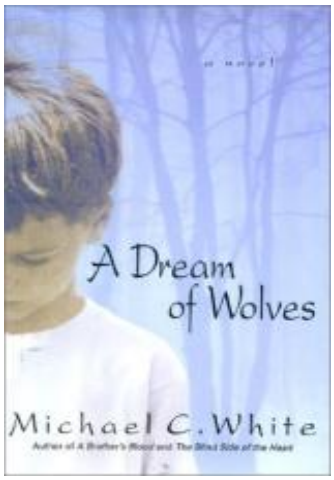
A Dream of Wolves

by Michael C. White



About the Book

Author of the critically acclaimed novels, **A Brother's Blood** and **The Blind Side of the Heart**, Michael C. White weaves a brilliant tale of one man's struggle to reconcile the beckoning nostalgia of the past with the allure of a hopeful future, while carving out a livable niche in the present.

A transplanted Yankee, Dr. Stuart Jordan has settled amidst the rugged beauty of the southern Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina. He lives a quiet, small-town life where locals call him "Doc." By day Doe runs an OB/GYN practice, delivering babies into the world and warmly tending to their mothers, but by night he moonlights as the town's medical examiner, as he puts it, "working the other end of the line." Since the tragic death of his son fourteen years earlier, Doe has been willing to lose himself in the daily rhythms of his job and of the mountains and its people. Yet he can't let go of the past, a past which includes Annabel, his estranged, mentally ill wife. Driven by drugs, alcohol, and her own raging demons, she floats in and out of his life like a drifter, wreaking havoc and leaving nothing but painful memories each time she disappears. Knowing that divorce would be the best answer for both of them, Doc, however, can never quite bring himself to abandon the woman he once so dearly loved. Instead, he loses himself in his work, hoping to numb his pain.

But his quiet life is about to be rudely jolted. One night he is called to the scene of a brutal murder and unknowingly comes across three people who will forever change his fate: Rosa Littlefoot, a young Native American woman who has gunned down her abusive lover; her victim, Roy Lee Pugh, a white man related to a violent hill-dwelling clan; and their baby daughter, Maria. Facing arrest and separation from her daughter, Rosa refuses to hand over her baby safely until she extracts a promise from Doe to see to it that her child is cared for while she's in jail. He agrees for the child's sake. With this one promise, Doe is slowly but forcefully drawn into a tangled web of lives ripe with conflict and passion -- those of Rosa and her baby, the backwoods Pugh clan, and Bobbie Tisdale, the local D.A., a beautiful woman who has recently become Doe's lover. There is also the secret Rosa shares with no one. Finally, there is the haunting presence of Annabel. Suddenly thrust into this world of treachery, deceit, and love, Doe finds his heart struggling to embrace an

uncertain future and realizes he must fight the battle he has been avoiding all these years.

At times charmingly sweet, at times tensely thrilling, and always emotionally riveting, A Dream of Wolves is a powerful and engaging novel that winds and weaves its way through the bitter struggles and uplifting victories of life.

Discussion Guide

1. Like many physicians, Stuart "Doc" Jordan, the narrator of the novel, works long hours. Is there any reason in his particular circumstance why he puts in such long hours?

2. Doc Jordan is, as he himself admits and as his friend, Cecil Clegg says, a Yankee, an outsider in this insular world of mountain people. What makes him such an ideal narrator? Why not a narrator who is from Hubbard County?

3. The Prologue begins with the following quote: "What I know of death is how hard we work to deserve it and how little we appreciate it when it finally comes." Given what happens later in the novel, what is the significance of this statement?

4. The women in Doc's life, his estranged wife Annabel and his new lover Bobbie, have very different personalities. What attracts Doc to each woman? Does he love each one?

5. Babies as well as the process of childbearing is very important to the novel. Discuss the various ways babies and woman giving birth are significant to the story.

6. The Appalachian Mountains and its people have been portrayed in various stereotypical ways, from Lil Abner to Deliverance. Doc himself admitted that when he first came to the region he also harbored similar stereotypes. Yet he says, "Slade, like most of the new South, was rapidly changing, sloughing off its small-town, bible-thumping, good-ole-boy skin." Discuss the ways the area is changing, breaking away from those stereotypes, and the effects those changes are having on its people and their traditions.

7. Doc Jordan is a man who is confronted by several moral, emotional, and legal choices? What are those choices and what are the repercussions of each?

8. There are several contradictions in Doc's life. For example, his day job, as he calls it, is nurturing life while his night job, that of part-time ME, is "working the other end of the line." Discuss this and other contradictions in his life.

9. Though Annabel says she wants Stu to be happy she continually returns and throws his life into chaos. Why does she keep coming back and why does he keep taking her in?

10. Several other women are important to Doc. Who are they and how are they significant to him? How do they affect him?

11. After Doc's meeting with Leonard Blackfox, when he learns about the events of the night of the murder, there's one thing that is still unclear to Doc. What is it and how does he handle it?

12. Dreams are an important device in the novel, starting right with the title. Discuss how dreams are used here.

13. At the end of the novel, Annabel leaves. However, even now Doc imagines her calling or returning some day. Do you think she will return?

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

Grace and Five Fortunes

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