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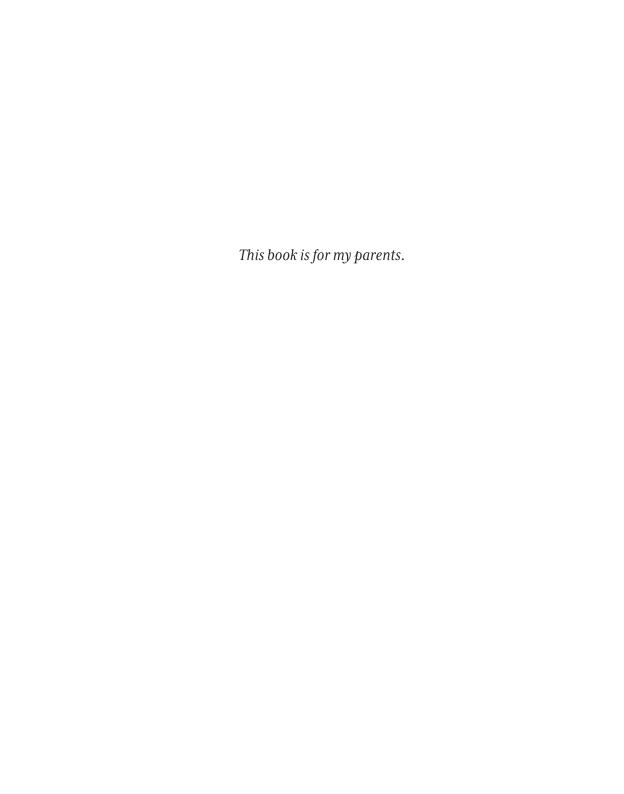
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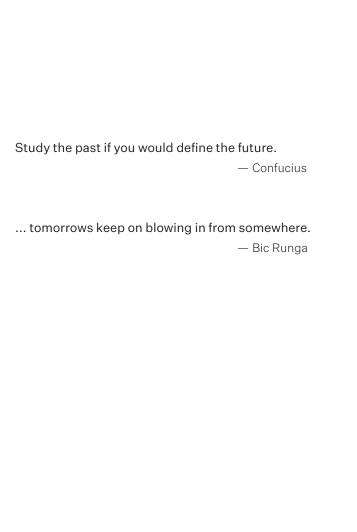
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Utopia? BIG MOOD!

I will use my tongue for good. I say I will because this book needs to start with the future even though the future has always scared me with its metallic fingernails poking through the metaphysical portal come-hithering. Aspiration—and the threat of what we have awakened from the salty ashes of a world gone mad aspiration will bolster my stretch goals. I will use my tongue to taste utopia, and share its delights with my minority brothers and sisters before the unmarked vans arrive to usher me back in time. Each set of curtains I pass through is a sucker punch—a reason to doubt my own optimism. I'm mostly careless in that regard. The future scares me, but it's good to be scared of what I want, even if it means that the more I write, the more I grieve for something I'm not even sure Perhaps I don't belong in utopia—perhaps belongs to me. there isn't a place for me under its many suns and moons, so to be thrown backwards every time we approach the future is history's way of telling me I'm in a loop I should just lean into. I want to know why there isn't a place for me. Perhaps it's because I ask too many questions about who will change the direction of the river. They say I make a fuss of the past as they drag me through it again and again to put me in my place. Can you blame me for attempting to reverse-engineer utopia as a means of survival? All the good in the world is set to expire when its afflictions become too much, when I am a length of string tied to a pole in an open field cut loose from my other end—just left to twist in the wind waiting for someone kind enough to tether me. It doesn't matter who, or to what. It's all progress, I guess—even if there's no way But I'll try—in the number of poems written, in keys to measure it. of songs, in gates torn down between here and wherever I think I said I will. I will belong, believing.