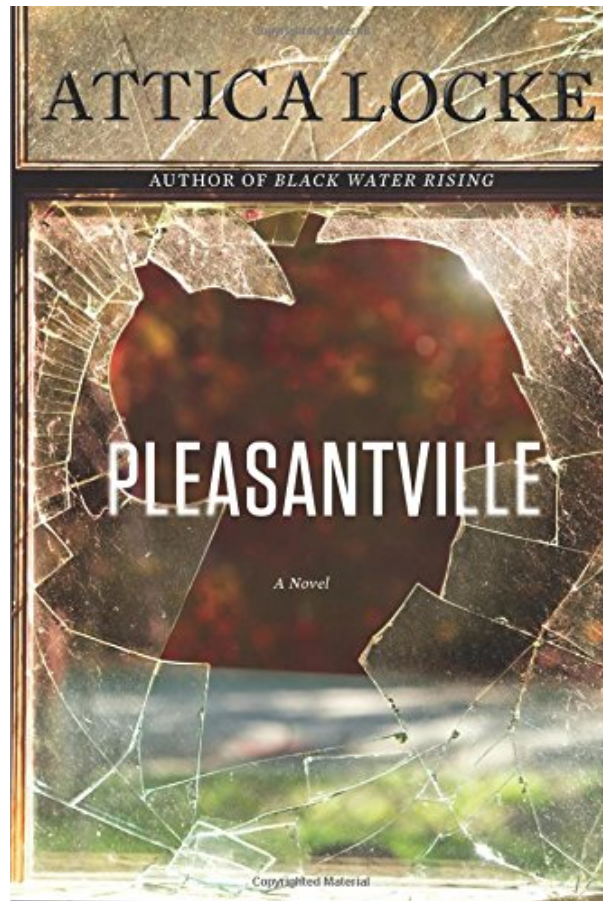
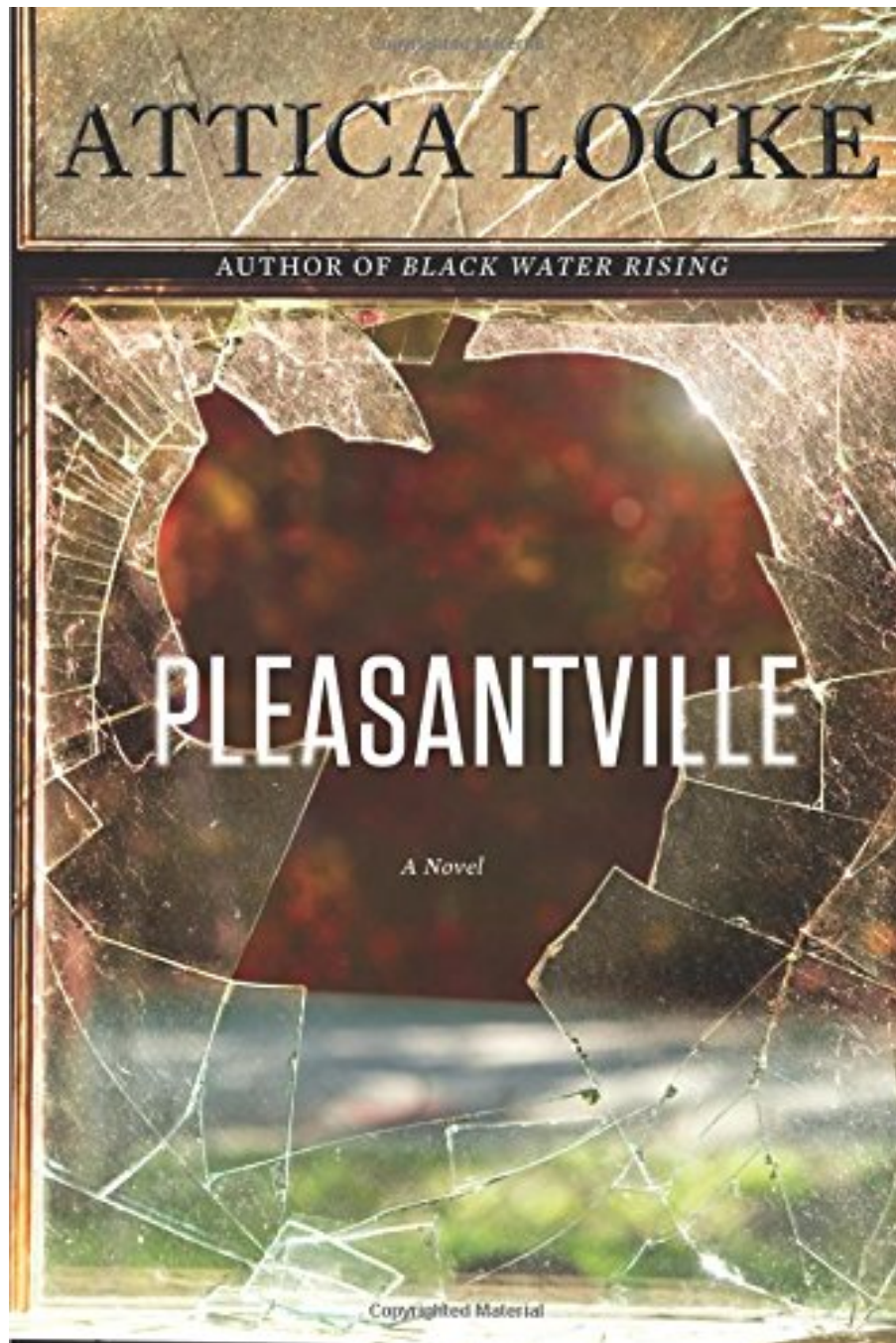


PLEASANTVILLE (JAY PORTER SERIES) BY ATTICA LOCKE



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WINNER OF THE HARPER LEE PRIZE FOR LEGAL FICTION

Wall Street Journal BEST BOOK OF THE YEAR

LONGLISTED FOR THE BAILEY'S WOMEN'S PRIZE FOR FICTION

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- Sales Rank: #392742 in Books
- Published on: 2015-04-21
- Released on: 2015-04-21
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x 1.33" w x 6.00" l, .0 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 432 pages

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For lovers of political intrigue and suspense, this is the total package.

By Texasbooklover

Fiction

Attica Locke

Pleasantville: A Novel

New York: Harper

Hardcover, 978-0-06-225940-0

432 pages, \$26.99

April 21, 2015

Pleasantville is a historical neighborhood in Houston, Texas, “a planned community...built specifically for Negro families of means and class” in the wake of World War II, and one of its favorite sons, Axel Hathorne, has just entered a runoff election for mayor of Houston. The same night, someone is watching Alicia Nowell, a teenage girl who had been handing out leaflets door-to-door for the election as she stands on a street corner waiting for her ride, “still wanting to believe a way out was possible, but already knowing, with a creeping certainty, that this this night had turned on her, that her disappearing had already begun.” How’s that for a hook?

Pleasantville is Attica Locke’s sequel to the many-award-nominated *Black Water Rising* is back -- with environmental plaintiff’s attorney Jay Porter, this time dealing with the death of his wife, single fatherhood, inertia, and a break-in at his law office that occurs the same night as the election, the same night the girl goes missing. When Hathorne’s campaign manager is arrested and charged with the murder of Alicia Nowell, Locke’s compelling setup for this complex, character-driven legal and political thriller is complete.

Pleasantville has a complicated plot with lots of moving parts. There is a large cast of disparate, intriguing characters, liberally peppered with predators of all stripes. The pacing never lags, goosed along by artfully placed plot twists. The story is a highly entertaining brew of political and personal ambition garnished with journalistic, legal, and corporate corruption. All of which Locke handles beautifully.

The cynicism of the political horse-trading is breathtaking and will confirm all of your conspiracy theories. A good number of the cast are politicians and their consultants, including the reincarnation of Lee Atwater, a city council member who can “hear the whir of a video camera from a block over” and a mayoral candidate who began wearing glasses when she entered the race because “talk of her pale green eyes and the height of her stiletto heels starting getting too much play in the press.”

Porter’s floundering without his wife is touchingly conveyed. “There are things she knew about her family, not secrets so much as hard-earned intimacies, that she inadvertently took with her, leaving the rest of them to fend for themselves in this new, foreign land, daily meeting at the kitchen table, or passing in the hallway, without their shared interpreter.”

There is humor here, as well, spiced with sassy one-liners. At one point Porter concedes that “the breadth of his investigation is an ex-con skulking around Hollis’s [a suspect] place in a rusty El Camino.” Hollis’s place is one of those giant, generic apartment complexes with pretentious names. “This one has the nerve to call itself Beechwood Estates.”

Full of family secrets and political secrets, Pleasantville gives new meaning to the truism that the political is

personal. For lovers of intrigue and suspense, this is the total package.

Originally published in Lone Star Literary Life.

7 of 8 people found the following review helpful.

Attica Locke showcases her gift of crafting a great story once again in PLEASANTVILLE

By Cyrus Webb

I was a little late to the Attica Locke party than some as my first book to read by her was THE CUTTING SEASON, but it didn't take me long to realize that she was a gifted storyteller that was able to draw the reader in by the characters and places she created. That definitely has proven true once again in Pleasantville.

The genius of Locke is that regardless of the race of the characters or the location of the action there is a commonality that the reader feels, making the story more personal and definitely adds to the excitement. Jay Porter is also the hero we all want to be, but as he unfolds in this book we are able to realize that like all heroes he is still a man with feelings, flaws---and sensitivities.

Considering the chaotic world that is politics, it added in the mix of this thriller is sure to deliver its own spice, and sure enough it reveals just how far some are willing to go for power and what they believe to be theirs.

The question the reader will be wondering as they probably do in their day-to-day lives is can good win out when it seems as though evil is all around? And is the good guy as easy to identify as we would hope? Settle in for an adventure that will keep you engaged from beginning to end.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

PLEASANTVILLE is an engaging, don't-want-to-put-it-down book ...

By M Denise Costello

Pleasantville is a predominantly black neighborhood on the northeast side of Houston, Texas. This neighborhood is notorious for its high voter turnout in most elections. The novel, PLEASANTVILLE, by Attica Locke, is set in Pleasantville, the neighborhood, in 1996 and begins with the disappearance of a young woman who had canvassed the area just before an election.

Jay Porter, a lawyer whose wife died the previous year, has been asked by the neighborhood's de facto mayor to aid his grandson in his defense as the young man is accused of the girl's murder. Porter almost loses his own daughter in the process of solving the mystery of who is really the heinous killer.

PLEASANTVILLE is an engaging, don't-want-to-put-it-down book and the second book I have read by Locke. I was amazed at the intricacies of the plot and how Locke wove so many sub-plots and subjects together so wonderfully. Some of the themes she presents are Erin Brockovich-type lawsuits of the neighborhood version Big Oil and Big Chemical, race issues in a major metropolitan area in the south, political machines and the underhanded ways they win, family drama, gumshoe work, and mainly the loyalty and trust between friends and neighbors.

As much as I enjoyed Locke's previous book, THE CUTTING SEASON, I thought PLEASANTVILLE was even better. Porter, the protagonist of this book and of Locke's first book that I have not read entitled BLACK WATER RISING, is such an angst-filled 40-something with all the normal foibles and insecurities, yet totally relatable and still an ethical guy. Even though he is not a criminal attorney, he takes on the defense of the young man because he knows it is the right thing to do.

See all 95 customer reviews...

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