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REVIEWS

TITLE INFORMATION

TWIN RIVER IV

C U When U Get There

Michael Fields

Xlibris (548 pp.)

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BOOK REVIEW

This fourth installment in Fields' (*Twin River III*, 2016, etc.) violent series focuses on a cursed Pennsylvania town.

It is 1998 in the ferociously hot Furnace Creek area of Death Valley, Nevada. Cain Towers is turning 18 years old. Near Funeral Mountain, he and his Uncle Abel celebrate with wine at a decaying desert residence. Cain believes that the magic of a medicine man runs in his blood, and he hears its voice. The truth is that Cain was separated at birth from his twin brother, Niles, and has brutality coursing through his veins. While Niles enjoys the life of a football star in Twin River, Pennsylvania, his brother and uncle plan to heed the powerful voice and kidnap a bus full of school children. Among those kids will be 14-year-old Stanley Banks of China Lake, California. The son of Naval Lt. Allen Banks, Stanley is close to nature and a budding expert on the native Coso peoples. Meanwhile in Twin River, Niles has no idea that he lost a brother in the conflict that rocked the community in 1980. Yet if Cain and Abel return to Pennsylvania for vengeance, they'll have to reckon with Vietnam veteran and high school janitor Gene Brooks. On this fourth trip into grizzled moral terrain, Fields explores side roads in time and geography. History factors heavily again, as Cain and Abel's villainy echoes the real-life Chowchilla, California, bus kidnapping of 1976. And though the desert is bright, Fields' prose channels all that is dark in nature ("Wings flogging, beaks striking furiously at head and eyes, the vultures fight over the scant lizard remains"). The narrative builds savage momentum in Death Valley, then explores the quaint life of Twin River. Fields establishes an idyllic quiet before the storm, which results in events reminiscent of the 1999 Columbine High School massacre. The author comments on former NRA President Charlton Heston by naming Twin River High's useless principal Charlie Hesston. Throughout, references to *The Simpsons* lighten the mood, and the ending surges with optimism.

The latest visit to Twin River becomes an exhilarating exercise in sustained, multipronged tension.