

# Say That To My Face: Fiction - David Prete

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Yonkers, New York, finds its place on the literary map of America. Transcending all the limitations of "ethnic literature" and mobster stereotyping, David Prete flawlessly (and seemingly effortlessly) nails Italian-American life to the page and elevates it to a new place in American writing. *Say That to My Face* introduces us to Joey Frascone and his family and friends in the tense, violent, racially divided Yonkers of the Seventies and Eighties. His childhood segmented between four homes and his teenage dreams pulling him towards the challenge and excitement of New York City, Joey is a handsome kid whose intense and conflicting loyalties threaten to tear him apart. Whether responding to the crush of a motherless girl whose sister he adores; flirting with danger during the terrifying summer of mass-murderer "Son of Sam"; cheating his teammates of a victory to save a friend on the ballfield; watching his mother play softball against his father ("in her lovely red dress, she pretended to fix her crotch and spit out a wad of chewing tobacco... With one shake of her ass in the batter's box of a church parking lot, my mother dropped thirty years"); or struggling with the mind-blowing high of a lifetime while running drugs from Jamaica, Frascone wins the reader's steadfast allegiance as he tries to figure out where his own truest loyalties lie. Capturing people in flux between their better and worse selves, David Prete is one outstanding storyteller. With hilarious, thrilling, and painful accuracy, he evokes the color and poignancy and humor of Italian-American speech and the characters who use it. Like barman Frank Gianguzzi, whose favorite term of affection is "coog," from the Italian "cugino," or cousin, or any of its variations: "coog-o, coogini, coogette, coogie coog, coog a'bell, coog a'brut." Or Benny Colangelo, the quintessential neighborhood guy, "emanating his future. A future of work, neighborhood, family, and the beautiful poetry of routine." Or Joey's butcher grandfather, scratching his grandson's back with his thick, heavy butcher's nails, as he yells, "Look at the prince here." Or his Uncle Gingy, whose motto - "the one thing you don't mess with is family"-doesn't seem to apply to how he treats his wife. Having come of age among characters as memorable as any in Faulkner's Mississippi, Joey finds that even when he escapes Yonkers for the sophisticated city sparkling at the other side of the bridge, his past isn't forgotten: the past isn't even past. Author: Prete, David Publisher: W. W. Norton & Company Illustration: N Language: ENG

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