

Southern Living Selects

Slow Way Home

BY MICHAEL MORRIS (HARPERANFRANCISCO, \$22.95)

Brandon Willard doesn't live the carefree life of a typical 8-year-old. Between his mother's drug problem and her abusive boyfriends, he's learned to survive by keeping quiet and lying low. But after moving in with his loving grandparents, the boy learns how to be a kid. When his mother fights to get him back, the law-abiding Nana and Poppy are forced to take desperate measures.

A number of other characters figure prominently in the plot: Sister Delores, an African American woman who runs a church called God's Hospital; bad-to-the-bone Klansmen; and Senator Gina Strickland. During the worst of times, Jesus Christ appears to the boy as a full-fledged protective vision.

Despite the hardships, Brandon's ability to warm the hearts of those around him helps him to grow into a self-assured young man. He develops a faith that sustains him, along with a belief that he will not only survive but also be protected and loved. —ELISE BRATCHER



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