

The Two Hearts of Kwasi Boachi: A Novel (Vintage International)

Arthur Japin

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"The first ten years of my life I was not black." Thus begins this startlingly eloquent and beautiful tale based on the true story of Kwasi Boachi, a 19th- century African prince who was sent with his cousin, Kwame, to be raised in Holland as a guest of the royal family. Narrated by Kwasi himself, the story movingly portrays the perplexing dichotomy of the cousins' situation: black men of royal ancestry, they are subject to insidious bigotry even as they enjoy status among Europe's highest echelons. As their lives wind down different paths-Kwame back to Africa where he enlists in the Dutch army, Kwasi to an Indonesian coffee plantation where success remains mysteriously elusive-they become aware of a terrible truth that lies at the heart of their experiences. Vivid, subtle, poignant and profound, The Two Hearts of Kwasi Boachi is an exquisite masterpiece of story and craft, a heartrending work that places Arthur Japin on a shelf that includes Joseph Conrad, J.M. Coetzee, Kazuo Ishiguro and Nadine Gordimer.

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