Clarion Review

General

Beyond the Dream

CreateSpace
Rosalie T. Turner
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★★★★☆

Most Americans have a story about how their family came to America. As children they heard stories of their grandparents arriving in an unknown and sometimes untamed world with practically nothing, and it's likely that many of the struggles that their ancestors faced were smoothed over. But the truth is that our grandparents often faced a reality check as they worked toward their goals in this new world. *Beyond the Dream* is an inspirational, historical narrative that explores this kind of reality check.

The story opens as seventeen-year old Kathleen O'Neill is boarding a boat to leave nineteenth century Ireland for America. Once aboard, Kathleen falls in love with Joseph, a charming young Englishman also on his way to the New World. The two marry, but their idyllic relationship is often interrupted by Joseph's 'darkening,' temporary moments of coldness and anger that leave Kathleen baffled. As they land in Philadelphia and settle in Virginia, Kathleen and Joseph struggle with the land and soon balance a growing family while continually facing "the darkening."

Author Rosalie Turner creates a strong, family-centered character in Kathleen and, in the early chapters of the book, gives her a voice in an Irish brogue that is endearing, yet still clear to readers. "I want us ta feel like we belong ta a place, a place where we work hard, worship God, and are happy," she says early on in the book.

In Turner's clear, precise prose, Kathleen's journey from Ireland to the New World moves at a quick, even clip. During these travels, Turner gives the reader only a taste of what Kathleen's world is like—the crowded steerage on the boat that carries Kathleen to America, the noisy dock at Philadelphia, the rolling Virginia countryside. While it would be nice to see a little more of the world around her characters, Turner balances description with action in a way that

keeps the reader's attention.

In some ways, Kathleen's life feels a lot like that of Laura Ingalls Wilder's in the *Little House* series. Even though she is taking risks by being an immigrant and a frontier woman, Turner's setting of the scene never feels dangerous or life-threatening. We know Kathleen will be okay and that the trouble will fade as easily as the "darkening" leaves Joseph. At times, it feels like the risk should be more desperate, but the steadiness that seems to underlie Kathleen fits well with the inspirational nature of the novel. Kathleen's fear is quelled by a faith that sees her through the family's most difficult times.

Overall, *Beyond the Dream* is an incredibly engaging novel—part romance, part historical adventure. It's a book about the strength of faith and love, even when the reality we may have dreamed of achieving is not quite as we envisioned it. Even if you're not a fan of inspirational novels, this is a book that will keep you turning the pages and dreaming for more.

Katerie Prior