



The Late Rebellion

Mark Powell

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Mark Powell's brooding Southern novel *The Late Rebellion* dives into the psychology of a multigenerational South Carolina family whose members rage against the future and cling to the past.

Richard, a bank founder, receives a call from state prosecutors looking into his financial behavior. So begins a disastrous, bourbon-soaked evening that was at first about his son Tom's homecoming. Further, Richard foregoes his nightly visit to his ninety-four-year-old mother, Rose, who falls in the night, alone in her farmhouse.

There are long-deferred emotions to reckon with: Tom, a minor reality television star, is in the midst of a premature midlife crisis. Jack, Richard's middle son, wishes for a stronger connection with his disaffected teenage daughter, who in turn wishes that Jack were less needy and more available. And Emily, Richard's daughter, is caught in quiet loneliness, feeling "the last grains in the hourglass of self trickling out" as her maternity leave ends and the prospect of returning to work investigating sexual assaults looms.

Further, orbiting the family and broadening the novel's scope are local concerns that reflect the complex legacies of hatred that afflict the American South. These are included in the stories of a pastor-turned-English-teacher, Elias; an American-born child of Mexican deportees, Nayma, who is alienated in the community, despite her academic achievements, because of the color of her skin; and Elvis, a scarred Iraq War veteran. Sliding between the inner worlds of these and other characters, the novel juxtaposes people's doubts to their secret longings, drawing thematic connections between both. Failings and universal human desires are exposed in each person's story thanks to the book's sympathetic and incisive prose.

In the novel *The Late Rebellion*, love is ferocious, and tragedies occur when that love goes unspoken.

WILLEM MARX (March / April 2024)

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