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Clarion Review ★★★★½ GENERAL FICTION

Our Heart

Brian MacLearn
CreateSpace
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Jason Owens is a lost young man. As a teenager his mother is killed in a car accident and his father can't cope with her death. He leaves Jason with his grandparents and moves out of state to make a fresh start. Jason is devastated by the loss of his parents, but in his senior year of high school he falls in love with Allison Dittmer and his happiness prospects improve. As graduation approaches, however, Allison begins to have doubts. Though Jason is ready to commit to her, she is not sure. Eventually, one decision tears them apart and Jason runs away to California, determined to forget the past.

Now, nearly six years later, Jason's grandfather has died and he returns to his small hometown of Cedar Junction, Iowa. Everywhere he turns he is assailed by memories, both good and bad. Not only must he face the loss of his grandparent, but also the memories of his father, whom he has not spoken to in years, and Allison, who still lives in Cedar Junction. As Jason explores his past through eyes that have had six years to mature and six years to regret, he begins to realize that not everything is as clear cut as he had once thought. He also learns that his grandfather was keeping secrets from him, and those secrets will ultimately change Jason's life for good.

Our Heart is a beautiful story about love and loss and redemption. The story is split between Jason dealing with the death of his grandfather and the memories that Jason has of Allison. Brian MacLearn has done a lovely job of expressing both the grief and the intense love that Jason feels for the people in his life. The author also writes knowingly of a family that loves one another but doesn't always succeed in supporting one another.

MacLearn uses a great deal of imagery and over-the-top description throughout the text. For example, he describes a kiss shared by Jason and Allison: "We shared one last, tender kiss, and I entered the realm of souls. It is the place where souls join and touch each other, a world where everything is possible, and love is what matters most." This sort of description is fine in small doses but becomes excessive over the nearly 500 pages of the book, often making the plot feel slow. There are also many typographical errors in the book, and this will be quite distracting for the reader.

In final analysis, this is an enjoyable book. The author has put a great deal of thought into the meaning of forgiveness and true love. His characters are well written and the story is ultimately uplifting. The reader will close the book believing that love can redeem even the most unforgivable acts.

CATHERINE THURESON (December 3, 2010)

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