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Man in the Blue Moon

Michael Morris
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Ella Wallace didn't know who the man was. He arrived through inexplicable circumstances and stayed to help. But his help could ruin everything she's fought for … or, it might be the one thing that saves her and those she loves.

Award-winning author Michael Morris weaves a powerful tale of hypocrisy, murder, political power, manipulation, and faith. His novel speaks of perseverance, trusting the truth you know inside, and holding on to faith even when all conspires against you. And sprinkled throughout is a glimpse of how God's ways are not ours.

The story takes readers deep into Florida during World War I, to a small community teeming with as many gossips, hypocrites, and odd characters as good, well-intentioned people. There Ella Wallace struggles to survive. Left by her addict husband with three children to raise, a mercantile to run, and insurmountable debt, Ella must find a way to save her livelihood and family.

When the most powerful man in the community schemes to shut down her store and take her land, she fights with everything in her. And she hasn't even discovered the full extent of his plot. Meanwhile, Lanier Stillis—a man wanted for a murder he claims he didn't commit, and with faith-healing powers he doesn't fully understand—mysteriously arrives. Stillis is a man willing to help, but likely more trouble than he's worth. When each move Ella makes is thwarted, and gossip turns the town against her, she refuses to give in even as the net tightens and lives are on the line.

Morris, acclaimed for his compelling novels with the heart of the great Southern writers, pens a story that proves page-turning, literary, and sharp. The tale incorporates unexpectedly intense sociopolitical drama for such a setting and time period.

The characters are well drawn and fascinating. Although some border on caricatures, it is somehow appropriate for this story with almost mythical elements. Throughout there is a sense of allegory, in particular to do with Lanier, who serves as a messiah character, reflective in many ways of the story of Christ, which lends gravitas and even truth beyond mere folklore. It all makes for an unusual, enthralling read with plenty for lovers of mystery, myth, spiritual allegory, and Southern storytelling. In the end, readers will be left wondering if they have the perseverance and faith to overcome their own trials.
DIANE GARDNER (Fall 2012)

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