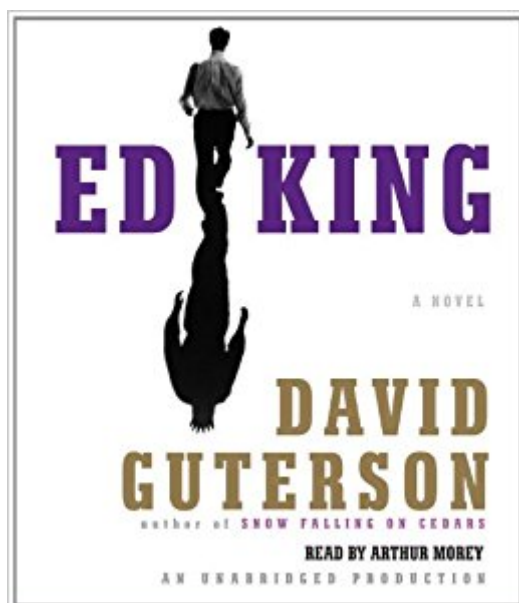


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# Ed King



## Synopsis

A sweeping, propulsive, darkly humorous new novel by the best-selling author of *Snow Falling on Cedars*: a story of destiny, desire, and destruction that reimagines Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex* for our own era. In Seattle in 1962, Walter Cousins, a mild-mannered actuary, "a guy who weighs risk for a living" takes a risk of his own, and makes the biggest error of his life. He sleeps with Diane Burroughs, the sexy, not-quite-legal British au pair who's taking care of his children for the summer. Diane gets pregnant and leaves their baby on a doorstep, but not before turning the tables on Walter and setting in motion a tragedy of epic proportions. Their orphaned child, adopted by an adoring family and named Edward Aaron King, grows up to become a billionaire Internet tycoon and an international celebrity, the "King of Search" who unknowingly, but inexorably, hurtles through life toward a fate he may have no power to shape. An instant classic, David Guterson's most daring and dazzling novel yet that brings a contemporary urgency to one of the greatest stories of all time. Grateful acknowledgment is made to the following for permission to reprint previously published material: Alfred Music Publishing Co. Inc.: Excerpt from "Do You Remember Walter?" words and music by Raymond Douglas Davies, copyright © 1969, copyright renewed by Davray Music Ltd. and ABKCO Music Inc., 85 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10003. All rights on behalf of Davray Music Ltd. administered by Unichappell Music Inc. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission of Alfred Music Publishing Co. Inc. Killer Queen Words and Music by Freddie Mercury © 1974 (Renewed 2002) QUEEN MUSIC LTD. All Rights for the U.S. and Canada Controlled and Administered by GLENWOOD MUSIC CORP. All Rights for the world excluding the U.S. and Canada Controlled and Administered by EMI MUSIC PUBLISHING LIMITED. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission Reprinted by permission of Hal Leonard Corporation

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## Customer Reviews

“Guterson . . . retells one of the oldest stories we know in a way that makes you hang on every twist and turn. You know where you’re going, but the trip is such a literary sightseer’s delight that you still enjoy every minute of it. . . . Even as you know your final destination, the route Guterson uses will keep you entertained the whole way. The way he makes Ed-ippus finally see, peeling the layers back one at a time, is ingenious. Guterson is one of America’s most talented novelists. This time, he has taken on a daunting task and succeeded. . . . [Ed King] should add to Guterson’s already glittering reputation.”—Howard Owen, *Fredericksburg.com*

“Sweeping. . . Ed King, a reimagining of Sophocles’ Oedipus Rex, the Greek tale of patricide and incest, is grounded in spot-on morality tales of exceedingly normal people who are doing their best to struggle through their middle- and upper-middle-class existence. . . . We meet the characters of Ed King in ensemble fashion. While their stories and the bonds that connect them are the stuff of sometimes far-fetched fiction, their personalities and behavior are all too believable. These are people more or less just like us. . . . Guterson clearly has made his bet on nature, not nurture. What’s bred in the bone guides each character in this well-told tale. [Guterson’s] portraits of humanity are real, and exceedingly enjoyable to read.”—Adam Lashinsky, *The San Francisco Chronicle*

“It takes a lot of nerve and perhaps a special brand of madness to take on the classics, and it doesn’t get more classic than the ancient Greek tragedies . . . especially when the play in question happens to be Sophocles’ magnum opus Oedipus the King. Yet with his latest novel, Ed King, author David Guterson does what many might consider the unthinkable: brings Oedipus into the modern age. . . . It would be a shame to ruin all the twists and turns that Oedipus/Ed—who in Guterson’s version becomes a celebrity billionaire through the power of the Internet—faces on his journey. Even for those who are well versed in Sophocles, Ed King is filled with plenty of surprises and sly homage to the original (as well as a few other Greek myths), and half the fun here is reveling in the sheer cheekiness of the narrative. Ed King is not a new story,

yet Guterson has managed to infuse this novel with feelings of freshness, relevance and even believability that are sure to delight 21st-century readers. A special pleasure will be experienced by those who can appreciate how the old elements have been modernized. Oedipus may not have been Guterson's to begin with, but by the end, readers will have no doubts that Ed King is a creation entirely his own.

—Stephanie Harrison, BookPage

“The Greek gods ran a pitiless universe. David Guterson's brilliant new novel, *Ed King*, mirrors that world, but it sets the wheels in motion in 1960s Seattle, as it follows the city's transformation from a sleepy, self-satisfied city to a 21st-century tech powerhouse. Ambition and desire drive the plot (it must be said that there is a whole lot of sex in this book) along with the fundamental irony that the road to hell is often paved with good intentions. . . . *Ed King* is compulsively readable and witheringly funny. Guterson's narrative voice by turns savage and sad, amused and outraged becomes a kind of Greek chorus of one. From the self-reverential blather of liberals to the gaming industry's nihilistic love of violence to the winner-take-all world of software and search engines, Guterson skewers it all, as he tracks Ed's ascendancy to the top of the tech world as the “King of Search.” He interweaves the story with enough mythological references to keep even the most ardent classicist entertained. The technological titans of *Ed King*, walled off in their estates and kingdoms, and privy to the best life that money can buy, strive and strain with little thought to where all their efforts might be headed. It forces the thought: what have all the technological achievements of Microsoft, , Apple wrought, when it comes to changing certain fundamental certainties of human nature? Ed believes the sky is the limit. Will [he] cheat death? Will he dodge the bullet of fate? In the world of *Ed King*, what brings the all-powerful “King of Search” to his final reckoning will keep the reader enthralled until the final page of this transcendently dark and dazzling book.

—Mary Ann Gwinn, *The Seattle Times*

“For a while after I finished *Ed King*, I wondered: With cheap, easy, 24-hour access to humanity's weirdest, creepiest, freakiest behavior, do we need a reboot of the Oedipus myth? Guterson persuasively argues that the answer is yes. While his latest novel is indeed full of sex, *Ed King* stands at polar opposite to the sad line-crossings of pornography. Guterson has trucked with Ovid and Homer and dear old Mr. Sophocles to merrily smash taboos like crockery and bring into the 21st century the old story of a man who kills his father, marries his mother and becomes a god. *Ed King* is dense with Guterson's customary needle-sharp prose. Guterson even drove me to my Bullfinch's to track the allusions to his sources. Those old stories survived millennia because they tell us about the human condition. Brave writers like Guterson can renew them to observe that some things are taboo for good reason; go ahead and break them, but there's no avoiding the

consequences. — Anne Saker, *Oregon Live* — “In his daring novel, David Guterson reimagines Oedipus Rex in contemporary America. Unlike Oedipus in the original Greek drama, Ed is not royalty per se but the contemporary equivalent: a billionaire tech titan, — the King of Search. — Born of a fling of a married man and a much-younger British au pair, baby Ed is left on a stranger’s doorstep and soon adopted. Ed grows up handsome, intellectually gifted, and powered by a relentless self-confidence. The narrative runs briskly through decades and multiple points of view as Guterson carves a wry edge into Sophocles’ — tragedy about an abandoned baby who grows up to kill his father and marry his mother. — When [Ed and his mother] meet by chance, the attraction is immediate and the implications horrifying, though not to the lustily oblivious couple. Guterson keeps the novel winningly good-natured and almost farcical, all the better to teach timeless lessons about hubris, ambition, and the consequences of long-ago sins. — •Karen Holt, *O Magazine* — “[In this] tale of mythic proportions. . . readers watch in horror as three disparate lives hurtle toward their fate in this reimagining of the Oedipus myth. . . . [Guterson’s] fans will likely clamor for this. — •Sally Bissell, *Library Journal* — “[An] engrossing, constantly twisting retelling of Oedipus Rex . . . darkly funny. — •The Huffington Post — “A retelling of Oedipus Rex for the information age [that is] more comedy than tragedy. Guterson maintains an enjoyably sharp edge to his humor that will keep readers hooked. — •Kirkus Review — “How would a modern man go about killing his father and marrying his mother, just like Sophocles’ Oedipus? Guterson’s vivid recreation . . . is a study in outsized avarice and arrogance. Exuberantly rambunctious, Guterson’s bold pondering of the Greek classic is a fiendishly tantalizing romp. — •Carol Haggas, *Booklist*, starred review — From the Hardcover edition.

David Guterson is the author of the novels *East of the Mountains*, *The Other*, *Our Lady of the Forest*, — and *Snow Falling on Cedars*, which won the PEN/Faulkner Award, as well as a story collection, *The Country Ahead of Us*, *the Country Behind*, and *Family Matters: Why Homeschooling Makes Sense*. He lives in Washington State. From the Hardcover edition.

Unlike, *SNOW FALLING ON CEDARS*, this novel was very dark and without any redemption at the end. The characters lacked any depth and were so awful that I almost stopped reading the book. But I wanted to give it a chance so I continued to read to the very bitter end. It was a novel I would

not recommend. It left me feeling very depressed.

Having read most of David Guterson's book I was fully anticipating another exciting read, but once I discovered what 'the plot' was I found myself flicking the last 100 plus pages and was thankful when I reached the last one. Sorry David, but this 'effort' is nowhere near 'Snow Falling On Cedars'!

More like a wild John Irving novel than what I have experienced with Guterson.

How often does this story happen in real life!! What a powerful intriguing read about a topic that should be discussed more openly. So superbly written. To say more would spoil your read.

Cleverest book I have read in ages. Loved it.

Never read Oedipus Rex - went to music school and did not study literature so lots of the story was surprising to me. Although there were a few hard to believe moments I think Guterson did a great job bringing it back together. Just a good fun read! Glad I didn't read reviews or I would not have enjoyed it. Obviously it's not for everybody and here on there are many critics of this book that couldn't write a novel to save their life. I actually read a sample on my Kindle and it hooked me. I also think I would have been pretty happy to read only about the characters who appear early on in the book as there was something intriguing even though the father's escapades were twisted. I like characters, and hate cliches. Guterson's a masterful writer.

David Guterson, the eternal flaming fountain of readable, engrossing stories. "Ed King" another can't-lay-it-down thriller. Having read them all, right here in the Northwest, I can only wish for him good health and a safe journey through a long, thriving career as storyteller extraordinaire. I look forward to a few more such treasures before I die.

When I first read the reviews of "Ed King" (your Vine Program reviews) I was discouraged and almost did not purchase the book. What a blessing that I did not go along with their negative opinions! Perhaps these reviewers have a great track record with , but they are way off the track with Guterson's book. Guterson's writing in "Ed King" is almost flawless. I can think of only a couple places where I thought it could have been better. What he has created here is, first of all, a brilliant cultural history of the West Coast (at least) from the '60s to the present. Forget Oedipus for a

moment. The book starts out in the summer of 1962 and relentlessly takes us through what we have lived or witnessed with remarkable insight and detail. On top of what is already an exciting journey, Guterson has also brought us most of the Oedipus story. This is no small feat since he is dealing with utterly different cultures quite remote from each other in time. There are two huge problems in this project. One is effectively translating the crucial moments in the Oedipus story into reasonable facsimiles. The other is making the story yield the overall sense of tragedy commanded by the Greek play. The first challenge is determining a reason for Ed's abandonment. Guterson's version is far removed from Sophocles' but it certainly fits into our cultural environment. He even gives Walter a threatening dream closer to the original. From that point onward, Guterson finds every opportunity available to parallel the story, including Eddie's early-childhood foot problems. The next dramatic moment is, of course, the killing scene. In this, Guterson does an unbelievable job of translating from Greek to American. It happens so fast it makes you gasp. At this point in the book I wondered how he can possibly carry off the sphinx and the riddle --- to say nothing about the oracle's replacement by the Tarot Card reader. Well, if there was a sphinx, I did not see it but the riddle comes quite naturally in a lecture on statistics and betting odds. It fits the characters perfectly. From there onward it's a simple race to the tragic realization of who he is and what he has done. Like Oedipus, Ed is possessed by wanting to know the truth in detail and wanting to know it immediately. But Ed is far ahead of Oedipus in that field. He is, after all, the Search King. In the end, Guterson has masterfully connected Sophocles' tragedy with today's monumental digital hubris. We must have detailed genetic knowledge for everyone; all our records, including medical, must be easily accessed digitally; and there must be nothing left that we cannot know. I do not like Ed King nor did I ever like Oedipus the King. Liking isn't the important issue. What is important, I think, is that Ed King is a tragic figure in our culture just as Oedipus was in his. But understanding him as a tragic figure requires more than understanding him simply as a character. The culture fills in the tragedy as much as the character himself does. Guterson has found a very interesting way of getting into a fundamental and potentially tragic aspect of who we are as an evolving people.

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