Clarion Review

General

Kennison's Gifts
W. David Tibbs
iUniverse
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Five Stars (out of Five)

Author W. David Tibbs has crafted a beautifully layered depiction of one life's journey from start to finish. Through emotional and well-written accounts Tibbs introduces readers to the character of Ken Kennison a man born to lowlife teenage parents and sold into a tumultuous life that scarred his very existence.

Beginning at the end and cycling back through Kennison's life Tibbs tells readers that there is something special about this particular protagonist. Remarkably he died exactly thirty years from the day he was born. This interesting fact hooks the audience forcing them to dig deeper for the answers that at first seem so elusive. If that weren't enough to keep the audience involved Tibbs presents us with the very first entry in Kennison's journal a poem titled "Who Am I?" that sees Kennison searching for answers. The poem seems to break the story down into pieces which Tibbs gifts to us in short but sweet chapters.

Tibbs's inherent storytelling ability is present from the beginning and his writing never falters along the way. Each chapter seems as intricately plotted as the last making the epic journey seem intensely personal and real. Tibbs has a knack for creating interesting realistic characters that serve to better ingrain the trials and tribulations of Kennison's existence in the audience's collective subconscious.

Tension abounds throughout the tale as one is left to wonder what will ultimately become of this forgotten soul from the summoning of the FBI to investigate his very existence at the onset of the story to the voyage home across the Atlantic near the end. Readers remain utterly connected with the hero willing him onward when times are tough. We know the outcome early on but that never takes away from the journey rather it helps to construct a bond between character and reader.

Throughout the book we return again and again to the journal and the poems that adorn its pages. Here Tibbs writes of life's fragility:

To sow seeds in a field that will be our life
In an orderly way—as the rule of Heaven intended
When before they were often scattered about haphazardly
With hope that the wind would blow favourably in the right
Direction;
With hope that they might find places to take root and
grow.

This simple passage encapsulates the entire novel demonstrating the preciousness and unpredictability of life on Earth. *Kennison's Gifts* is highly recommended.

Liam Brennan