

# **The Blue Book**

by

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## **Synopsis**

In the wee hours of a steamy morning in the year 1910, a collection of “sporting women” assemble in the back room of a rundown Storyville saloon after the funeral and second line for another prostitute.

Over the next seventy-five minutes, the women, whose names are among those in *The Blue Book*, the guide that was published between 1900 and 1917 and listed the over one thousand of the women working in the bordellos. One by one, they tell the stories of how they came to be in what was and is the only legally-sanctioned red-light district in American history.

There’s **VIOLA**, a “trick baby” who grew up in a brothel and is now in the life; **CAMELIA**, a victim of sexual violence who rose to become a successful madam; Hazel, a wild, crude, rough-hewn woman from the Arkansas backwoods; **SARAH**, a wandering soul who works on the street called the “Jew Colony;” **UNICE**, the hopeless mattress whore who lingers a dark step from her demise; **BELLE**, one of the many lesbians who work the District’s sex trade. **JANE**, a beauty who loses herself memories and an opium haze; and **RUBY**, who is growing too old with no place else to go.

Two other characters orbit these women: **THE ROUNDER**, a street-wise sport but a bit of a fool; and **THE LADY OF THE EVENING**, an undefined presence who drifts through without being seen and rarely being heard. All the while, bottles are passed and a jass band plays in the saloon on the other side of the wall.

The women of “The Blue Book” don’t simply act and interact. They relate their narratives: tragic, comic, brutal, kind, redemptive. They share their secrets. And they reveal their parts beyond the place that is driven by the value of the pleasure it offered.