

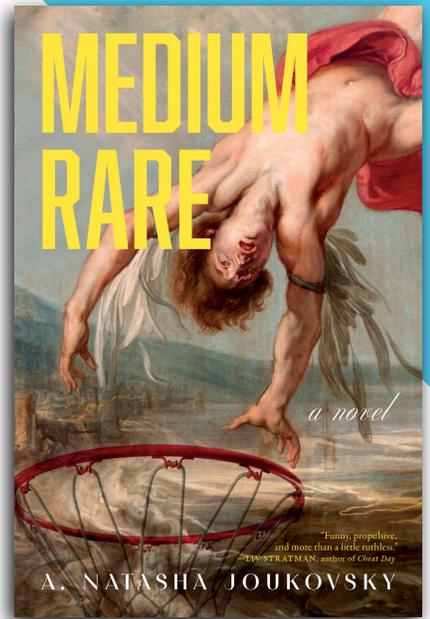
MEDIUM RARE

A Novel

A. Natasha Joukovsky

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“ Funny, propulsive, and more than a little ruthless, *Medium Rare* is a shrewd interrogation of the American political class, the attention economy, and the Millennial worldview's inherent contradictions. It's also tremendous fun. A. Natasha Joukovsky's prose moves along a high-speed rail of exquisite wit and incisive observation. I could not stop reading.”
 — Liv Stratman, author of *Cheat Day*

“ Joukovsky fillets the American dream with the razor-sharp knife it deserves. *Medium Rare* is a brilliant delight. I devoured it.” —Isabel Kaplan, author of *NSFW*

“ Lovers of sports, political intrigue, and mythology will enjoy deciphering characters, motives, and plot in this captivating, creative novel.” — *Booklist*

INTRODUCTION

From the author of *The Portrait of a Mirror*, a modern tragicomedy transforms the myth of Icarus into a blazing romp through bureaucracy, B-list fame, and college basketball...

Phil is an ordinary mid-level Washington lobbyist until the spring of 2019, when Phil's picks for the NCAA March Madness Tournament start panning out, and heads begin to turn his way. He really may do it: predict a perfect bracket, for a billion-dollar prize.

At first, Cassandra is just along for Phil's soaring rise—she had foreseen it happening, after all. Despite Cassandra never much liking him, she recognizes in Phil the making of a legend worthy of the highest art. What Cassandra fails to predict, though, is just how much she'd grow to care about Phil's wife, Raleigh—and that the grandest narrative arcs sometimes unfold at the steepest of personal costs.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *Medium Rare* depicts several “arenas”—sports, politics, Hollywood. What do these arenas have in common? How do they diverge?
2. How do the characters' formal roles and affiliations influence their behaviors, relationships, and decisions?
3. Is the plot propelled more by luck or skill? Would you rather be lucky or good?

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4. How does fame change Phil? How does it change those around him?
5. Cassandra claims that “If you want the world to pay attention to an extraordinary woman, you have to tell the story of an ordinary man.” Do you agree? Why or why not?
6. The novel is billed as a modern retelling of the myth of Icarus, but a number of other mythical characters are also at play: Phaethon, Cassandra, Midas. What is the role of narrative and myth itself in the story?
7. Conversely, all of the basketball games cited in the novel are real. Several characters are fictionalized versions of public figures. What is the role of history here?
8. What is the difference between prophesy and probability in the novel? Do you trust one more than the other in your own life?
9. Is Cassandra telling the truth? Do you believe her? If she’s credible, why is she credible? If not, why not?
10. The novel’s title, *Medium Rare*, is used in a number of different ways. How many can you find? How do these various interpretations intersect and deviate?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A. NATASHA JOUKOVSKY is the author of *The Portrait of a Mirror*. Her writing has been published in *Literary Hub*, *Electric Lit*, *The Common*, and *Still Alive*. Natasha holds a BA in English from the University of Virginia and an MBA from New York University’s Stern School of Business. She lives in Washington, DC.

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