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CLARION REVIEW ★★★☆☆ GENERAL FICTION

Emily's Hope

C. Scoushe Rosa
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At just four years of age, Katie, who has already faced the horrors of sexual and physical abuse, is witness to her mother's murder at her father's hands. Her uncle and aunt, Mathew and Carolyn O'Gorman, decide to take on the responsibility of raising her. Katie is brought into the O'Gorman's home, which is full of love and support. The large, Irish Catholic family is very close and extremely wealthy. They devote themselves to Katie's care, going so far as to establish a school for abused children where Carolyn can work and also be with Katie and her other children. Despite all the privileges Katie has in her new life, the psychological effects of her violent beginnings are long lasting and deeply troubling for her and her family.

C. Scoushe Rosa, a retired school teacher, has crafted a thoughtful story full of well-rounded characters that are lovingly brought to life. The writing style is clear and the plot is well organized. Though it may be difficult to consider a story about abuse pleasant to read, the book is engaging and moves at a reasonable pace.

The author explains that one of her reasons for writing this story is to examine the lasting effects of child abuse. Though the book does focus on the lifetime of problems that Katie struggles with, the O'Gormans' limitless emotional and financial resources make the story difficult to accept. Child abuse is terrifyingly real, but the vast majority of abused children are forced to deal with their emotional scars in less than ideal circumstances.

Another problem with the novel is the way that Carolyn and Mathew lecture various members of the family on everything from finances to sex. These lectures are highly didactic and stall the narrative. For example, Mathew talks to his oldest son Stevie about a friend who was injured in Iraq. He says:

> *Omid is one of thousands of brave men and women who have sacrificed all for an honorable belief. I don't agree with the foundation of the Iraq War, but I have profound respect for individuals like Omid. They deserve respect, dignity, and the honor they rightfully earned. We need to step forward with a hand of gratitude and charity.*

This conversation between Stevie and Mathew goes on for four pages. The sentiment may be a good one, but it is not relevant to the central plot of the book.

Child abuse is an issue that every adult should be aware of. Only through awareness can understanding and prevention be achieved. *Emily's Hope* is worthwhile because of the compassionate attention it focuses on an important topic.

CATHERINE REED-THURESON (March 28, 2011)

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