



Tiger Rag: A Novel

Nicholas Christopher

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The acclaimed author of *Veronica* and *A Trip to the Stars* returns with a dazzling new novel based on one of the great legends of musical history.

New Orleans, 1900. The virtuoso cornet player Charles “Buddy” Bolden invents jazz, but after a life consumed by tragedy, the groundbreaking sound of his horn vanishes with him. Rumors persist, though, that Bolden recorded a phonograph cylinder, and over the course of a century it evolves into the elusive holy grail of jazz.

Florida, the present day. Dr. Ruby Cardillo’s life is falling apart. Her husband, a prominent cardiologist, has left her for a twenty-six-year-old. Her daughter, Devon, a once promising jazz pianist, has recently finished an enforced stint picking up trash along the interstate after a drug conviction. Ruby’s estranged mother has just died, but not before conjuring up ghosts that Ruby thought she had put behind her long ago. After a long career as a well-respected anesthesiologist, Ruby suddenly jumps the tracks, forgetting to eat and sleep, indulging her every whim, wearing only purple, consuming only bottles of 1988 Château Latour.

Then Ruby enlists Devon to accompany her on an impulsive road trip to New York, and both mother and daughter get more than they bargained for, discovering that their own shrouded family history is connected to the tantalizing search for Buddy Bolden’s long-lost cylinder.

Ranging from turn-of-the-century Louisiana to Roaring Twenties Chicago to contemporary Manhattan, *Tiger Rag* is at once a moving story of loss and redemption and an intricate historical mystery from one of our most brilliant storytellers.

Praise for *Tiger Rag*

“The structure here is like a long and complex jazz arrangement. There is a comparatively simple theme set up against what might be thought of as distinctive chord changes. And then, against this main story, the author sets up what might be seen as highly individualistic solos. The themes of the male performers and the female audiences come together, separate, then come together again. If you love the world of jazz, if it’s a little like a religion to you, **you’ll love this ambitious, thoughtful novel.**” —*The Washington Post*

“Describing music in a book is a bit like trying to describe color to a blind person; it rarely goes well. The opening stretch of Nicholas Christopher’s latest novel *Tiger Rag*, however, paints a picture of a jazz recording session so vividly that **the reader might want to keep a towel handy for mopping his brow James Brown-style.**” —*GQ.com*

“Nicholas Christopher's new novel, *Tiger Rag*, is **a New Year's treat that lovers of good music and good writing should not deny themselves.** . . . Nicholas is a master at building a rich story populated with vivid characters on the bare foundation of historical record. Although no recording of Bolden and his band has yet surfaced, his sideman Willy Cornish, a trombone player, died claiming a recording session took place. Nicholas has imagined a **satisfying and engrossing** tale about what might have happened. He has fleshed out the lives touched by the wax cylinders that stored three versions of “Tiger Rag.” From the musicians who played with or followed Bolden, to the recording engineer and his assistant at the fateful recording session,

Nicholas has created a colourful cast whose stories draw readers into their lives. . . . **Nicholas is a poet as well as a novelist, and the book sings**, thanks to his compelling descriptions and use of imagery. . . . [C]ompulsively readable.” —*The Toronto Star*

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