

## The Latter Half of Inglorious Years

**Kirk Ward Robinson**

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*Graceful and emotionally evocative, The Latter Half of Inglorious Years is an thought-provoking work of literary fiction.*

Kirk Ward Robinson's *The Latter Half of Inglorious Years* not only wraps a story within a story but also adds another literary layer to explore how family ties—no matter how tight or loose—influence the actions people take to bolster their self-esteem, especially in the media-driven contemporary reality.

When a phone video of Joplin Dean's father's death (he saves a toddler from being run over by a car only to be hit by that car himself) goes viral, Joplin and his sister, Kessie, are thrust into the media spotlight. On the same day, Joplin happens to publish a blog post asserting that media often take issues too far and glorify incidents for attention. This, of course, leads to much backlash.

Though Joplin hasn't seen his father in years, his sister claims to have been close to him. Without his consent, she publishes their father's stories, which he had previously self-published to limited success, and the book flies to the top of the bestseller list. Aspiring author Joplin suddenly finds himself in competition with his nonwriter sister and dead father, as well as cast as the antagonist by media.

Joplin tells this story to a bartender on the Caribbean island that he escapes to, and the book alternates between Joplin's delivery, what he is doing on the island in the present, and excerpts from his father's book. All three sections are woven together perfectly, with information—family secrets, press reactions—revealed with expert pacing and suspense. The story is pulse-pounding. There is irony on every page. The characters, both major and minor, all feel like real people; their emotional reactions to events are realistic.

Only portions of Joplin's father's book that are pertinent to the main plot are included in the story, which bolsters the thematic exploration of how family members' lives, including the secrets they keep and how these secrets infiltrate their choices, inform individual perceptions. When Joplin realizes that a character in the book, Clarissa, is based on someone his father knew in real life, he has a change of heart and decides to speak with an investigative journalist who has been following the story from the beginning.

Graceful and emotionally evocative, *The Latter Half of Inglorious Years* is a thought-provoking work of literary fiction.

AIMÉE JODOIN (November 13, 2018)

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