



Meet Me Halfway: Milwaukee Stories

Jennifer Morales

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When Johnquell, an African American teen, suffers a serious accident in the home of his white neighbor, Mrs. Czernicki, his community must find ways to bridge divisions between black and white, gay and straight, old and young. Set in one of the nation's most highly segregated cities—Milwaukee, Wisconsin—*Meet Me Halfway* tells stories of connections in a community with a tumultuous and divided past. In nine stories told from diverse perspectives, Jennifer Morales captures a Rust Belt city's struggle to establish a common ground and a collective vision of the future.

Morales gives life to multifaceted characters—white schoolteachers and senior citizens, Latino landlords, black and Puerto Rican teens, political activists, and Vietnam vets. As their lives unfold in these stories, we learn about Johnquell's family—his grandparents' involvement in the local Black Panther Party, his sister's on-again, off-again friendship with a white classmate, and his aunt's identity crisis as she finds herself falling in love with a woman. We also meet Johnquell's mother, Gloria, and his school friend Taquan, who is struggling to chart his own future.

As an activist mother in the thick of Milwaukee politics, Morales developed a keen ear and a tender heart for the kids who have inherited the city's troubled racial legacy. With a critical eye on promises unfulfilled, *Meet Me Halfway* raises questions about the notion of a "postracial" society and, with humor and compassion, lifts up the day-to-day work needed to get there.

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