

by Christina Cooke

## About the Book

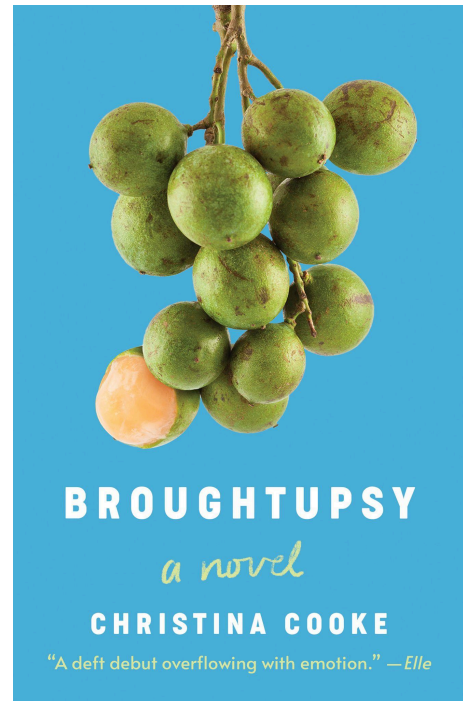
At once cinematic yet intimate, *Broughtupsy* is an enthralling debut novel about a young Jamaican woman grappling with grief as she discovers her family, her home, is always just out of reach

Told through an intimate and atmospheric first-person account, *Broughtupsy* is a queer diasporic chronicle of twenty-year-old Akúa's return to her native Kingston, Jamaica, after living in the U.S. then Canada in the decade following her mother's death.

The reason for Akúa's return is a woeful one: her younger brother Bryson has just passed from sickle cell anemia, the same sickness that took their mother. Unmoored and in mourning, Akúa returns to Kingston to hopefully reconnect with her estranged older sister Tamika, her last living sibling, and to bring her brother home. As the two sisters visit significant places from their childhood, Akúa is confronted with the difficult realities of being gay in a deeply religious family, of feeling separate from her home culture after years of living abroad, and of battling the grief of losing her mother then brother at pivotal moments in her young life. Along the way, she meets Jayda, a bashful queer woman who shows her a different side of Kingston and gives her a glimmer of hope of how to be at peace with her sister and herself.

## About the Author

Named a "Writer to Watch" by CBC Books and *Shondaland*, Christina Cooke's work has appeared in or is forthcoming from *The Caribbean Writer*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Electric Literature*, *Epiphany*, *Apogee*, *PRISM International*, and others. Born in Jamaica, Christina is now a Canadian citizen who lives and writes in New York City.



**“Cooke’s vibrant debut novel is a queer coming-of-age story and a chronicle of diasporic rediscovery.”**  
—Hannah Giorgis, *The Atlantic*

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## **Discussion Questions**

1. Before reading the book, what did you think the title referred to or meant? Is the meaning of the title clearer to you after reading? Why or why not?
2. How did reading this book change your perspective about Jamaica?
3. Cooke frequently quotes the Jamaican folklorist Miss Lou and her iconic children's television show, *Ring Ding*—including Miss Lou's re-telling of the Christian creation myth: "And the trees and the earth and the pigs' snout and the reason why cows go moo—is Anancy mek it! So she seh." What do you think the novel's implying about the importance of folklore to Jamaican culture through quotes like these?
4. Akúa's grief over her brother's death appears in tangible and visceral ways, whereas the loss of Akúa's mother hangs heavy over the story like a shadow. What do you think this juxtaposition tells us about the experience of familial loss?
5. With grief present throughout so much of the book, how did you find the characters' relationship to it relate or differ from your own experience?
6. How would you describe Tamika's approach to showing Akúa any sort of sibling protection or affection? Did you find it convincing or effective?
7. Discuss the trajectory of Akúa's and Tamika's relationship. Does it seem easy? Expected? Comforting? Loving?
8. The novel is bookended by the loss of young love: first, by Akúa breaking up with her Canadian girlfriend Sara then closing with Akúa running away from her Jamaican partner Jayda. What do you think these instances tell us about young queer romance? Does it seem easy? Does it unfold like you might expect?
9. The novel often flashes back in time to give us context about how Akúa's reacting in the present. How did these temporal switches affect your reading experience?
10. Ultimately, the novel builds towards painting a picture of a woman who's fragmented, but here – grieving, but crawling towards the light of being alive. Do you think society at large has created spaces for people like Akúa? Why or why not?