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CLARION REVIEW ★★★★☆ GENERAL FICTION

The Giles Amendment

Stirling Scruggs
iUniverse (January 2009)
Softcover $17.95 (270pp)
978-0-595-47091-4

American history is filled with small moments that have tremendous repercussions. An altercation between British soldiers and American colonialists caused the Boston Massacre the momentum of which led to the American Revolution. John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry in 1859 brought the issue of slavery to a head and ultimately led to the Civil War.

The Giles Amendment begins with that kind of moment. Shiloh Giles a young Episcopalian priest from Tennessee is leading a pregnant woman through a mob outside an abortion clinic. When a mob instigator physically attacks Shiloh on TV she responds by breaking the man's nose. The footage creates a sensation that puts the spunky Shiloh on the campaign trail.

Once she is elected to Congress Shiloh works to get the Equal Rights Amendment passed. It's no easy task as activists other politicians and even those in the White House try to undermine her attempts. But with the support of her brother and her love Shiloh is ready to face down anything even death threats to get the amendment passed.

The world of Shiloh Giles is amazingly realistic; when she recalls her appearance on Larry King for instance readers may wonder how they missed that episode. This attention to the characters is one of many qualities that make *The Giles Amendment* an engrossing and fascinating read. Quick-paced and absorbingly believable readers may expect to catch more about Shiloh's efforts on the evening news.

That's quite a feat considering that some readers may root for Shiloh while disagreeing with her politics. Author Stirling Scruggs has thrity-five years experience in the field of reproductive health and rights. While Scruggs could probably have found a bigger audience by finding a more neutral issue she sticks to her beliefs and in most cases it pays off. In one scene Shiloh recalls teaching reproductive health to a village of Philippine women at their request; it shows her as a person who truly wants to help people. In other cases however it doesn't and Scruggs' beliefs simply end up as dogmatic-sounding dialogue. "Abortion is legal" Seth tells Shiloh in one scene. "That's a fact. But it could be dramatically reduced with better sex education and universal access to birth control."

Nonetheless *The Giles Amendment* is a fascinating read that will captivate political junkies activists and those who enjoy reading tales of American history in the making.

KATERIE PRIOR (April 2, 2009)

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