

# FRANCES MENSAH WILLIAMS Readers'

# BOOK CLUB NEWSLETTER



ISSUE NO 8 | July 2020 |

## WELCOME DEAR READER!

It's hard to believe that we're already in July!

I hope you are keeping well and adapting safely to our new normal.

Welcome to new members of our Readers' Club and I invite you to contact me to share your stories. It would be great to hear what everyone is reading and your recommendations for books. You can see my own book recommendation for this month on page 5.

[Drop me a message with any news you'd like to](#) share with the readers' Club.

Stay safe

Frances x

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# The Power of Stories

**Reading books about our different experiences can help unite us in these divisive times**

Growing up, I was a book junkie who read absolutely *everything*! Books were my favourite companions and I would trudge to my tiny local library and literally work my way through the different bookshelves.

I read across all genres: romance, mystery, crime, historical, international. From Agatha Christie to Mills & Boon; P G Wodehouse to courtroom dramas; historical sagas to revolutionary biographies.

“

***The best way to humanise strangers is to show them in all their humanity***



**The little public library that brought me such childhood joy**

In later years, I loved reading books that centred on women overcoming everyday challenges – and usually with a love story at the centre.

I’m often asked to pick a favourite book and, as you can imagine, it’s impossible to do! It’s easier for me to talk about writers who helped to shape my writing ambitions.

I marvelled at how writers like Jilly Cooper built their own worlds – even including a helpful cast list at the front! I loved sagas by Penny Vincenzi that spanned generations and continents. I’ve always preferred uplifting, upbeat tales and I went through a phase of reading nothing but rom coms (thank you, Jill Mansell and Jane Green).

While I would happily read books written through the gaze of white writers, there was always something special about reading stories featuring black female heroines. After reading the book (and watching the film) *Waiting to Exhale*, I became an instant and lifelong fan of Terry McMillan. Books like *How Stella Got Her Groove Back* celebrate women and sisterhood and explore the lives of everyday Black women. It’s fair to say that *Waiting to Exhale* was an inspiration for my latest novel *Imperfect Arrangements*.

As a black British writer trying to find her voice, reading *The Chocolate Run* by Dorothy Koomson was an eye-opener. It was also lovely to discover the international love stories by Ghanaian-Scottish novelist Lesley Lokko through her book *Little White Lies*, partially set in Lomé, Togo.

Stories are powerful things. Because of books, I’ve learned to see the world through the eyes of others and reading so widely has helped build my curiosity about the world and my own approach to storytelling. We live in strange and divisive times, but I have often found that the best way to humanise strangers is to show them in all their humanity.

To my mind, books can do this best.

**[Write in and share your](#) story about the role books have had in your life**

## A Taste of Ghana

Ghana features in almost all my novels. It's a beautiful country with a rich history and blessed with diverse cultures that contribute to its dazzling array of food, music, arts and people. Here are a couple of dishes from Ghanaian chef and food writer [Patti Sloley](#)



## My New Logo!

### Do you need a fresh visual brand to kick off a new venture?

We all need to refresh and update our image from time to time.

My new logo was designed by the talented Nathan Dupigny of [Plug My Brand](#).

Nathan started by asked me questions about what I wanted my brand to convey. Reflecting on what I want readers to experience with my books and how I'd like them to feel as they engage with me was a useful exercise.

After several suggestions, I settled on this logo. I think it's upbeat and captures the warmth I love to bring to my work. As an avid scribbler, I also liked the flourish of the artistic scribble below the letters.

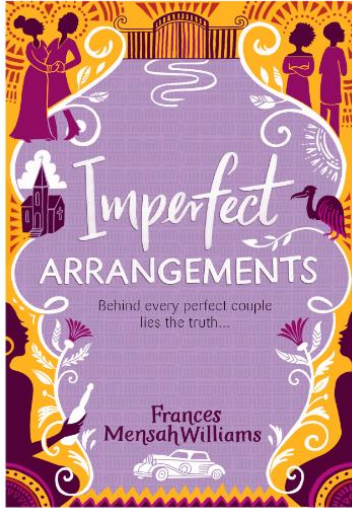
Nathan offers a friendly, efficient and very affordable service. Contact him to see what he can do for you.



Design by

[www.plugmybrand.net](http://www.plugmybrand.net)

# Introducing Lyla...



My latest novel, [\*Imperfect Arrangements\*](#), tells the story of three sister-friends: Theresa, Maku and Lyla, who are navigating life, relationships, culture and ambition.

When we first meet...

## Lyla

Lyla bit hard on her lip to suppress a groan as another shaft of pain shot through her lower abdomen. Despite the faint kernel of hope she nursed every month, the familiar cramps that once again proved her unfitness to be a mother were really no surprise. Head bowed, she sat motionless on the ornately carved wooden stool and waited for the spasm to ease before attempting to stand up. Not content with trumpeting her ongoing

infertility, the cramps were often so intense that she was in danger of fainting.

‘Low blood pressure, Mrs Amoah,’ had been the opinion of the doctor she’d reluctantly consulted after almost keeling over during an afternoon meeting with her sales team. ‘Your menstrual cycles are very heavy and have caused a deficiency in your iron levels.’

Another deficiency to add to the others, Lyla thought bitterly. Her polite smile had vanished when the doctor added, ‘If you don’t mind me saying, Mrs Amoah, you are extremely slim. Perhaps we should arrange for you to have a full check-up? It will help if we can investigate this a bit more thoroughly to see how we can help make that pregnancy happen.’

If ‘deficiency’ was bad, then ‘investigate’ was even worse and Lyla had barely suppressed a shudder. She didn’t need any investigating, thank you very much, no matter how well intentioned. That was the last visit she’d paid to the doctor and she had no plans for another.

The pain slowly subsided and she sat up and pushed the tangle of braids away from her face. A quick glance at her watch confirmed that it was time to start making dinner. Kwesi would be home in an hour – or not. Predicting her husband’s behaviour was an exercise she really should have given up long ago. As the General Manager of the largest retail store in Accra’s central shopping mall, Kwesi could cite an abundance of excuses for why he was regularly late home from work; from awkward customers who needed soothing – apparently for hours on end, in some cases – to incompetent staff in need of additional training. And if it wasn’t his workers that kept him busy after hours, it was one or other of his numerous suppliers demanding to be entertained at one of Accra’s popular nightclubs, or insisting on personal visits at the oddest times— all of which, Kwesi assured her, formed a vital part of his relationship-building responsibilities. Whatever relationships were being cultivated, Lyla thought as she trudged upstairs to change into one of the simple caftans she preferred to wear at home, they certainly weren’t with his wife.

She tried, and failed, to remember the last time Kwesi had come straight home, and she winced as another dart of pain stabbed at her stomach and slowed her footsteps to a shuffle. Pushing open the door to the bedroom, she sank with relief onto the corner of the bed. Even with no guarantee that her husband

would appear, she had to cook dinner. It would be just her luck not to bother and then have to deal with his heavy sighs and reproachful silence at finding no warm pot of rice and stew waiting for him.

Kwesi was firmly in the I'm-a-traditionalist-and-I-don't-do-the-cooking camp when it came to preparing meals, ignoring the fact that Lyla's demanding senior managerial job often had her working long hours. His love of tradition, however, stopped just short of taking on the role of sole provider and foregoing the healthy salary and bonuses Lyla's job brought home.

She fell back against the pillows and stroked the silky quilt covering the huge mahogany-framed bed Kwesi had insisted they invest in with a wry smile. *A bed*. It was almost laughable given how little time he managed to spend in it, at least with her. Who knew what he got up to when she wasn't in the house? If their former housemaid's stories – before Kwesi had peremptorily sacked her – were to be believed, the master of the house wasn't averse to bringing female guests home in Lyla's absence.

**Don't miss out! Buy your copy of *Imperfect Arrangements* or download it now!**

Available now in ebook and paperback from [Amazon](#) and other online retailers!

## **YOUR BOOK REVIEW MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE...**

If you have read and enjoyed *Imperfect Arrangements*, *From Pasta to Pigfoot* or *From Pasta to Pigfoot: Second Helpings*, please do me a massive favour and post a short review on Amazon.

Even a couple of lines explaining why you liked a book will encourage someone to give it a try. There are so many good books out there that a positive review can give a tremendous boost to writers like me.

Thank you!!

Here's a helpful link to [post your review on Amazon](#)!\*

**\* For readers outside the UK, please use your country Amazon.com website**

# DOWNLOAD YOUR FREE BOOK NOW!

Have you downloaded your free companion novella called *Sweet Mercy* yet? It's exclusive to members of our Club. Do [send me your thoughts](#) to share with our readers!



## *Sweetness comes at a price...*

When sweet-natured Mercy married successful businessman and aspiring politician, Lucas Peterson, she abandoned her media career to focus on her husband and raising her son, Hakeem. But with the country now hurtling towards elections, Lucas's eye is on the ministerial position he craves within the Party and when Mercy's best friend, Araba – the niece of the Party leader – returns to Ghana, Mercy refuses to see what's obvious to everyone...

Collect your free copy of *Sweet Mercy* [HERE](#)

## WHAT I'M READING ...

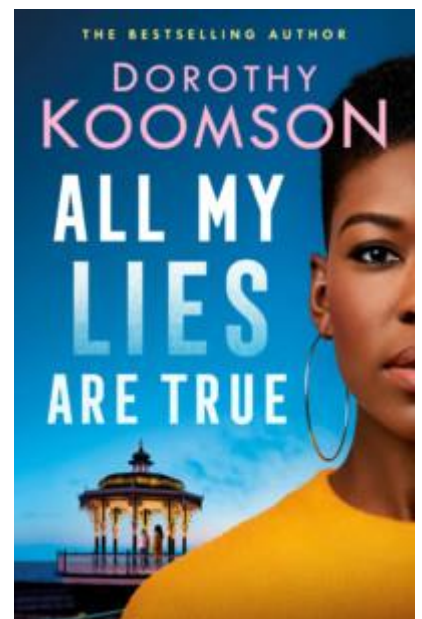
### **All My Lies Are True by Dorothy Koomson**

Remember the novel *The Ice Cream Girls*?

Written by my lovely friend, the international best-selling author, Dorothy Koomson, *All My Lies are True* is the long awaited sequel.

Ten years after the end of the first book, we meet Verity, daughter of Serena, one of the famous ice cream girls who were put on trial following the murder of their boyfriend. In *All My Lies are True* we see the impact of Serena and Poppy's actions in the first book played out in the lives of their families.

A love story packed with mystery, suspense, drama, and unforgettable characters – you simply must read this book!



**Write in and share what's at the top of your reading list!**

# EVENTS



## In Conversation with... Frances Mensah Williams

Presented by Landé Belo and curated by Landé Belo and BeEbop Curaçao, this interview celebrates black female voices in theatre.

The theme tune is *Tula's Tambú* by Jair-Rôhm Parker Wells.

Edited by Colin Guthrie. [Listen here](#)



I wanted to share this AMAZING YouTube review of my latest novel *Imperfect Arrangements* from the book blogging site Pull Down the Moon

Thank you so much, Sandra!

Watch the video at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ebAKZHcl5E>

# COMING UP...

## Embracing Change & Moving Forward

Raise Your Vibrations | **ONLINE RETREATS**

"It's Time For A New Empowering Breakthrough"

A circular portrait of Frances Mensah Williams CBE, a Black woman with short dark hair, wearing a pink top and a necklace, resting her chin on her hand.

**Frances Mensah Williams CBE**  
Speaker & Author

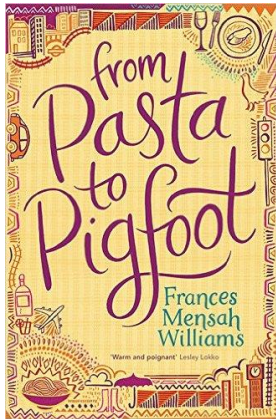
**Saturday July 25th 2020**  
**10 am to 6 pm (UTC +4)**

Transforming Your Passion Into a Career

To register and get the zoom link [please click here](#) or  
email: [raiseyourvibrationsteam@gmail.com](mailto:raiseyourvibrationsteam@gmail.com)

This Retreat is **FREE** to attend, and it is open to the public  
To Pay it Forward, donations to **Pencils of Promise** are encouraged.

# Have you read...?

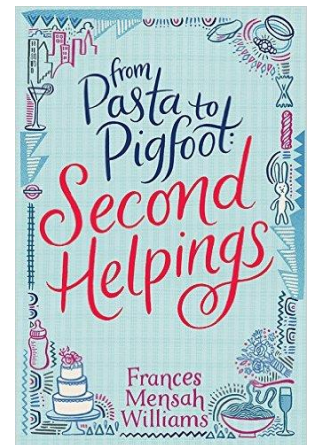


A novel set in London and Ghana following the mishaps of under-achieving PA, Faye Bonsu. On a mission to find love, a disastrous night out leaves pasta-fanatic Faye's romantic dreams in tatters and underscores her alienation from her African heritage. Leaving her cosy middle-class life in London's leafy Hampstead to find out what she's missing, Faye is whisked into the hectic social whirlpool of Ghana where she meets a host of characters. Transported into a world of food, fun and sun, and faced with choices she had never thought possible, Faye is forced to discover that no matter how far you travel, you can't find love until you find yourself.



**'Brilliant characters...very true to life and you got a glimpse into Ghanaian life and its culture.'**

Pasta fanatic Faye Bonsu seems to have it all; a drop-dead gorgeous and successful boyfriend, a burgeoning career as an interior designer and a rent-free mansion in leafy Hampstead to call home. But with all her friends shifting into yummy mummy mode, a man who seems to have no desire to put a ring on it, tricky clients, and an attractive and very single boss, things are not quite as straightforward as they might appear. Hoping to escape from her suddenly complicated life and revive her wilting romance, Faye returns to sunny Ghana for what she hopes will be the time of her life. But life doesn't always offer second chances and when disaster strikes, she is forced to confront the biggest question of her life and to make a choice that comes with consequences she will have to live with forever.



[Paperback and ebook versions available online](#)

[Get in touch](#) – *I'd love to hear from you!*

*Frances*

Instagram: francesmensahw

Twitter: @FrancesmensahW

FB: facebook.com/francesmensahwilliams

To unsubscribe from the FMW Readers' Book Club,  
[contact me](#)



*A final thought...*

"If you only read the books that everyone else is reading, you can only think what everyone else is thinking."

– Haruki Murakami