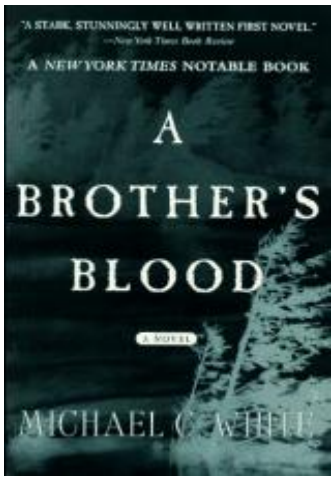
A Brother's Blood

by Michael C. White



About the Book

This extraordinarily engrossing literary mystery exposes a little-known chapter of twentieth-century history -- the detention of nearly 400,000 German prisoners of war in the U.S. during World War II.

The landscape of rural Maine provided a surreal sort of shelter for these most reviled casualties during the war. While many prisoners served their time peacefully enough, some escaped and others -- like the brother of Wolfgang Kallick -- were simply reported to have died.

A Brother's Blood commences decades after the war, with Wolfgang Kallick's arrival in America to learn the details of his brother Dieter's death. When he discovers that Dieter escaped from the camp and was found dead months later, he vows to find out how his brother died. Libby, a flinty local woman who grew up during the war is drawn into the drama, only to find that her family is impli- cated. After her brother is slain, Libby undertakes her own quest for solutions to both deaths -- suspecting they are somehow related -- and exposes a darkness beyond her imagining.

Discussion Guide

1. In the novel, Libby is at first reluctant to question the past. Why is she reluctant? What begins her transformation?

2. Libby is not a typical symbol of femininity. Her mother said that with her looks she would have to try harder to get a man. Several people have made fun of her cleft lip, yet she has no lack of male suitors. Discuss Libby as a feminine symbol.

3. Libby has always protected her brother Leon. And yet in part because of him, she was never able to have a life, a husband, and a family. What does Leon represent to Libby?

4. Ambriose is a complex character. A drunkard, he is gruff and distant from his family, yet by the end of the novel, we see him in different terms. Why?

5. The setting of this novel can almost be looked upon as another character. How does the bleak Maine landscape contribute to the tension of the book?

6. Libby was abandoned by her mother at a young age. How does this affect her? Does she ultimately resolve her conflict about being left alone?

7. The title comes from The book of Genesis: "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground." Discuss as many possible implications of this as they appear in the novel.

8. Had Libby known earlier on about the truth of Dieter Kallick's death, would she have lived her life differently?

9. Did the horror of the Holocaust and the atrocities on the German side diminish the concern of the local citizens about the death of a German?

10. Why did the author choose to tell the story from a female point of view?

11. Mitzi's death hits Libby hard. Why does she react so emotionally and how does this serve as a pivotal force in the novel?

Author Bio

Michael White is the author of six novels: *Soul Catcher*, which was a *Booksense* and *Historical Novels Review* selection, as well as a finalist for the Connecticut Book Award, *A Brother?s Blood*, which was a *New York Times Book Review* Notable Book and a Barnes and Noble Discover Great New Writers nominee; *The Blind Side of the Heart*, an Alternate Book-of-the-Month Club selection; *A Dream of Wolves*, which received starred reviews from *Booklist* and *Publisher?s Weekly*, and is under option by Miracle Pictures; and *The Garden of Martyrs*, also a Connecticut Book Award finalist. His latest novel (William Morrow, 2010) is *Beautiful Assassin*. A collection of his short stories, *Marked Men*, was published by the University of Missouri Press. He has also published over 45 short stories in national magazines and journals, and has won the *Advocate Newspapers* Fiction Award and been nominated for both a National Magazine Award and a Pushcart. He was the founding editor of the yearly fiction anthology *American Fiction* as well as *Dogwood*.

He is the founder and director of Fairfield University's low-residency MFA Creative Writing Program (www.fairfield.edu/mfa). He lives on a lake in Guilford, CT, with his black lab Henry.

Critical Praise

" A stark, stunningly well-written novel. "-***The New York Times Book Review***"(White's) strength lies in his characters and his use of language to evoke the dark woods of rural Maine and the even darker lives of the people who spent the

war years there. Reader's of Gutterson's work will probably find White's equally rewarding. "-***Denver Post***"Even without a buried crime to exhume, this novel would be fascinating...Michael White is a writer to watch. "-***Wallace Stegner***" *A Brother's Blood* is a mystery novel of the highest order...White's is a frightening--and ultimately moral--vision." "-***Dawn Raffel, fiction editor, Redbook***"A readable, tough, reverberating novel...The people inhabiting this story are every bit as real as the landscape...A first rate novel. "-***Seymour Epstein, author of Leah***"Remarkable controlled...This novel marks White as a talented and energetic writer. "-***Publishers Weekly***"Intelligent and believable...(*A Brother's Blood*) has depth and heart...A fine debut novel. "-***Tulsa World***"White captures perfectly the insularity and claustrophobia of a small New England town, the gruff eccentricity of its inhabitants, the brusque pride of a lonely spinster, and the moral tragedy of war. This dazzling first novel deserves a place in all collections. "-***Booklist***"*A Brother's Blood* is a dark, brooding tale containing mystery and suspense...a good novel that is well told. "-***Springfield Sunday Republican***"Remarkable controlled...This novel marks White as a talented and "energetic writer.What David Gutterson's *Snow Falling on Cedars* did for the Northwest and the subject of Japanese internment camps, Michael"murky aspect of World War II. "-***The Hartford Currant***"Read it--do read it...A mystery of uncommon humanity and understanding. "-***Central Maine Newspaper***

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