

# Black and Blood: *Mosley's latest a hit*

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## *Suspended Sentences*

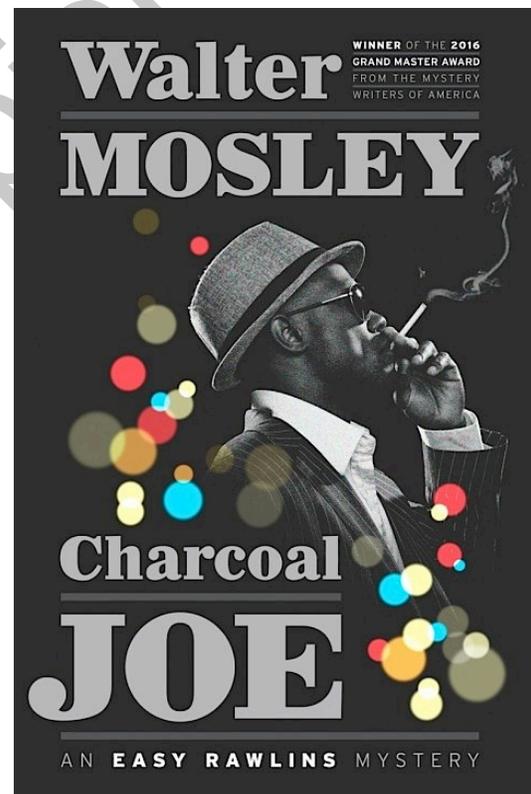
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by Jim Napier

**E**asy Rawlins is back. The iconic black American detective first made his appearance in *Devil in a Blue Dress*. Set in the layered moral ambiguities of postwar Los Angeles, the novel was not only a fine tale, but chronicled the experience of the black man in those troubled times, when in recent memory it had been ok to carry a rifle into combat and die for your country, but back home you were expected to know your place, and to suffer the consequences if you forgot.

Now it's the late 1960s, and Rawlins finds himself drawn into a case he doesn't want, but cannot avoid. Rawlins is running a small detective agency when a friend calls: a white man has been killed, and a young black man has been found by the police standing over his body. The young man, a twenty-two-year-old physics post-grad at UCLA, has been arrested and charged with murder. A man in prison named Charcoal Joe is a friend of the boy's father. He

believes the boy is innocent, and wants Easy to get the boy out on bail. Easy isn't so sure he can do that, but Charcoal Joe is not a man you can refuse, even if he is in prison.



Easy's instincts are right: before the case is over people will suffer, and some will die, and Easy's own life,

and others close to him, will be on the line.

**Walter Mosley is a skilled novelist** and an accomplished narrator of what it's like to be black in post-war America. His plots are always engrossing, but it's in his portrayal of the atmosphere of a nation that tries to straddle the line between racist and integrated that Mosley's writing really shines. Whether the tension is revealed explicitly, in racially-charged dialogue, or more

subtly, in the myriad of small accommodations that black people still have to make daily simply in order to go about their lives, Mosley has been there, and he understands. His novels help the rest of us who have never experienced that humiliation or fear to better grasp the significance of a world divided by the colour of one's skin. A fine crime novel in its own right, *Charcoal Joe* extends that narrative.

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§Since 2005 Jim Napier's reviews and interviews have appeared in several Canadian newspapers and on various crime fiction and literary websites, including his own award-winning site, *Deadly Diversions*. His own crime novel, *Legacy*, is scheduled to appear in the Spring of 2017. He can be reached at [jnapier@deadlydiversions.com](mailto:jnapier@deadlydiversions.com)



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