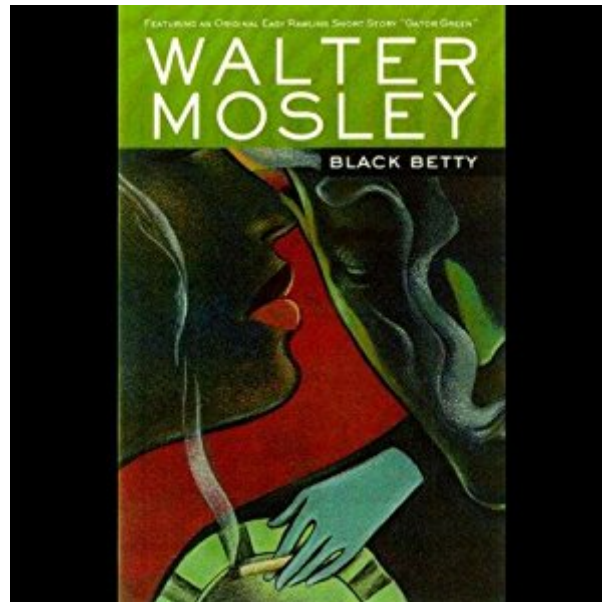




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Black Betty: An Easy Rawlins Mystery



Synopsis

1961: Kennedy is in the White House. King is marching down South. It's a new day for blacks in America--but many black men and women are still living hard and desperate lives. Easy Rawlins is one of these, so when he's offered \$400 to track down one Elizabeth Eady, a.k.a. "Black Betty," he readily agrees. 6 cassettes. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Walter Mosley doesn't just write mysteries. He creates a historical landscape peopled with vibrant and authentic characters who like most of us are flawed and lacking in some way. "Black Betty" is Mosley at his best. The mystery is enthralling and many layered, the atmosphere electric, and the villains exquisitely evil. The time is 1961 the era of Martin Luther King, John Kennedy, and the beginning of The Civil rights movement. Easy Rawlings is raising two adopted children on his own, and his secret real-estate empire is sinking. He has no idea how to solve his financial problems until a sleazy private eye Saul Lynx approaches him with a job. Lynx offers Easy \$200 to track down a former acquaintance of his, Elizabeth Eady, aka Black Betty. Betty a beautiful and sensual woman has vanished from her wealthy employer's home in Beverly Hills. Easy's search for Betty will uncover a trail of chaos and murder. To make matters worse, Easy's psychopathic best friend Mouse is also out of prison determined to find and execute the man who betrayed him. However, this book is much more than a murder mystery; it is a journey into the heart of racial bigotry and the paradox that is the human race. The language is vibrant and moving: On the bus there were mainly old people and young mothers and teenagers coming in late to school. Most of them were black people.

Dark-skinned with generous features. Women with eyes so deep that most men can never know them. Women like Betty who'd lost too much to be silly or kind. And there were the children, like Spider and Terry T once were, with futures so bleak it could make you cry just to hear them laugh. Because behind the music of their laughing you knew there was the rattle of chains.

I don't generally like crime fiction. There's a sentence to alienate most of the people reading this review! However for some writers - the great ones - the genre they write in is irrelevant. It cannot be denied that Mosley is a great writer, who has shown equal facility in tough but politically and socially literate crime writing and also in witty and wise post-modern science-fiction. *Black Betty* is a fine demonstration of his craft. His particular skill is in weaving the world into his tales. The mystery is well-constructed and satisfyingly tangled, featuring multiple murders, corruption and racial and class divisions. However the central plot is framed both by the atmosphere of early 1960s America with the rise of the civil rights movement confronting old prejudices, and by the dense web of family and social life within the families of ordinary, mainly (but not entirely) black, working class Americans. In theory Easy Rawlins' role in the investigations in which he is involved is limited to where white men fear to tread - the black community. However the networks of corruption and deceit he uncovers inevitably take him outside this world, in this case into the bizarre and emotionally-stunted world of white land-owners and their complicated relationships with their black and latino servants, as well as a corrupt and racist police force and legal system. Easy is also personally involved - Elizabeth Eady AKA *Black Betty* - the woman whose disappearance he is hired to investigate was a teenage crush of his, a woman who inspires obsession in many, which turns out to be her tragedy.

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