


All I Have In This World

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Two strangers meet on a windswept car lot in West Texas. Marcus is fleeing the disastrous fallout of chasing a lifelong dream; Maria is returning to the hometown she fled years ago, to make amends. They begin to argue over the car that they both desperately want—a low-slung, sky-blue, twenty-year-old Buick Electra.

The car, too, has seen its share of mistakes and failures. Every dent and seam has witnessed pivotal moments in the lives of others, from the boy who assembled it at the Cleveland factory to all the owners who were to follow: a God-fearing man who sells it when he sees a sexy girl sprawled across it, a doctor who can't dissociate it from his son's fate, a girl with a hole in her heart, and a rancher's wife who'd much rather live without it for all the history it carries.

Marcus and Maria, after knowing each other for less than an hour, decide to buy the old car together. And as this surprising novel follows the rocky paths of the Electra and its owners both past and present these two lost souls find solace in an unexpected alliance.

All I Have In This World is a tender, compelling novel about our desire to reconcile the past with the present, and the ways we must learn to forgive others, and perhaps even ourselves, if we are ever to move on.

All I Have In This World Details

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Author : Michael Parker

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From Reader Review All I Have In This World for online ebook

Mary Moore says

This novel is a rare find: first, the main characters are likable. The writing is beautiful but never pretentious. The story comes with dark edges, but at its center it's a comedy. And there's plenty of action, but actions aren't the point. The point, it seems to me, is the spirit of the main characters: Marcus, Maria and Harriet. It's clear that Parker knows these people in a very deep way and, flawed as they are, I nominate them for Characters in a Novel I Would Most Like to Hang Out With. Like Parker's writing, the people in ALL I HAVE IN THIS WORLD are original, quirky and have no patience with bs.

Snotchocheez says

3.5 stars

Contemplative, dreamy, quirky, and consistently engaging, Michael Parker's *All I Have in This World* was a very pleasant surprise. It reminded me a little of Ian McEwan's work, if ever he decided to emigrate to West Texas, channel Larry McMurtry and write a quixotic mood piece featuring an impulsive failed Venus fly-trap farmer, a troubled sous-chef, and a sky-blue 1984 Buick Electra hoop-dee.

Mr. Parker's prose might not be for everyone (those who hate run-on sentences and swirly dream sequences might want to give this a pass) but his serendipitous tale of poor life choices and redemption really struck a chord with me. I look forward to reading more from him.

Pat says

Two strangers meeting and deciding to buy the same car.....together. These two are loners and really have nothing in common. Their symbiotic relationship is interesting. Not a page turner but pretty good read.

Care says

Based on the reaction at today's bookclub, I am in the minority for loving this. Just my kind of book, I guess. But why do I feel the need to apologize or temper my five stars by saying, "Well I loved it but I doubt anyone else will." Raspberries! I liked it a lot. Amazing? Yes, to me. Not "Should be amazingly adored by everyone!" Skillfully constructed, well-balanced and authentic seeming characters, (and by 'well-balanced', I mean in how they were presented, not the character's personalities!) Sure, suspend some beliefs but yet, as a reader, I didn't doubt ANY of it. I totally get that some people might not find it authentic and rather thought it silly, even; but I loved it. (Some one thought the relationships were as dry and arid as Western Texas.) I don't know why it made sense to me and was believable or why I didn't feel I needed to believe that two strangers sharing a car is possible or 'would ever never happen'. Who cares - it works in this story. The Buick Electra was a character and I didn't care that the last chapter 'didn't make any sense' or that the story of the

mother and dot who followed the car in Indiana was odd and didn't connect. I loved it.

So, if you want to experience this book and you know I hate to give spoilers, just know this: The first ten pages are WHAM!-punch. And then the author inserts little short stories about a Buick Electra. Pay attention to the years on the chapter titles and just roll with it.

It might have helped that I read the last 2/3 of this book in two days. I was not expecting to 5-star this when in the first 1/3; I thought it had chances of being a solid 3-star. But something about the prose and the thoughts shared and the emotions provoked pushed it into the amazing realm.

I loved it.

I suspect that most of my book club would have given it 2-3 stars...

(AND I bet they are very worried that I am extremely excited about our next book! The Good Lord Bird by James McBride. Totally different book, I'm sure, but they are nervous.)

Sojourner says

All I Have in This World by Michael Parker may not be the most amazing of books I have read in a while but it is a fairly attention-grabbing love story, unique in its own way. Author Michael Parker crafted a gentle yet persuasive novel why it is important to come to terms with our situation and learn to move on in life. The biggest stumbling blocks in life is our inability to forgive others, forget the past and learn the lessons life teaches us as we press forward.

In his own compelling way, Michael Parker writes a story which focuses on a car and two individuals, total strangers Maria and Marcus who ended up as co-owners, however improbable that may sound.

Maria is a carefree but troubled girl who at the tender age of seventeen has seen different shades of life. She has gone through an abortion. Her boyfriend has killed himself. Her hometown does not hold any hope for her. All she wants now is to run away, leave everything behind, including her past. Marcus fares no better in life, though he had a promising start. When he fails to realize his dream which forces him into bankruptcy, he has to find a way to survive, forcing him to stoop as low as possible, even to the extent of robbing his sister of her rightful inheritance.

Maria and Marcus are both failures. They are distraught with life, with a troubled past and disappointed with themselves. They are total strangers. But by a quirk turn of fate, they are brought together in a car yard, and strangely plump to buy a sky blue Buick Electra as co-owners. Will the car they jointly owned bring them luck? What will the future hold for them?

All I Have in This World by Michael Parker is a story about mistakes, regrets, forgiveness, hope and redemption. The narrative is simple but engaging, and keeps one moving forward. The plot twists in the story are wonderfully done. It is a story that builds bridges between past failures and the promise of hope for a better tomorrow.

Jumi Ramirez says

Great concept

Judy says

Complicated relationships and the history of a 1984 Buick Electra (sky blue) ... not particularly compelling.

Larry H says

Michael Parker's *All I Have in This World* is a beautifully written, poignant, sometimes meandering novel about two people damaged by their mistakes and the aftermath of them, and an old car that somehow binds them together in a strange way.

Maria fled her home in Pinto Canyon, Texas just at the end of high school, when a life-changing decision she made resulted in a tragedy she couldn't escape. Ten years have gone by, and Maria has stayed away from Texas, and barely kept in touch with her mother. Maria has moved from place to place, job to job, and, at times, from man to man, although the holes in her life have yet to be filled. But she makes the decision to return home for a little while, and is surprised by how much she is still affected by the events that caused her departure.

Marcus dreamed of breeding Venus flytraps, and building a farm and educational center for them on his family's acreage in a small North Carolina town. But Marcus' lack of business and museum acumen, as well as his lack of foresight, has led to the bank foreclosing on and seizing the land, land which partially belongs to his sister. Marcus decides to leave North Carolina and head for Mexico, with the money he was able to salvage, and did not share with his sister what happened. A stop along the way in Pinto Canyon for a hike along the Rio Grande results in his truck getting stolen with nearly everything he owned inside.

Maria and Marcus meet at a used car lot. Both are looking for a car—Maria to avoid having to share with her mother, and Marcus to be able to head to Mexico as he originally planned. The two both set their eyes on the same car, a 1984 sky blue Buick Electra. In a snap decision, the pair agrees to share the car, regardless of the fact that they had never really met (or introduced themselves, for that matter), and both have different plans for the car. But they agree to use the car on alternate days, as both try to gain some footing again in their world.

All I Have in This World tells the story of two people desperately trying to hang on and make some sense of their lives, and find a way forward that doesn't involve giving up. Both need to come to terms with what they've done and move on, but neither can seem to handle either of those monumental steps. As life pushes in around them, they are both unsure of what to do next—face their problems or flee again?

This book also tells the story of the Buick Skylark through the years, from when it was first transported from the factory as a young girl with a heart problem watches the car trailer drive past, to the various people whose lives the car touched through the years, until it wound up on the used car lot where Marcus and Maria found it. For its previous owners, the car was both a point of pride and pain, a talisman and a bittersweet reminder.

Michael Parker is tremendously skilled, and he has created two characters with so much depth and pain in their lives, not all of it their own making. I felt as if the story took a bit to get going, as really the book hit its stride once Maria and Marcus met, but both of their stories are tremendously compelling. At times the book is a little hard to follow, and I felt that the ending was a little more ambiguous than I would have liked, but in

the end, this book has stuck with me. I felt for Marcus and Maria and their struggles, and would like to know more about whether they were able to put their pasts behind them and find happiness. A unique, interesting, and emotionally rich book.

Mary says

If I had to summarize this book's theme, I'd say it was about realizing that "everything is not about you" and simultaneously, "you are responsible for your life". The story is told through a vehicle (literally a blue buick), a woman who has been fleeing her past (a boyfriend who killed himself when she broke off her relationship and an abortion) and a man who has gone bankrupt from a badly designed business plan to have a nature center for venus fly traps. As you can guess from the players in this drama, there is some humor. And it's an intriguing story. The whole Buick thing seems contrived but by the end of the book, it sort of works. This is more of a cerebral book (mostly about what people are thinking at any given time) then it is about anything happening.

Sshelly says

I enjoyed this book but it is not an easy read. I had to go back and reread many passages....Not something I usually will do as much as I did with book. So if you are wanting an easy read, this book is not for you. This is a book you have to "sink your teeth into" as the saying goes. And if course I loved all things "Texas" in this book. He got the float down the Comal spot on!

Shelleyrae at Book'd Out says

I'm left fairly underwhelmed by this novel which takes almost half the book to get to the point where it reflects the precis provided by the blurb.

The narrative shifts between 1994 and 2004 revealing the protagonists defining life moments. For Maria this is fleeing her hometown at seventeen after an abortion and the subsequent suicide of her boyfriend. For Marcus it is the failure of his dream, forcing him into bankruptcy and robbing his sister of her rightful inheritance. They are strangers when they meet in a car yard (nearly halfway through the book) and inexplicably decide to jointly purchase a sky blue, low slung Buick Electra.

The main themes of the novel explore regret, forgiveness and redemption but I had trouble maintaining my interest in two such introspective characters. Their angst about their individual circumstances seemed repetitive at times and the streams of consciousness were tiring. One sentence ran over three pages (p220-224) and it was not the only one.

I did like the vignettes that shared the history of the car and its previous owners and I would have liked more of these to break up the relentlessly serious tone.

All I Have In The World is the sort of novel that will likely gain praise for its literary style and I have to admit the imagery is often wonderful but it didn't really work for me, in retrospect I probably should have

put it aside instead of pushing through.

Meagan says

All I Have In This World is a curious, quirky and intriguing novel about a man and a woman who meet in a used car lot while looking at the same car - a 1984 Buick Electra. The novel is intertwined with the history of the car, along with the previous owners history.

The Buick Electra is an entity unto itself, as we discover flitting back and forth from the present day to the past.

Trina says

I really loved this book. The characters are losers and burdened with loss, and a car with a lot of history helps to save them. There is a kind of tenderness for every thing here -- the landscape, the car, the harsh and damaged people, places and things we see every day. The novel's construction was a bit tantalizing -- snippets of characters touched by the car. Parker succeeds here in communicating the sacredness of life in the world, a theme I've found in his other work.

Julie Barrett says

All I Have In This World by Michael Parker

What first prompted me to apply to read this book was the title. It's not the material things we have that will live with us forever.

This is a story about many people and I first found it confusing because of the chapters were from a different year and different people til I realized it was the story of the car and the previous owners lives.

Loved learning about the terrain and nature around the various places the books take you to. Marcus has his dream and realizes he's a failure and tries to make his dream happen. Maria is from a mixed up family and they end up buying the car together.

Found it interesting where their path takes them especially when they are out driving, talking and learning about one another and what they want to do.

Loved the lists and charts. Love how the background of the car and its owners connect to the characters who buy it.

I received this book from Library Thing via Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill in exchange for my honest review.

John Luiz says

This is a terrific novel about two lost souls who come together and help one another find peace and a modicum of joy in their lives. One is a woman, Maria, who suffered a traumatic experience with a high school boyfriend. Because her family is one that suppresses rather than discusses experiences and feelings what transpired haunts her for decades. The other is 47-year-old man, Marcus, who brought on his own

misery by trying to start a flytrap museum on the North Carolina farm he inherited with his parents. When that business fails, the bank reclaims the property and he runs away, afraid to tell his sister that he's squandered their inheritance. Marcus and Maria meet in Texas, near Maria's home, at a used parking lot when they both become interested in a decades-old Buick Electra. They end up deciding to share the car and become friends. The novel starts with a blockbuster first chapter in which we learn of Maria's traumatic history with her high school boyfriend. It then shifts between the two main characters' points of view, but interspersed we get intriguing vignettes about all the people who touched that Buick Electra before them – from the Detroit workers who assembled it to all the previous owners. It would seem like a distracting device, but it's not. Each story is compelling. After that jaw-dropping opening chapter, the novel does slow down a bit as we get to know Maria and Marcus muddling along in their own lives – and it takes a while for the two of them to get together. But their back stories are fascinating. This is a novel of rich characterization. One of the "bad" people in the book would seem to be Maria's mother, who is so shut down and unable to communicate that she seems to be the source of all of Maria's troubles. But over the course of the novel, we get to know her, and by the end this distant and aloof woman is perfectly understandable, and you end up feeling great compassion for her. Overall it's a terrific novel with an incredible sense of place. You feel like you walk right into the North Carolina and Southwest Texas environments the author describes. It's a terrific read for anyone who enjoys a character-based novel, and it's a novel that will give you hope about the possibilities of relationships and human connections – especially because it portrays that budding relationship between Maria and Marcus without resorting to any plot hijinx or overly sentimental, romantic-comedy type twists.
