ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

GENERAL

Moon Tanning: Motorcycles, Mechanics, Mayhem
Gwynn Davies
Xlibris
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Three Stars (out of Five)

For ten years, Gwynn Davies has been a BMW motorcycle mechanic, and *Moon Tanning: Motorcycles, Mechanics, Mayhem*, a collection of eighteen stories, is inspired by his work at a dealership in Victoria, Canada. He describes the dealership's eight employees, including fellow mechanics, Harry and Albert, and the much maligned Duane, the "whack job" general manager. Also featured prominently is Gerald, the owner, whom the author grudgingly considers a good boss.

Davies' tales nicely convey the pressures of the long workday, which doesn't end until 6:30 p.m., and they cover the demands of unreasonable customers and attitude from Duane and other staff members. Davies is at his best when describing Harry, whose "moon tanning" is a cheap way to make homegrown moonshine, and Albert, who has been a mechanic for many years and a devoted drug user and boozer since he was twelve. One story that stands out, "A Winter Marshmallow Roast," recounts a serious fire at the dealership and how the employees dealt with its consequences in their own ways. Several stories offer haunting recollections of riding through the desolate, unforgiving landscape of rural British Columbia, about which Davies can turn such poignant phrases as, "Running over any animal in a car is cruel and upsetting, but on a motorcycle, it feels close and personal."

Although Davies is a fine writer, he is also a frustrating one, as many of the stories are overwhelmed by jargon-filled details about motorcycle repairs that will leave nonriders and nonmechanics bewildered. Unfortunately, this diminishes the appeal of some stories for general readers, as it unnecessarily interrupts some good and funny dialogue among mechanics and between the mechanics and their natural enemies in the showroom.

Readers hoping to learn more about Davies himself will be disappointed: He plays his cards close to the vest and does not reveal much about his life outside the shop. Yet, despite his book's flood of details and lack of connection between the reader and author, Davies is a good writer who could be an excellent one, if only he pared down the motorcycle minutiae and shared

more about himself.

Karl Helicher