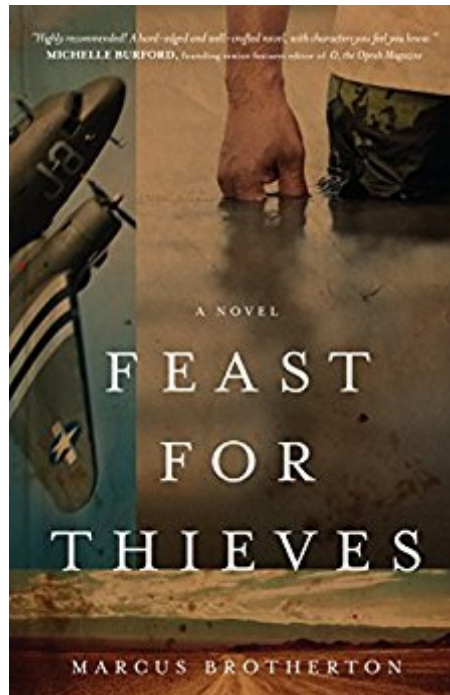


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Feast For Thieves: A Rowdy Slater Novel



Synopsis

Preaching or prison. An impossible choice for a man who usually solves his problems with a rifle or his fists. Sergeant Rowdy Slater was the most incorrigible paratrooper in Dog Company during World War II. But after the war, when Rowdy robs a bank with the black-hearted Crazy Ake, he vows to turn his life around. The lawman, suspicious that Rowdy's confession is a sham, gives him an ultimatum: Rowdy must serve for one year as the town minister, or go straight to jail. Rowdy's choice? Preaching at the community church in Cut Eye, Texas, at the midpoint of nowhere and emptiness. At first the job seemed easy, particularly since Rowdy took over for the willowy female missionary who held the church together while the men were at war. But when Crazy Ake shows up with a plan to make some quick cash, Rowdy becomes ensnared and is forced to make a deadly choice.

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Customer Reviews

Every now and then a talented writer creates a character that is truly memorable, and Marcus Brotherton has given us one in the person of Sgt. Rowdy Slater, WWII veteran who parachuted into occupied France with the famed 101st Airborne. But this member of the Band of Brothers wound up

cashiered from the Army and thrown into prison. When he gets out, he returns to his native east Texas and drifts from job to job. His past catches up to him when a former cellmate recruits him into robbing a bank in a sleepy town. They pull off the heist, but Rowdy has a change of heart. He returns to the scene of the crime and gives back the money, fully expecting that he will face many years behind bars. To his surprise, though, the sheriff offers him a deal: become our town's preacher and if you stick it out for a year, nobody will ever learn about your part in the robbery. Over the course of that year we will learn what happened to cause Rowdy's dishonorable discharge and imprisonment, what drove him to commit the robbery and what he intends to do about it. Our nostalgic memories of post-war 1940s America don't often include the dark alleys and backwaters, but they were there and Rowdy will have to walk into that darkness if he hopes to come out and live in the light. Brotherton writes in the first person from Rowdy's point of view, and he nails the dialect of the time and place without overdoing it, always a challenge for writers. If this had been written in the 1950s and made into a movie, we could easily see a young Andy Griffith in the role of Rowdy. Making the movie today might be a challenge, since there's little if any of the things that modern moviemakers seem to prize: profanity, gratuitous violence and sex. What there is, is a story about a man seeking redemption, and that's always the best kind of story.

As a fan of Marcus Brotherton's nonfiction and a regular reader of his blog, I knew that I had to read his first published novel. I am so glad that I took the opportunity to read *Feast for Thieves*. As a WWII veteran who is a little rough around the edges (to say the least), Rowdy Slater is essentially forced into life as a preacher. As the wife of a pastor, it is somewhat difficult for me to imagine a realistic scenario in which someone enters the ministry against his will; however, somehow Rowdy's story seems to make sense. Although we like to think that we always act with honorable motivations, Rowdy teaches us that sometimes our heart follows after we make the correct choice out of a sense of duty or obedience. Themes of forgiveness and mercy are pervasive as Rowdy makes his choices in life and we witness the results and watch his heart change. Getting to know Rowdy also reminds us that everyone has a story behind their actions and that sometimes we judge others for what they do without realizing that they may be coming from a place of pain and loss. We're all in need of "the good meal" that Rowdy is looking for. In addition to the dynamic character of Rowdy, the book features well-developed minor characters and a strong plot. The themes are thought-provoking, and the novel is written in a manner that is fast-paced and entertaining. Colorful language helped me visualize the setting and, most notably, the lavish descriptions of food throughout the story clearly made me understand why "feast" was an apt word to include in the title!

I appreciated Brotherton's notes regarding his choice to use dialect as a narrative device and especially enjoyed reading about the real-life paratrooper-turned-preacher who inspired the character of Rowdy. I certainly hope there will be more Rowdy Slater books to follow!

First things first. I became aware of Marcus Brotherton's writing from his guest posts on the Art of Manliness website. This led me to check out Marcus' own website and I have been a regular visitor ever since. So before I give my thoughts on his first novel let me encourage you to check out Marcus' website, marcusbrotherton.com. As someone who does not generally read much fiction I was unsure how I would feel about *Feast for Thieves*. Let me say I was very impressed. I don't want to give too much of the plot away because it really is a fun ride reading this book. I feel that Marcus chose a perfect time frame and setting for his novel and his character development is very well done. Once I started reading I could not put the book down. *Feast for Thieves* shows how hard it is for anyone to come back from war and find their place in society again. Rowdy Slater has found himself in this situation after his service in the 101st Airborne in World War II. Like many men at the time discovered, Rowdy is unable to find work in immediate post war America, especially when he has a past history that is not exactly sterling. Eventually Rowdy makes a series of poor decisions that land him in a take it or leave it situation; become a pastor in a small Texas town or face the consequences of those poor decisions. The story that follows is hardly what I expected and that is a real credit to Marcus and the way he chose to write this story. As someone who is fairly indifferent to an overly religious message, I was a bit apprehensive about this theme of the book. That apprehension was unnecessary and the inclusion of the theme of faith and forgiveness really enhances this story. I really cannot recommend this novel enough. I could go on more about the story and the characters but I really want everyone to discover them on their own. Great job by Marcus on his debut novel, I'm hopeful that it will be the first of many.

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