



OFF THE SHELF BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP

TUESDAY
JANUARY 21, 2020
6:30 PM

Virginia, 1852. Seventeen-year-old Josephine Bell decides to run from the failing tobacco farm where she is a slave and nurse to her ailing mistress, the aspiring artist Lu Anne Bell.

New York City, 2004. Lina Sparrow, an ambitious first-year associate in an elite law firm, is given a difficult, highly sensitive assignment that could make her career: she must find the "perfect plaintiff" to lead a historic class-action lawsuit worth trillions of dollars in reparations for descendants of American slaves.

It is through her father, the renowned artist Oscar Sparrow, that Lina discovers Josephine Bell and a controversy roiling the art world: are the iconic paintings long ascribed to Lu Anne Bell really the work of her house slave, Josephine? A descendant of Josephine's would be the perfect face for the reparations lawsuit - if Lina can find one. While following the runaway girl's faint trail through old letters and plantation records, Lina finds herself questioning her own family history and the secrets that her father has never revealed:

How did Lina's mother die? And why will he never speak about her?

Moving between antebellum Virginia and modern-day New York, this searing, suspenseful and heartbreaking tale of art and history, love and secrets, explores what it means to repair a wrong and asks whether truth is sometimes more important than justice.

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