



# Behind You

*By Jacqueline Woodson*

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FOR USE IN SCHOOLS AND LIBRARIES ONLY. After 15-year-old Jeremiah is mistakenly shot by police, the people who love him struggle to cope with their loss as they recall his life and death, unaware that 'Miah is watching over them.

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## **Behind You By Jacqueline Woodson Bibliography**

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## Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Grade 8-10—In this poignant, stand-alone sequel to the wrenching romance, *If You Come Softly* (Putnam, 1998), Woodson's characters are dealing with grief and picking up the pieces of their lives after the death of 15-year-old Jeremiah (Miah) Roselind. The impact of their loss is revealed through the alternating voices of his white girlfriend, Ellie; basketball teammate, Kennedy; childhood friend, Carlton; and his separated parents. As a year passes and these characters take "a step deeper into their world.... The world they're learning to live in without you," Miah's spiritual voice searches for a final, parting moment to whisper that they are loved so that they can move on into their own futures. With tenderness and compassion, the author exposes the characters' vulnerabilities and offers the hope that they will emerge and grow from this tragic loss. Although the voices are distinct, a quiet, reflective tone pervades the story. Interestingly, each character opens up and changes in some way except Ellie's parents, who espouse liberal views but never accepted their daughter's African-American boyfriend or his friends. Readers who savor tough reality stories as much as happy endings will appreciate this thought-provoking, satisfying novel that offers hope but no easy answers.—*Gerry Larson, Durham School of the Arts, NC*

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From [Booklist](#)

Gr. 7-12. "Even if you turn your back on the world you left, you're still pulled toward it, you're still turning around--always--to look behind you. To make sure everyone's o.k.," says teenage Jeremiah, who first appeared in Woodson's *If You Come Softly* (1998). In this moving sequel, Jeremiah is dead, killed by New York City police bullets. Like the main character in Gary Soto's *Afterlife* (2003), Jeremiah watches over the people he has left behind--his girlfriend, Ellie; his friends; his divorced parents--as each struggles through grief and tries to "keep doing what the living do," ultimately finding new connections with one another and themselves. *Softly* alternates between Jeremiah and Ellie's voices. Here Woodson includes the first-person perspectives of several other characters, and with so many different voices, the narrative becomes crowded, diluting each character's story. Still, Woodson writes with impressive poetry about race, love, death, and what grief feels like--the things that "snap the heart"--and her characters' open strength and wary optimism will resonate with many teens. *Gillian Engberg*

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In a deftly constructed series of first-person reactions and reflections, Woodson reaches back to the events of *If You Come Softly* and explores the grieving and process of moving on for both the mistakenly killed Jeremiah as well as for his family, friends, and white, Jewish girlfriend. "VOYA"

Books with painful subject matter rarely leave the reader longing for more. This one does. "Children's Literature"

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#### **Bradley Simpson:**

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