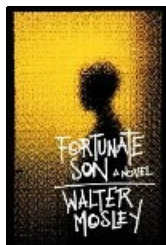


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Book Review
Fortunate Son
A Novel
by [Walter Mosley](#)

Reviewer: [Geoff Wisner](#), Staff Reviewer
Posted: July 6, 2006

It's hard to summarize *Fortunate Son* without giving the wrong idea. You could say, for instance, that it's about two boys who are raised as brothers. The white boy, the son of a doctor, is strong and healthy and good-looking. The black boy, taken in by the doctor after his wife dies in childbirth, is sickly. As time goes by, the white boy moves from one success to the next while the black boy is caught in a spiral of poverty and abuse.

All that is true as far as it goes, but what makes this book so fascinating is how Walter Mosley complicates what might look at first like a simple-minded tale of racial discrimination. For one thing, this is a story of interracial love as much as it's about interracial conflict. The doctor makes a home for Tommy, the black boy, after falling in love with the boy's mother at the hospital. The mixed-race parents and their mixed-race boys live together as a family in everything but name. Tommy's mother turns down the doctor's repeated proposals of marriage, an omission that will have dire consequences later.

The story is complicated, too, by the emotional lives of the two boys. Despite his trials in life, Tommy is a loving child, while Eric, the Nordic-looking son, has an emotional blind spot. Though others love him readily, he cannot respond in kind. Those who love Eric tend to suffer, as though he were drawing the life force out of them. The doctor's housekeeper, a Vietnamese woman with her own emotional scars, seems to recognize this, and fears for Tommy. Yet she does not see that Eric loves his brother in a way that gives health and strength to each of them.

Walter Mosley relates the lives of the two boys, their separation and eventual reunion, in a story full of melodrama, shocking violence, explicit sexual encounters, and hints of the supernatural. *Fortunate Son* explores some of the psychological territory Mosley mapped out in *The Man in My Basement*, but it's definitely a wilder ride.

About the Reviewer

[Geoff Wisner](#) is a freelance writer and staff member of Indigocafe.com. He is the author of [A Basket of Leaves: 99 Books That Capture the Spirit of Africa](#). Visit his website at www.geoffwisner.com.

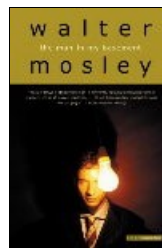
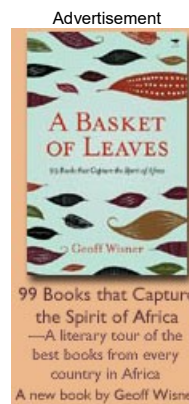


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The Man in My Basement
by [Walter Mosley](#)

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—Mahatma Gandhi

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