



The Coal Tattoo: A Novel

By Silas House

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Life isn't easy for twenty-two year old Easter and her teenage sister Anneth, who were left parentless as young children. While Easter, a devout Pentecostal, finds solace in the powerful music of her church, Anneth seeks comfort in the rougher edges of life found in dancing, drinking, and fast living. Easter believes in tradition and is intent on rearing her wild young sister properly, but it's only a matter of time before a wedge is driven between them—and threatens to undo their bond forever. . . .

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The Coal Tattoo: A Novel By Silas House Bibliography

- Rank: #134527 in Books
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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Evocative prose and unforgettable characters mark this haunting novel from House, a Kentucky writer who mines the storytelling tradition of Appalachia. Set in the 1960s, the novel functions as a prequel of sorts to House's award-winning book *Clay's Quilt*, offering two sisters who are as different as night and day. Anneth—who will become Clay's mother—is a wild-blooded manic depressive determined to suck joy from life, while her older sister Easter, a deeply religious Pentecostal woman with the gift of foresight, has "decided to walk through life like a whisper." House paints both characters lovingly and unsentimentally, charting how each remains devoted to the other through tragedy and a battle to hold on to the one constant that unites them in a turbulent world: their land. As they fight to protect their mountain from the mining company that wants to clear the earth and strip it bare, the sisters make sacrifices for one another that will grip the reader. House has a gift for understanding the cadences of mountain folk religion and the way that music sustains people's spirits. The titular image of the coal tattoo—a bluish tinge that seeps under a miner's skin and leaves a permanent stain—is a perfect metaphor for the novel's depiction of the indelible imprint the land leaves on the human soul.

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From [Booklist](#)

The talented House continues his long love letter to Kentucky in this starkly beautiful, overtly literary third novel, following *Clay's Quilt* (2000) and *A Parchment of Leaves* (2002). Restless 16-year-old Anneth is running wild, drawn to nightclubs, liquor, and music, while her steadfast sister, Easter, is a devout Pentecostal. Despite their differences, the two sisters have an unbreakable bond, forged in the aftermath of their father's death in a coal-mining accident and their mother's suicide. Anneth elopes with a musician to the big city of Nashville, where she becomes so homesick for the water and greenery of her Appalachian hometown of Free Creek, Kentucky, she comes racing back. Easter faces the pain of a miscarriage, which severely tests her faith. Whether describing the sight of dozens of redbirds or the taste of moonshine, House does so in prose that is both lovely and cadenced. Rural Kentucky is so vividly rendered, it's no surprise native son House has been showered with regional awards. In addition, his work on National Public Radio should garner extra attention for this title. *Joanne Wilkinson*

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Review

"A portrait of two sisters that is both realistic and deeply moving . . . House stakes a strong claim on the territory of Southern fiction, unearthing new gems from a well-loved landscape."

—The Charlotte Observer

"[This] lovely novel . . . about the love and survival skills of two very different sisters . . . is powered by a strong sense of place."

—USA Today

"[House is] a writer of startling abilities . . . a master at rendering his characters' emotional terrain as real and accessible."

—The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

"Full of heartbreaking beauty and suffering . . . House brings vividly to life the Appalachian Mountains. . . . His love of the land comes through his words, and his admiration of the people colors every character."

–Richmond Times-Dispatch

“Some characters wear coal tattoos, patches of coal buried in the skin. . . . The author brands the readers with a similarly indelible mark as we become enmeshed in the lives of these people; it’s a badge to be worn proudly.”

–Southern Living

“A deeply emotional story . . . How do we cope with tragedy and heartbreak? The Coal Tattoo describes the struggles that all of us must endure to be human.”

–Dayton Daily News

“Engrossing . . . [A] pitch-perfect tale.”

–Seattle Post-Intelligencer

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Mamie Shaw:

Do you have favorite book? If you have, what is your favorite's book? Guide is very important thing for us to find out everything in the world. Each guide has different aim or maybe goal; it means that e-book has different type. Some people experience enjoy to spend their time for you to read a book. They may be reading whatever they consider because their hobby will be reading a book. What about the person who don't like studying a book? Sometime, man or woman feel need book once they found difficult problem or even exercise. Well, probably you should have this The Coal Tattoo: A Novel.

Michael Jones:

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Robert Maas:

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Andrew Gillon:

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