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CLARION REVIEW ★★★★★ GENERAL FICTION

The Wedding Song: a novel

Ira Eisenstadt
Melody Hill Press (January 2007)
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The Wedding Song maps the unconventional physical and spiritual life-journey of minor league catcher Sol Bable as he grows from a struggling bachelor wannabe into a professional baseball player with loose commitments to home and marriage.

Sol meets his wife Fannie in Florida where he's involved in a major-league tryout camp and she's writing a story about the rookies. The two immediately click and their relationship moves along quickly. Although Sol grows uneasy with their intimacy he continues his relationship with Fannie long-distance when he's shipped out to Toledo and then Jamaica.

While in Jamaica Sol becomes intrigued with the people the rum and a woman named Celeste. A hotel worker acts as Sol's official guide into the world of Mas Afrikani a local religion with African roots. Sol becomes so involved he grows dreadlocks and goes out on a quest for the religious leader in order to ask his permission to sleep with Celeste a Mas Afrikani follower. Sol neglects both baseball and Fannie in his obsession to possess Celeste.

From the mountains of Kingston the author drops the reader into the Stateside home of Sol and Fannie as they discuss an impending baseball strike and the family's finances. Finances at least are Sol's primary concern for Fannie is focused on the lack of time Sol spends with their two teenage boys. When the strike comes to pass Sol is called upon by his team's owner to lobby for resolution. This new task takes Sol back on the road encouraging him to break the promises he made to spend time with his family.

It is a stretch to call *The Wedding Song* a novel. There are events: Sol and Fannie at the opera for which the book is named: Sol and Fannie at the onset of their relationship; Sol in Jamaica; Sol and Fannie twenty years later married and distant; Sol traveling as an ambassador for baseball; Sol caught in Washington D.C. in a "compromising position." Eisenstadt makes an attempt to pull together the edges of these scenarios but ultimately they lack cohesion. Additionally the overall writing quality is poor: transitions are weak or nonexistent the use of metaphor extravagant and the thought frequently difficult to follow. "Fannie crawled better than Sol when they swam as he grew ashamed of the changes that swelled like a tsunami inside him."

The Wedding Song lacks plot cohesion and meaning.
(August 21, 2009)

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