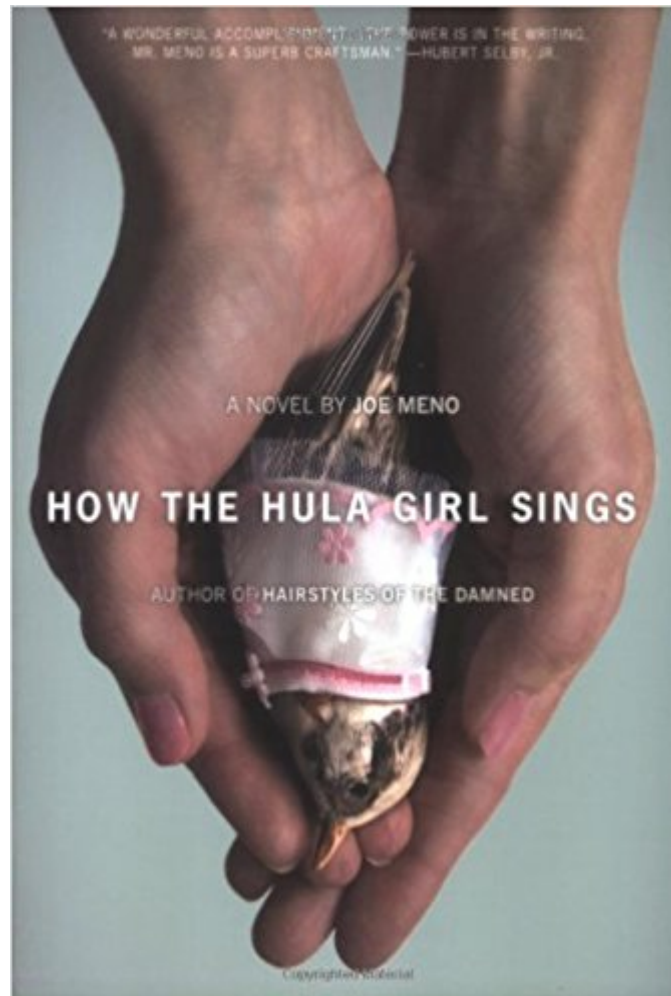




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# How The Hula Girl Sings



## Synopsis

A wonderful accomplishment. . . . The power is in the writing. Mr. Meno is a superb craftsman. —Hubert Selby Jr.; The author moves the story along at a surprisingly fast and easy pace. The evil eyes of small-town America seem to peer from every page of Meno's claustrophobic noir, where the good and the bad are forced down the same violent paths. —Kirkus Reviews; Joe Meno writes with the energy, honesty, and emotional impact of the best punk rock. —Jim DeRogatis, pop music critic, Chicago Sun-Times; A likable winner that should bolster Meno's reputation. —Publishers Weekly; Joe Meno writes with the energy, honesty, and emotional impact of the best punk rock. —Jim DeRogatis, Chicago Sun-Times; Fans of hard-boiled pulp fiction will particularly enjoy this novel. —Booklist A young ex-con in a small Illinois town. A lonely giant with a haunted past. A beautiful girl with a troubled heart. Strange and darkly magical, *How the Hula Girl Sings* begins exactly where most pulp fiction usually ends, with the vivid episode of the terrible crime itself. Three years later, Luce Lemay, out on parole for the awful tragedy, does his best to find hope: in a new job at the local Gas-N-Go; in his companion and fellow ex-con, Junior Breen, who spells out puzzling messages to the unquiet ghosts of his past; and finally, in the arms of the lovely but reckless Charlene. *How the Hula Girl Sings* is a suspenseful exploration of a country bright with the far-off stars of forgiveness and dark with the still-looming shadow of the death penalty.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Luce Lemay returns to his hometown in Illinois after serving time for accidentally running down a young mother's infant daughter, but hope turns to tragedy in Meno's (Tender as Hellfire) moving second novel. Lemay is a poetic ex-con who often waxes lyrical about his remorse for his crime as well as the tragic character flaws of his equally romantic best friend from the joint, a troubled giant named Junior Breen. Lemay is also a hard worker who wants to make good, though, and events take a positive turn when he gets a job at a local gas station and meets beautiful young Charlene Dulaire, a waitress at a diner. Their romance sours when Dulaire's ex-fiancé, a brute named Earl Peet, attacks Lemay and threatens to run him out of town. Meno pens some wonderful scenes of courtship and setbacks in the course of love, and he also does some nice work bringing Breen to life and exploring his friendship with Lemay. The tragic confrontation between convicts and townies is somewhat predictable, but Meno gets considerable mileage from the give and take among Lemay's elderly boss and the two young ex-cons as they care for one another and try to overcome their earlier mistakes. Meno has a poet's feel for small-town details, life in the joint and the trials an ex-con faces, and he's a natural storyteller with a talent for characterization. The novel has some mawkish moments and certainly many disturbing ones, but overall it's a likable winner that should bolster Meno's reputation. National advertising; Midwest author appearances. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Ex-con Luce Lemay, haunted by the crime he committed, returns to his hometown in rural Illinois to serve out his parole. Working as a gas station attendant with a fellow former inmate, he starts to forge a new life as he begins to court the tart-tongued waitress at the local diner. The locals, however, are reluctant to let him move on, and Lemay soon finds himself fending off attacks from jealous husbands, jilted fiancées, and a particularly vengeful ex-con. As Lemay struggles to find redemption through his interactions with his grief-stricken landlady and a young abused boy, he finds himself inexorably drawn into the world of violence he sought to escape. Indeed, the characters seem to spend the majority of their time spitting out bloody teeth or attacking each other with tire irons. Yet Meno's poetic and visceral style perfectly captures the seedy locale, and he finds the sadness behind violence and the anger behind revenge. Fans of hard-boiled pulp fiction will particularly enjoy this novel. Brendan Dowling Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book was in good condition, and the story was worth the money. I would recommend this as a light

read to a friend, but it's soooo different from *Hairstyles of the Damned*. I can't wait to read his other works.

I've read it three times. I just passed it along to a friend.

Loved it.

This book was quite a surprise to me. In college I became deeply infatuated with a certain style of writing — that of such Southern writers as William Faulkner, Flannery O'Connor and especially Carson McCullers. Joe Meno carries on this great Southern gothic tradition in his new book *How the Hula Girl Sings*. Meno creates a claustrophobic small town seething with sickness and hate. He fills it with characters such as an abusive father whose feet were eaten by gangrene, a woman who kills small animals and nails them to her walls in hand-crocheted sweaters so that she can mourn them, and a backstabbing ex-con who fashioned his fake teeth out of gravel. While this book is not a traditional mystery I believe that it is well worth the read. The story moves along at a good pace and is extremely engaging. (The Librarian, 5 cats)

I seem to be the lone voice on this, but I found this book to be a real disappointment. The dialogue was often too elaborate and misplaced, making the conversations unrealistic. Other parts, such as the sheriff "calling a doctor" and telling the characters to escape town, rather than take them to a hospital and try arresting the offenders, just got me plain mad because of the implausibility. However, the thing that really capped off my dislike for the book was Meno's constant repetition in description. "No dainty gloom could make a body feel more lonesome than missing a tooth. It made me feel improper to smile. Losing that molar over a girl who wouldn't even spare me a kiss made me feel like the imperial king of all fools. Nothing else could make me feel so low." After reading iterative writing like that, extended to 209 pages, I felt like taking a thesaurus and bashing the author in the head with it. This book, every component of it, was a disgrace to the literary accomplishments Meno created in *Hairstyles of the Damned*.

This book is the type that I find few and far between. Without so much as blinking I was already through the first hundred pages. Since I have a very short attention span, you can see why this is a big deal. This book made me not want to sleep, eat, or do anything to deter me from its pages. When it was over I was left sated but wishing there were a thousand more pages to come. Luce

Lemay's auspicious heart, dealt a hard luck hand, kept me filled with hope, wonder and awe. Even after a month since I finished it, I still can't help but wonder what old Luce is doing now.

HTHGS is a lyrical, poetic chronicle of a recently paroled felon's return to small town America. Mr. Meno writes with a dark, terse voice which captures the reader's attention. This trip inside a off-kilter, violent and sometimes insane world left me wanting more. A pure and thoughtful exploration of guilt and love in a world with little room for either.

What can I say? This is just an excellent read. Meno combines the quick, tight story movement of a pulp novel with a poet's view of the world. The language is simple but moving. Combine all that with some solid, fascinating, very human characters, finish it up with a powerhouse ending and you know what you got? One hell of a book.

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