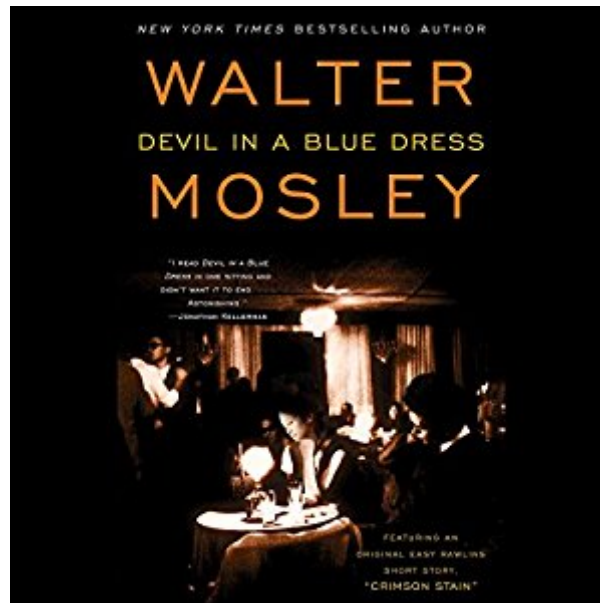




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Devil In A Blue Dress: An Easy Rawlins Mystery



Synopsis

In 1948 Los Angeles, black PI Easy Rawlins is hired to find a blond beauty known to frequent jazz clubs. 2 cassettes. --This text refers to the Audio Cassette edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book presents a good look at the social history of the 1940s and is very engaging. It presents racial inequities in a format that is not likely to be offensive to anyone but shows how prejudice endures far longer than it should. The book was recommended to me by my former philosophy professor, and I am glad. Born and raised in Texas, like Easy Rawlins, I left Texas partly because of the racist attitudes prevalent there in the late 1950s and 1960s. Like Rawlins, I found California less stressful, because the racism was less entrenched and not "in my face" as it had been in Texas. I am Caucasian but participated in the Civil Rights Movement as a student. Many do not realize the degree to which racist language and behaviors are entrenched in our society. Walter Mosley presents these situations and problems in ways that raise our awareness and move us to question ourselves. I am now an Easy Rawlins fan and will read the other books.

After reading *Six Easy Pieces: Easy Rawlins Stories*, a collection of loosely related short stories featuring Easy Rawlins, an African-American detective in LA set in the early 1960s, I wanted to get a sense of where the character began. *Devil in a Blue Dress* is the first of Mosely's series about

the the private eye, and it is classic noir. Set in late 1940s LA, Rawlins just lost his job at an aircraft plant and is looking for work when he is hired to locate a missing woman (the "devil in a blue dress" and femme fatale) for a wealthy area businessman. What follows could just as easily been written by the masters, Chandler or Hammett, as Rawlins soon realizes he has bit off more than he can chew. That Rawlins is an African-American, and dealing with the subtle (and not-so-subtle) racial nuances of the time add texture and depth to the formula that neither Sam Spade nor Philip Marlowe had to deal with. The dialogue isn't as crisp as that of the masters, and some of the characters are a bit one-dimensional (DeWitt Albright is a bit of a character of a Southern cracker, and Mouse - Rawlins' side-kick is a bit vague), but the plot moves at a good clip and kept my attention. I enjoyed *Devil in a Blue Dress*, but compared to his *Socrates Fortlow* - *Always Outnumbered, Always Outgunned* - it is very apparent that this is his early work.

Mosley writes as good a "hard-boiled" detective novel as Parker, MacDonald, etc. The plot is intriguing and the characters are strong. It's hard to believe that this was his first novel. It also provides a realistic view of what it was like to be a person of color in the early 1950s and of the culture in general so is well worth reading for historical perspective.

Mosley's *Devil in a Blue Dress* is several things: social commentary about race relations and prejudices during this time period, noir with voice-over from antihero, crime tale with twists, tension and suspense. There are also some uncomfortable themes scattered throughout. Money is also a recurrent theme, a prime motivator for many characters, and Easy falls prey to this lure as well. Mosley does an effective job of making post-World War 2 Los Angeles come alive with realism and grittiness. Amid the diversity of Los Angeles, we see antihero Easy Rawlins, as he returns from the war, struggling to claim his piece of the American Dream, even if it only to pay next month's mortgage. We are pushed instantly into the first main conflict when Easy is given a seemingly straightforward task of finding the whereabouts of Daphne Monet. However, the man who requests this, Mr. Albright, is shady as they come, and Easy soon learns that the task at hand is more complex and dangerous than Easy would have imagined. Deceit, violence, chaos, and murder ensue. From Easy's voice over, we follow his pursuit of this mysterious woman, as he goes through seedy places and characters. There are times when he questions why he even got involved in the first place, but it seems as though once he is in, there is no other place to go. The set up, and first half of the novel, was much more compelling to me than the second half, which seems to wander and become a bit convoluted. Easy

is over his head in this deception game created by others, but he is quick to use his smarts and instincts to play the game as well. The uncovering of secrets and the big reveal didn't quite have the impact that I'd hoped for, and Easy, while a serviceable main character, sort of flat-lines at some point, and never progresses beyond this. I'm still glad to have read, as this novel is a different take on the genre, and a novel I've heard so much about. I would be interested to pick up another in the series, just to see where the story goes from here.

I first read this book "100 years ago," and I really liked it then. I love Michael Boatman as the reader. He was able to update the edition but keep the 1948 ambiance. Easy Rawlins books are gritty and seem true to life (but how would I know that?).

A friend recommended this as a change of pace from my usual diet of Michael Connelly, Daniel Silva etc. It was definitely that. Devil is a fast paced book about murder and intrigue in post war south L.A.. While minding his own business and trying to make ends meet after being fired from a defense plant, Easy Rawlins gets caught up in a mysterious search for a beautiful white woman who hangs out in the Black bars. Shortly, people start dying and Easy becomes a target for the police as well as for a variety of local shady characters. The story reads well and is very fast moving. Great perspective on the tough life in post war Watts and its environs. My only complaint was that the plot got very complex and it was tough to follow all the characters. If not for the complexity, I probably would have rated the book a five.

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