



The End of California

Steve Yarbrough

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A PEN/Faulkner finalist for *Prisoners of War*, Steve Yarbrough returns to the Mississippi Delta—seen through the historical lens of World War II in that novel, and of Jim Crow in his previous, *Visible Spirits*—but now in the blinding light of contemporary life.

Loring is the sort of town children dream of leaving and most adults return to only in the absence of better options. But after twenty-five years Pete Barrington—having escaped to California on a football scholarship and then established himself as a doctor, only to be brought low by scandal—has come home. Here he finds solace with his closest old friend, opens a new practice, and daily runs into memories he'd rather forget, even as his aggravated wife and unsettled daughter contend with this wholly alien society.

Meanwhile, Alan DePoyster has come to revel in his family life and his position in the church and community—the sort of idyll snatched away from him in childhood and won back only with patience and faith. Yet he now feels old grudges against the prodigal Barrington eroding his sense of accomplishment; and as their lives inevitably become intertwined, his rage against the forces chiseling away at his values and beliefs soon threatens to destroy everything he cherishes.

The End of California is a vivid, even shocking, portrait of small-town life, where people turn to booze, gossip, and feckless sex in their struggles with provincial claustrophobia, where fates often hang in the balance of personal history, and where the sins of the fathers and mothers are visited most acutely on their sons and daughters. This is the most expansive, generous, and moving novel thus far from “a confident and elegant prose stylist,” as David Guterson has described him, “a storyteller who knows how empty spaces can resonate with power and meaning.”

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