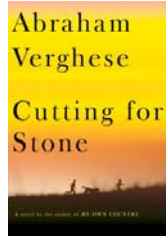


Review: Cutting for Stone

February, 2009

In a sense, Marion Stone, the narrator of Abraham Verghese's sparkling first novel, *Cutting for Stone*, is a dramatically enhanced doppelgänger of his creator. Like Verghese, he is born in Ethiopia to Indian parents, becomes a physician, and relocates to America (Verghese moved in the eighties to Tennessee, then Texas, and in 2007, to California; Stone moves to New York). Stone's epic life begins in 1954 as the fruit of a tryst between Thomas Stone, a surgeon at Addis Ababa's Missing Hospital, and his aide, Sister Mary Joseph Praise, who hides the resultant pregnancy under her habit. When she dies giving birth to Marion and his twin brother, Shiva, Thomas takes his grief and anger to America, abandoning the boys to be raised by two colleagues. Marion soon grows estranged from his brother and later flees Ethiopia's brutal Mengistu regime, making his alienation complete: no family, no friends, no country—just a medical internship in a Bronx welfare hospital. Verghese has made a seamless transition from best-selling memoirist (*The Tennis Partner*, *My Own Country*) to novelist. His plotting is subtle—clues planted in chapter 1 blossom with meaning in chapter 53—and the Stone circle of characters is unforgettable. *Cutting for Stone* is as wise and worldly as it is gritty and unpretentious.



Knopf, \$26.95