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CLARION REVIEW ★★★☆☆ ROMANCE

A Good Man

Jimmy Holcomb
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A Good Man is the story of a young couple in love. What makes the romance unusual is the exceptionally slow progression of their intimate encounters, which play out over fourteen years against a backdrop of blossoming careers. Cassie Wells and Seth Nelson are destined for high-level success in acting and athletics, respectively. The professional paths they have chosen are strewn with few obstacles, and the trouble they do experience tends to be glossed over rather than played for attention-grabbing effect.

With little significant conflict to keep Cassie and Seth apart, only distance, competition, and indecisiveness form the basis of their long-term desire to sidestep each other. This persistent hesitation is realistic, yet the couple's blasé behavior does nothing to help sustain the plot of this rather lengthy book.

Jimmy Holcomb writes with admirable control, as is evident in his description of Seth's feelings for Cassie: "…the fire burning inside her was what defined her in his eyes. It was her drive and her relentless pursuit of her dreams that was so attractive to him."

The basis of this contemporary romance is a genuine affection that takes root in college and develops over time in a natural series of events. Unfortunately, Holcomb's long-winded telling of incidents cannot substitute for a strong story line.

The novel reads more like a squeaky-clean, real-life dramatization, minus the drama, than a work of fiction. "Seth hardly got to see Cassie when the series went west to Los Angeles, and he wouldn't dare stay at her place overnight. She appreciated his attitude and agreed with his decision. Although, she thought, if everyone actually knew Seth, they'd know just how safe her reputation really was."

Meticulous editing of well-written, concise prose improves the overall quality of this book, strengthening its weak plot. A moral tone teeters close to the inspirational Christian genre, evident in the stained-glass church window and cross on the book's cover, but the author keeps the story mainstream.

A native of Alabama, Holcomb enriches the novel with a pronounced southern flavor, evident in the wholesome attitudes and perceptions of his characters. Most of the book, however, takes place in locales far removed from the South, such as New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. Old-fashioned tradition mingles with big city flair in this journey, contrasting values that tend to be emphasized in faith-based environments. *A Good Man*, Holcomb's first novel, is a worthwhile read, especially for romance enthusiasts who enjoy a stroll, as opposed to a jog, through the intricacies of a loving relationship.

JULIA ANN CHARPENTIER (December 19, 2012)

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