

East of A

Russ Atwood

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New York City's hot-wired East Village: From Avenue A to Avenue D, Alphabet City is a magnet for all-night revelers, actors, musicians, and artists. But it's also a lair for desperate hustlers, con men, and last-chance addicts.

Just part of the scene East of A.

Payton Sherwood knows that scene. He lives it daily. But Payton also lives by a creed derived from the white-knight heroes of Golden Age detective fiction. And like those renowned hardboiled private eyes, he is riddled with loss--the loss of an old love who still exists in daydreams, and the loss of a city he barely recognizes.

Payton returns to the Lower East Side after a short absence to find himself an outsider. When he takes a wrong turn on a side street, he stumbles into trouble in the form of three bull-necked heavies and a tough sixteen-year-old runaway named Gloria Manlow. After taking a savage beating, Payton is robbed of his Rolex watch and left bleeding on the sidewalk.

For Payton, trying to retrieve his three-thousand-dollar wristwatch has its perils. So does tracking Gloria, whose trail zigzags from a stray dog to a psycho boyfriend to an ice-hearted killer.

Following clues both hot and cold, Payton winds his way through Alphabet City--in and out of trendy after-hour dives, across barrio tenements and vacant lots where the homeless camp, and finally on a descent into a nightclub in a defunct church: the Hellhole. Here, the shadows that frighten aren't those that shade the street, but rather the soul. Payton's dusk-to-dawn nightmare on the wild side is about to begin--and nothing will stop it but death.

There may be millions of stories in the Naked City, but few are as riveting as the one Russell Atwood tells. A black-lit, neo-noir urban thriller, East of A is a bloody valentine to classic detective fiction--and an original hard-drive narrative so seductive and compelling it takes the reader hostage and never lets go.



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