



Paradise (Vintage International)

By Toni Morrison

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"Rumors had been whispered for more than a year. Outrages that had been accumulating all along took shape as evidence. A mother was knocked down the stairs by her cold-eyed daughter. Four damaged infants were born in one family. Daughters refused to get out of bed. Brides disappeared on their honeymoons. Two brothers shot each other on New Year's Day. Trips to Demby for VD shots common. And what went on at the Oven these days was not to be believed . . . The proof they had been collecting since the terrible discovery in the spring could not be denied: the one thing that connected all these catastrophes was in the Convent. And in the Convent were those women."

In **Paradise**--her first novel since she was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature--Toni Morrison gives us a bravura performance. As the book begins deep in Oklahoma early one morning in 1976, nine men from Ruby (pop. 360), in defense of "the one all-black town worth the pain," assault the nearby Convent and the women in it. From the town's ancestral origins in 1890 to the fateful day of the assault, **Paradise** tells the story of a people ever mindful of the relationship between their spectacular history and a void "Out There . . . where random and organized evil erupted when and where it chose." Richly imagined and elegantly composed, **Paradise** weaves a powerful mystery.

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Paradise (Vintage International) By Toni Morrison Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Oprah Book Club® Selection, January 1998: Toni Morrison's *Paradise* takes place in the tiny farming community of Ruby, Oklahoma, which its residents proudly proclaim "the one all-black town worth the pain." Settled by nine African American clans during the 1940s, the town represents a small miracle of self-reliance and community spirit. Readers might be forgiven, in fact, for assuming that Morrison's title refers to Ruby itself, which even during the 1970s retains an atmosphere of neighborliness and small-town virtue. Yet Paradises are not so easily gained. As we soon discover, Ruby is fissured by ancestral feuds and financial squabbles, not to mention the political ferment of the era, which has managed to pierce the town's pious isolation. In the view of its leading citizens, these troubles call for a scapegoat. And one readily exists: the Convent, an abandoned mansion not far from town--or, more precisely, the four women who occupy it, and whose unattached and unconventional status makes them the perfect targets for patriarchal ire. ("Before those heifers came to town," the men complain, "this was a peaceable kingdom.") One July morning, then, an armed posse sets out from Ruby for a round of ethical cleansing.

Paradise actually begins with the arrival of these vigilantes, only to launch into an intricate series of flashbacks and interlaced stories. The cast is large--indeed, it seems as though we must have met all 360 members of Ruby's populace--and Morrison knows how to imprint even the minor players on our brains. Even more amazing, though, are the full-length portraits she draws of the four Convent dwellers and their executioners: rich, rounded, and almost painful in their intimacy. This richness--of language and, ultimately, of human understanding--combats the aura of saintliness that can occasionally mar Morrison's fiction. It also makes for a spectacular piece of storytelling, in which such biblical concepts as redemption and divine love are no postmodern playthings but matters of life and (in the very first sentence, alas) death.

From Library Journal

It's the 1970s, and four young women living in a convent near an all-black town have been viciously attacked. This is Morrison's first novel since winning the Nobel prize, and by the time she's done, she has taken on Reconstruction, the Civil Rights Movement, the counterculture, and more. The 400,000-copy first printing is no surprise.

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From [The New Yorker](#)

Paradise is the strangest and most original book that Morrison has written.... the genius of *Paradise* is that the biblical subtext is rarely allowed to obtrude on the reader's attention to the gritty particulars of the characters' stories.... One reason that these stories are so gripping is that they are hard to understand. The energy we have to spend puzzling out the various pieces and getting them into some kind of satisfactory narrative shape keeps our focus on the realistic plane of the novel and allows that allegorical machinery to operate more or less hidden from view.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Wanda Crane:

Hey guys, do you really wants to finds a new book to study? May be the book with the concept Paradise (Vintage International) suitable to you? The particular book was written by renowned writer in this era.

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Andrea Whitt:

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Mary Norman:

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Elaine Sitz:

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