ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

GENERAL

Stopping By Earth
Scott Gibson
CreateSpace
978-1-4538-7160-7
Five Stars (out of Five)

"She was pleasant enough in her unique little way. She didn't kick dogs, didn't dress scandalously or spend her evenings in the bars." Her husband "…loved her with an enthusiasm that was apparent to all who watched them together, and that counted for a lot." The residents of the small western Colorado agricultural community of Wickersham eventually accept Gaberdine (Gaby) as one of their own after she arrives there as the young bride of Caspar Robule in the summer of 1957.

Scott Gibson's *Stopping By Earth* actually begins sixteen years later, when Gaby nails a sign on the large elm at the end of her driveway announcing the impending arrival of The Rose Trellis Tea Room. The impending arrival of the tea room is the thread that winds its way throughout the ensuing years, affecting and influencing several lives in the process.

The book's title comes from an observation made by Frances, Gaby's older sister, who'd "always viewed her sibling as a creature only half of this world, somebody merely stopping by earth on her way to someplace else."

A native of Colorado, Gibson exquisitely brings to life the many nuanced characters who populate Wickersham over a period of roughly forty years. Chief among them are Gaby, an unusual woman "prone to small, inexplicable laughs"; Gaby's husband Caspar; Frances, four years and many miles removed from Gaby; Michelle (Michy), the daughter readers first meet as a high school sophomore, then follow as a nearly forty-year-old woman with children and issues of her own; Arley French, a timid and insecure new boy at Michy's school looking for his place in the world; Hilary Blanchard, a chain-smoking and cat-loving English war bride; and numerous others.

Their lives unfold and weave together in ways readers will find both fulfilling and rewarding. Told mostly chronologically, there are several flashbacks that fill in the backstory.

Gibson is a talented storyteller whose prose reflects a quiet sensibility and humor. For example, the author's omniscient narrator reflects on Michy's sixteen-year-old acquaintance:

“Peter was one of those individuals who had inherited just the correct combination of features from both parents to prove he was indeed their offspring, and that perhaps they should have thought twice about reproducing.”

This book is recommended for anyone who enjoys following well-drawn, true-to-life characters as they live their lives and face the unknown. Central to all of the characters is the perplexing Gaby, who “very often seemed to be listening to something far away even when somebody speaking to her was sitting close.”

Robin Farrell Edmunds