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CLARION REVIEW ★★★★☆ GENERAL FICTION

I Want My Name Back

Kathryn Boyle
CreateSpace (Nov 6, 2011)
Softcover $21.58 (156pp)
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Loretta Martin has been pushed to the brink. A forty-three-year-old widow, she simply wants to have her late husband's pension records changed to reflect her maiden name, which she had retaken shortly after his death ten years earlier. And that's the rub. An unidentified bureaucrat stands in her way, forcing her to contemplate other solutions to circumvent the futile situation.

Loretta has been single since her policeman husband passed away, but she's been busy with her corporate job and remains close to her family, including younger sister Alice, with whom she lunches nearly every day. The story's initial focus is on Loretta's ongoing battle with the Government Pension Department and her Kafkaesque journey to their office in an attempt to set the record straight.

The novel's tone switches gears about fifty pages in, as Loretta inadvertently meets a new neighbor, the recently divorced and somewhat younger Michael Martin. The eventual "bus buddies" concoct an unusual scheme to change Loretta's predicament.

Boyle writes her protagonist as an authentic woman with whom readers will identify and commiserate. Here Loretta sharply dismisses one suggestion to solving her problem: "'I'd have to put one of those legal notices in the newspaper with my name, address, and date of birth! That's three-quarters of a steal-my-identity kit!'" She also does not hesitate to voice her opinions: "To have someone else with your last name living on your block and not be aware of it was a sad commentary on city living."

Other characters—Alice, Michael, Fred, and Miss Wilson, the one helpful government worker—are fleshed out well enough, though perhaps more detailed descriptions of these key individuals would add a bit more interest and imagery. The front cover will be intriguing to any reader trying to determine which characters are depicted. In addition, the editing is flawless, which makes for a very smooth and uninterrupted read.

Readers who enjoy well-written stories about strong women who are problem solvers, those who like a little bit of mystery tossed in with their romance, or even those who want to finish a book in one sitting will find that *I Want My Name Back* fits the bill.

ROBIN FARRELL EDMUNDS (April 24, 2012)

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