



## Stumptown Kid

By Carol Gorman, Ron J. Findley

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**Stumptown Kid** By Carol Gorman, Ron J. Findley

**This dramatic and moving story set in the days of the Negro Leagues illustrates the true meanings of friendship, prejudice, and heroism**

Twelve-year-old Charlie Nebraska wants two things he can't get: to make the local Wildcats Baseball team and to have life to return to the way it was before his father died two years earlier in the Korean War.

Then Charlie meets Luther Peale, a stranger who quietly and mysteriously arrives in the small town of Holden, Iowa, and sets up camp near the river. Luther is a former Negro Baseball League player, and Charlie loves baseball. The two strike up a friendship and Luther agrees to coach Charlie's fledgling neighborhood baseball team for a game against the Wildcats.

But many of Holden's white residents are suspicious of Luther because of his skin color. And when Charlie inadvertently reveals a secret of Luther's, violence erupts in the town and both Luther and Charlie are drawn into serious danger.

Authors Carol Gorman and Ron J. Findley have created two highly memorable, emotionally complex characters in this dramatic story that illustrates the meanings of friendship, prejudice, and heroism.

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### Editorial Review

#### From School Library Journal

Grade 5-8—Themes of honesty, loyalty, and heroism are imbedded in this powerful, fast-paced story set in a small Iowa town in 1952. Charlie Nebras, 11, misses his father, who died in the Korean War; dislikes his mother's domineering, prejudiced boyfriend, Vern; and loves baseball but is cut from the premier Wildcats team. Into his life walks Luther Peale, a former Negro Leagues player who is on the run after a wild pitch accidentally killed a drunk, white batter. Luther serves up baseball expertise and kindness, and Charlie becomes his friend, inviting the young man home for dinner and helping him find a job. When Luther agrees to coach Charlie's "Stumptown" team in a game against the Wildcats, wary white parents and townspeople become more accepting. His fugitive past is revealed, however, and a harrowing chase pits Charlie and Luther against the vengeful, murderous brother of the dead batter. Charlie is a feisty, lonely kid who fiercely defends Luther and recognizes Vern's sinister deceit. Devoted to her son and his happiness, his mother gradually realizes the truth about her boyfriend, who aids Luther's attacker. Luther is compassionate, knowledgeable, and resourceful. He and Charlie become mutually supportive and protective as they confront racism and revenge. Readers will enjoy this winning mix of sports, suspense, and heroism, and delight in the baseball wit and wisdom.—*Gerry Larson, Durham School of the Arts, NC*

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#### From [Booklist](#)

Gr. 5-8. The authors incorporate tried-and-true elements into a competent, if unexceptional, historical novel. Still grieving over the death of his father in the Korean War, young Charlie latches onto Luther Peale, a former Negro League pitcher, who is laying low after he accidentally pitched a ball that killed a player in another state. As Luther's coaching turns Charlie and some friends into a team good enough to take on the local champs, Charlie sees his quiet friend's presence opening up racial divisions in town; encounters a bully (who has been abused); watches his best buddy drift away; behaves badly toward the salesman who is courting his remarkably patient mother; and blurts out Luther's secret. The climax arrives with the advent of the slain player's murderous brother. Matt Christopher fans may want more baseball action, but kids looking for a lightweight read will find a cast easily broken down into heroes and villains, and all the side plots tidily resolved by the end. *John Peters*

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—*School Library Journal*

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