



Graceland (Today Show Pick January 2005)

Chris Abani

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Graceland is a dazzling debut by a singular new talent

The sprawling, swampy, cacophonous city of Lagos, Nigeria, provides the backdrop to the story of Elvis, a teenage Elvis impersonator hoping to make his way out of the ghetto. Broke, beset by floods, and beatings by his alcoholic father, and with no job opportunities in sight, Elvis is tempted by a life of crime. Thus begins his odyssey into the dangerous underworld of Lagos, guided by his friend Redemption and accompanied by a restless hybrid of voices including The King of Beggars, Sunday, Innocent and Comfort. Ultimately, young Elvis, drenched in reggae and jazz, and besotted with American film heroes and images, must find his way to a GraceLand of his own.

Nuanced, lyrical, and pitch perfect, Abani has created a remarkable story of a son and his father, and an examination of postcolonial Nigeria where the trappings of American culture reign supreme.

"A richly detailed, poignant, and utterly fascinating look into another culture and how it is cross-pollinated by our own. It brings to mind the work of Ha Jin in its power and revelation of the new."--T. Coraghessan Boyle

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