



As a River

Sion Dayson

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In Sion Dayson's *As a River*, Greer makes a valiant attempt to outrun his past, but this surface story belies a powerful undertow that transforms his return to Bannen, Georgia, and its anything-but-lazy Sicama River into a more universal story in which such attempts are futile, and the past refuses to let go.

When he's thirty-two, Greer reappears in Bannen. He's been gone for as many years as he lived there. His greatest fear isn't that his ailing mother will die, but that the self he's tried so hard to leave behind did not.

He bonds with his fifteen-year-old neighbor, Ceiley, instantly. She's too protected and fatherless, and she's reminiscent of Greer when he was a boy. But his guilt and resentment preclude kinship with his long-estranged mother. Greer may have outgrown Bannen, but he learns that the town has yet to outgrow the prejudices, taboos, and socioeconomic disparities of its past. Meanwhile, its steadfast Sicama continues to work overtime as guide for lost travelers, rendezvous for friends and lovers, and the giver/taker of life's most precious gifts.

Like a river, the novel assumes multiple roles, beginning with its title that embodies Bannen's waterways plus the river-like qualities of the plot, pace, and prose. The story, though heavily driven by suspense about what remains unsaid, has much to say. The all-knowing narrator is insightful, observant, and poetic, as are the characters themselves. Their unique personalities are adroitly developed through dialogue, but their greatest gifts for self-revelation are found in their thoughts and tendency to communicate with each other through the words of poets and proverbs.

The only difference between the threat posed by the powerful currents fueling Sion Dayson's *As a River* and those posed by rivers themselves is that the risk of the novel lies not in getting pulled under, but in being released too soon.

LINDA THORLAKSON (September / October 2019)

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