

KIRAN
DESAI



*the
inheritance
of
loss*

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CASMTVK Books

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WINNER OF THE MAN BOOKER PRIZE 2006

Boast of Quietness

Writings of light assault the darkness, more prodigious than meteors.
The tall unknowable city takes over the countryside.
Sure of my life and my death, I observe the ambitious and would like to
understand them.

Their day is greedy as a lariat in the air.

Their night is a rest from the rage within steel, quick to attack.

They speak of humanity.

My humanity is in feeling we are all voices of the same poverty.

They speak of homeland.

My homeland is the rhythm of a guitar, a few portraits, an old sword,
the willow grove's visible prayer as evening falls.

Time is living me.

More silent than my shadow, I pass through the loftily covetous multitude.

They are indispensable, singular, worthy of tomorrow.

My name is someone and anyone.

I walk slowly, like one who comes from so far away he doesn't expect to
arrive.

—Jorge Luis Borges



My Salams

To my editor, Joan Bingham, and my agent, Michael Carlisle, for their unstinting enthusiasm and generosity regarding everything to do with *The Inheritance of Loss*. Also, to Rose Marie Morse, David Davidar, and David Godwin. To Adelaide Docx for additional editing help.

To the Santa Maddalena Foundation, the Eastern Frontier Society, to Bunny Gupta and Doma Rai of *Sukhtara*, each for a desk with a view during three vital stages in the writing of this book.



'Kiran Desai is a terrific writer'

—SALMAN RUSHDIE

In a crumbling, isolated house at the foot of Mount Kanchenjunga lives an embittered judge who wants only to retire in peace from a world he has found too messy for justice, when his orphaned granddaughter, Sai, arrives on his doorstep. The judge's cook watches over her distractedly, for his thoughts are claimed by his son, Biju, who is hopscotching from one gritty New York restaurant to another on an elusive search for a green card.

When an Indian-Nepali insurgency in the mountains interrupts Sai's romance with her Nepali tutor, and causes their lives to descend into chaos, they are forced to consider their colliding interests. The cook witnesses the hierarchy being overturned and discarded. And the judge must revisit his past, and his own journey and role in their intertwining histories.

This majestic novel of our busy, grasping times illuminates the consequences of colonialism and global conflicts of religion, race and nationalism.

'A delightfully original book, [The Inheritance of Loss is] a triumph of the storyteller's art, nuanced, and even worthy of the most overworked term: luminous'
—*India Today*

'Kiran Desai's new novel manages to explore, with

intimacy and insight, just about every contemporary international issue: globalization, economic inequality, fundamentalism and terrorist violence. Despite being set in the mid-1980s, it seems the best kind of post-9/11 novel'
—*New York Times*

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