



Nostalgia: A Novel

Dennis Mcfarland

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This stunning Civil War novel from best-selling author Dennis McFarland brings us the journey of a nineteen-year-old private, abandoned by his comrades in the Wilderness, who is struggling to regain his voice, his identity, and his place in a world utterly changed by what he has experienced on the battlefield.

In the winter of 1864, Summerfield Hayes, a pitcher for the famous Eckford Club, enlists in the Union army, leaving his sister, a schoolteacher, devastated and alone in their Brooklyn home. The siblings, who have lost both their parents, are unusually attached, and Hayes fears his untoward secret feelings for his sister. This rich backstory is intercut with scenes of his soul-altering hours on the march and at the front—the slaughter of barely grown young men who only days before whooped it up with him in a regimental ball game; his temporary deafness and disorientation after a shell blast; his fevered attempt to find safe haven after he has been deserted by his own comrades—and, later, in a Washington military hospital, where he finds himself mute and unable even to write his name. In this twilight realm, among the people he encounters—including a compassionate drug-addicted amputee, the ward matron who only appears to be his enemy, and the captain who is convinced that Hayes is faking his illness—is a gray-bearded eccentric who visits the ward daily and becomes Hayes’s strongest advocate: Walt Whitman. This timeless story, whose outcome hinges on friendships forged in crisis, reminds us that the injuries of war are manifold, and the healing goodness in the human soul runs deep and strong.

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