

The Journey From Ennuied

Donald Braun

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In this novel that serves as a spiritual guide, journeying characters become a lens for considering important life questions.

In an allegorical fantasy adventure, a young man leaves home to find the source of beautiful music. Along the way, he learns about himself, those around him, and the path to a happy life. Donald Braun's *The Journey From Ennuied* is a delightfully simple story that opens itself up to interpretation and analysis.

The plot starts off in the not-so-distant future, when Jack Burchell discovers a box of family mementos. Nestled within that box is a book that turned his grandfather's life around: *Journey from Ennuied*. The narrative then transitions to that book's main character, Eloy. Eloy lives a simple life farming in a strange world where no one ever dies—they either fade away or are taken by The Darkness.

Facing The Darkness, Eloy flees his village. Deep in the mystical forests, he hears beautiful music and endeavors to find its source. While on the path, he discovers other strange villages, faces harrowing obstacles, and befriends other travelers. The journey becomes increasingly fraught as he nears the climactic ending.

The Journey From Ennuied seems meant to be a psychological and spiritual guide that can be turned to in times of need. The adventure itself is fairly straightforward, without shocking twists and turns. The framing narrative, Jack's story, mostly functions to show how the novel-within-a-novel is a guidebook for facing life's difficulties. Both narratives are written in a plainspoken style, becoming almost templates that allow for anyone to project themselves into the characters' shoes.

An excess of exposition does tend to limit opportunities to independently determine the importance and meaning of narrative events. At times, such tendencies derail the pacing and emotional buildup. Often the lesson is quite clear, but Eloy or another character will still spend time explaining it fully, hampering the progress of the story.

The book is, at its core, an adult bedtime story. Eloy's journey from his sleepy village ruled by fear of The Darkness begs to be followed. Thrilling storms, strange characters, and unusual events make for a one-of-a-kind read laced with insights and psychological guidelines for finding the best path through life.

The Journey From Ennuied is a polished adventure with important lessons embedded within. The prose operates as a blank slate, as do the characters at times. Messages shine through for those who seek them.

JOHN M. MURRAY (January 22, 2016)

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