



The Sweet Everlasting: A Novel

Judson Mitcham

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In *The Sweet Everlasting*, Judson Mitcham cuts through the moral ambiguities of life in the midcentury, rural South to show us the heart and soul of a good but flawed man.

Sharecropper's son, mill worker, and ex-convict? Ellis Burt surely knows adversity. For a brief and cherished time there was a woman, and then a child, too, who had been a kind of salvation to him. Then they were gone, leaving Ellis to carry on with the burden of what he had done to them, of the ruin he brought down upon them all.

In *The Sweet Everlasting*, Ellis is seventy-four. Moving back and forth over his life, he recalls his Depression-era boyhood, the black family who worked the neighboring farm, his time in prison, and the subsequent years adrift, working at jobs no one else would take and longing for another chance to rejoin what is left of his family. Ever in the background are the memories of his wife, Susan, and their boy, W.D. How Ellis drew on her strength and his innocence to resist everything that threatened to harden him: the shame that others would have him feel, the poverty he had known, and the distorted honor and pride he had seen in others and that he knew was inside him, too.

Like the hero of William Kennedy's masterpiece, *Ironweed*, Ellis Burt is a man of uncommon personal dignity and strength, always moving toward, but never expecting, redemption.

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