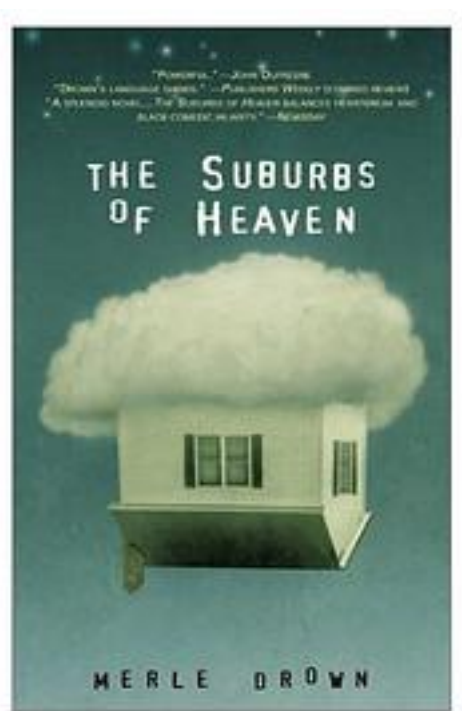


# the suburbs of heaven



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著者:Merle Drown

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"If I could get Pauline to see daylight, get my kids settled, and pay off my debts, why, we could be living in the suburbs of heaven," Jim Hutchins thinks in a uncharacteristically optimistic moment from Merle Drown's second novel. But he isn't getting anywhere near heaven anytime soon--not even its suburbs, not even its commercial strip. Considering the many obstacles standing between Jim and heaven (the tax man after him, his wife Pauline mired in grief over their drowned daughter, another daughter turning tricks for booze money, one son in and out of jail and the other son thinking a snake has hatched in his head), he might as well be writing postcards from the fiery pit. What's more, while Jim suspects his brother-in-law Emory

Holler has murdered his sister, he knows his wife Pauline has been dancing in her altogether for Emory. Finally, there's a panty thief terrorizing their rural New Hampshire town, and somehow, you just know he's going to make an appearance before the novel's end.

All things considered, Jim Hutchins is a kind of Down East Job, though he wastes little time picking scabs or cursing God. Jim's a man of action, not reflection, and so the book begins with a shotgun and ends with an inferno, with comedy and tragedy battling it out in the pages between. What keeps all this from turning into an episode of Jerry Springer is Drown's black, biting wit and his prose, which like the characters themselves is both colorful and coiled tight as a spring. (The police stick to Tommy Hutchins like "straw to a sweaty neck"; Jim gets mad but stays "sober as a cold chisel.") If the concluding reversal comes about a trifle suddenly, well, there are greater crimes in this world--crimes that one of the Hutchins clan is sure to commit if you just give them a chance. --Mary Park --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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