

ON SALE
JULY 5,
2022



THE
LIGHT
ALWAYS
BREAKS

a novel

ANGELA
JACKSON-BROWN

BOOK CLUB KIT

Book clubs are about reading good books, socializing and making connections, considering different perspective, and maybe even trying something new. This kit is perfect for preparing to read *The Light Always Breaks* as part of a book club.



Dear Readers,

Greetings and salutations! I am so excited to share my next novel, *The Light Always Breaks*, with you.

The idea for this book started to germinate when I was in my early twenties. I had this romantic love story in mind for two characters named Eva and Courtland. I tried my best to write that book back then, but it just felt overly dramatic and sappy. So, I did what all good writers do – I filed it away in my desk, vowing to come back to it someday.

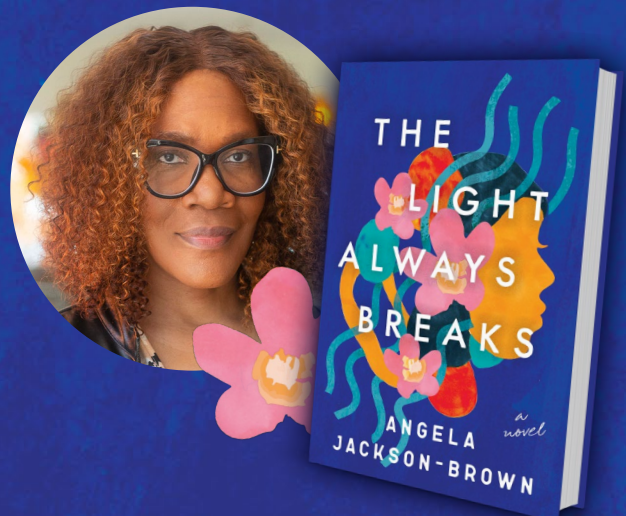
Thirty years later I finally saw these characters with fresh eyes. Eva and Courtland are still madly in love, but they are more conscious of the perils of sharing an interracial love during the 1940s in the US. They also have larger dreams than falling in love. Eva wants to be a successful restaurant owner and she is well on her way to becoming just that. Senator Courtland Hardiman Kingsley IV has his sights set on becoming the president of the United States. They both realize that falling in love with each other will bring their dreams to a screeching halt.

The Light Always Breaks also spotlights the civil rights movement long before Dr. King became the symbol of it. Throughout the story, readers are introduced to historical figures like: Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., Mary McLeod Bethune, A. Philip Randolph, Ethel Kennedy, and John F. Kennedy, Jr. Readers of this novel will not only appreciate the history, but they will fall in love with the love the various characters feel for each other.

Thank you for selecting my work for your book club. I could not do what I do without your support.

Best wishes,

Angela Jackson-Brown



REVIEWS & PRAISE

“Award-winning Jackson-Brown’s latest historical novel, following *When Stars Rain Down* (2021), skillfully tackles romance, religion, and race relations in a tale that will appeal to readers who enjoyed *The Personal Librarian* (2021), *The Vanishing Half* (2020), and *Black Bottom Saints* (2020).”

—*Booklist*



“Against the turbulent backdrop of human rights protests for equal access to the voting ballot, education, protection under the law and Civil Rights, this knowledgeable author has crafted a family saga that examines the emotional and physical inheritances from generations of racism . . . An immersive sense of time and place makes *The Light Always Breaks* an enticing lure to understanding complex factors in being privileged economically while politically and otherwise experiencing discrimination. Rich historical context is this novel’s greatest strength and the source of its 4 stars.”

—*Romance Daily News*



“Angela Jackson-Brown’s reputation for digging deep and going wide at the same time continues to reward readers. Thoughtfully portrayed characters with deep minds and passionate hearts make *The Light Always Breaks* a memorable story that leaps off the page. You can see it, hear it, and feel it in your marrow. Hard and necessary truths are addressed, and as an avid reader of both historical fiction and historical romance, I found this novel struck a refreshing balance between the two. I highly recommend it.”

—*Rhonda McKnight, award-winning author of Unbreak My Heart*

Friends,

With much arm twisting and begging, I was finally able to get Chef du Passe to share his gumbo recipe with me and all of you. As you will find, when you read *The Light Always Breaks*, everyone, and I mean everyone, loves the gumbo we serve at *Chez Geneviève*, my restaurant named after my dearly departed mother. I hope you enjoy cooking this gumbo as much as all of us enjoy eating it.

With Love, Eva

Chef du Passe's Gumbo Recipe

1 lb sausage (preferably Conecuh Sausage)
2 lbs boneless, skinless chicken thighs, cut into bite size
2 lbs shrimp, peeled and deveined
4 cups of chicken broth
1/4 cup creole seasoning (preferably Tony Chachere)
Vegetable oil (see below)
1 cup of all-purpose flour
1 1/2 cups onions, diced
1 cup green bell pepper, diced

1 cup celery, diced
1 bunch of green onions, thinly sliced
2 tablespoons garlic, minced (preferably Spice World)
3 bay leaves
2 cups of okra (optional)
1 teaspoon cayenne
Cooked long-grain rice (as much as you need)
Louisiana hot sauce, for serving
Filé powder, for serving (optional)

Directions

Prep the vegetable and set them aside.

Heat a tablespoon of the vegetable oil in a large skillet and sauté the sausage. Then repeat the step and brown the chicken. Set aside until you are ready to use.

Heat 3/4 cup of vegetable oil in a large pot over medium-high heat until almost smoking. Add the flour and cook, stirring constantly until the roux is the color of a milk chocolate. Don't leave the pot once you begin making the roux. The stirring has to be continuous!

Once the roux reaches the correct coloring, add the onions, celery, garlic, bell pepper, cayenne, and sausage. Let it cook for about 5-7 minutes until the vegetables are softened.

Add the broth to the mixture along with salt, pepper, and bay leaves. Bring to a gentle simmer. Continue to simmer, skimming any foam or excess oil that comes to the top, until all traces of the flour taste is gone, about 2 hours.

Depending on your desire for fire, add a few shakes of the Louisiana hot sauce to the mixture.

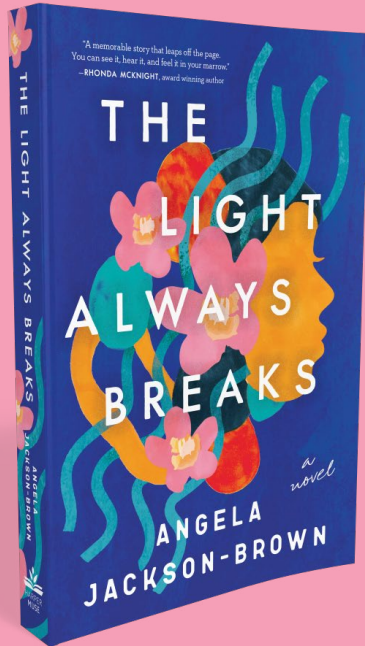
Add the chicken, green onions, and parsley and continue to simmer for another thirty minutes.

Adjust the thickness by adding additional broth, depending on whether or not you like a thick broth or a thinner broth.

Serve over hot, white rice. Have the hot sauce and the Filé powder on the table for guests to use to their liking.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In what ways does this novel defy the traditional roles you think of when it comes to Black women in the 1940s?
2. Oftentimes when people think about the civil rights movement, they think about the 1960s, but this novel illustrates how vibrant the movement was even in the 1940s. What were some things you learned about the civil rights movement that you did not previously know?
3. Discuss how Eva and her sister, Frédérique, have suffered as a result of their mother's relationship with a white landowner from the South and how their mother's choices ended up affecting Eva's relationship with Courtland and Frédérique's relationship with her husband, Pearson.
4. In what ways does Courtland transcend his white, upper-class upbringing and in what ways does he follow in lockstep with his family's legacy?
5. So much of this novel follows the historical timeline of the 1948 presidential election when the Democratic Party split in two. Although this book is fiction, it still honors much of the historical past. How far is historical fiction allowed to veer off the path of truth?
6. Parties play a huge role in the lives of Eva and Courtland. What do these social events reveal about the protagonists and the historical characters portrayed in the novel?
7. Eva's faith plays a strong role in her life, but she has found ways to create her own version of religion. What are your thoughts about how she seems able to combine her Catholic upbringing with her brother-in-law's Baptist faith?
8. This novel explores loss on many different levels. How does loss affect both Courtland and Eva in the story?



ANGELA JACKSON-BROWN is an award-winning writer, poet, and playwright who is a member of the graduate faculty of the Naslund-Mann Graduate School of Writing at Spalding University in Louisville, Kentucky. In the fall semester of 2022, she will be joining the creative writing program at Indiana University Bloomington as an associate professor.

Angela is a graduate of Troy University, Auburn University, and the Spalding low-residency MFA program in creative writing. She has published her short fiction, creative nonfiction, and poetry in journals like the Louisville Courier Journal and Appalachian Review. She is the author of *Drinking from a Bitter Cup*, *House Repairs*, and *When Stars Rain Down*.

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