

THE ONES WHO ~~DON'T~~ SAY THEY LOVE YOU

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The setting of New Orleans is intrinsic to this book. Discuss the ways in which the city functions as a character in the collection and how each of the other characters relates to it.
2. How does the title, *The Ones Who Don't Say They Love You*, speak to the entire collection?
3. What specific themes does the author emphasize throughout the stories? What do you think he is trying to get across to the reader?
4. The stories are filled with intriguing characters. Which ones would you have liked to know more about? Why?
5. In what ways does the past seem to control, or at least influence, the present in *The Ones Who Don't Say They Love You*? How do the characters try to repress or escape the pain of their pasts? What does the collection as a whole seem to be saying about the relationship between past and present?
6. Which is your favorite story and why?
7. How did this book change you? Do you have a new perspective as a result of reading it? Did you learn something you didn't know before? Has your attitude or behavior changed?
8. What did you think of the writing? Are there any standout passages? What are some that you underlined, or that particularly affected you?
9. What was your initial reaction to the book? Did it hook you immediately, or take some time to get into?
10. Which character did you relate to the most, and what was it about them that you connected with?

PRAISE FOR

THE ONES WHO DON'T SAY THEY LOVE YOU

"*The Ones Who Don't Say They Love You* is an ode to all that makes us human. With an acute eye for beauty in seemingly hidden places, Maurice Carlos Ruffin shows us that having true empathy for others is not only transformative but also necessary for our evolution as a people. Each story grabs your heart, squeezes the hell out of it, and then, somehow, makes it fuller. I couldn't stop feeling. Ruffin is a writer whose work will make you a better person without your knowing it."

—MATEO ASKARIPOUR, author of *Black Buck*

"These short stories ring out like the bells of St. Louis Cathedral over Jackson Square. One of our great writers of place, Ruffin dazzles with this sonorous collection of deeply moving New Orleanian tales. Told with humor, insight, and radical empathy, these stories will linger in your heart and mind like the fading song of a brass band, vibrant and beautiful."

—KALI FAJARDO-ANSTINE, author of the
National Book Award finalist *Sabrina & Corina*

"Some are funny, some poetic, others near heartbreaking, but the true hallmark of Ruffin's stories is an interest in what language can do. This is the work of a playful and exuberant writer who is always a joy to read."

—RUMAAN ALAM, author of the
National Book Award finalist *Leave the World Behind*

"Ruffin, more than any of the greats I read, searches for that idea, that style, that genre we think is impossible to do well, and he makes it look easy. What he is doing in these short stories is breathtaking. They are so singular yet so reliant on each other for wholeness. This is wonder writing."

—KIESE LAYMON, author of *Heavy*