

■ **JOHN STARKS: My Life** by John Starks with Dan Markowitz; Foreword by Spike Lee (Sports Publishing L.L.C.). The '90s wound up being a catch-22 sort of year for fans of the *New York Knicks*. While the winning team had some of their finest seasons throughout most of the '90s, the simple fact remains that the team *never* managed to bring home that holy grail of basketball — the NBA Championship — even after repeated trips to the finals. Though the talent of the "4th Quarter Knicks" amazed many and put hope into the hearts of countless fans, the sad fact remains that the *Knicks* couldn't even steal themselves a championship trophy from a blind, deaf and paralyzed street vendor. Along for this depressing ride was former NBA All-Star and 3-point binge shooter, John Starks.

Starks lived through that classic tale of the messed-up kid whose life was going nowhere, got a lucky break and became an All-Star player. The only difference between his story and one you'd see on the Disney Channel is the fact that in John's version there's no climactic championship ending. In 1985, Starks was 19 and in the process of getting dismissed from the Rogers State basketball team because he got arrested for stealing a car stereo. He'd get a second chance with Northern Oklahoma College, but squander that by getting caught smoking marijuana. He'd go on to stock shelves at a local grocery store before getting the break of a lifetime, landing a spot on the Oklahoma State *Cowboys*. However, the rest isn't *all* history, as he would later deal with the deaths of those closest to him due to cancer, or his ongoing visits to see his brother in prison throughout his professional career. Despite the fame, fortune and many posters made out of his famous dunk on Scottie Pippen and Michael Jordan, the truth is that there was still a real man suffering with life and family issues behind all the glitz and glam. *My Life* manages to tell the *real* story with honesty.

■ **COLDBLOODED: A Hardcore Novel** by The Urban Griot AKA Omar Tyree (Simon & Schuster). Good girls fall for bad boys. Though that is quite the blanket statement, there's no denying that everybody knows at least one worthy example of a good girl/bad boy couple. Whitney fell for (and got slapped up by) Bobby, and FBI agent Clarice Starling hungered for the fava bean-flavored love of everybody's favorite cannibal, Dr. Hannibal Lecter. Urban author Omar Tyree returns under the pen name of The Urban Griot to tell another hard-hitting story from the streets in the same vein as his prior literary hits, *For the Love of Money*, *Single Mom and Fly Girl*.

The story stars your average good girl. Janeia Goode (note the pun-tastic name) is a beautiful young woman who is set on obtaining her college degree. She's enrolled as a psychology major at Chicago State University and well on her way to academic success, that is, until she meets Warren Hamilton. On the streets, Warren is known as "Malasses" or "Moe" (for short). He's a paid killer and though Janeia knows that a life with him would be dangerous, she finds his mystery to be undeniably sexy and loves him regardless of his profession. However, with the kind of life Moe leads, things obviously won't go as smoothly as possible and Jan begins to learn that not only is he a cold-blooded killer, but he's also quite the womanizer. Moe winds up in the emergency room while on the job and it motivates him to reconsider his lifestyle, his enemies and his loyalty to "the hustle."



Will he turn his life around in time and live happily ever after with his goody-two shoes college girl, or is he too late? Remember, in the streets, happy endings aren't guaranteed.

■ **SISTER GOT GAME** by Leslie Esdaile (Dafina Books). Just as there's brothas out there who are considered playas because of the way their good looks and over confident swagger can manipulate the minds and hearts of all types of females, there are sistas out there who carry a virtual man-taming whip. These honeys manage to get what they want, when they want it, from any man they choose — no matter what the price. They've got mad game and they know how to use it. Leslie Esdaile, author of *Through The Storm* and a 2003 Romance Slam Jam *Emma Award* winner for "Best Romantic Suspense," has penned a

sexy, romantic and outright humorous story about a particular sister who's got plenty of game up her sleeve.

Centered in the "City of Brotherly Love" — Philadelphia, Pennsylvania — Darien Jackson is a young professional who is new to town and about to get into quite a mess. She works for a public relations firm and is doing quite well, but living way beyond her means. A 'slammin' apartment, hot car and fly clothes all add up to one major pain when Darien loses her job. Though, rather than compromise some of her material wealth, she begins charging up a storm and maxes out her credit cards. Her older sisters realize what Ms. Jackson's gotten herself into and refuse to bail her out this time. When repo man Maxwell Ferguson comes to tow her *Diamante*, she uses all of her good looks and charm to win his heart and he gives her one last chance to keep her belongings. What she doesn't know is that Maxwell is *actually* the CEO of the PR Company he's hooked her up with. Mr. Ferguson's family isn't too keen on Darien's ways, but he feels he may be in love. Will Darien play her game and win? Or will the *real* repo man come and collect?

■ **IF YOU WALKED IN MY SHOES** by Gwynne Forster (Dafina Books). In life, we don't always consider the consequences of the decisions we make and how they might affect those we love. This is something that author Gwynne Forster tackles frequently in her work. She dealt with issues of love, sibling rivalry and adultery in her critically acclaimed novel, *When Twilight Comes*, and sets foot on even more serious emotional grounds with her latest work, *If You Walked In My Shoes*.

In this story, Coreen Holmes Treadwell is a successful career woman, wife and mother of two stepsons. However, even though on the outside she seemingly lives a perfectly healthy life, on the inside she's still emotionally torn by her past. At age 17, Coreen was the victim of a brutal date rape that left her with an unwanted pregnancy that ended in adoption. She's never been able to shake the pain that stemmed from that incident, and still lives with the guilt and paranoia that comes with never having known her daughter. As it turns out, her paranoia wasn't totally unfounded, because at age 31, Frieda Davis — Coreen's daughter — has sought out to destroy her biological mother's life. The revenge she seeks stems from her being raised by an abusive adoptive father. Hence, she wants to ruin her mother's image as a caring public figure and head of a social welfare agency. This is definitely not the type of family reunion anyone would really look forward to — one filled with vengeance, betrayal, seduction and a shocking ending that will alter the lives of everyone involved. •