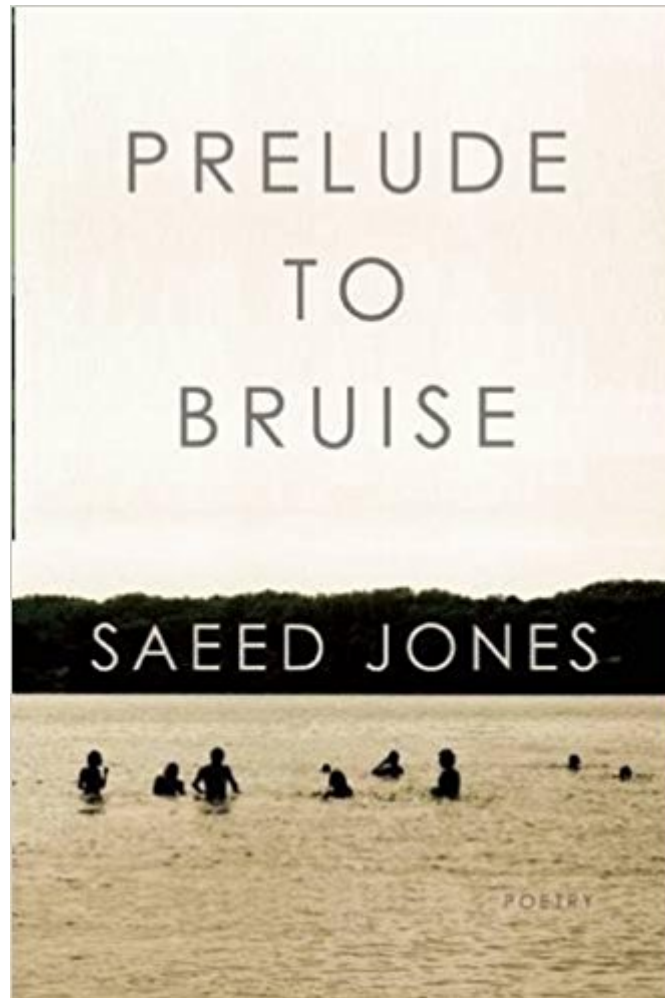




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# Prelude To Bruise



## Synopsis

Praise for Saeed Jones: "Jones is the kind of writer who's more than wanted: he's desperately needed." — FlavorWire "This book leaves your body transformed in a way that poetry should." — ElevenEleven "I get shout-happy when I read these poems; they are the gospel; they are the good news of the sustaining power of imagination, tenderness, and outright joy." — D. A. Powell "Prelude to Bruise works its tempestuous mojo just under the skin, wreaking a sweet havoc and rearranging the pulse. These poems don't dole out mercy. Mr. Jones undoubtedly dipped his pen in fierce before crafting these stanzas that rock like backslap. Straighten your skirt, children. The doors of the church are open." — Patricia Smith "It's a big book, a major book. A game-changer. Dazzling, brutal, real. Not just brilliant, caustic, and impassioned but a work that brings history in which the personal and political are inter-constitutive to the immediate moment. Jones takes a reader deep into lived experience, into a charged world divided among unstable yet entrenched lines: racial, gendered, political, sexual, familial. Here we absorb each quiet resistance, each whoop of joy, a knowledge of violence and of desire, an unbearable ache/loss/yearning. This is not just a 'new voice' but a new song, a new way of singing, a new music made of deep grief's wildfire, of burning intelligence and of all-feeling heart, scorched and seared. In a poem, Jones says, 'Boy's body is a song only he can hear.' But now that we have this book, we can all hear it. And it's unforgettable." — Brenda Shaughnessy "Inside each hunger, each desire, speaks the voice of a boy that admits 'I've always wanted to be dangerous.' This is not a threat but a promise to break away from the affliction of silence, to make audible the stories that trouble the dimensions of masculinity and discomfort the polite conversations about race. With impressive grace, Saeed Jones situates the queer black body at the center, where his visibility and vulnerability nurture emotional strength and the irrepressible energy to claim those spaces that were once denied or withheld from him. Prelude to a Bruise is a daring debut." — Rigoberto González

From "Sleeping Arrangement": Take your hand out from under my pillow. And take your sheets with you. Drag them under. Make pretend ghosts. I can't have you rattling the bed springs so keep still, keep quiet. Mistake yourself for shadows. Learn the lullabies of lint. Saeed Jones works as the editor of BuzzFeedLGBT.

## Customer Reviews

NPR's Best Books of 2014  
Time Out New York Best Books of 2014  
Book Riot, 2014's Must-Read Books from Indie Presses  
Split This Rock Recommended Poetry Books of 2014  
Vol. 1 Brooklyn, A Year of Favorites, Jason Diamond  
Greenlight Bookstore, Holiday Picks "In his debut collection, Jones

has crafted a fever dream, something akin to magic. . . . Solid from start to finish, possessing amazing energy and focus, a bold new voice in poetry has announced itself." *Œ Publishers Weekly*, starred review "This is indeed a book seamed in smoke; it is a dance that invites you to admire the supple twist of its narrative spine; it is hard and glaring and brilliant as the anthracite that opens the collection: 'a voice mistook for stone, / jagged black fist.'" *Œ NPR Book Review* "The features that distinguish his poems from prose *Œ* brevity, symbolism, implication *Œ* let him investigate the almost unsayable." *Œ Los Angeles Times* "Jones had a meteoric rise to literary prominence in the past year. . . . The poems of this book are harrowing and heartbreaking, treating family, sexuality, and race with unrelenting intensity." *Œ Publishers Weekly* "The way these poems address violence, life in the south, race, sexuality and relationships makes for an engrossing read best consumed in as few sittings as possible." *Œ Time* "A debut poetry collection examining identity in all its forms *Œ* racial, sexual, geographical, and more *Œ* with both incisive intensity and tenderness." *Œ Off the Shelf* "Saeed's *Prelude to Bruise* is a rigorous collection that challenges political, sexual and familial norms and bristles with pain. . . . No matter the subject, Jones's writing is silky smooth." *Œ The Washington Post* "This is as purely transformative as poetry gets. Saeed leads us through discovery of self: racial and gendered, political and familial." *Œ PrideSource* "Jones' 2014 poetry collection, offers a candid, refreshing view of the issues often faced within the LGBT community, including struggles with identity and masculinity." *Œ America Magazine* "Jones's lavish sonic patterning and gothic imagery often recall the incendiary mythos and immaculate craft of Sylvia Plath's *Ariel* as well as the haunted, sensual longing of Thomas James's *Letters to a Stranger*." *Œ Kenyon Review* "This year's Stonewall-Gittings literature award goes to Saeed Jones's *Prelude to Bruise* (Coffee House), a punch-in-your-gut fusion of racial, sexual, and personal struggle and a National Book Critics Circle finalist." *Œ Library Journal* "An astonishing poetry collection, furious, tender, and true." *Œ Tin House* "Jones' poetry is evocative and rhythmic, at times tilting into a songlike cadence, and moves uneasily and strikingly between imagery of sex and violence." *Œ The Portland Mercury*, "Sex, Death, and *Prelude to Bruise*" "Prelude to Bruise is a harrowing examination of masculinity and femininity as a 'brutal' performance." *Œ BuzzFeed* "Reading this book will change you." *Œ Cambridge Writers' Workshop* "Saeed Jones's first full-length book, *Prelude to Bruise*, is a necessary piece of contemporary poetry that bravely tackles issues such as abuse, promiscuity, homosexuality, and racism." *Œ Prairie Schooner* "Jones' haunting lyricism creates a portrait of hard-won self-realization, of a young man's determined struggle, pushing through doubt and distress with the

strength of his imagination and verve." [NBC's Critical Mass](#)"Perhaps the readiest, most painfully assured debut of the decade." [Flavorwire](#)"This book leaves your body transformed in a way that poetry should." [ElevenEleven](#)"This is a beautiful, haunting, nearly perfect collection" [Raging Biblio-holism](#)"Prelude to Bruise by Saeed Jones, a tome of searing poetry about what it means to be Black, gay, Southern and so much more."

[Refinery 29](#)"A work of insight and great beauty, Jones' first poetry collection manages to be both ferocious and and subtle." [Brooklyn Magazine](#)"The poems in Prelude to Bruise enflame, with all flame's consequences of wounding and illumination. . . . It's a story of the forces of destruction—the destruction of black bodies and black selves—built into America, and it surfaces in lines of lust, violence, possession, and power." [Rain Taxi](#)"Prelude to Bruise Saeed Jones is a powerful collection . . . with a high level of craft, emotion and metaphor." [Ebony](#)"This would be an interesting collection to me even if I didn't understand English. There are moments of such lushness." [Dive Deeper](#)"Prelude to Bruise is an airtight collection of visceral and stunning poems." [Mosaic Magazine](#)"'I didn't exactly mean to survive myself,' writes the African-American poet Saeed Jones, and the line comes to my mind: what it means to have survived official policies designed to erase you, and the kind of impulse to self-destruction that might arise in the face of this." [The Monthly \(Australia\)](#)"Prelude to Bruise was published by Coffee House in August to widespread (and deserved!) acclaim."

[Electric Literature](#)"Jones uncovers what exactly is at stake when one presents oneself authentically, when one insists on being oneself regardless of the consequences."

[Coldfront](#)"A radical standard of pain acknowledges the intersection between individual and collective histories of suffering. This radical standard is the thrust of works like. . . . Saeed Jones' Prelude to Bruise, a collection of poems that narrates the wounds of a black gay boy in the American South." [Pacific Standard](#)"His work is imaginative and lyrical while maintaining a self-proclaimed ferocity, as if there could really be any other kind, that challenges conventions of masculinity and race in a deeply emotional way." [Dazed](#), "The top ten American writers you need to read this year""Maybe the best collection you will read this year, Jones is a poet who also understands how to tell a story, obviously keeping his feet planted in the former since poetry is his craft, but giving the reader so much more to unpack page after page. At times harrowing, Jones succeeds at never straying too far away from beauty and light, and that balance makes this a true reading experience." [Jason Diamond, Vol. 1 Brooklyn](#)"Saeed Jones brought the audience to a near swoon." [Twin Cities Daily Planet](#)"Prelude to Bruise is a book with a controlled realm of imagery, which creates this really beautiful territory for the reader to explore." [Ace](#)

Hotel" Saeed Jones may be one of the most necessary poets of our time." *Ã¢â¬âJuly Westhale, Lambda Literary* "Beautiful, haunting and heartbreaking" *Ã¢â¬âJones* "Ã¢â¬âs poems are an emotional punch to the gut. A lyrical shock to the system." *Ã¢â¬âLambda Literary* "What these poems show us is the necessity of owning that longing, the refusal to let the wounds the world has laid upon us turn inward, into our shame, our silence. To show the world the face that the world has made." *Ã¢â¬âMuzzle Magazine* "It's a diverse festival, showcasing talents as different as the best-selling crime novelist Rebecca Chance and the politically engaged poet Saeed Jones." *Ã¢â¬âThe Times Picayune* "[Saeed Jones] is leading the way and writing critically about the community," [Spectrum's president] Diaz said." *Ã¢â¬âThe Torch* "Prelude to Bruise is an airtight collection of visceral and stunning poems." *Ã¢â¬âMosaic Magazine* "I packs a wallop . . . I found myself in awe." *Ã¢â¬âRaging Biblio-holism* "I was bowled over by Saeed Jones" *Ã¢â¬âs Prelude to Bruise* (Coffee House Press, #16), a beautiful and biting collection of poetry that has been making waves in the US. Investigating race, sexuality and what it means to be southern, Jones's lean, searing lines transcend identity politics." *Ã¢â¬âNew Statesmen (UK)* "Poetry book most likely to win over your poetry-avoiding friends: *Prelude to Bruise* by Saeed Jones." *Ã¢â¬âTime Out New York*, "The Best Books of 2013" "Jones is responsible for a growing portion of the gay narrative being written online, and the Internet is a much better place for it. His voice will have even more impact with his upcoming debut, which will explore the collision of race, sexuality and identity." *Ã¢â¬âThe Root*, "30 Viral Voices Under 30" "For years now the BuzzFeedLGBT editor has been lighting it up at his day job, and also on Twitter, with a ferocity befitting his name. Now, after earning praise from D.A. Powell and after winning a NYC-based Literary Death Match bout, Jones will use his debut collection to prominently display his poetry chops." *Ã¢â¬âThe Millions* "This powerful collection feels at times like a blow to the throat, but when we recover, the air is sweeter for having been absent." *Ã¢â¬âGuernica* "It's a book about identity that expands beyond the borders of the terms we use to cordon off safe spaces." *Ã¢â¬âDialogist* "[A] stunning debut collection of one of America's most promising young poets. . . . These poems lacerate as they heal, making us feel the resilient intensity of a protagonist who says, 'I didn't exactly mean to survive myself.'" *Ã¢â¬âThe Journal* "Saeed Jones has created a radically different coming of age narrative distinctly his own through forceful, original poetry." *Ã¢â¬âLonesome Reader* "[A] daring, ferocious, and often impossibly gorgeous meditation on boyhood and personhood, language and love." *Ã¢â¬âFlavorwire*, 10 New Must Reads for September "The first book of Saeed Jones's poetry, *Prelude to Bruise*, reads with astonishing momentum and tenacity, a lyrical torch thrust into shadows and silence to illuminate pain from a history of wounds." *Ã¢â¬âShelf Awareness* "Jones

has a voice, and it is not plucky or regretful. It is not about being a 'man' - it's more ambitious. This book is his credo, his aspiration. Convert or abstain, his 'hunger [does] not apologize.'"

Ã¢â¬âPoets at Work" For their journey on this beautifully clear but sweltering Saturday afternoon, they were not disappointed, treated to over a dozen readings of vintage O'Hara poems, as well as new poems written by the likes of Saeed Jones, author of *Prelude to Bruise* and the editor of *BuzzfeedLGBT*. "Ã¢â¬âHuffington Post" These poems are tightly constructed, scary-beautiful, and lyrically brilliant, driven by a raw and devastating emotional power. He awes me." Ã¢â¬âThe Millions" Saeed Jones begins this electrifying book Ã¢â¬âone of the most exciting debut collections IÃ¢â¬âve read in years" Ã¢â¬âwith a quotation from Kafka's notebooks: 'The man in ecstasy and the man drowningÃ¢â¬â both throw up their arms.' It's a powerful opening for these searing poems." Ã¢â¬âTowleroad" In his first book of poetry, Jones blazes forth, his voice new, potent, lyrical, and deadly beautiful. Enveloping his words in the body, its politics, its genders and colors, the legacy of its trials and abuse, Jones sings truths from the perimeter, the disenfranchised, the ready to be heard." Ã¢â¬âBookshop Santa Cruz" Today my writing ambition, my heart, and my mind are expanded by my peers who are writing the books I read with breathless anticipation and envy." Ã¢â¬âBuzzfeed, "The Books Who Made Me Who I Am" "Riveting and heartening to read." Ã¢â¬âThe Dodge Blog" This book is so good it will give you night sweats." Ã¢â¬âGreenlight Bookstore" The collection seems to begin again frequently, and end too soon." Ã¢â¬âLenny Letters" I had to stop trying to read Saeed JonesÃ¢â¬âs debut, *Prelude to Bruise*, on the subway to avoid yelping with joy, weeping, or getting all hot and bothered in public." Ã¢â¬âWork in Progress" *Prelude to Bruise* is a thunderous title for a first collection. It promises that a bruise will come later. It says that, even when we feel like we're drowning, we can still be ecstatic." Ã¢â¬âThe Brooklyn Rail" Heartrending, lyrical, and raw." Ã¢â¬âBuzzFeed" Ecstatic and haunting." Ã¢â¬âBrooklyn Magazine" This is the type of book that merits clichÃ¢â¬âd hyperbole: because it will actually 'leave you floored,' 'feeling naked' (together, that's almost a Natalie Imbruglia lyric!), and 'gasping for breath.'" Ã¢â¬âFlavorwire" Poems like 'Post Apocalyptic Heartbreak,' 'History According to Boy,' 'Prelude to Bruise,' and others will break your heart and force you to investigate and confront the unconscionable brutality of this nation." Ã¢â¬âMELO" A compelling collection." Ã¢â¬âRunestone" Saeed writes about blackness and gayness, fierce and thick and brave in every poem." Ã¢â¬âMedium" Damn near genius." Ã¢â¬âShade" Saeed Jones is one of the English department's most distinguished graduates." Ã¢â¬âWKU HeraldNPR's Best Books of 2014Time Out New York Best Books of 2014Book Riot, 2014's Must-Read Books from Indie PressesSplit This Rock Recommended Poetry Books of 2014Vol. 1

Brooklyn, A Year of Favorites, Jason Diamond Greenlight Bookstore, Holiday Picks" In his debut collection, Jones has crafted a fever dream, something akin to magic. . . Solid from start to finish, possessing amazing energy and focus, a bold new voice in poetry has announced itself" *Œ Publishers Weekly, Starred Review* "Jones had a meteoric rise to literary prominence in the past year. . . the poems of this book are harrowing and heartbreaking, treating family, sexuality, and race with unrelenting intensity." *Œ Publishers Weekly* "A debut poetry collection examining identity in all its forms *Œ racial, sexual, geographical, and more *Œ with both incisive intensity and tenderness." *Œ Off the Shelf* "Jones's lavish sonic patterning and gothic imagery often recall the incendiary mythos and immaculate craft of Sylvia Plath's Ariel as well as the haunted, sensual longing of Thomas James's Letters to a Stranger." *Œ Kenyon Review Online* "[T]he way these poems address violence, life in the south, race, sexuality and relationships makes for an engrossing read best consumed in as few sittings as possible." *Œ Time* "This book leaves your body transformed in a way that poetry should." *Œ ElevenEleven* "This is indeed a book seamed in smoke; it is a dance that invites you to admire the supple twist of its narrative spine; it is hard and glaring and brilliant as the anthracite that opens the collection: 'a voice mistook for stone, / jagged black fist.'" *Œ NPR Book Review* "The features that distinguish his poems from prose *Œ brevity, symbolism, implication *Œ let him investigate the almost unsayable." *Œ Los Angeles Times* "This year's Stonewall-Gittings literature award goes to Saeed Jones's Prelude to Bruise (Coffee House), a punch-in-your-gut fusion of racial, sexual, and personal struggle and a National Book Critics Circle finalist." *Œ Library Journal* "Perhaps the readiest, most painfully assured debut of the decade." *Œ Flavorwire* "The poems in Prelude to Bruise enflame, with all flame's consequences of wounding and illumination . . . It's a story of the forces of destruction *Œ the destruction of black bodies and black selves *Œ built into America, and it surfaces in the lines of lust, violence, possession, and power." *Œ Rain Taxi*******

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