

ALL MY FRIENDS

Marie NDiaye, translated from French by Jordan Stump

1. NDiaye’s writing is characterized by everyday circumstances infused or disrupted by the unusual. In each story, what shape does the surreal, supernatural, or uncanny take, and how does it impact the narrative?
2. The narrator of “All My Friends” asks, “If my house schemes, can it not sometimes and by chance scheme in harmony with my desires?” (pg. 25). What do characters’ relationships to nonhuman beings (houses, mountains, etc.) suggest about their own desires?
3. The stories in this collection span a range of settings. What role does place play in each story? What other forms of context are shared or withheld from the reader?
4. How does each story define “a better life,” and how are the promises, costs, and realities associated it portrayed?
5. In the first story in *All My Friends*, a character isolated from his family seeks community with a group of outsiders. How are similar feelings—of isolation and desire for community—at play in each story?
6. “You ought to see something,” says a character in “The Death of Claude François” (pg. 35). How does NDiaye’s use of restricted viewpoint limit what the reader can see or understand? Conversely, what does narrative proximity make more clear to the reader?
7. In each narrative, how do first impressions of characters change? Considered together, what do the stories suggest about the ability to know someone else or oneself?



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