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Based on the true story of Belle da Costa Greene, a woman who defied all odds to carve out a destiny of her own choosing, this is a richly imagined novel bursting with atmosphere, lush period detail, and many unforgettable characters. New York in the 1900s. A young girl fascinated by rare books defies all odds and becomes the director of one of the countrys most prestigious private libraries. It belongs to the magnate J. P. Morgan, darling of the international aristocracy and one of the citys richest men. Flamboyant, brilliant, beautiful, Belle is among New York societys most sought after intellectuals. She also hides a secret. Although she looks white, she is African American, the daughter of a famous black activist who sees her desire to hide her origins as the consummate betrayal. Torn between historys ineluctable imperatives and the freedom to belong to the society of her choosing, Belles drama, which plays out in a violently racist America, is one that resonates forcefully, and illuminatingly even today. The fruit of years of research and interviews, Alexandra Lapierras magnificent novel recounts the struggles, victories, and heartbreaks of a woman who is free, astonishingly determined, daring, and fully, exuberantly alive.

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