

Moonshine Revival

Daniel Micko

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Moonshine Revival is an eye-opening historical novel about the reverberations of the Civil War throughout the South.

Set in the Reconstruction Era and after, Daniel Micko's historical novel *Moonshine Revival* considers changing race relations in the American South.

In Kincaid, Georgia, "a white man dressed in filthy rags with greasy hair" is "a community pillar." Here, four generations of white Kincaid men survive and thrive after the Civil War. From among them, Little T narrates, discussing his family's roots in the town, as well as the formative events of his youth in the early 1900s.

Long before Little T's birth, his grandfather, Big T, starts bootlegging moonshine to escape his own father's Ku Klux Klan legacy by making an independent name for himself. When his wife dies in childbirth, Big T sends his son, Terry Lee Jr. (Little T's father), to live with Alberta, the wife of his moonshine-making partner. Because Alberta and her son, Sonny, are Black, tensions rise in their rural Southern farming town, and adolescent Little T sees it all.

Little T acknowledges his family's historical involvement with the KKK up front to draw attention to the themes woven throughout his story. Refusing to shy away from harsh truths, Little T's narrative is as appealing as it is enlightening: historical realities are rendered palatable through his sympathetic, amicable, and often funny young voice. Dropped g's in "-ing" words reveal his singsong Southern drawl, which permeates conversations throughout the book, cultivating its distinctive settings and atmosphere.

Tangible, intimate details, as of Little T observing that his father's clothes reek of alcohol, make him a reliable, empathetic narrator while also establishing the characteristics of the players in his tale. Little T speaks to the audience on many occasions, too, alleging his family members' and friends' innocence in crimes they've since been blamed for; he tells the story from a future point in time, after he is able to collect letters and in-person testimonies from individuals who traveled far from Georgia during his story and returned.

While it begins with Big T and Terry Lee Jr.'s life stories, about halfway through the book, the narrative diverges from the Kincaid family's history to follow a KKK member, Mosgrove; Sonny, on his army ventures; and a French man who moves to Haiti and becomes the father of Sonny's eventual wife, Isabelle. The loose connection between these characters results in some meandering. When the book's focus returns to Georgia, and to a formative event in Little T's youth, it achieves a surprising, emotional climax. The love story between Sonny and Isabelle, a Black man and a multiracial Haitian woman who moves to the US with him, is a romantic, heartbreaking subplot that adds valuable layers to the book's examinations of race relations in the South.

Moonshine Revival is an eye-opening historical novel about the reverberations of the Civil War and the KKK throughout the South.

AIMEE JODOIN (June 22, 2022)

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