



The Farming of Bones

By Edwidge Danticat

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It is 1937 and Amabelle Désir, a young Haitian woman living in the Dominican Republic, has built herself a life as the servant and companion of the wife of a wealthy colonel. She and Sebastien, a cane worker, are deeply in love and plan to marry. But Amabelle's world collapses when a wave of genocidal violence, driven by Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo, leads to the slaughter of Haitian workers. Amabelle and Sebastien are separated, and she desperately flees the tide of violence for a Haiti she barely remembers.

Already acknowledged as a classic, this harrowing story of love and survival—from one of the most important voices of her generation—is an unforgettable memorial to the victims of the Parsley Massacre and a testimony to the power of human memory.

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The Farming of Bones By Edwidge Danticat Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

In a 1930s Dominican Republic village, the scream of a woman in labor rings out like the shot heard around Hispaniola. Every detail of the birth scene--the balance of power between the middle-aged Señora and her Haitian maid, the babies' skin color, not to mention which child is to survive--reverberates throughout Edwidge Danticat's *Farming of Bones*. In fact, rather than a celebration of fecundity, the unexpected double delivery gels into a metaphor for the military-sponsored mass murder of Haitian emigrants. As the Señora's doctor explains: "Many of us start out as twins in the belly and do away with the other."

But Danticat's powerful second novel is far from a currently modish victimization saga, and can hold its own with such modern classics as *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *The Color Purple*. Its watchful narrator, the Señora's shy Haitian housemaid, describes herself as "one of those sea stones that sucks its colors inside and loses its translucence once it's taken out into the sun." An astute observer of human character, Amabelle Désir is also a conduit for the author's tart, poetic prose. Her lover, Sebastian, has "arms as wide as one of my bare thighs," while the Señora's complicit officer husband is "still shorter than the average man, even in his military boots."

The orphaned Amabelle comes to assume almost messianic proportions, but she is entirely fictional, as is the town of Alegría where the tale begins. The genocide and exodus, however, are factual. Indeed, the atrocities committed by Dominican president Rafael Trujillo's army back in 1937 rival those of Duvalier's Tonton Macoutes. History has rendered Trujillo's carnage much less visible than Duvalier's, but no less painful. As Amabelle's father once told her, "Misery won't touch you gentle. It always leaves its thumbprints on you; sometimes it leaves them for others to see, sometimes for nobody but you to know of." Thanks to Danticat's stellar novel, the world will now know. --*Jean Lenihan*

From Publishers Weekly

The almost dreamlike pace of Danticat's second novel (*Breath, Eyes, Memory*, 1994) and the measured narration by the protagonist, Amabelle Desir, at first give no indication that this will be a story of furious violence and nearly unbearable loss. The setting, the Dominican Republic in 1937, when dictator Trujillo was beginning his policy of genocide, is a clue, however, to the events that Amabelle relates. She and her lover, Sebastien Onius, are Haitians who have crossed the border. Amabelle is a servant to a patrician family, while Sebastien endures the brutal conditions of work in the cane fields. The lovers each have poignant memories of parental deaths, and other deaths enter the narrative early, subtly presaging the slaughter that is to come. Haitians in the DR, always regarded as foreigners, are "an orphaned people, a group of vwayaje, wayfarers." When a military-led assault against them does erupt, it is a surprise, however, and as Amabelle barely survives a massacre by soldiers and an equally bloodthirsty civilian population, the narrative acquires the unflinching clarity of a documentary. In addition to illuminating a shameful, little known chapter of history, Danticat gives us fully realized characters who endure their lives with dignity, a sensuously atmospheric setting and a perfectly paced narrative written in prose that is lushly poetic and erotic, specifically detailed (the Haitians were betrayed by their inability to pronounce "parsley") and starkly realistic. While this novel is deeply sad, it is infused with Danticat's fierce need to bear witness, coupled with a knowledge that "life can be a strange gift" even when memory makes endurance a difficult task. 50,000 first printing; first serial to VLS; QPB selection; rights sold in U.K., Germany, Spain, Holland, Denmark and Finland; paperback rights to Penguin; author tour.Sept.)

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From School Library Journal

YA-At one time the people of Haiti and the Dominican Republic accepted and nurtured their interdependency. Trujillo's racist regime marked the end of this peaceful coexistence with the deplorable Massacre of 1937. This tragic and horrific ethnic cleansing is remembered by Amabelle, an aging Haitian woman who lived through this period as a young girl. Orphaned when her parents are swept away by a swollen river, she is cared for by the Haitian community across the river in the Dominican Republic. Eventually she falls in love with Sebastien Onius, a worker in the cane fields; their lives are forever entangled as the events of 1937 gather them in. She flees, becoming companion and nursemaid for the wife of Se?or Pico Duarte, a member of Trujillo's inner circle. For the rest of her life, Amabelle searches for Sebastien, never completely able to accept his death. Danticat's lyrical writing propels readers forward. This is an emotionally charged story and a powerful historical account that helps readers understand the radical division that exists between two countries on a single island.

Dottie Kraft, formerly at Fairfax County Public Schools, VA

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Betty Terry:

The particular book *The Farming of Bones* has a lot of information on it. So when you read this book you can get a lot of advantage. The book was compiled by the very famous author. The author makes some research ahead of write this book. This kind of book very easy to read you can find the point easily after reading this book.

Shirley Williams:

People live in this new moment of lifestyle always aim to and must have the time or they will get wide range of stress from both daily life and work. So , if we ask do people have free time, we will say absolutely of course. People is human not just a robot. Then we inquire again, what kind of activity do you have when the spare time coming to you actually of course your answer can unlimited right. Then do you try this one, reading textbooks. It can be your alternative inside spending your spare time, the actual book you have read is definitely *The Farming of Bones*.

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