



Bitter Bronx: Thirteen Stories

Jerome Charyn

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Brooklyn is dead. Long live the Bronx! In *Bitter Bronx*, Jerome Charyn returns to his roots and leads the literary renaissance of an oft-overlooked borough in this surprising new collection.

In *Bitter Bronx*, one of our most gifted and original novelists depicts a world before and after modern urban renewal destroyed the gritty sanctity of a land made famous by Ruth, Gehrig, and Joltin' Joe.

Bitter Bronx is suffused with the texture and nostalgia of a lost time and place, combining a keen eye for detail with Jerome Charyn's lived experience. These stories are informed by a childhood growing up near that middle-class mecca, the Grand Concourse; falling in love with three voluptuous librarians at a public library in the Lower Depths of the South Bronx; and eating at Mafia-owned restaurants along Arthur Avenue's restaurant row, amid a "land of deprivation...where fathers trundled home...with a monumental sadness on their shoulders."

In "Lorelei," a lonely hearts grifter returns home and finds his childhood sweetheart still living in the same apartment house on the Concourse; in "Archy and Mehitabel" a high school romance blossoms around a newspaper comic strip; in "Major Leaguer" a former New York Yankee confronts both a gang of drug dealers and the wreckage that Robert Moses wrought in his old neighborhood; and in three interconnected stories—"Silk & Silk," "Little Sister," and "Marla"—Marla Silk, a successful Manhattan attorney, discovers her father's past in the Bronx and a mysterious younger sister who was hidden from her, kept in a fancy rest home near the Botanical Garden. In these stories and others, the past and present tumble together in Charyn's singular and distinctly "New York prose, street-smart, sly, and full of lurches" (John Leonard, *New York Times*).

Throughout it all looms the "master builder" Robert Moses, a man who believed he could "save" the Bronx by building a highway through it, dynamiting whole neighborhoods in the process. *Bitter Bronx* stands as both a fictional eulogy for the people and places paved over by Moses' expressway and an affirmation of Charyn's "brilliant imagination" (Elizabeth Taylor, *Chicago Tribune*).

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