ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

GENERAL

The Beloved
P.A. Minyard
Lulu
978-0-557-74044-4
Three Stars (out of Five)

Gabe is a modern man. He has a fulfilling career, a loving wife and a close-knit family. The morning after his wife, Sarah, tells him that she is pregnant with their first child, Gabe is at the bank when a robber enters. He is the only man other than the security guard there, and the robber shoots, killing him instantly.

Death is not the end of Gabe's story, however. He is immediately called on by the Father to serve, fighting demons to protect the innocent. *The Beloved* tells the story of Gabe's afterlife and the role he plays in a war that has been going on for centuries. He must reconcile all that he has lost with the new life he has been given. He will need faith, decency and love to accomplish his mission.

The Beloved is a complex tale. In addition to Gabe's story, author P.A. Minyard introduces a French nobleman named Michel. A captain in the royal military, he is the only son in a loving family. On what was to be his wedding night, a political enemy stabs Michel in the stomach and like Gabe, he is called to serve—as the very first Beloved. His subsequent actions have centuries-long repercussions.

The book has several other important supernatural characters, too, each with their own back story and agenda.

Minyard is very good at writing interesting characters and she has created a unique world for them to inhabit here. Gabe and Sarah's love story is well written and the author successfully conveys emotional depth in simple statements, such as when she writes about Sarah giving Gabe a foot massage and trying to offer him some comfort:

> *Are you OK?*
>
> "My answer weighs heavily on your definition of OK." His eyes remained shut.
> "I'll take that as a no," she replied still working back and forth between his feet.

She could see that he wasn’t in the mood to talk so she let her hands tell him everything she was feeling. There was nothing but comfort and acceptance in her touch.

Despite such emotional eloquence, the story tends to fall flat. There is too much going on for one book. The author invests a great deal in telling Michel’s story and in the end, most of what the reader has learned is not relevant to the main plot. The other characters provide the central conflict, but their stories are introduced relatively late and feel incomplete.

With many of the threads in the plot left unresolved, some readers will be frustrated and dissatisfied. However, the idea of a book about undead demon fighters working for God is certainly interesting, and will appeal to readers of paranormal fiction.

Catherine Thureson