



The Five Books of Moses Lapinsky

Karen X. Tulchinsky

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In 2003, a mild-mannered historian named Moses Lapinsky jots down notes for a biography. It is to tell the tale of his father Sonny, a famous Jewish- Canadian boxer. As Moses buries himself in his research, he is transported back in time to the pivotal events of his father's life. So begins the first of the five sections of the novel, each narrated by a different third person. Crammed with humour, sorrow, folly, bravery and the richness of the everyday, Tulchinsky traces the remarkable fortunes of generations of the Lapinsky family, bringing life to the character of an entire community.

August 1933: a sweltering Toronto night. At Christie Pits Park, during the ninth inning of an amateur-league softball game, four youths unfurl a white sheet emblazoned with a large black Swastika, lift their arms and shout, "Heil Hitler!" Within seconds, a group of Jewish youths charge in a struggle to capture the flag, setting off a four-hour race riot (the largest ever to occur, before or since, in Toronto), involving fifteen thousand people and injuring hundreds.

The riot at Christie Pits Park was the culmination of weeks of political and racial tension. Tulchinsky has re-created this and other defining historical moments in vivid detail, taking us inside the life of one immigrant Jewish family. We trace the fortunes of the Lapinskys—in particular the four sons—from the pivotal moment of the riots, through the years of the Great Depression, the rise of fascism and all its attendant social tensions, World War II, into the post-war era that began to emerge in the early 1950s. A stunning, engaging and moving fictional treatment of a defining moment for a family, a city, a nation and a continent struggling with ideas of freedom, tolerance and identity in a world broken by war.

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