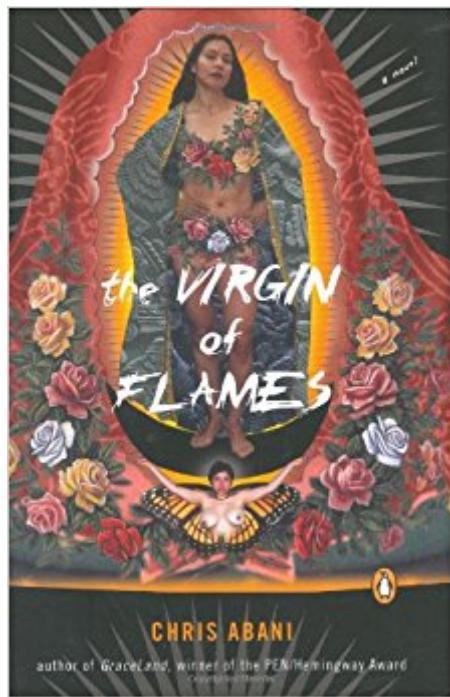


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The Virgin Of Flames



Synopsis

From the author of the award-winning GraceLand comes a searing, dazzlingly written novel of a tarnished City of Angels Praised as "singular" (The Philadelphia Inquirer) and "extraordinary" (The New York Times Book Review), GraceLand stunned critics and instantly established Chris Abani as an exciting new voice in fiction. In his second novel, set against the uncompromising landscape of East L.A., Abani follows a struggling artist named Black, whose life and friendships reveal a world far removed from the mainstream. Through Black's journey of self-discovery, Abani raises essential questions about poverty, religion, and ethnicity in America today. The Virgin of Flames, a marvelous and gritty novel filled with indelible images and unforgettable characters, confirms Chris Abani as an immensely talented writer.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I can confidently echo for you the praise the other reviewers on this page have granted The Virgin of Flames. It is the lyrical, grotesque, ecstatic, outcast story of a Los Angeles that simmers unknown to many of its own citizens-migrants and natives alike. Chris Abani's imagery of Black, Iggy, Sweet Girl, Bomboy, Ray-Ray, Rio L.A. and East L.A., among others is quite reverential and even more than the pictures and qualities he conjures, they are brave. As a resident of L.A. and its environs I enjoyed those references to neighborhoods (yes, L.A. has neighborhoods), bridges, restaurants (Thai Palms-Thai Elvis) and the like that told me Mr. Abani walks these places and sees the faces and graffiti, decay and sublime magnetism that propels many of us here. He captures the mystery

and possibility of Los Angeles in the radical expressionism of Black's identity experimentation, Iggy's underground venues and physical risk, Sweet Girl's bold sexuality and paralyzing trans/pro-gression. As well, the Catholic blood that run through the dusty past of Los Angeles and California, the WEST, in all it's harrowing, piercing pain. Abani's vision of a modern martyr, his many attempts at acceptance and expression reminded me of Leonard Cohen's Beautiful Losers. The artist living his life as a work of art, challenging the dominate modes through as many of his avenues of existence as possible. Some favorite passages: "It seemed, though, that those with a clear sense of the past, of identity, were always so eager to bury it and move on, to reinvent themselves. What a luxury, he thought, what a thing, to choose your own obsession, to choose your own suffering.

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