



Julep Street

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Julep Street is the poignant journey of a man searching for meaning after loss, with his best friend by his side.

There's no better way to melt hearts than with an emotionally charged boy-and-his-dog adventure. *Julep Street* delivers this, and then some. The boy, in this case, is middle-aged, bad-lucked Carson McCullough, and the dog is Hector, an aging butterball of a yellow Lab, who is as much a life partner to Carson as any human can be.

The crushing loss of Carson's beloved job as editor of the *Argus-Dispatch* newspaper propels him to grab his pup, trade in his car, and hit the road for a soul-seeking trip back to his hometown.

The "narrator takes a journey" plot can often fall prey to the backstory vortex, but *Julep Street* avoids this. The book moves along in a vivid, continuous manner that mirrors Carson's physical and emotional journey, taking the story swiftly forward with the use of the present tense and by avoiding the speed bumps of an elaborately explained personal history. The book's format keeps the journey interesting, punctuating traditional storytelling with excerpts from emails and newspaper articles.

Carson is a good-hearted misfit who can't seem to escape life's blows, the kind of narrator that calls to mind those envisioned by J. D. Salinger and Denis Johnson. Some of Carson's blows are large and devastating, but some are quirky and hilarious, like when Carson receives an eye injury by way of an ill-placed sex toy. As he navigates his newfound independence, revisiting old haunts and reopening old wounds, his journey only gets darker, eventually leading the book to its surprising but inevitable end.

The crux of *Julep Street's* success is its ability to grant access to larger issues while adding a personal touch. This book is ultimately about the pain and inevitability of loss, acceptance of the passage of time, and what it means to confront dark memories and make tough choices. *Julep Street* also spotlights the present-day demise of newsprint in a digital age.

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MEREDITH HARDWICKE (May/June 2017)

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