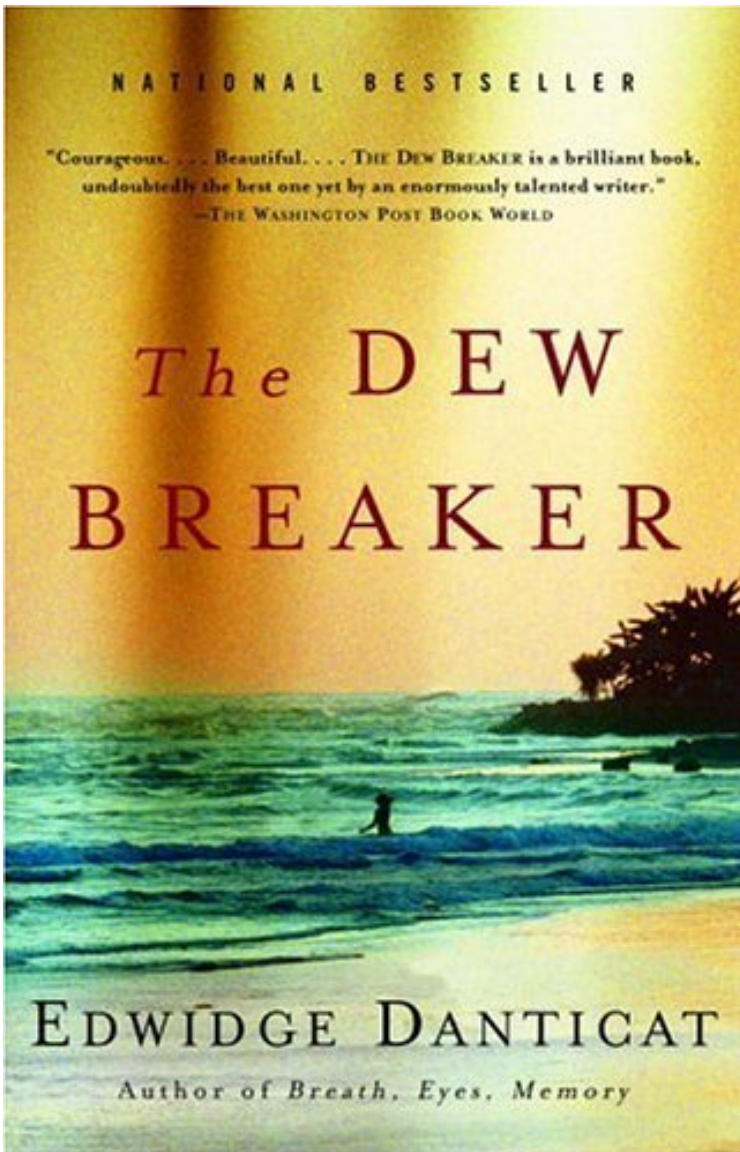


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The Dew Breaker



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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurWe meet him late in life: a quiet man, a good father and husband, a fixture in his Brooklyn neighborhood, a landlord and barber with a terrifying scar across his face. As the book unfolds, moving seamlessly between Haiti in the 1960s and New York City today, we enter the lives of those around him, and learn that he has also kept a vital, dangerous secret. Edwidge Danticats brilliant exploration of the dew breaker--or torturer--s an unforgettable story of love, remorse, and hope; of personal and political rebellions; and of the compromises we make to move beyond the most intimate brushes with history. It firmly establishes her as one of Americas most essential writers.BONUS: This edition includes an excerpt from Edwidge Danticat's Claire of the Sea Light.ExtraitThe Book of the Dead My father is gone. Im

slouched in a cast-aluminum chair across from two men, one the manager of the hotel where we were staying and the other a policeman. They're both waiting for me to explain what's become of him, my father. The hotel manager Mr. Flavio Salinas, the plaque on his office door reads has the most striking pair of chartreuse eyes

I've ever seen on a man with an island Spanish lilt to his voice. The police officer, Officer Bo, is a baby-faced, short, white Floridian with a potbelly. Where are you and your daddy from, Ms. Bienaim? Officer Bo asks, doing the best he can with my last name. He does such a lousy job that, even though he and I and Salinas are the only people in Salinas' office, at first I think he's talking to someone else. I was born and raised in East Flatbush, Brooklyn, and have never even been to my parents' birthplace. Still, I answer Haiti because it is one more thing I've always longed to have in common with my parents. Officer Bo plows forward with,

You all the way down here in Lakeland from Haiti? We live in New York, I say. We were on our way to Tampa. To do what? Officer Bo continues. Visit? To deliver a sculpture, I say. I'm an artist, a sculptor. I'm really not an artist, not in the way I'd like to be. I'm more of an obsessive wood-carver with a single subject thus far my father. My creative eye finds Manager Salinas' office gaudy. The walls are covered with orange-and-green wallpaper, briefly interrupted by a giant gold leaf-bordered print of a Victorian cottage that resembles the building we're in. Patting his light green tie, which brings out even more the hallucinatory shade of his eyes, Manager Salinas reassuringly tells me, Officer Bo and I will do our best. We start out with a brief description of my father: Sixty-five, five feet eight inches, one hundred and eighty pounds, with a widow's peak, thinning salt-and-pepper hair, and velvet-brown eyes. Velvet? Officer Bo interrupts. Deep brown, same color as his complexion, I explain. My father has had partial frontal dentures since he fell off his and my mother's bed and landed on his face ten years ago when he was having one of his prison nightmares.

I mention that too. Just the dentures, not the nightmares. I also bring up the blunt, ropelike scar that runs from my father's right cheek down to the corner of his mouth, the only visible reminder of the year he spent in prison in Haiti. Please don't be offended by what I'm about to ask, Officer Bo says. I deal with an older population here, and this is something that comes up a lot when they go missing. Does your daddy have any kind of mental illness, senility? I reply, No, he's not senile. You have any pictures of your daddy? Officer Bo asks. My father has never liked having his picture taken. We have only a few of him at home, some awkward shots at my different school graduations, with him standing between my mother and me, his hand covering his scar. I had hoped to take some pictures of him on this trip, but he hadn't let me. At one of the rest stops I bought a disposable camera and pointed it at him anyway. As usual, he protested, covering his face with both hands like a little boy protecting his cheeks from a slap. He didn't want any more pictures taken of him for the rest of his life, he said, he was feeling too ugly. That's too bad, Officer Bo offers at the end of my too lengthy explanation. He speaks English, your daddy? Can he ask for directions, et cetera? Yes, I say. Is there anything that might make your father run away from you, particularly here in Lakeland? Manager Salinas asks. Did you two have a fight? I had never tried to tell my father's story in words before now, but my first completed sculpture of him was the reason for our trip: a three-foot mahogany figure of my father naked, kneeling on a half-foot-square base, his back arched like the curve of a crescent moon, his downcast eyes fixed on his very long fingers and the large palms of his hands. It was hardly revolutionary, rough and not too detailed, minimalist at best, but it was my favorite of all my attempted representations of my father. It was the way I had imagined him in prison. The last time I had seen my father? The previous night, before falling asleep. When we pulled our rental car into the hotel's hedge-bordered parking lot, it was almost midnight. All the restaurants in the area were closed. There was nothing to do but shower and go to bed. It's like paradise here, my father had said when he'd seen our tiny room. It had the same orange-and-green wallpaper as Salinas' office, and the plush emerald carpet matched the walls. Look, Ka, he said, his deep, raspy voice muted with exhaustion, the carpet is like grass under our feet. He'd picked the bed closest to the bathroom, removed the top of his gray jogging suit, and unpacked his toiletries. Soon after, I heard him humming loudly, as he always did, in the shower. I checked on the sculpture, just felt it a little bit through the bubble padding and carton wrapping to make sure it was still whole. I'd used a piece of mahogany that was naturally flawed, with a few superficial cracks along what was now the back. I'd thought these cracks beautiful and had made no effort to sand or polish them away, as they seemed like the wood's own scars, like the one my father had on his face. But I was also a little worried about the cracks. Would they seem amateurish and unintentional, like a mistake? Could the wood come apart with simple movements or with age? Would the client be satisfied? I closed my eyes and tried to picture the client to whom I was delivering the sculpture: Gabrielle Fonteneau, a Haitian American woman about my age, the star of a popular television series and an avid art collector. My friend Cline Benoit, a former colleague at the junior high

school where I'm a substitute art teacher, had grown up with Gabrielle Fonteneau in Tampa and on a holiday visit home had shown Gabrielle Fonteneau a snapshot of my Father piece and had persuaded her to buy it. Gabrielle Fonteneau was spending the week away from Hollywood at her parents house in Tampa. I took some time off, and both my mother and I figured that my father, who watched a lot of television, both at home and at his Nostrand Avenue barbershop, would enjoy meeting Gabrielle Fonteneau too. But when I woke up, my father was gone and so was the sculpture. I stepped out of the room and onto the balcony overlooking the parking lot. It was a hot and muggy morning, the humid air laden with the smell of the freshly mowed tropical grass and sprinkler-showered hibiscus bordering the parking lot. My rental car too was gone. I hoped my father was driving around trying to find us some breakfast and would explain when he got back why he'd taken the sculpture with him, so I got dressed and waited. I watched a half hour of local morning news, smoked five mentholated cigarettes even though we were in a nonsmoking room, and waited some more. All that waiting took two hours, and I felt guilty for having held back so long before going to the front desk to ask, Have you seen my father? I feel Officer Bos fingers gently stroking my wrist, perhaps to tell me to stop talking. Up close Officer Bo smells like fried eggs and gasoline, like breakfast at the Amoco. Ill put the word out with the other boys, he says. Salinas here will be in his office. Why dont you go on back to your hotel room in case your daddy shows up there? Back in the room, I lie in my fathers unmade bed. The sheets smell like his cologne, an odd mix of lavender and lime that Ive always thought too pungent, but that he likes nonetheless. I jump up when I hear the click from the electronic key in the door. Its the maid.

Shes a young Cuban woman who is overly polite, making up for her lack of English with deferential gestures: a great big smile, a nod, even a bow as she backs out of the room. She reminds me of my mother when she has to work on non-Haitian clients at her beauty shop, how she pays much more attention to those clients, forcing herself to laugh at jokes she barely understands and smiling at insults she doesnt quite grasp, all to avoid being forced into a conversation, knowing she couldnt hold up her end very well. Its almost noon when I pick up the phone and call my mother at the salon. One of her employees tells me that shes not yet returned from the Mass she attends every day. After the Mass, if she has clients waiting, shell walk the twenty blocks from the church to the salon. If she has no appointments, then shell let her workers handle the walk-ins and go home for lunch. This was as close to retirement as my mother would ever come. This routine was her dream when she first started the shop. She had always wanted a life with room for daily Mass and long walks and the option of sometimes not going to work. I call my parents house. My mother isnt there either, so I leave the hotel number on the machine. Please call as soon as you can, Manman, I say. Its about Papa. Its early afternoon when my mother calls back, her voice cracking with worry. I had been sittin... *Revue de presse* A serious-minded work of a mature talent, a searching examination of terror and its lingering aftershocks on generations . . . Gripping . . . Powerful. John Marshall, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* [The Dew Breaker] never wavers in placing its attention on individual lives, and as [Danticat] moves from one character to another you feel she is holding their faces up to you . . . [An] accomplished novel. Jenny Shank, *Rocky Mountain News* [Danticats] prose is at once stately and riveting, echoing sincere grief for Haitis plight and capturing the intensity of violent times. Jeannette J. Lee, *Associated Press* Filled with quiet intensity and elegant, thought-provoking prose . . . An elegiac and powerful novel with a fresh presentation of evil and the healing potential of forgiveness. Champ Clark, *People* [Danticats] writing . . . transcends its subject matter in moments of harsh poetry . . . Though Haitis violent history is rarely far from the surface of Danticats work, she also celebrates its vibrancy . . . theres an intimacy to [her] writing.

Associated Press Perfectly formed chapters written in prose that feels like blood moving slowly through veins . . . Startling. Joy Press, *Village Voice* With her grace and her imperishable humanity, her devotion to lives lived like a pendulum between forgiveness and regret, [Danticat] . . . makes sadness beautiful. Daniel Asa Rose, *The New York Observer* The stories relate to one another like beautiful shards of a broken vase . . . Haunting . . . A flawless finale . . . [Danticat] is a master at capturing the inarticulate sorrow and bafflement that evil inspires. Ron Charles, *Christian Science Monitor* [The Dew Breaker] delivers the pleasures of intricacy . . . Danticat has an emotional imagination capable of evoking empathy for both predator and prey. Troy Patterson, *Entertainment Weekly* In its varied characters, its descriptive power and its tightly linked images and themes, [The Dew Breaker] is a rewarding and affecting read, rich with insights not just about Haiti but also about the human condition. Kate Washington, *San Francisco Chronicle* With characteristic lyricism and grace, Danticat probes the painful legacy of [Haitis past] . . . [She] allows her deft, impressionistic strokes to evoke the many different lives shattered by each act of violence. Heather Hewett, *Philadelphia Inquirer* Stunning . . . Engrossing for its fine-tuned characterizations and evocative interactions

. . . Vivid and memorable . . . Always shifting and always beautiful, the stories maintain a sense of mystery about what lies behind them. Johnette Rodriguez, *The Providence Phoenix* A compelling portrait of individuals untied against their will, even without their knowledge, by pain, trauma, and loss . . . A collection of perspectives that, together, give a snapshot of a community struggling to get out from under tragedy. Rick Massimo, *Providence Journal* Danticats prose . . . is lucid, precise from start to finish . . . A singular vision of what a novel is capable of achieving and the depths to which it can pull us. Kevin Rabalais, *Times-Picayune* Stunning . . . Beautifully written fiction [that] seamlessly blend[s] the personal and political, [and] asks questions about shame and guilt, forgiveness and redemption, and the legacy of violence . . . haunting. Bob Minzesheimer, *USA Today* Danticat [is] surely one of contemporary fictions most sensitive conveyors of hopes bittersweet persistence in the midst of poverty and violence. Margaria Fichtner, *Miami Herald* (feature) Moving . . . An emotionally rigorous story told with wit and occasional humor by one of our greatest living writers. Nader Sadre, *Gotham* Danticat writes finely crafted, hauntingly evocative books. [The Dew Breaker] probes the shadows of the Haitian diaspora in all its complexity. Anderson Tepper, *Time Out New York* Unforgettable . . . Danticat masterfully leads her readers into the everyday lives of Haitian immigrants in Brooklyn and Queens, New York . . . This heart-stirring book teaches us profound truths about the power of the human spirit. Organic Style Breathtaking . . . With terrifying wit and flowered pungency, Edwidge Danticat has managed over the past 10 years to portray the torment of the Haitian people . . . In *The Dew Breaker*, Danticat has written a Haitian truth: prisoners all, even the jailers. Richard Eder, *New York Times* Book A tangle of history, biography, circumstance and chance forms the emotional backdrop of Edwidge Danticats luminous new novel, *The Dew Breaker* . . . A tale of crime and punishment in the great tradition of Dostoevsky. Glenn McNatt, *The Sun* Violence and politics haunt *The Dew Breaker* . . . [The dew breaker's] moral ambiguities seem, at times, to be purely psychological, but Haitis vicious politics are at their core. *New York* magazine Remarkable . . . Danticats most persuasive, organic performance yet. As seamless as it is compelling . . . It is a measure of Danticats fierce, elliptical artistry that she makes the elisions count as much as her piercing, indelible words. Michiko Kakutani, *New York Times* Danticats gift is to combine both sympathy and clarity in a moral tangle that becomes as tight as a Haitian community. . . Moving. Pico Iyer, *Time* A devastating story of love, delusion, and history . . . Searing. Elaina Richardson, *O* magazine Riveting . . . Like a young Cassandra, gifted with the sight whether she wants it or not . . . Danticat leads her readers into the underworld. Its furnished like home. Kai Maristed, *Los Angeles Times* *The Dew Breaker* is a captivating, eloquent tale told by a nimble storyteller. Daphne Uviller, *Newsday* [The Dew Breaker tells of] men and women whose tremendous agonies fill every blank space in their lives . . . It also is a vivid document of recent Haitian and Haitian-American history . . . The scenes are memorable, cinematic. Betsy Willeford, *Miami Herald* [A] mesmerizing tale of redemption and regret. Essence Masterful . . . Danticats challenging novel draws readers deep into Haitis dark past, causing us to question our notions of good and evil and the limits of redemption. Bernadette Adams David, *Bookpage* [Danticat] fuses the beauty and tragedy of her native land, a land her characters want to forget and remember all at once. *Ebony* Haitian-born Danticats third novel focuses on the lives affected by a dew breaker, or torturer of Haitian dissidents under Duvaliers regime. Each chapter reveals the titular man from another viewpoint . . . This structure allows Danticat to move easily back and forth in time and place, from 1967 Haiti to present-day Florida, tracking diverse threads within the larger narrative . . . The slow accumulation of details pinpointing the pasts effects on the present makes for powerful reading . . . and Danticat is a crafter of subtle, gorgeous sentences and scenes. As the novel circles around the dew breaker, moving toward final episodes in which, as a young man and already dreaming of escape to the U.S., he performs his terrible work, the impact on the reader hauntingly, ineluctably grows. *Publishers Weekly* [The Dew Breaker] is, most profoundly, about loves healing powers. From its marvelous descriptions of place to the gentle opening up of characters, this is a book that engages the imagination. Amy Wilentz, *Elle* Compelling and richly imagined . . . The resonant theme of Danticats beautifully lucid fourth work of fiction is the baffling legacy of violence and the unanswerable questions of exile . . . The books pivotal, and most riveting, sections portray a man who works for the state as a torturer, or dew breaker, until a catastrophic encounter with a heroic preacher induces him to flee to New York, where his daughter finally learns of his past. Danticats masterful depiction of the emotional and spiritual reverberations of tyranny and displacement reveals the intricate mesh of relationships that defines every life, and the burden of traumatic inheritances: the crimes and tragedies that one generation barely survives, the next must reconcile. *Booklist* (starred) [Danticat's] clear and resonant prose moves easily from past to present (and back again) . . . This tour de force will certainly earn Danticat high acclaim . . .

Highly recommended. Library Journal (starred) In this third novel from Danticat, the past has a way of intruding on everyday life no matter how all of the characters try to stop it. The dew breaker at the heart of this story is an old man when we first meet him . . . each chapter brings another view of this same man, who escaped his crimes in Haiti to hide out in Brooklyn, and each is relat...