

Clarion Review ★★★★★

GENERAL FICTION

A Fag for Her Fifties: A Fabulous Fairy Tale

B MacGregor

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Taking back the other “F” word, a gay author revels in Super-Fag-alicious-ness.

Writing under the pseudonym B MacGregor, the author of *A Fag for Her Fifties* is a proud gay man who wholeheartedly and unabashedly advocates embracing life, even when it means changing and redefining obstacles that stand in the way of happiness. “It’s never too late to change,” he stresses, pointing to his own decision to “take on” the word “fag,” never one of his favorites, and not only use it, but glorify it, in his new novel.

And that he does, in all sorts of creative permutations: *Fag-a-pendous*, *Fag-bulous*, *Fag-rentious*, and even *Super-Fag-alicious* are sprinkled liberally throughout, reinforcing the message that the word is not to be feared but, rather, celebrated. Spicy “homo lingo” vies with double entendres like “things that go dirty in the night,” as often raunchy outrageousness challenges “the convenient, conservative, ethical, and primitive” in this original, if ultimately unfulfilling, “Fabulous Fairy Tale.”

The story’s premise is ingeniously promising. Beulah Mae Osguard, a middle-aged woman in the small, ironically named town of Paradise, Iowa, sees a televised report about San Francisco’s Gay Pride Festival and finds herself enthralled by the sheer joy the participants exude. Seeking to experience similar exuberance, she decides to change everything about her staid and unsatisfying life. She turns to Craigslist to find someone to guide her in a complete transformation, and her wayward ad, poorly placed in the “Women Seeking Men” section, is answered by the very same B MacGregor who serves as author and narrator of the story. It seems like the perfect setup for a humorous romp, but the tale that follows is surprisingly not funny.

Assuming the all-too-obvious role of the fairy godmother, B sets about helping Beulah Mae, whom he renames Charity, find her inner splendor. As it happens, B soon discovers that he needs her every bit as much as she needs him. When real-life events intervene, Beulah Mae is forced to trade the constraints of her stultifying life in Paradise for a prison sentence at the local penitentiary, and B becomes her weekly visitor. His Sunday visits to the prison and the tales he tells Charity drive the book’s plot.

The weekly stories juxtapose memories of their time together with reinterpretations of well-known fairy tales. From Cinderella’s own fairy godmother, a “Fag hag if ever there was one,” to Peter Pan, “a juvenile Fag-in-the-making,” to Pinocchio, whose growing nose offers the perfect opportunity for innuendo, each fairy-tale character is unceremoniously unmasked to reveal his own “inner Fag.”

Implausible circumstances, a high-strung personality, an abundance of gay pride, and even an overweight transvestite canine named Mr. Gizzy Wizzit contribute an unrestrained promise of hilarity, but laughter rarely follows. B’s stories always begin, “Once upon a time,” but he cannot guarantee a “happily ever after,” and *A Fag for Her Fifties* often feels overwhelmingly sad.

With pearls of wisdom like, “even though life is tough, the Fag in you has to be tougher,” and “throw out ALL the

worthless memories in your life," B offers his best advice for living life in the present, but in the end, the much-sought-after happiness is bittersweet at best.

CHERYL HIBBARD (August 1, 2013)

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