Clarion Review

General

A Life Worth Dreaming About
Nicholas Dettmann
AuthorHouse
978-1-4685-4300-1
Two Stars (out of Five)

In *A Life Worth Dreaming About*, Nicholas Dettmann sets forth an appealing, if not unfamiliar, scenario. Through some sort of "divine intervention," a man is allowed to go back in time and "fix" some of the mistakes he has made, thus correcting the path of his life and making him a better person for it all. Dettmann's main character, Carl, is granted this intriguing opportunity, although exactly how is never made clear. Nonetheless, the idea does have a certain enchantment to it, and those who enjoy Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* or Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life* will be rooting for Carl to make good on this amazing gift. In the end, he apparently does, but following his path through the story involves some uncomfortable reading.

Few students make their way through school without hearing what many call "the golden rules" of writing: "Write what you know," and "It's all in the details." Dettmann would be well advised to heed this advice. He does provides extensive detail, and it is often delightful. But sadly, in so many instances it is so far off base that the end result falls very flat.

Dettmann's knowledge of New York City, the setting for most of the book, is pitifully lacking. For instance, his main character, Carl, a Giants, Rangers, and Yankees fan, has season tickets for the events of all three teams. For this, Carl spends only a couple thousand dollars each year, and for premium seats. Fans seeking season tickets could set him straight!

Further, Carl lives in a "twelfth story condo facing west in Manhattan" with, of course, "a remarkable view of the city." This condo has hardwood floors throughout, a "gorgeous kitchen," an indoor lap pool, indoor and outdoor tennis courts, and full room service. And the reader is to believe Carl pays $3,000 a month in rent—for this luxury condo in Manhattan. Carl also wears Armani and other "high-class" suits, purchased at an average price of $2,500. And that is not unlikely. But given the fact that he has more than a hundred of them in his closet, and then being told that he never wears any suit more than three times, the reader's belief in the

reality of Carl's described lifestyle continues to unravel.

When Carl takes a potential business prospect to dinner, he treats her to an evening at the Marriott. With all the restaurants available in NYC, how impressive might his visitor—from Paris—find his choice of dining establishments?

Add to these other issues the numerous, well-detailed trips by taxi. "That'll be sixteen seventy-five," the driver says. The passenger "gives him seventeen and says, 'Keep the change.'" And the cab driver departs, without even a comment, after receiving a twenty-five-cent tip. In New York City? It is laughable.

Dettmann's story has real potential. His writing style, grammar, and structure are just fine, and his flair for detail is impressive. With more research, he could use his current draft as the gateway to a solid four-star or even five-star novel. As it is now, however, the errors in factual detail overwhelm the whole, and the story line is not allowed to deliver on its promise.

Cheryl M. Hibbard