Clarion Review

General

The Gideons
Jeffrey Hopkins
Hard Oak Press
978-0-9845673-2-4
Three Stars (out of Five)

A large variety of themes weave through *The Gideons.* Religion, man's brutality and inhumanity, the bonds of love, power and control, and many other topics run throughout the novel. Violence abounds, and women are portrayed almost exclusively as insignificant and mere pleasure commodities for men. A somber, dark tone dominates the futuristic storyline, but Hopkins skillfully uses it to reinforce the plot line.

A young boy must eventually leave the security of his childhood to face the unknown future of transitioning into a man. But that future becomes even more daunting when he realizes the controlled environment of his youth actually shielded him from a world of violence, deceit, evil, and almost everything counter to what he has experienced or been taught. In *The Gideons*, young Isaac watches his world crash down around him when he is cast out from his community and forced to find his way in the world alone with the only copy of his sect's holy book to be his moral compass.

Just entering his teen years, Isaac must overcome the devastating reality that all the adults who shaped his childhood were living in total contradiction to the beliefs they were teaching him. With his innocence destroyed and the rejection of the community, Isaac begins his new life in the frightening and mysterious woods beyond the community's boundaries.

Shortly, he meets a wide variety of characters with disparate backgrounds, customs, and beliefs. Through it all, two things keep him pressing on: his unquenchable love of his young wife, Deer, and the Gideons. He leaves on a mission only days after marrying Deer and spends the rest of the story trying to reconnect with her. He eventually learns that the book he cherishes is called the Holy Bible, and the Gideons were simply people from hundreds of years ago who distributed the books with their name on the cover.

The Gideons starts with a compelling and engaging narrative of the sect and its inner

workings and easily flows into Isaac's expulsion from his people. As Isaac's journey unfolds, the action becomes somewhat uneven and occasionally gets too drawn out in overdone scenes. Most befuddling is the bizarre twist near the climax when Hopkins suddenly shifts from an intriguing futuristic story into science fiction mode before finally coming back to his original storyline for an ending that doesn't quite tie up all the loose ends.

Hopkins proves to be a very descriptive and adept storyteller. Once the reader gets past the book's difficult to read cover, *The Gideons* provides a story that is both entertaining and thought provoking, but it is certainly not for someone looking for a little light reading.

Jeff Friend