



Annie's Legacy

Elizabeth Ratcliff

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Ratcliff's clever use of imagery delights the senses.

Faced with worry and fear, Annie's dreams take over and she relives the history of her ancestors. *Annie's Legacy* by Elizabeth Ratcliff follows several generations of Annie and her husband's families, from the 1870s to the 1950s, allowing her to contemplate all that her relatives endured.

After a snow-filled day outdoors, Annie and her two daughters are exhausted and fall into bed after dinner. Her daughters sleep easily, but Annie is worried because her husband hasn't returned home or called to tell her why. Once she drifts off, she dreams of every turning point in her family's past. The strength they relied on to survive so many events helps Annie find the courage to help her husband and children through the struggles that result from that fateful, snowy night.

Ratcliff uses clever imagery throughout the novel, such as when describing the landscape: "snowflakes descend like a gushing featherbed." Although enticing, descriptions are often repeated, and this overuse dilutes the beauty of the language.

There are multiple grammar and punctuation errors on each page, which makes the novel difficult to read and causes some confusion about the action taking place. Annie waits for her husband: "Tired as I was I questioned myself, what kind of tracks and philosophy do I leave on my children's lives."

The dialogue is often stiff, preventing the characters from coming to life. For instance, Annie thinks of a time her mother gave her advice: "Mother said, "That is what I said Annie, you only learn when you put into action the lesson, just sing now. Remember the next time I tell you something, recognize I have a purpose.'" And in a plot that should be ripe with tension, moments that need time to build in intensity are too quickly passed over, such as when Annie simply describes her husband's injuries and what she was thinking at the time; putting that potentially heartfelt moment into an active scene and letting those emotions play out would have had more impact.

Most of the novel is a dream sequence, as Annie relives her entire family history in one night. While the historical aspect is interesting, the dream does not truly connect to what's happening to Annie's immediate family in the present. Presented as a series of events, the dream sequence does not seem to move the story forward or have an impact on the characters. As well, within the dream, it's often difficult to discern one character from another or determine from whose point of view a particular family history is being told.

The cover art is interesting and relevant once the family history comes to light. However, the back cover copy contains multiple grammatical errors that may turn off potential readers. Despite the raw style and structure of the writing itself, the imagery Ratcliff uses will delight the senses.

KANDY ALAMEDA (March 31, 2014)

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