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Owen's Day

Helen Yeomans
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Generosity and eccentricity associated with the wealthy are catalysts for countless novels, a perfect example of which is *Owen's Day*, the story of elusive publisher Owen Adair, a courageous soul who risks his life to prevent nine-year-old Tom Newton from drowning in a half-frozen river. With few witnesses, this act of selfless love remains anonymous, until a local Canadian tabloid, the *Star*, identifies the stranger.

Initially, this doesn't seem like much of a plot, but Tom's mother Sara needs to thank the hero who saved her child's life, especially since the boy believes an angel rescued him and that the ethereal being must be his deceased father, a delusion she considers potentially dangerous. Her meeting with Mr. Adair was intended to be a formal affair, recorded for posterity by the *Star*, but a blizzard obstructs the planned event and puts Sara in the awkward position of caring for her son's savior as he recovers from pneumonia in his home. Presumably, his illness has been triggered by his daring escapade at the river.

This familiar situation, bordering on trite, brings to mind the old-fashioned nurse romances published by Mills and Boon, but Yeomans gives a sophisticated, realistic slant to a book that outside of a fiction category might have been deemed a failure. The setup insinuates sex, yet the relationship between Sara and Owen is remarkably tame, primarily due to the hero's poor physical condition.

The town's need to glorify Owen, reward him, and place him on a pedestal does not have the desired reaction, despite his polite exterior. Beneath it all, this is a man who values his privacy and refrains from drawing attention, which is apparent in this introspective excerpt: "The idea that the city would actually design a T-shirt and name a day in his honor was so irrational he felt a twinge of fear."

Helen Yeomans is a native of England with an extensive career in publishing. After working in London and Toronto, she launched her own company, providing editorial and writing services to corporate clients. *Owen's Day* is her first novel.

With a small-town flavor, this captivating novel is an exploration of the daily, sometimes dire incidents that lie like stumbling blocks throughout our lives. On a deeper level, social issues such as the religious concept of "good deeds" and the obligation, or even the *preference*, to literally pay for every privilege or service, turns this work into a valuable book that invites analysis.

JULIA ANN CHARPENTIER (August 29, 2011)

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