



# Half-Blood Blues: A Novel

By Esi Edugyan

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**Half-Blood Blues: A Novel** By Esi Edugyan

**Winner of the Scotiabank Giller Prize**

**Man Booker Prize Finalist 2011**

**An Oprah Magazine Best Book of the Year**

Shortlisted for the Governor General's Literary Award for Fiction

**Berlin, 1939.** The Hot Time Swingers, a popular jazz band, has been forbidden to play by the Nazis. Their young trumpet-player Hieronymus Falk, declared a musical genius by none other than Louis Armstrong, is arrested in a Paris café. He is never heard from again. He was twenty years old, a German citizen. And he was black.

**Berlin, 1952.** Falk is a jazz legend. Hot Time Swingers band members Sid Griffiths and Chip Jones, both African Americans from Baltimore, have appeared in a documentary about Falk. When they are invited to attend the film's premier, Sid's role in Falk's fate will be questioned and the two old musicians set off on a surprising and strange journey.

From the smoky bars of pre-war Berlin to the salons of Paris, Sid leads the reader through a fascinating, little-known world as he describes the friendships, love affairs and treacheries that led to Falk's incarceration in Sachsenhausen. *Half-Blood Blues* is a story about music and race, love and loyalty, and the sacrifices we ask of ourselves, and demand of others, in the name of art.

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## Half-Blood Blues: A Novel By Esi Edugyan Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

### Amazon.com Review

**Amazon Best Books of the Month, March 2012:** Looping from Nazi-occupied Berlin and Paris to modern-day Baltimore and back, Esi Edugyan's Giller prize-winning *Half-Blood Blues* is a haunting song of a novel. In Paris 1940, the three remaining Hot-Time Swingers run take after exhausted take, trying to get one right before the S.S. boots stomp their last chance. Our irascible narrator, Sid, learned to play bass in Baltimore, with his longtime friend and rival Chip on drums, and in Berlin they'd joined up with Hiero, a half-black German "kid" who blows brilliant trumpet with a "massive sound, wild and unexpected, like a thicket of flowers in a bone-dry field." As Hiero scratches the wax on disc after disc of imagined mistakes, Sid saves the final take--the record that will become legendary. When Hiero's arrested and sent to a Nazi camp, Sid's the only witness, and things look suspicious. Fifty years later, Chip and Sid return to Berlin for the opening of a film about Hiero. But Sid stands accused of engineering his disappearance, and a strange letter suggests there's more to the story than anyone knew. With delightfully witty jazz-cat banter, tactile imagery, and descriptions of music sensual enough to stand your hair on end, Edugyan evokes a time, a place, and a band whose refusal to repress their difference could mean death, or become a catalyst for acts of creative genius that will make them immortal. --*Mari Malcolm*

### From [Booklist](#)

**\*Starred Review\*** Short-listed for the Booker Prize, Canadian Edugyan's second novel jumps between Berlin and Paris in 1939–40 and Berlin in 1992 to tell the story of a German American jazz band and its star trumpeter, Hieronymous Falk. Having hit it big during the Weimar era, the band—a mixture of expat African Americans and German jazz fanatics, including Falk, who is both black and a German (a *mischling*, or crossbreed, in the eyes of the Nazis)—now faces tough and increasingly dangerous times in the wake of Hitler's ban against "degenerate music." Drummer Chip Jones and bassist Sid Griffiths, both African Americans, escape to Paris, but Falk is arrested in Berlin. Cut to 1992: the discovery of the band's unreleased last recording, "Half-Blood Blues," a jazz version of the "Horst Wessel Song," the Nazi party anthem, has made a music legend of Falk, never heard from after the war and presumed dead, and has prompted a celebratory documentary, which will premier in Berlin. Edugyan tells this incredibly rich story of music, politics, and personal betrayal both subtly and dramatically, unveiling the mystery of what happened to Falk as she exposes the tensions between the band members and the secret that has been gnawing at one of them for half a century. Like Paule Marshall's *The Fisher King* (2000), which tells a similar story of an expat jazzman and his troubled legacy, Edugyan's novel mixes palpable period atmosphere with an interpersonal drama of great emotional depth. That narrow moment in time when the freewheeling decadence of Weimar Germany gave way to jackbooted tyranny has been the subject of much fine fiction, but Edugyan is the first to overlay it with jazz history. It makes a sublime marriage. --Bill Ott

### Review

"Unforgettable...Brilliantly conceived, gorgeously executed. It's a work that promises to lead black literature in a whole new direction." *?The Globe and Mail (Toronto)*

"A superbly atmospheric prologue kick-starts a thrilling story about truth and betrayal...[A] brilliantly fast-moving novel." *?The Times (London)*

"Shines with knowledge, emotional insight, and historical revisionism...Truly extraordinary in its evocation of time and place, its shimmering jazz vernacular, its pitch-perfect male banter and its period slang." *?The*

*Independent (London)*

“Ingenious.” ?*The Daily Telegraph (London)*

“Destined to win a wide audience...Deftly paced in incident and tone, moving from scenes of snappy dialogue, in which band members squabble and banter humorously, to tense, atmospheric passages of description...Edugyan makes fresh tracks in this richly-imagined story...*Half-Blood Blues* itself represent a kind of flowering--that of a gifted storyteller.” ?*The Toronto Star*

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Joyce Cassady:**

Now a day people that Living in the era where everything reachable by interact with the internet and the resources inside can be true or not need people to be aware of each information they get. How individuals to be smart in receiving any information nowadays? Of course the answer is reading a book. Studying a book can help men and women out of this uncertainty Information specially this *Half-Blood Blues: A Novel* book because this book offers you rich details and knowledge. Of course the details in this book hundred percent guarantees there is no doubt in it as you know.

#### **Donald Labelle:**

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#### **Molly Maldonado:**

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#### **Joel Peterson:**

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