

Work Song

Ivan Doig

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An award-winning and beloved novelist of the American West spins the further adventures of a favorite character, in one of his richest historical settings yet.

"If America was a melting pot, Butte would be its boiling point," observes Morrie Morgan, the itinerant teacher, walking encyclopedia, and inveterate charmer last seen leaving a one-room schoolhouse in Marias Coulee, the stage he stole in Ivan Doig's 2006 *The Whistling Season*. A decade later, Morrie is back in Montana, as the beguiling narrator of *Work Song*.

Lured like so many others by "the richest hill on earth," Morrie steps off the train in Butte, copper-mining capital of the world, in its jittery heyday of 1919. But while riches elude Morrie, once again a colorful cast of local characters-and their dramas-seek him out: a look-alike, sound-alike pair of retired Welsh miners; a streak-of-lightning waif so skinny that he is dubbed Russian Famine; a pair of mining company goons; a comely landlady propitiously named Grace; and an eccentric boss at the public library, his whispered nickname a source of inexplicable terror. When Morrie crosses paths with a lively former student, now engaged to a fiery young union leader, he is caught up in the mounting clash between the iron-fisted mining company, radical "outside agitators," and the beleaguered miners. And as tensions above ground and below reach the explosion point, Morrie finds a unique way to give a voice to those who truly need one.

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