

Resting Places

Michael C. White

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Michael C. White's *Resting Places* is a beautiful depiction of grace in the midst of grief, a modern odyssey across America, populated with memorable characters.

Elizabeth Gerlacher wrestles with questions surrounding the circumstances of her son's death, but while her husband throws himself into his support group at his local church, Elizabeth seeks solace in alcohol. A chance encounter with a man at a roadside memorial—a *descanso*, a resting place—inspires her to flee her home and her law office on a cross-country journey to New Mexico, the site of the car accident that claimed her son's life. Based on the charges on his credit card bills, she follows in his footsteps, encountering a colorful cast of characters who saw him in the days before his death. With the aid of Gabe, a tow-truck driver, Elizabeth reaches her destination, and the story culminates in a surprisingly quiet but powerful realization unencumbered by sentimentality or melodrama.

Elizabeth's journey is tinged with the mythic. As the catalyst for her odyssey of redemption, George, a retired widower, appears in Elizabeth's life almost like some angelic messenger. Their conversation at his wife's *descanso* not only establishes the tone and themes of the novel, but the dialogue itself flows naturally and conveys universal truths without sounding preachy or condescending.

Elizabeth's development is spiritual at its core but manifests itself in physical acts of kindness—leaving a large tip for a pregnant single mom working in a diner, connecting with Gabe over his marital troubles, and stopping to visit the *descansos* she and Gabe find along the road. Ultimately, she learns the importance of lingering long enough in people's lives to discover their stories, a lesson learned too late for her relationship with her son but perhaps not too late for her marriage.

Although painted in Christian strokes, the light and hope in *Resting Places* should be refreshing to anyone, regardless of beliefs. *Descansos* abound throughout life, not only at the foot of white crosses by the road.

MEAGAN LOGSDON (Summer 2016)

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