

A quest for connection, identity  
and solace

# Companions in Fate

SABRINE INGABIRE

In this coming-of-age novel we follow Rwandan-Belgian Ajali during her final year at secondary school in Ghent. In many ways, she is a typical teenager. The book depicts life at school, youthful infatuations and drunken parties. But as the child of Rwandan refugees, she also has difficulty finding her place in society; a cultural divide alienates Ajali from her environment. She doesn't feel entirely at home with her white classmates, but at the same time experiences a sense of distance from her family, especially from her older brother Benjamin, who seems to move comfortably in a world in which Ajali has to work so very hard. She feels at her best alone in her room, where there's no need to explain herself all the time: why she likes Bon Iver and not Jay-Z, why she feels awkward around black girls and why her discomfort becomes increasingly harder to bear.

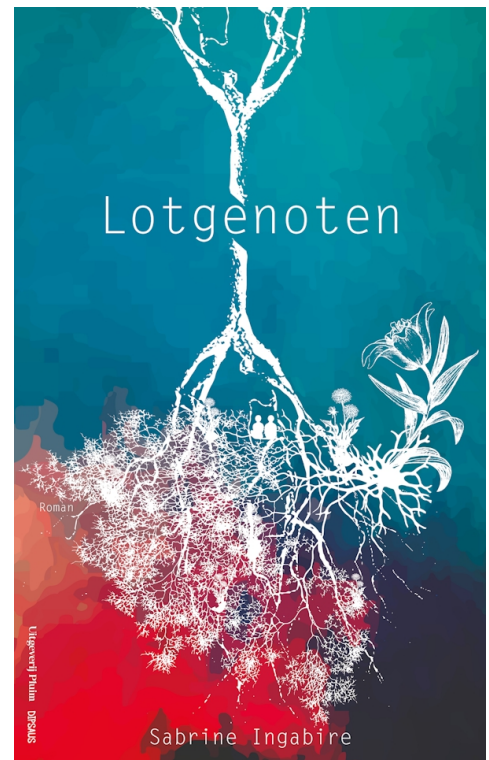
**Beautiful, raw and honest. Her refreshing style of writing is uniquely her own.**

NAOMI PIETER

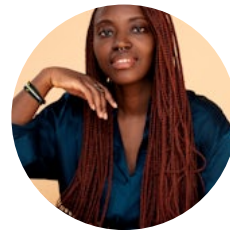
When Benjamin moves back to the family home and hardly ever leaves his room, their parents have difficulty recognizing his depression. Ajali tries to help her brother and to get close to him again, but struggles to talk about her own feelings.

Not a single word is wasted in 'Companions in Fate'. In a style both clear and incisive, Ingabire has written a relevant and necessary tale. Ajali's nerve-wracking, depressive teenage years are convincingly described. The author subtly deals with subjects like growing up, trauma, connection with an unknown country, and love in a family that struggles both with silence and the past. The result is a brittle and honest story that you'll want to read in one sitting.

**Ingabire puts into words what it's like to grow up in a world that sees you as a stranger. Authentic and open, she dissects**



## AUTHOR



**Sabine Ingabire** (b. 1995) is a Rwandan-Belgian journalist, writer and editor-in-chief of Lilith Magazine. She also regularly writes columns about pop culture for the Dutch podcast Dipsaus. Previously, she worked as an editor and reporter for NRC and as a columnist for De Morgen and MO\* Magazine. She writes in both French and Dutch. Her first young adult novel *Le chemin vers le bonheur* was published in 2016.

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the complexity and layering of (Ajali's)  
identity.

VPRO GIDS