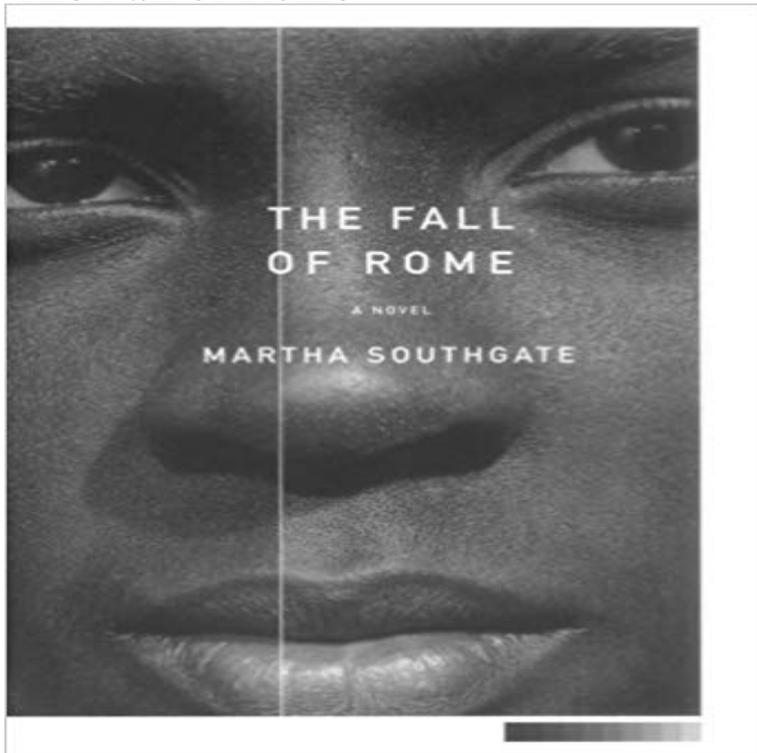


## The Fall of Rome



WHAT IS IT ABOUT THIS FLESH THAT COVERS ME THAT MAKES IT A PART OF EVERY TRANSACTION I CONDUCT? In this compelling novel of race, class, and integrity, three characters confront the inevitable tensions that arise from living at the margins of the elite. Latin instructor Jerome Washington is a man out of place. The lone African-American teacher at the Chelsea School, an all-boys boarding school in Connecticut, he has championed the classical virtues of rigor and discipline since he was hired nearly two decades ago. Nicknamed Wooden Washington by his students, he has spent his career -- and his life -- at Chelsea trying not to appear too racial: He is reserved, controlled, seemingly content with his isolated life. Into his classroom one autumn morning steps Rashid Bryson, a promising African-American student from New York City. He sees in Washington a potential ally, a man who is sure to understand the younger man's need to find his bearings in this citadel of the white status quo. But to Bryson's surprise and dismay, Washington responds un-expectedly to him. It is up to Jana Hansen, herself a newcomer to Chelsea, to come to Bryson's aid. A middle-aged white divorcee who used to teach public school in Cleveland, she is as foreign to the sylvan self-possession of the Chelsea School as Washington and Bryson are. As the three get to know one another, and as they struggle with their individual loss, they begin their journey toward an inevitable and ultimately tragic confrontation that is both painful and life-altering. Told from three different perspectives, *The Fall of Rome* explores powerful and timely issues as it unfolds inexorably, like the classical tragedies that were the glory of ancient civilizations.

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