

Graywolf Press announces



**WALKING ON COWRIE SHELLS**  
STORIES  
By **Nana Nkweti**

**Publication date: June 1, 2021** / Contact: Caroline Nitz / [nitz@graywolfpress.org](mailto:nitz@graywolfpress.org) / 651-641-0077  
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**A virtuosic debut collection that roves across genres and styles, by a finalist for the AKO Caine Prize**

**Advance Praise for *Walking on Cowrie Shells***

A Most Anticipated Book for 2021 by **The Millions** and **The Rumpus**

“Nana Nkweti’s exuberant collection is full of stories that weave together love and friendship, horror and comedy, all with great deftness.”—**Yaa Gyasi, author of *Transcendent Kingdom* and *Homegoing***

“Funny and heartbreaking and wonderfully ferocious.”  
—**Carmen Maria Machado, author of *In the Dream House***

“It would be impossible to overstate how much I love this book, and its author.”  
—**Karen Russell, author of *Orange World***

“*Walking on Cowrie Shells* is a collection of verve, audacity, and consummate control.”  
—**Kevin Brockmeier, author of *The Ghost Variations***

“Nana Nkweti’s words are dazzlingly energetic, world-ranging and straight-up brilliant.”  
—**Samantha Hunt, author of *The Dark Dark***

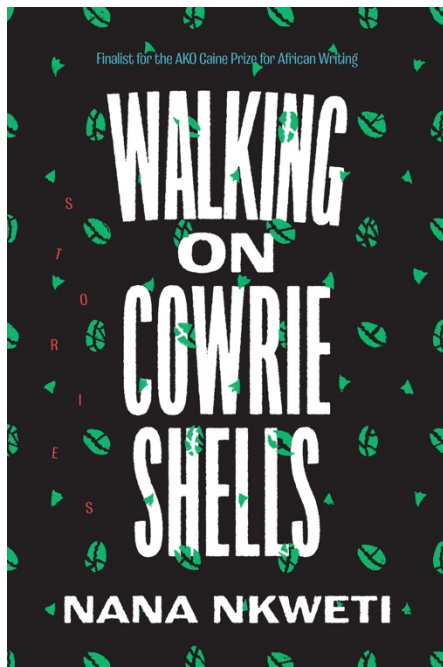
“Magical, funny, inventive and joyous, Nkweti’s tales remind us what storytelling can be.”  
—**Andrew Sean Greer, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Less***

**D**rawing from mystery, horror, myth, and graphic novels, Nana Nkweti showcases the complexity and vibrance of Cameroonian and American cultures in her debut story collection, *Walking on Cowrie Shells*. In the AKO Caine Prize finalist story “It Takes a Village, Some Say,” she skewers racial prejudice and the practice of international adoption, delivering a sly tale about a teenage girl who leverages her adoptive parents to fast-track her fortunes. In “The Devil Is a Liar,” a pastor’s wife struggles with the collision of Western Christianity and her mother’s traditional Cameroonian belief system as she worries about her unborn child. In other stories, Nkweti vaults past realism, upending genre expectations in a satirical romp about a jaded PR professional trying to spin a zombie outbreak in West Africa, and in a mermaid tale about a Mami Wata who forgoes her power by remaining faithful to a fisherman she loves. A dazzling, inventive debut, *Walking on Cowrie Shells* announces the arrival of a superlative new voice.

**Nana Nkweti** is an AKO Caine Prize finalist and alumna of the Iowa Writers’ Workshop. Her work has garnered fellowships from MacDowell, Kimbilio, Ucross, and the Wurlitzer Foundation, among others. She is a professor of English at the University of Alabama.

**June 1, 2021**, Fiction, 176 pages, 5.5 x 8.25, \$16.00, Trade Paperback (978-1-64445-054-3)

## Advance Praise for *Walking on Cowrie Shells*



“Nana Nkweti’s **exuberant** collection is full of stories that weave together love and friendship, horror and comedy, all with great **deftness**. The characters, straddling continents and cultures, carving out a place for themselves, remind me of home. A **wonderful** debut.”—Yaa Gyasi, author of *Transcendent Kingdom* and *Homegoing*

“These genre-leaping stories are **funny** and **heartbreaking** and **wonderfully ferocious**; it’s been ages since I’ve read sentences with this much verve and snap. *Walking on Cowrie Shells* is a delightful, rollicking debut.”—Carmen Maria Machado, author of *Her Body and Other Parties* and *In the Dream House*

“*Walking on Cowrie Shells* is a **virtuosic, kaleidoscopic** debut, one that rejects the paint-by-number templates of storytelling to refresh our sense of what fiction can be and do. Nana Nkweti’s **supersonic prose** breaks the sound barrier as she crisscrosses genres and cultures and continents, from a zombie outbreak in Cameroon to a *kunstlerroman* set at Comic Con. Satirical, playful, keenly critical of the racist stereotypes and received narratives that limit women’s lives, these polyphonic tales are a joy to read. Nkweti’s **ambitious, amphibious** tales capture the diverse and complex experience of “hyphenated-Americans” who, like Nkweti, have deep roots in Africa and America. It would be impossible to overstate how much I love this book, and its author.”—Karen Russell, author of *Orange World*

“Let us thank whoever granted Nana Nkweti her all-access-pass to the human soul, for with it she is able to gain entry into the lives of women and men, children and adults, the damaged and the damaging, the human and the not-quite, all with equal clarity and conviction. *Walking on Cowrie Shells* is a collection of **verve, audacity, and consummate control**. That it is her first book makes it all the more astonishing.”—Kevin Brockmeier, author of *The Ghost Variations*

“Nana Nkweti **trills** and **enchants**. This totally vibrant collection spins a wonder of love and horror. Each fresh universe is more captivating than the next. Always human, *Walking on Cowrie Shells* searches through the real and into the hyperreal. Nkweti’s words are **dazzlingly energetic, world-ranging** and **straight-up brilliant**.”  
—Samantha Hunt, author of *The Dark Dark*

“What an **intoxicating** book! **Magical, funny, inventive** and **joyous**, Nkweti’s tales remind us what storytelling can be.”—Andrew Sean Greer, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Less*



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