ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

GENERAL

Deliberate Steps: (Along a Familiar Path)
Dick Gibson
978-1-4259-2928-2
Three Stars (out of Five)

Love is the answer but while you're waiting for the answer sex raises some pretty good questions. —Woody Allen

Narcissistic ladies man and New York corporate hotshot Rob Grant gives Henry Miller and Charles Bukowski a run for their money on bedpost notching but does not approach the shimmering greatness of hooker-struck legend Charlie Sheen. The twice-divorced swingle father of two teenage boys is religious about keeping his options open while idly speculating on filling the vacant wife position. He's "…like the hummingbird simply moving from one flower to the next…" The sons are desperate for a replacement mother cozying up with psychologically unhealthy swiftness to women doomed to flavor-of-the-month status. The younger boy appears on the radar of a drug enforcement agency.

The talent rotation includes administrative assistants bar conquests and Luisa who Rob charms by displaying amorously used sheets at a laundromat. Some lovers focus on financial prospects others want babies. Those aware of rivals don't rein him in or initiate unmanageable interpersonal conflict—they wait patiently to be loved in return. He faults the losing proposition of marriage tracking any passing scent. Rob could be kinder emotionally deeper less prone to pickup clichés but the reader is asked to accept these flaws and hope for later redemption.

Rob likes a cocktail hour of locker-room style jocularity after work before riding the commuter train home to suburban Connecticut. He and boss R.D. compare weekend scorecards and josh about trading girlfriends. His Human Resources positions are with an oil company and a mining conglomerate. The latter involves travel to Guatemala in a period of distressing military-business partnership. Determined to impress superiors with an assessment of that branch's practices Rob wrestles with whether to report complicity in human rights violations.

The protagonist isn't classically likable—he's a gladhander with a tendency to speak in slogans. "'Don't want to get too far ahead of the curve' he said 'I can hold my "juice" pretty well but it's best I think to wait until dinner to "open the keg of nails" if you know what I mean.'" Despite the personality women want this supremely virile guy; inflated accounts of

liaisons are so pronounced that select passages play effectively as tongue-in-cheek farce. Rob seems most real and vulnerable from the standpoint of employment security.

The author resides in Luxembourg after a varied career in real estate oil and aerospace industries. *Deliberate Steps* a trilogy's opener includes a teaser from *It Isn't Easy Being a Lion*. The concluding volume is entitled *Imprints (On a Healing Heart)*. Although the challenge of single fatherhood is a sub-theme this book is about the pleasure of the chase. Gibson's story documents new sexual revolution norms emerging at the tail end of the 1960s simple days when lonely people with needs offered to show strangers their etchings (wink wink nudge nudge). Readers riding along can enjoy vicarious peccadillos without the risk of contracting a social disease.