



Magic Seeds

By V.S. Naipaul

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Nobel laureate V. S. Naipaul's magnificent **Magic Seeds** continues the story of Willie Chandran, the perennially dissatisfied and self-destructively naive protagonist of his bestselling **Half a Life**.

Having left a wife and a livelihood in Africa, Willie is persuaded to return to his native India to join an underground movement on behalf of its oppressed lower castes. Instead he finds himself in the company of dilettantes and psychopaths, relentlessly hunted by police and spurned by the people he means to liberate. But this is only one stop in a quest for authenticity that takes in all the fanaticism and folly of the postmodern era. Moving with dreamlike swiftness from guerrilla encampment to prison cell, from the squalor of rural India to the glut and moral desolation of 1980s London, **Magic Seeds** is a novel of oracular power, dazzling in its economy and unblinking in its observations.

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Magic Seeds By V.S. Naipaul Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. At the end of *Half a Life*, Naipaul's previous novel, Willie, a young Indian in late 1950s London, travels to Africa. At the beginning of his new novel, Willie is in Berlin with his bossy sister, Sarojini. It is 18 years later. Revolution has uprooted Willie's African existence. Sarojini hooks him up with a guerrilla group in India, and Willie, always ready to be molded to some cause, returns to India. The guerrillas, Willie soon learns, are "absolute maniacs." But caught up, as ever, in the energy of others, Willie stays with them for seven years. He then surrenders and is tossed into the relative comfort of jail. When an old London friend (a lawyer named Roger) gets Willie's book of short stories republished, Willie's imprisonment becomes an embarrassment to the authorities. He is now seen as a forerunner of "postcolonial writing." He returns to London, where he alternates between making love to Perdita, Roger's wife, and looking for a job. One opens up on the staff of an architecture magazine funded by a rich banker (who is also cuckolding Roger). Willie's continual betweenness—a state that makes him, to the guerrillas, a man "who looks at home everywhere"—is the core theme of this novel, and the story is merely the shadow projected by that theme. Sometimes, especially toward the end of the book, as Willie's story becomes more suburban, there is a penumbral sketchiness to the incidents. At one point, Willie, remarking on the rich London set into which he has been flung, thinks: "These people here don't understand nullity." Naipaul does—he is a modern master of the multiple ironies of resentment, the claustrophobia of the margins. In a world in which terrorism continually haunts the headlines, Naipaul's work is indispensable.

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From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

Half A Life (2001) might have been better been left without this sequel, which ruffles reviewers' feathers as only a grand old man of literature can. Though his trophy shelf holds a Nobel Prize, his past accomplishments buy him little sympathy. In fact, it's often difficult to tell if critics are more put off by *Magic Seeds* or their appraisal of Willie Chandran as a mouthpiece for Naipaul's politics. For an author whose greatest works have a heavy dose of autobiography, this reaction is not surprising, though it makes one wonder whether critics are reading the novel or dissecting the author. In the end, one hopes the unlikeable characters, implausible plotting, and general fog of pessimism are what doom this book, not critical disappointment in Naipaul.

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From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review This is a novel about war. It doesn't feature traditional pitched battles between the forces of declared belligerent nations; rather, it's about underground revolutionary movements that fight--ambush, really--police and civilians. This latest work by the beloved Nobel laureate is a sequel to *Half a Life* (2000), which introduced the character of Willie Chandran, an Indian, a son of a Brahmin and a low-caste woman, whose participation in secret revolutionary programs in various locales over the years has been more about his search for purpose, identity, and control over his own destiny than about aiding other people's struggles against oppression. Naipaul's new novel, then, is a continuation of Willie's experiences, first in India and then upon his return to England, where he lived 30 years before. Naipaul's elaborately constructed novel is an anatomy of revolution but in its clandestine, guerilla "format." It is Naipaul's genius to individualize the abstract, in this case giving the concept of perpetual, worldwide fights against political tyranny and social inequality a deeply sculpted face--Willie's--and through him, offering a richly imagined example of what drives the revolutionary. But, ultimately, the novel reaches its full depth in tracking Willie's disillusion, as he

is left, after all his attempts to grasp onto an idealized vision of society, to face the reality of what it is people truly want and need. We expect brilliant thought and sensitive artistry from Naipaul, and once again, we are not disappointed. *Brad Hooper*

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Marie Clemmer:

Do you have favorite book? For those who have, what is your favorite's book? Publication is very important thing for us to learn everything in the world. Each publication has different aim as well as goal; it means that guide has different type. Some people really feel enjoy to spend their the perfect time to read a book. They are reading whatever they consider because their hobby will be reading a book. How about the person who don't like looking at a book? Sometime, person feel need book whenever they found difficult problem or maybe exercise. Well, probably you will require this Magic Seeds.

Edward Bastian:

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