



Come Kingdom

Poems

DERRICK HARRIELL

“A mind-blowing experience—a tender reflection of one poet’s life laid bare in the public sphere.”—**Randall Horton**

“What a book. It hurts, it redeems, it does not blink. . . . *Come Kingdom* is a singular work of craft, vision, and empathy.”—**Catherine Pierce**

Derrick Harriell’s new book, *Come Kingdom*, chronicles a Black man’s journey toward an ever-elusive American Dream with poems anchored in the trenches of personal crossroads ranging from child conception to substance abuse and racism. The collection follows a male speaker as he and his partner family plan, hoping to provide their son with a sibling. Their troubles burst through in bold poems that incorporate both medical and mental hurdles. At the same time, it pays homage to Black musical icons such as Marvin Gaye, Whitney Houston, Tupac Shakur, and Nipsey Hussle.

With spirited vulnerability and gritty lyricism, Harriell reveals the stakes and hauntings of relentless generational traumas. A tour de force of outcry and courage, *Come Kingdom* confronts shifting social, political, and musical climates. On a more intimate level, it also follows a couple’s desperate attempts to become parents again.

DERRICK HARRIELL is the Otilie Schillig Associate Professor of English and African American Studies at the University of Mississippi. His previous collections of poems include *Stripper in Wonderland*, *Cotton*, and *Ropes*, winner of the 2014 Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters Poetry Book Award.

if I’m going blind I wonder
if I’ve seen enough / for every compelling
Mt. Hood kingdom-ornament outside
Portland hotel windows I’ve squinted
at the sight of an outlook burned grim / voyeur
of rude suffering when viewing
my granddaddy’s blind resolve crumble
like a burning watchtower / he says he doesn’t mind
not seeing because my grandma’s face fills
the void / I too only see her in darkness /
only see another kind of kingdom
with my eyes shut / this morning my child
burrowed inside my chest and became
another heart / his breathing printed an album as
I blindly studied the darkroom

—from “Optometrist”



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PRAISE FOR *COME KINGDOM*

“Tupac Shakur once told an interviewer all his songs were spiritual because they were emotional. Derrick Harriell finds similar resonance/reverence in the dimensions of feeling. Every line of this terrific book is a slash of contrapuntal experience. Praise tilts into appraisal, levity tilts to gravity, Crown Royal tilts into crown sonnets. This kingdom is both refuge and hornet’s nest and Harriell is a scrutinizing witness disguised as a casual observer, a master bluesman disguised as a neighbor. It’s all so intimate and immediate. I felt I’d been in conversation with a new, old friend after reading *Come Kingdom*.”—Terrance Hayes

“Derrick Harriell sculpts *Come Kingdom* with the kind of language that strikes the tongue, stinging life itself with praise and wonder. These poems soar, precise and startling in their wounds and triumphs. In his hands, Harriell holds the afterbirth of bruises that are as delicate and devastating as our hunger to understand our desires, our fears. *Come Kingdom* is about how to live while we wait to fully arrive inside ourselves, immediate and urgent as blood. Harriell’s vision of ‘complicated beauty’ is deeply real in its recognition of what it takes to craft our scars into a face that recognizes the ‘bouquet of faith’ and how our truths change us, for better and for worse. *Come Kingdom* is a profound and spiritual testament to how grace itself can be a form of reparations, reaping power from what has failed to kill the love and hope from which we are made.”—Rachel Eliza Griffiths

“If song takes up where talk breaks down, Derrick Harriell’s *Come Kingdom* sings what families refuse. These poems cast wisdom in riddles, twenty-first century syncopated blues. Physics says a voice echoes back in reverse. Harriell’s poems show life bounce between generations, voice gather flesh in refraction. *Come Kingdom* goes from here to the broken, gone to the chronic, the subtractive to happenstatic. The rule seems to be this: Every kingdom’s mostly what it isn’t, so it’s on us. Come with it.”—Ed Pavlic

“What a book. It hurts, it redeems, it does not blink. In these utterly arresting poems, Derrick Harriell gives us a life’s scope: tenderness and violence, memory and its force on the present, fatherhood, fertility, the work of being both a parent and a parent’s grown son. *Come Kingdom* is a singular work of craft, vision, and empathy.”—Catherine Pierce

“In *Come Kingdom*, Derrick Harriell constructs a pulsating and provocative world of flesh, memory, and fantasy, where the celestial and the purgatorial come face to face. We readers witness this moving and jarring encounter, at turns terrifying and tender. The book culminates in two exuberant works, an elegiac crown of sonnets and a spectacular reinvention of the many figures who appear throughout the collection. If poetry is memory and memory is a kind of afterlife, then *Come Kingdom* is Harriell revealing to us the many spirits his one gorgeous, lyric world can hold.”—Patrick Rosal

“*Come Kingdom* by Derrick Harriell is a continuous motion of intense poems that are often hypnotic mic-drop moments driven by lyric and the precision of the line/stanza. Call *Come Kingdom* a def execution of language. I call *Come Kingdom* a mind-blowing experience—a tender reflection of one poet’s life laid bare in the public sphere. I will not forget these poetic compositions (jewels) from a poet who leaves nothing on the metaphorical mat. I don’t know whether to cry, clap, laugh, slap, or hug somebody—maybe I’ll do them all. *Come Kingdom* is unafraid to operate in those complicated spaces, that once investigated, makes us our whole selves.”—Randall Horton

“Derrick Harriell’s brilliant *Come Kingdom* pounds like a jackhammer. He explores the landscapes of masculinity, family, and responsibility, and illuminates his own unique path through language, where joy and grief sing the same song. Rich, dynamic, full of invention and wordplay, Harriell’s poetry documents those kingdoms we are given, and the kingdoms we create.”—January Gill O’Neil