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People and Peppers, A Romance

Kelvin Christopher James

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Gossipy, intimate, and provocative, and set in Trinidad and New York City, People and Peppers, A Romance gives a diverting peek into the nuances of a Caribbean island's callaloo of inter-racial and multicultural social mores. James's main characters are complex, motivated, and fun to know. Tall and handsome, the main protagonist, Vivion K Pinheiro, is the bastard of a half-Portuguese, half Afro-Haitian woman, and an attractive New Yorker with carrot-colored hair who danced beautifully. Accomplished as well, Vivion has earned national prestige as a scholar and athlete. As a young man trying to realize dreams, he can be selfish yet thoughtful, deceptive yet generous-no real villain, just a callow fella getting over by pulling the tricky strings of privilege and personal charm. An important factor in his dream actualization is Vivion's doting, wealthy mother to whom he confessed an ambition to construct an ecologically sensitive, self-sufficient house on countryside property she bought for him. He imagines the finished structure to be surrounded by a pepper farm that grows Moruga Red Scorpion peppers-the hottest on the planet. A significant stubbing-stone to his ambitions though, is a habit of dodging difficulties-when the goings get tough, Vivion's gone. How he deals with this failing is only one serving of this fine novel. Of other satisfying portions is the influence of the women in his life. In earlier novels, James's female characters have been admirable stalwarts and he doesn't disappoint here. Andaluza, the mother, is an indulgent one. Nikki, the lover, is a strong other. This empathetic novel superbly speaks to women's compassion and tolerances in the name of love. So let's live with Vivion as he discovers and submits to the sublime effects of romantic love and father issues. "Peoples and Peppers, A Romance, draws on complex interactions between diverse peoples, men and women, from Dominican Republic, Trinidad, New York, and Japan. Kelvin Christopher James captures their intimacies and compromises with fluent, accurate, and tasty expression in an ecology of people and pepper varieties in the field, and with sweet language, they linger on the reader's mental palate." -Dr. Brader Brathwaite Praise for his Jumping Ship and Other Stories: "A warm and gifted raconteur." -New York Times Praise for Secrets, a novel: "Incantatory . . . the finest novel to come out of the Caribbean experience since V.S. Naipaul's A House for Mr. Biswas." -Washington Post

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