wanted the world to know it. The memory gave her a brief moment of happiness.

"I'm sorry," she told the man as she stood. "With the long wait, I must've fallen asleep." Even so, she wondered how he could not have known it was her name that he was calling out; she was the only woman in a room full of men there to be a witness.

She walked toward the officer who had been calling her alias. He handed her a green visitor's pass and instructed, "Please put this where it can be visibly seen, and get in one of the three vans outside." He gestured toward the door leading to the outside parking lot. "The vans will transport us to the prison where the execution will be performed." Performed. He made the ordeal sound as if it were a magic trick about to take place instead of a man being put to death.

"Thank you," she said, taking the pass from him. All eyes were on her as she placed the tag on her sweater and exited the small building to proceed to the van. There were nine people logged in to witness Dave's execution. The rest were men, seasoned vets who had witnessed many executions. They were curious about the innocent-looking young black woman whom they had never seen before.

It struck Isis as funny that none of the police officers recognized her; she had been in the courtroom every single day of Dave's two-week trial. But the new Bulgari sunglasses she sported hid the pain in her deep brown eyes. The short spiked brown wig she wore was a contrast to her normal long black hair. What she couldn't hide was her figure: Isis's five-foot seven-inch physique, with every curve well placed, was breathtaking. Good thing a lot of rednecks think that all black people look alike, because who knows what they would have done to her if they'd discovered her true identity.

The police officer who had interrupted her thoughts continued to hand out the visitor passes. "Roland Pledge. Ronald Lassiter. Dan Martin," he called out.

Each name rang a loud bell in Isis's head. They were the police officers, detectives, and the prosecutor who worked on Dave's case. Even the captain of the police department was there to serve as a witness. Because Dave had been in and out of the penal system, his execution was seen as a coup. Isis watched their demeanor. They all appeared to be ecstatic, as if their football team had just won a play-off game and life couldn't get any sweeter. Five of the men, plus Isis, were there as official witnesses. There were three others who were alternates in case anyone changed his or her mind. The state of Virginia required that there be at least six witnesses to serve at an execution, and best believe the good ol' boys were lined up to come out to see a black man fry.

After everyone was seated in the van, a couple of the detectives started to make small talk with each other. The van reminded her of one that she and Dave rode in when they had gone with her church to Kings Dominion one Saturday. She and Dave went on every single ride, including the Pirate, which had flipped them upside down and caused their spending money to fall out of their pockets. They'd had only six dollars left and had to split a hamburger. Dave had insisted that she eat the entire thing, but she wouldn't eat it unless he had half.

"So, Ms. Cross," one of the detectives asked, disrupting her good memory of Dave, "what made you want to witness the death of a monster like Dave Davis?" He asked the question that everyone wanted to.

"Are you somehow connected to the victims?" another detective probed.

"Or are you doing some kind of research?" another interjected. "You look like a college student."

Isis turned around her head, locked her eyes with Detective Lassiter, and relayed the answer she had prepared in the event she was asked that question. "I'm in therapy." Then she looked in the face of each man, one by one, as the state-issued white van started its engine and headed to Greenville Correctional Center. "And my doctor said that if I saw a life taken, maybe I would appreciate living my own a bit more."

Her answer seemed to stun the rest of the witnesses, and they all stared at her. At first, the short ride was silent, and then one officer asked another, "What kind of snacks are we going to have this time around?"

"I don't know. Hopefully we'll have the hot Krispy Kreme doughnuts."

"The last time we had those awful-tasting doughnuts that were stale."

A man is about to lose his life, and the only thing these motherfuckers can think about is some goddamn snacks, Isis thought with disgust.

As the van pulled up to the gate at the prison, the man sitting behind her, whom she recognized as the prosecutor, tapped Isis on the shoulder and asked, "Is this your first execution?"

"Yes, it is. Yours?" she asked.

Special Prosecutor Pledge answered, "No, actually this is my eleventh." To Isis, he seemed to state the number with pride as if he were a runner and it was the eleventh marathon he'd run or as if he were an obstetrician and it was the eleventh baby he'd delivered.

"Oh," Isis exclaimed. "How come you've viewed so many?"

"Actually, we've all witnessed quite a few." He motioned to indicate the others in the van. "We know this process like the back of our hands. There's no better feeling than to see what you worked so hard to make happen-take bad guys off the street for life-come to its ultimate manifestation. It's what we live for."

Isis was silent while the rest of the people in the van shared idle chatter. Then the prosecutor said to her, "You know, before the execution actually can happen, the inmate gets to appeal and has plenty of fair chances. As a matter of fact, he could still get a stay of execution."

That would be wonderful. What if he could get off? . . . Stop thinking crazy, she told herself.

"Just curious-what are the chances of that really happening?"

"Slim to none because it's a capital murder case."

"Oh."

I don't know why I am torturing myself. I know better. They got a man's head on the chopping block. It ain't no turning back now.

"Often people think that in a capital murder case, the police and prosecutor's jobs are done once they get the guilty verdict, but it's not until the scum is put to death that we know that it's a job well done." When she didn't respond, he continued. "That's the real pat on the back: when we see the bad guys go down."

And they said that Dave is a monster, she thought. Regardless of what he did, he's still a human being- someone's son . . . someone's boyfriend. But to them he's just another statistic. Another notch on their belt to let them know they accomplished something in the world. Inside, Isis was shaking, but she maintained a calm demeanor as the bus pulled up to the prison.

Isis and the others were led into a room where they sat for about two hours. Everybody except for Isis ate Krispy Kreme doughnuts and drank orange juice and coffee while a corrections officer gave them a brief rundown on what to expect: the basic rules and regulations of a state- sanctioned murder.

It was in this room where they found out what Dave had had for his last meal: lobster, shrimp, and crab cake, which was odd to Isis because Dave had never cared for seafood. He said it gave him gas.

"Who were his final visitors?" an officer asked.

"His grandmother and his girlfriend," the corrections officer answered.

"That broad of his was one faithful bitch, I tell you that much," another officer chimed in. "She sat in that courtroom every single day. Didn't miss a beat."

Expressionless, she sat there, wondering if they were toying with her. Did they know who she was behind the designer sunglasses and the best wig that the Korean beauty supply store had to offer? Although she was terrified on the inside- and was a nanosecond from losing it- she wasn't about to let them see her sweat and blow this opportunity to see Dave alive for the very last minutes of his life.

"Well, Phoebe. It is Phoebe, isn't it?" Detective Lassiter asked.

She nodded.

"I'm not sure that seeing this slimeball die will inspire you to appreciate life," Lassiter told her.

"Why would you say that?" she asked, trying not to sound defensive.

"Did you follow the story?" Lassiter asked.

She didn't know how she should answer, because she wasn't sure if the question was a trap or not. She paused.

Are these cunning motherfuckers trying to set me up? She knew she couldn't trust these pigs any farther than she could smell them. She didn't used to feel that way about officers of the law, but seeing things from another perspective made it different.

"Umm, no. But I did read a little briefing on it," she finally answered.

"Well, since we have a few minutes before his balls will be on the commonwealth's platter, fellas, maybe we should bring the lady up to speed," Lassiter suggested.

Users Review

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Helen Thibodeaux:

Playing with family in a park, coming to see the sea world or hanging out with buddies is thing that usually you might have done when you have spare time, in that case why you don't try matter that really opposite from that. One activity that make you not experiencing tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you have been ride on and with addition of knowledge. Even you love Black Widow: A Novel (Nikki Turner Original), you can enjoy both. It is very good combination right, you still wish to miss it? What kind of hangout type is it? Oh come on its mind hangout guys. What? Still don't have it, oh come on its called reading friends.

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