



Old Fires

Josh Patrick Sheridan

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A bereaved widower embarks on a fateful journey in Josh Patrick Sheridan's spiritual novel, *Old Fires*.

In between a horrific tour of service in Vietnam and his wife Grace's death from cancer, Tim had a good life. After Grace's passing, Tim doesn't know what to do: all he knows is that he cannot bear to live without her. So he packs up his truck, leaves home one last time, and waits for a sign that he should join his dead wife. As he waits, he encounters a family with a tangle of strange secrets.

The people he meets are just odd enough for Tim to wonder about them, but he is too caught up in his own troubles to think about the incongruities in their speech and actions. Instead of focusing on the present, he reminisces about the people he met in Vietnam; his contentious relationship with his brother, also a Vietnam vet; and the beloved, vibrant wife whose loss he does not want to survive.

Sentence fragments depict a disconsolate man in a barren landscape, searching for something he does not understand. And yet he is surrounded by life: in the creeks, the forests, the hollers, and even the memories of the times and stories he shared with Grace. Things still grow, just as Tim himself is alive and growing. Whether he can learn this in time to keep from taking irreversible action is anyone's guess.

The book's ending raises as many questions as it answers, exposing the true extent of Tim's fragility. Whether he gained anything by his experience, or if he considered it worth the journey, is something that even Tim may never know. *Old Fires* is a dark novel about the heavy burden of grief.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (November / December 2021)

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