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Clarion Review ★★★☆☆ GENERAL FICTION

No Time for Tears... A Walk Through Life With Ann Deane Teal

Kellee Stone
(October 2007)
Softcover $14.90 (241pp)
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“A one-in-a-million thing had happened again” Kellee Stone writes. “My babies were gone from my life forever and so was the house.”

Stone’s alter ego the barely fictionalized Ann Deane Teal suffers through unthinkable loss in her early twenties almost certainly at the hands of a husband later certified as psychopathic but finds the inner iron necessary to move ahead. After her savings account is audaciously funneled away to finance grandiose adultery she frames her injury with perspective saying “…God had his reasons and purposes for these awful events in my life. Some you never understand but you learn to accept them.” This Christian faith is rarely referenced overtly; Ann Deane’s resilience is in good part derived from an innate sense of bedrock worthiness which cruelty cannot extinguish.

Though her early childhood is discussed including a philandering father who runs a hardware store and impregnates a teenage neighbor before departing the book’s focal period commences with the onset of adulthood and runs from the 1960s through the 1990s. Her mother Elaine approves of a relationship with a man eleven years older than Ann Deane’s naive sixteen. This obviously bad call is the catalyst for a long string of disappointments. Ann Deane grows up not far from Columbia South Carolina moves on to Atlanta and finally heads to Virginia for reasons of employment.

By the time complicated brain surgeries become imperative in the late 1980s Ann Deane is preoccupied with the afflictions and domestic problems of others. With an even temperament and a job at the phone company she refuses to let medical trouble keep her homebound longer than need be.

So what gets this industrious indomitable family-oriented woman down? Chronic conflict with ugly-acting adult stepchildren one of whom Ann Deane writes “…lied about nearly everything and every part of her life.” Only when writing of her third husband’s offspring does the granite-firm poise suggest slippage: “…she almost destroyed our marriage—our wonderful marriage.” Somehow a stepdaughter’s depressive neuroticism appears less forgivable than her first husband’s infanticide (two of their children died at his hands). In all other situations Ann Deane retains unflappability. Heightened tension imminent risk of physical danger and dreadful tragedy crowd into the first half of the book. Closer to the end where a climax is expected concerns decompress from earthshaking betrayal to more pedestrian grousing. Real lives rarely fit into standard literary structure so the early peak shouldn’t be a deterrent to further reading but the impact isn’t what it could be.

A growing cloud of transitionary books with content obscuring the fiction / memoir boundary is washing over mildly confused cataloging librarians. This book is part of that cloud because of concern over possible retribution from the wildly disturbed first husband and the privacy of more benign individuals. *No Time For Tears* shares the pain and wising-up of a woman who weathered uncommon suffering and emerged ready to pursue a quieter existence.

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