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CLARION REVIEW ★★★☆☆ GENERAL FICTION

Point of the Circle

Leona Gibbs
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"Grandfather is a good and decent man…he just wasn't the love of your life" Erik repeats after a conversation with his grandmother. These words would be enough to shake most families apart yet the secret revealed to Esther Jensen Webb's grandson—who is named after Captain Erik of the schooner *Rip Tide*—only sets in motion a circle of love that despite storms and tragedy blesses its descendants richly in the end.

Readers will enjoy their plunge into atmospheric Valda Bay. The year is 1857. The world in which readers find themselves is a slower more thoughtful one than today's. It is a cultural soup in which America is still considered "the most desirable place in the world" by the peasants and fisher folk of Scandinavia China and other countries far-flung and exotic.

But these immigrants to the Pacific Northwest many of whom do not speak enough English even to ask for directions when they get lost will not be handed a Promised Land. Racism and self-interest abound as a young Asian girl must struggle with an arranged marriage and two criminal brothers skulk about the edges of Valda Bay society. Selfish promiscuous Elsa Nash has no one's best interests at heart least of all her husband's.

A bullheaded fire chief and a frightened young wife must overrule a community doctor's adamant refusal to allow a Chinese herbalist to treat a young fireman mortally wounded in a suspicious fire at wealthy Rudolph Nash's mercantile. Can cleanliness herbal ointments and acupuncture save him?

"Prior to entering Ian's room the Chief was given a pair of scissors that were hot to the touch. They had been boiled" Gibbs writes. "The removal of his clothes was agony. Instructed by Mr. Chang not to pull on any clothing that was stuck to Ian's person the task had to be done with great care. Mr. Chang had prepared a pipe filled with something he called opium. When Mr. Fisk was lifted and placed into the warm water he screamed to (*sic*) the top of his lungs…"

And when Rudolph Nash is found murdered amidst a poisonous atmosphere of suspicion can the good offices of lighthouse keeper Erik Johansson and his wife Karin among others save the community?

Lives futures friendships and the lost treasure of the Rip Tide are at stake. In *Point of the Circle* there is a comfortable sense of continuity beyond tragedy in this work which rings true.

Despite the occasional meandering flashback which fails to advance the plot and although this novel would have benefited from a thorough proofreading before publication it is an enjoyable reading experience and the impending sequel is bound to be even better.

Leona Gibbs is retired from the US Air Force and recently completed a family history about her Native American heritage. She and her husband live in a small coastal community in the Pacific Northwest where she is currently working on a sequel to *Point of the Circle*.
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