



BOOK RELEASE

I & I George Elliott Clarke

Poetry/Verse Novel
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“Gothic in romance, grotesque in its depictions, and gaudy in plot.”

Passion, rape, murder — *I & I* opens with Betty Brown and Malcolm Miles falling in love in Halifax. She is the pampered daughter of a middle-class mixed marriage; he is a young boxing sensation with parasitic parents. When Betty’s father rejects Malcolm, the young couple find their own path, eventually setting out for Corpus Christi, Texas, where Betty will attend college.

Malcolm is uprooted from the world of boxing and his budding fame as Betty becomes immersed in her studies, unwittingly attracting the unwanted attention of her lecherous English professor. Tragedy and bloodshed ensue; an eye-for-an-eye justice is meted with gut-wrenching brutality. Propelled into adult independence through the idealism of love, Betty and Malcolm are confronted by the grave realities of sexism, racism, and the American justice system.

True to form, Clarke’s poetry throbs with musicality, echoing the rhythms of blues, jazz, and contemporary rock. The imagery is visceral at times, but this baseline is balanced by riffs of loveliness, eloquence, and glimmering light.

*Into a hedonistic Eden,
The unaccustomed gilding of light
Granting everything a gold crust.*

George Elliott Clarke was born in Windsor, Nova Scotia, a seventh-generation Canadian of African-American and Mi’kmaq Amerindian heritage. He holds three degrees in English: a B.A. Honours from the University of Waterloo, an M.A. from Dalhousie University, and a Ph.D. from Queen’s University. In addition to being a poet, playwright, and literary critic, Clarke is the E.J. Pratt Professor of Canadian Literature at the University of Toronto. As a writer, George Elliott Clarke has published in a variety of genres: verse collections, verse-novels, verse-dramas, verse-operas, screenplays, and fiction. He has received the Governor General’s Award for Poetry and the Martin Luther King Jr. Achievement Award among numerous other national and international awards and accolades. His poetry has been translated into Chinese, Turkish, and Romanian.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For review copies, author interviews, or publication excerpts, please contact Susan Baker at sbaker@gooselane.com or call (888) 926.8377.

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