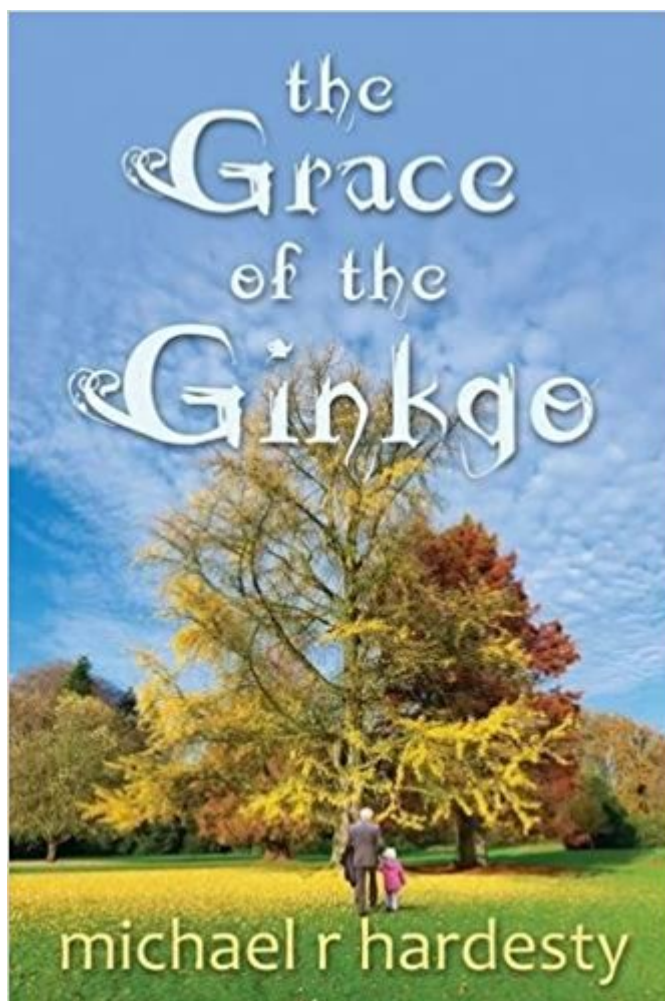


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The Grace Of The Ginkgo



Synopsis

David Foley, a lonely, divorced businessman, is devastated when his only son dies at the hands of a terrorist in Saudi Arabia during the Gulf War. Only the contemplation of his imminent grandchild rallies him from a debilitating depression. David sells his successful Boston business, leaves New England, and moves to Louisville, KY to be near his son's pregnant widow and await the birth of his granddaughter, Liesl. When his daughter-in-law dies while birthing Liesl, David assumes the guardianship of the infant, changing his life forever. An avowed atheist, he's often at odds with Madonna, the deceased woman's staunchly Catholic sister who, along with her husband, has her own seven-child family. Though he wears his atheism on his sleeve, David realizes a relationship with Madonna and her family would benefit his granddaughter. The religious polarity causes him to deftly maneuver through precarious conflicts in search of the elusive common ground between Madonna's devout Catholicism and his own passionate impiety. Hardesty takes advantage of his narrative's twenty-four year time frame to create a wide cast of memorable characters that populate David and Liesl's world. These include Dexter, a dangerous fugitive who confronts them in a road rage incident, Emily, a single mom who David meets while tending Liesl in a local park, and Samantha, a banal but lovable teenager who becomes Liesl's embedded babysitter. There's also Sheila, the wealthy, married, and promiscuous mother of one of Liesl's classmates, and Joel, a teenage schoolmate of Liesl's, who David stumbles upon in a compromising position with his granddaughter. Enter Justine, a recently divorced and transplanted classical musician on whom David has definite designs. Next comes Alan, a grad student Liesl falls in love with while away at college, then Nestor, a brutal family abuser who preys upon his wife and daughter, both clients of Liesl, now a counselor at a woman's shelter. As David flits between crudity and gentility, the story itself seamlessly conveys the reader between humor and poignancy, hope and despair, performing arts and violence. David's final two dramatic acts beg the questions: were these noble and courageous deeds, or evil and cowardly actions? Is this a man of probity, sometimes failing his own standards, or is he an immoralist, wrapping himself in a mantle of culture?

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Customer Reviews

". . . a well-written and poignant story . . . Hardesty is an excellent writer, drawing me in from the start. A confirmed atheist, David Foley surprises his friends and extended family members with his sensible but unorthodox (grand)parenting skills. His orphaned granddaughter, Leisl, learns that morality comes in many forms, and that her grandfather's belief system may not model the religious undertones of her deceased mother's family, but that the grace of good deeds stands firm in both arenas. A compelling novel of unusual life events, told with honesty and unabashed self-reflection. Just as the reader assumes that all such stories have a happy ending, a new twist appears to remind us that happiness is in the imagination of the reader. An interesting story, one that I do not believe has been told before." -- Lisa McComb, Author *Raspberry Beret*, *Opening Pandora's Box*. . . a moving narrative about beating one's past, understanding one's present, and confronting one's place in the universe. Hardesty guides the reader with a deft hand through David Foley's raging internal battles waged between his coarseness and his urbanity, his temper and his equanimity, his Catholic upbringing and his professed atheism. Definitely a five-star read." --Suanne Schafer Fiction Editor Empty Sink Publishing
Offbeat Grandfather "David Foley is a very likable and inspiring character. The author describes the ups and downs, the adjustments, frustrations, and the humorous moments that all parents and grandparents experience with great insight and observation. I loved the relationship that develops between Foley (Poppa) and Liesl, the granddaughter he raises from birth." -- Hilary Hawkes *Readers' Favorite*

"The Grace Of The Ginkgo" is Michael Hardesty's first novel. He is a graduate of the University of Louisville and Stanford University's Certificate of Writing Program in long fiction. Hardesty is retired

from his marketing communications firm, Black & White, and lives in Louisville, KY where his favorite activity is hobnobbing with his three grandchildren.

I had been searching for a very long time for literary fiction with the voice of an atheist narrator. Hardesty's is the first outside of science fiction, and he has given the reading public a wise, gentle introduction. I call this book an idyll even though it's hardly a sweet romp across fields of golden wheat. Narrator David Foley can be lusty and tough, but for the most part his is a story of everything going right and sweet. We are in his secular mind, and we never cringe--even when he hits the worst life passages. I thank author Michael Hardesty from the bottom of my godless little heart.

I read "The Grace of the Ginkgo" a month or so ago and I'm still thinking about it. Mr. Hardesty has quite a talent for character development, so much so that I fell in love with them, laughed with them, and cried with and for them. And I miss them since I finished the book! Thank you for the wonderful hours I spent lost in your excellent writing. How lucky you are to have such a talent. I know I will read this book again, something I rarely do. I am looking forward to more pleasurable reading from your next book. There WILL be a next book I hope!

Really lovely book, shows different elements of human relationships and explores life in all stages while avoiding any time-worn cliches. The passage of time from scene to scene flashes beautifully; fans of Kim Edwards' writing will enjoy this immensely. The characters are at once realistic and interesting, and the story line is not one that has been explored before I think. Toward the end, I couldn't stop turning the pages to find out what happens.

A moving story that made me alternately laugh and cry. Lead character David Foley is a certified rascal, but his relationship with his adopted granddaughter, Liesl, is heartwarming. A must read for grandparents, religious doubters, performing arts patrons, and lovers of sad but beautiful endings. The metaphor of the ginkgo tree's life cycle is wonderful. More - please - Mr. Hardesty!

This author sets you on a path to experience each character's humanness. The ever-present candor, wit, and quips were rapturous. The involvement and love of the characters to one another was pure joy. Oh, but don't be lulled into a false sense of harmony. There were plot twists that were doozies! That being said, I was reminded to take every opportunity to enjoy others - just as they are. I recommend this book for your reading pleasure. Enjoy.

I enjoyed this book more than I thought I would which surprised me ... Love, humour, grief, wit, the scourging of the inner mind .. nicely done

For a first novel, Michael Hardesty knocks it out of the ball park! It starts out tame but unwinds into a complicated and thought-provoking ride through the protagonist's life where he must make hard decisions about how to take care of his family. It's a modern-day tale of child-rearing, pain, sacrifice and revenge. I highly recommend it!

Michael Hardesty's book is a must-read. You'll enjoy the journey with his characters, and enjoy his graceful writing style!

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