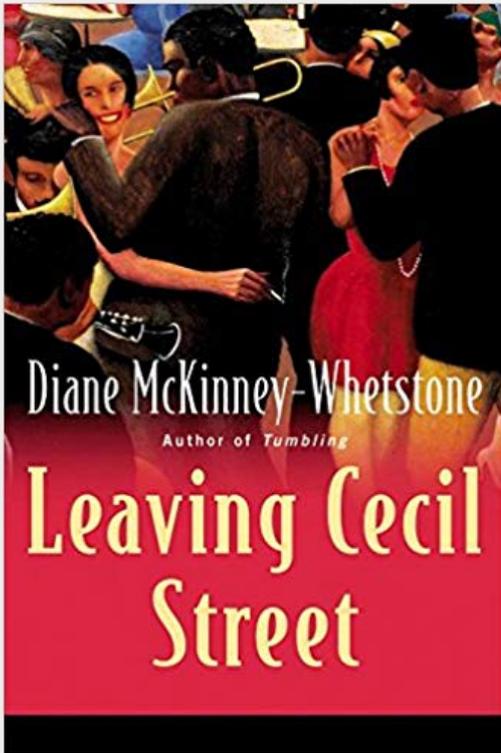


## Leaving Cecil Street by Diane McKinney-Whetstone



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**Author:** Diane McKinney-Whetstone

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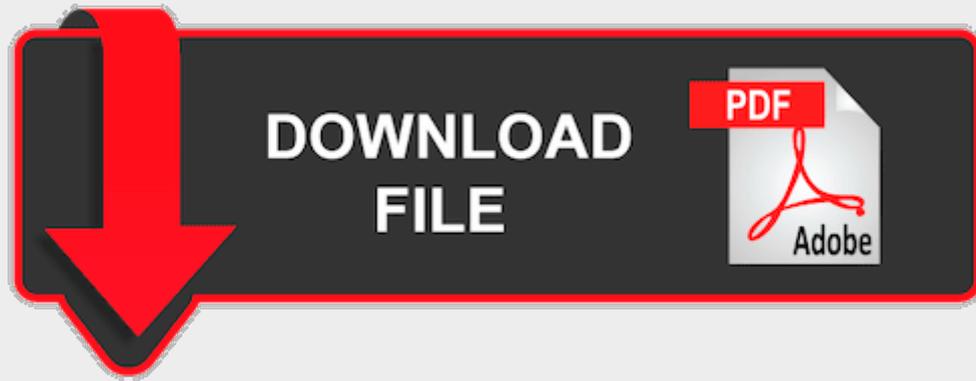
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. . . though the block had long ago made the transition from white to colored to Negro to Black Is Beautiful, the city still provided street cleaning . . . when the children took to the outside and there was the familiar smack, smack of the double-Dutch rope. The sound was a predictable comfort. Like the sounds of the Corner Boys, a mildly delinquent lot consumed with pilfering Kool cigarettes or the feel of a virgin girl's behind. . . .

As she did in her previous novels *Tumbling* and *Blues Dancing*, Diane McKinney-Whetstone once again masterfully renders time and place, character and emotional intensities. It is 1969 and Cecil Street is "feeling some kind of way," so the residents decide to have two block parties this year. These energetic, sensual street celebrations serve as backdrops to the stories of the people on the block. Joe, a long-ago sax player, has turned his eye across the street to a newly arrived young southern beauty even as he is suddenly haunted by memories of his horn-playing nights and his affection for a shy, soft hooker from years ago. Joe's wife, Louise, a licensed practical nurse, is losing her teeth to gum disease and her joy to sensing that Joe's attention has wandered. Their teenage daughter, Shay, is consumed with helping her best friend and next-door neighbor Neet, who has gotten pregnant by a Corner Boy. Neet's mother, Alberta, is shunned by the block because of her immersion in a religion that has no name. As the novel opens, the first block party has ended and a naked woman has secretly taken up residence in Joe and Louise's cellar.

McKinney-Whetstone's superb gift for language and storytelling, for crafting scenes that leave the reader breathless, for distilling complex human emotion in a well-turned phrase, is on full display here. She portrays the community and the times with precision and compassion in an unforgettable story that gets under the skin. As the novel builds to the second block party, the past becomes as immediate as the present, condemnable acts become righteous, and what is tragic is also filled with hope.

This P.S. edition features an extra 16 pages of insights into the book, including author interviews, recommended reading, and more.



## Reviews of the [Leaving Cecil Street](#) by Diane McKinney-Whetstone

### 1. Camper

Very good book, that kept you interested. The characters were realistic. As the story unfolds, you really get into how everyone is connected and you get drawn in more and more with the character's pasts. What a twist to find out how Alberta and Louise were connected, helped explain the friction between them. As you learn more about the character's past, you start to really understand their present. Definitely a good read. I purposely try to be vague so as to not give away the story.

### 2. Thohelm

I just finished reading this book at work and I HAD to review it right now. WHEW! This book made me laugh, cry, and cry some more as I followed the lives of Louise, Joe, Shay, Neet, Deucie, and Alberta. Joe and Louise are happily married and their daughter Shay and Alberta's daughter Neet are best friends from the moment that are toddlers. Neet goes to Shay about all of her problems, but when she starts having sex she is embarrassed and even more embarrassed when she gets in "trouble". The decision that is made will impact them both in ways that couldn't even be imagined. Alberta is a woman who from the time she was born was on her

own. She is ostracized on Cecil street because she is in a cult-like church. This church is her punishment to herself for the past she lived, a past unknown by even her own daughter. No one knows the pain that Alberta has suffered. Joe is torn between his wife and the other love of his life, his music and whether or not to choose the musician's life over Cecil Street. He also has past issues and a secret that could cost him his marriage. Deucie is Alberta's biological mother who comes back to die in a cellar just to be next to Alberta. Will Neet have an abortion? Does Joe leave his wife and Cecil Street? What is Joe's secret? What decision does Neet make about her trouble? What was life like for Alberta before Cecil Street? To find out, you must go out and buy this book NOW! You will not be disappointed!!!

### 3. Hanad

When I read the story last summer, I missed the richness of it all. The second read left me sooooo satisfied that I couldn't read ANYTHING immediately afterwards.

Diane McKinney-Whetstone is masterful for her art of bringing characters, places, and sounds to life! On Cecil Street, you will meet the residents who are so real. The introductions are intense and animated - enabling you to feel their pain, their joy, and their sorrow.

The soulful music that moves from the pages into your heart will create a beat that you never imagined - a heartbeat for Joe, Louise, Shay, Neet, Alberta, and Deucie. These characters will etch indelible prints upon your heart - endearing you to them forever.

Leaving Cecil Street is a MUST read... a MUST hear... a MUST see... a MUST feel... a MUST have. It is sure to soothe your literary soul.

### 4. Usishele

I have read most of Diane McKinney-Whetstone's books, and this one like

the others did not let me down. It is a well crafted, organized story of a very personal nature. It reminds me how neighborhoods used to be, both black and white. Neighbors would share and assist raising each other's children, drink each other's food, and get into one another's business without major repercussions. This is the village that raised many of us in the older portion of the modern generation, before we were raised by the video game and television set. The characters are human, sturdy and accessible. I've seen these people, I know these people, I like these people. This is a very well written and enjoyable book. And I would encourage you to read it if you have a chance.

## 5. FRAY

Diane McKinney Whetstone is one of my favorite authors. I believe I've now read all her novels and can truly say each is absolutely

astounding and satisfying. Not only is she a good storyteller but her style is literary. I have always been drawn to stories set in big racially-mixed cities since I grew up in Chicago. I'm never disappointed with this author. I can't wait until I have a new novel to read. She's realistic and compassionate. I learn much about surviving from her novels.

## 6. Anyshoun

Diane McKinney-Whetstone does an incredible job of weaving the lives and stories of folks on Cecil Street. A masterful storyteller can be found in her previous works, *Tumbling and Blues Dancing*, Diane manages to showcase her storytelling talents again by taking her readers on several journeys at once, through the perspectives of her major characters Louise, Joe, Alberta, Shay and Neet.

Again, All Praises for Cecil Street!

Trinice Speight-Moses

7. Cherry The Countess

Starts kinda slow but just hold on. It gets going and is really good. Always enjoy books by this author !

8. All I can say is Wow. An excellent book. From beginning to the end. It was like being there. Wonderful

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