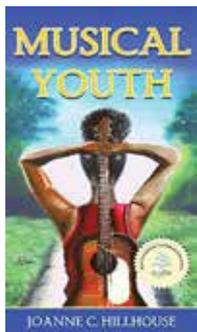


# Hillhouse's writing is overwhelmingly joyful and explicitly invested in the power of Black joy, Black excellence, and Black self-love.

MUSICAL YOUTH

has sophisticated, encrypted communication devices enabling him to jam all cellphones and electronics on campus and to tap into law enforcement agencies' feeds. Cade avoids the initial student roundup and works to prevent what horrors he can; he manages to get his mother released, enlist Kira's aid, and inflict serious injury on some henchmen. Meanwhile, Reilly announces his plan: The 10 richest parents of the hostages must transfer as much money as they can raise in an hour into an offshore account. The child whose parents raise the least will be executed. The story's pacing is taut and its tension intense, but it's tempered by the enjoyable pairing of Cade and Kira. Both are supersmart, funny kids whose knowledge base includes physics, chemistry, psychology, and even Morse code to help them outfox Reilly. Apt high school references abound, as when Cade notes that a weaponized 1922 school trophy is solid metal because "back then you only gave out one"—no participation awards necessary. Kira pulls off a few acts that are reminiscent of Katniss Everdeen's exploits because, due to the popularity of *The Hunger Games* and *Brave*, "every girl in school had been obsessed with all things archery." The book's positive depictions of female roles and slyly understated politics are also appealing.

**A captivating story of a reluctant hero that will leave readers eagerly anticipating the next installment.**



## MUSICAL YOUTH

Hillhouse, Joanne C.

Caribbean Reads Publishing (280 pp.)

\$16.99 | \$10.99 paper | Sep. 15, 2019

978-1-73382-996-0

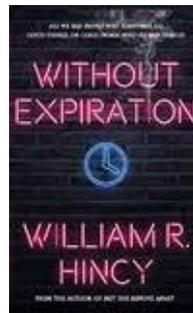
978-1-73382-995-3 paper

Two very different teenagers with a shared gift for music fall in love over a summer in this YA novel by Antiguan and Barbudan author Hillhouse.

In Antigua, painfully shy Zahara can play guitar and has an encyclopedic knowledge of famous musicians, but she just can't work up the courage to perform in front of people—and her strict grandmother likely wouldn't allow it, anyway. Then she meets a cute, confident boy who calls himself Shaka; he's not only her match in musical knowledge, he also writes his own rap verses with a schoolboy hip-hop crew. Shaka finds himself smitten by Zahara and tries to bring the anxious girl out of her shell. However, he has his own doubts and insecurities underneath his showman persona. Unlike the private-schooled, light-complexioned Zahara, public-schooled Shaka comes from the poor part of town and has been ridiculed all his life for his dark skin. As summer starts, the two teens grow closer, and a tender romance begins to blossom. Soon, Zahara and Shaka are caught in a whirlwind of creative collaboration, self-discovery, and family revelations that will leave them forever changed. In the tradition of the best YA stories, Hillhouse's characters are convincing because they're unfailingly realistic in their interactions, interests, and struggles. Her players sound like actual people, and specifically like Antiguan teens. Through their personal

journeys, readers learn about issues that affect young people in Antigua and across the globe, including internalized racism, colorism, economic inequality, generational trauma, and old-fashioned teenage angst. This is not to say that the book is heavy or maudlin in tone; on the contrary, Hillhouse's writing is overwhelmingly joyful and explicitly invested in the power of Black joy, Black excellence, and Black self-love.

**A charming and edifying work with a romance that will make YA fans swoon.**



## WITHOUT EXPIRATION A Personal Anthology

Hincy, William R.

Self (150 pp.)

\$9.95 paper | \$3.99 e-book | Nov. 1, 2019

978-1-73275-790-5

Flawed, despondent characters show a surprising wit and humanity in a collection of 12 tales, most of them previously published.

Two lovers are lying together in this book's opening story, "Bermuda Triangle." Their mutual fondness is evident, but it's clear they aren't likely to divorce their spouses. This is the attitude that characters in this collection adopt, simply accepting their reality, however imperfect it is. In "Left To Soak," for example, Helen's 46-year union with her shiftless husband, Hank, has involved endless days of washing the dishes alone. As she returns home from her three-day hospital stay, she unhappily anticipates the stack awaiting her. Hincy saturates the pages in sardonicism, primarily aimed at marriage. In the gloomy but superlative "A Study in Discontinuity," geologist Edward had been having an affair with a student when his wife, Christa, was in a debilitating accident. She winds up comatose but periodically awakens over the course of years to berate Edward mercilessly. Nevertheless, there's a fair amount of wit and satire in this new book by the author of *A Fire for Christmas* (2016). The comedic highlight is "Amen," which parodies religion, primarily Catholicism. But it's a lighthearted tale without spite: This religion's God, who narrates, causes some trouble by inadvertently passing misinformation to a priest whimsically named Poopé Hal. Hincy's taut prose makes the entire collection a quick read but still fills the stories with indelible passages. In "A Thousand Counted and Unrepentant Debts," life coach Bill blatantly describes himself as "not a man of my word; I'm a man of words, none of which I'm particularly committed to." Similarly, "A Study in Discontinuity" is rife with often amusing footnotes that are considerably more revealing than the narrative itself. The book strikes a chord with characters whose defects make them simultaneously believable and with descriptions of moments involving a loved one's death, either its prolonged aftermath or its inevitability.

**Cynicism and cheekiness abound in brief but memorable stories.**