

Any Other Place: Stories

Michael Croley

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Michael Croley's short story collection *Any Other Place* finds people in the circumstances they'd do anything to avoid and traces the ties of love, loyalty, and sacrifice that bind them. Croley masters this contradictory tension, turning the phrase "any other place" into one that's equal parts pride and plea, each informed by a deep intimacy.

From Masan, Korea, to New York City, all roads lead to Fordyce, Kentucky. Croley constructs Fordyce from the bottom up, bringing it into perspective through the people who are tied to it—willingly, unwillingly, or circumstantially. As links are forged, it becomes clear that this, like any, community is created from the ebb and flow of people who are sticking it out in the same space, unsure of how much they can claim of themselves or each other.

A young Korean family navigates the Japanese occupation during World War II, and their efforts to keep themselves intact echo down the years when their daughter moves to Fordyce decades later. A lonely widow is the only witness when a sinkhole opens in front of her house, swallowing a car and its young driver without a trace. For weeks, she stands vigil not knowing what to expect. A young man is recalled from New York City to raise his childhood friend's orphaned daughter, a responsibility he neither wants nor knows how to enact. Whether people turn toward each other, turn inward, or keep their gaze on the horizon, these stories examine how, together and apart, everyone is entangled in a battle between "I can't lose you" and "I can't lose myself."

Croley's stories are thrilling in the oldest sense of the word. They pierce, boring a hole straight into Fordyce's singular, multitudinous heart.

LETITIA MONTGOMERY-RODGERS (May/June 2019)

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