



One Man's Purpose: A Novel

Stephen D. Senturia

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This illuminating novel focuses on an academic who struggles to maintain a balance between his work and home lives.

One Man's Purpose is Stephen D. Senturia's illuminating story of a college professor who must reconcile the increasing tensions between his personal and work lives.

The book chronicles an academic year in the life of 43-year-old Martin Quint. When Quint, a tenured professor at the prestigious Cambridge Technology Institute in Massachusetts, is not lecturing in the very popular Circuits and Electronics course, he juggles other aspects of academic life. These include flirtatious students, managing a possible plagiarism scandal, competing against online courses, and navigating the politics behind tenure appeals. On the home front, Quint must contend with a sick father and a jealous wife.

The strategic family planning efforts of Martin and his wife, Jenny, are explored in depth. Jenny's observation that this process is "planned," not "spontaneous or joyful" as it was in a previous relationship, hints at a source of tension in Martin's home life. His work life is equally well established via descriptions of the rigmarole of academia and its bureaucracy. Dialogue is lively and the plot is engaging. *One Man's Purpose* effectively sets up the work-life balance from a man's perspective and provides keen insight into the inner workings of colleges.

As the story develops, the narrative gets bogged down in minutiae, such as the description of a meal that Martin cooks for his wife, or every event of his workday. This straining to include details from all of Martin's interactions leaves the narrative feeling overextended, rushed, and distant. Itineraries sometimes seem to take the place of plot development, as is the case with descriptions of Martin's trip to Istanbul:

Following short speeches by local dignitaries, including the mayor of Istanbul and the head of the Turkish Materials Society, Mustafa provided some details about coffee breaks and meals, the Wednesday night conference banquet and touring opportunities.

While Martin's marriage is developed throughout, highlighting day-to-day tension, tenderness, and humor, his other relationships are not as consistently developed, which makes it hard to invest fully in secondary characters. Martin's relationship with his father, for example, offers some touching moments but these are diluted with generalized descriptions that provide information but don't evoke emotion, as with: "[Martin and his sister] talked well into the night, not just about their father's health, but about mortality and its implications, the reality that their father would die, and possibly soon."

The writing throughout is clear and grammatically clean, and the dialogue is lively and relevant. However, numerous acronyms and excessive information regarding the workings of academia lead to inconsistent pacing and tone. Such factors detract from the overall effectiveness of the narrative at providing insight into the bureaucratic challenges of higher education.

One Man's Purpose is an enlightening exploration of the hectic life of a man struggling to keep up with the demands of

both work and home.

MAYA FLEISCHMANN (March 11, 2016)

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