

The Change: My Great American, Postindustrial, Midlife Crisis Tour

Lori Soderlind

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Awakening to the sad image of herself and her partner sleeping on opposite sides of the mattress, Lori Soderlind mused on discontent and change—her own, and that of the US. *The Change* is her probing memoir about discovering what had gone wrong, and working to fix it, during a five-thousand-mile drive across America's crumbling midsection with her aging dog.

On the cusp of fifty, increasing gray hairs and (horrors!) a gray whisker or two reminded Soderlind that life was passing her by. Then came the crisis. In the chaos of perimenopause and feeling herself ignite upon meeting a long-lost love in a store parking lot, she was pushed over the edge. Although she had not been physically unfaithful, Soderlind knew she was in trouble; the fine crafted, but tenuous, structure of her life was about to crack.

Thus began Soderlind's trek through middle America, visiting small towns whose big dreams and thriving industries had turned to dust, and whose remaining few residents struggled to survive on memories. She wanted to feel their pain, and to see if she could discover what might make them, and herself, feel alive again. She wished that she could "love back to life what was lost." What she discovered was that change is both unavoidable and relentless, and that America was just as confused as she was, and just as uncertain of its survival.

Soderlind's photographs of small towns in ruin underline her realization that both she and her country were trying to pretend that they were fine, and failing. *The Change* exposes the pain of owning the hollow places in one's self and reveals luminous moments of pure love found in the simplest of people and places—moments that are worth the sorrow of an inevitable goodbye.

KRISTINE MORRIS (July / August 2020)

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