Clarion Review

General

Making Love With God
Matthew Stanley
iUniverse
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Two Stars (out of Five)

"Even if he could locate his deeper self he wasn't sure he wanted to" the author writes. "The world is a scary place. The James he'd become had proven quite successful over the years. After all he was one of the most successful businessmen in West Virginia. But now he'd gone too far and now he was in a jam—he'd need to use his gift to deceive to get out of this jam to win back trust and loyalty so he could go back to his old ways. Yes he could rescue his business and maybe his marriage. He had the skill and the fortitude to rebuild and keep playing the game."

Making Love with God relates the adventures of James Clark the owner of an advertising agency hired to promote the benefits of mountaintop removal coal mining. Reclamation of the land hasn't been as good as planned and protesters are organized and effective. His wife finally fed up with his drinking neglect and failed promises kicks him out of the house. His advertising task is going almost as poorly as his marriage when the dam collapses killing seven and pushing James his camera crew and a group of protesters into the lake.

In the midst of illness and coughing up black goo James has a vision writes a short book and is transformed into an honest loving and forgiving man. He sets about to undo the messes he's made and promote the message of forgiveness as the key to life.

James's assistant buys and carries on with the business while James is making amends preaching the message of forgiveness on his book tour and befriending one of the protesters who nearly drowned. Some people get the message of forgiveness and reconciliation; others don't. His children do but not his wife. He thinks his former assistant gets it but then it looks like she may spoil everything.

While the story is quite readable Matthew Stanley does not provide enough background detail or foreshadowing in his debut novel to make many things in the story convincing. Psychological turn-arounds are all too easy here and James's message of forgiveness comes

across as preachy. Conversation too often seems stilted and many of the characters’ actions are physically awkward or unbelievable. While this has the potential to be an interesting story the lack of storytelling craftsmanship leaves readers dissatisfied.