

books

THREE WRITERS TO WATCH

The buzz is building for these debut books by a trio of novelists. Even before publication of their work, the writers earned praise from literary critics and authors ranging from Sapphire to Joyce Carol Oates. Here we introduce their stories to you BY LAURINA GIBBS

KALISHA BUCKHANON, 27 (top)

DAY JOB: The former language-arts teacher is currently writing full-time and volunteers as a mentor with the PEN American Center's Prison Writing Program in New York.

THE NOVEL: *Upstate* (St. Martin's Press, \$19.95)

THE STORY: Buckhanon chronicles the ten-year correspondence between Antonio, imprisoned for murdering his father, and Natasha, the girlfriend in his Harlem neighborhood. The letters begin when they're 16 years old and trace the transformation of the couple from naive teenagers into adults grappling with complicated life choices.

OUR VERDICT: *Upstate* is a sensitive portrayal of young lovers that moves beyond gritty urban fiction. The novel's inspiring story has a message of hope that's sure to connect with readers.

ESI EDUGYAN, 27 (center)

DAY JOB: Full-time writer in Calgary, Alberta, Canada

THE NOVEL: *The Second Life of Samuel Tyne* (Amistad, \$24.95)

THE STORY: Edugyan's atmospheric horror yarn follows Samuel Tyne, an ambitious middle-aged Black bureaucrat seeking opportunity, who uproots his family from cosmopolitan Calgary, moving them to rural, predominantly White Aster. He soon discovers that Aster is a town teeming with mystical secrets that take hold of Chloe and Yvette, his stone-faced, terrifying twin daughters.

OUR VERDICT: You'll sleep with all the lights on after reading this provocative thriller.

ROSALYN STORY, 54 (bottom)

DAY JOB: Violinist with the Fort Worth Symphony, Texas

THE NOVEL: *More Than You Know* (Agate, \$24.95)

THE STORY: This touching tale examines the tense marriage between L.J. Tillman, a talented saxophonist, and Olivia, an aspiring singer and beauty-shop owner. Their 25-year union shatters when L.J. reveals a shameful secret he has kept since childhood.

OUR VERDICT: *More Than You Know* is a moving grown-up read featuring well-drawn and familiar characters. This is the perfect choice for your next book club pick. ▸

