Clarion Review

Humor

Happy Endings
Gerald Downey
Ad Pub
978-0-615-82335-5
Four Stars (out of Five)

Did you hear the one about the joke book that was actually funny?

Happy Endings is a book of jokes collected over the years by Gerald Downey. Written in short story form, this enjoyable paperback will leave readers snickering and giggling from a variety of anecdotes.

Downey, an advertising creative director, has gathered an array of jokes on many different subjects, including marriage, golf, religion, gender, age, and the Irish. The joke titles, which are all listed in the four-and-a-half-page table of contents, feature names such as “Three Elderly Sisters,” “World’s Fastest Goat,” and “Mafia Bookkeeper.”

Most readers will have heard at least a few of these jokes and humorous stories before, but they are bound to find some new material. The collection is definitely not intended for children, as many of the jokes have adult themes; even sensitive older readers may find some of the subject matter questionable.

Downey has succeeded in writing with good comedic timing, giving enough opportunity for jokes to build, a feat in humorous writing. When telling a joke, the speaker pauses—something a writer cannot do, so relevant words or dialogue must act as a written pause. To accomplish this, the writer must add a sentence or two that makes sense within the joke, but that the joke does not depend on, taking the place of the spoken pause and giving time for the joke to build.

A storyteller at heart, Downey sets a scene in his jokes, creating a short story with a beginning, middle, and end. “Ghost Car” is set on a very stormy night in rural Louisiana, for example. Downey uses phrases such as “The wind howled and visibility was so poor, Leroy could barely see his hand at the end of his arm.” When a car pulls up slowly next to him and

stops, he jumps in…only to find himself alone. As the car silently drives along, it approaches a curve and a "ghostly, disembodied, gloved hand" grips the steering wheel, guiding it along the curve of the road. Scared out of his wits, Leroy bolts out of the car and finds his way to a small town bar where he recounts his story. Later, two large men in raincoats come into the bar and look at Leroy. "In a deep voice with a Louisiana accent, he said to his companion, 'Look, Boudreaux! Dere's dat idiot who rode in our car when we was pushin' it down da road in da rain!'"

The bright yellow cover featuring a smiley face and the title in bold, black font lends itself wonderfully to this type of book. Downey could have lumped the golf stories together, the Irish stories together, and so forth, but he didn't—the collection is organized as one funny story after another, and it works better that way. Each piece begins with its title on the right followed by the text of the story. If it is completed in one page, then the next page, on the left, is blank. There are many one-page jokes here, leaving a good deal of white space.

A joke book for adults, *Happy Endings* is a humorous collection of stories and anecdotes that will tickle the funny bone and delight the reader.

Beth VanHouten