

[PDF] Passing (Penguin Classics)

Nella Larsen, Thadious M. Davis - pdf download free book



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Description:

The heroine of *Passing* takes an elevator from the infernal August Chicago streets to the breezy rooftop of the heavenly Drayton Hotel, "wafted upward on a magic carpet to another world, pleasant, quiet, and strangely remote from the sizzling one that she had left below." Irene is black, but like her author, the Danish-African American Nella Larsen (a star of the 1920s to mid-1930s and the first black woman to win a Guggenheim creative-writing award), she can "pass" in white society. Yet one woman in the tea room, "fair and golden, like a sunlit day," keeps staring at her, and eventually introduces herself as Irene's childhood friend Clare, who left their hometown 12 years before when her father died. Clare's father had been born "on the left hand"--he was the product of a legal

marriage between a white man and a black woman and therefore cut off from his inheritance. So she was raised penniless by white racist relatives, and now she passes as white. Even Clare's violent white husband is in the dark about her past, though he teases her about her tan and affectionately calls her "Nig." He laughingly explains: "When we were first married, she was white as--as--well as white as a lily. But I declare she's getting darker and darker." As Larsen makes clear, *Passing* can also mean dying, and Clare is in peril of losing her identity and her life.

The tale is simple on the surface--a few adventures in Chicago and New York's high life, with lots of real people and race-mixing events described (explicated by Thadious M. Davis's helpful introduction and footnotes). But underneath, it seethes with rage, guilt, sex, and complex deceptions. Irene fears losing her black husband to Clare, who seems increasingly predatory. Or is this all in Irene's mind? And is everyone wearing a mask? Larsen's book is a scary hall of mirrors, a murder mystery that can't resolve itself. It sticks with you. --*Tim Appelo* --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

From Library Journal Another trailblazer, Larsen wrote this novel in 1929. It follows Clare Kendry and Irene Redfield, two light-skinned black women who try to escape racism. Kendry chooses to sever all ties with her background and passes herself off as white, while Redfield simply denies that racism exists. Both, however, eventually are forced to face the awful truth. This edition contains a lengthy introduction and scholarly notes on the text. Essential for Black History Month. Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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