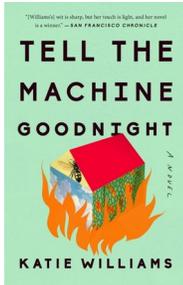# Books by the Stack

Tell the Machine Goodnight by Katie Williams

A woman whose job it is to help people find happiness finds a challenge in her own son, who seems to get the most joy out of being unhappy.

Why you'll like it: *Near future tech. Moving. Endearing characters.*

About the Author: Katie Williams's short fiction has appeared in The Atlantic, American Short Fiction, Prairie Schooner, Subtropics, and elsewhere. Williams earned her MFA from the Michener Center for Writers at the University of Texas at Austin. She teaches writing and literature at Academy of Art University in San Francisco. She is the author of two young adult novels, The Space Between Trees and Absent. This is her first novel for adults.

Questions for Discussion

1. Would the novel have been more or less successful if told from just one point of view? Which characters did you find the most compelling?

2. How would life be different in a world where it was possible to buy a scientifically proven path to happiness, factoring in that it's presumably an expensive test?

3. Was if fair for Pearl to swab Rhett against his wishes if she just wanted to make her son happy?

4. Do you think the Apricity machine altered to tell you what would make you more powerful would be as popular as the original? Does being powerful mean being happy?

5. What do you think some unintentional effects of this technology would be?

6. Would you want to know if you got an asterisk on your Apricity report?

7. Do you think one's person's Apricity report could negatively affect someone else's? For example, the man who cut his twin brother out of his life was happy but how did it impact his twin?

8. What do you think Val's caseworker was looking for on her mandatory Apricity reports? If she didn't set her mother on fire, why would she ask for a longer sentence?

9. Calla Pax became famous for her bloody death scenes that undoubtedly left a mark on her. Is it fair for her to potentially sacrifice her happiness for the enjoyment of others?