Clarion Review

General

The Road Show Saga: Two Vermont Farmers on the Loose in Scandinavia
Harvey Adjovitz Edwards
CreateSpace
978-1-4611-4194-5
Three Stars (out of Five)

Harvey Adjovitz Edwards's new novel, *The Road Show Saga*, follows the paths of two young men, Jay and Denny, friends since their Depression-era childhood. Edwards relates their stories from their younger years on neighboring farms in Vermont through their days as expatriates in Scandinavia in the years following World War II. Subtitled *Two Vermont Farmers on the Loose in Scandinavia*, the saga initially involves both of the friends but ultimately becomes the tale of Jay far more than Denny.

Over the course of his story, Edwards illustrates how the boys' disparate childhoods firmly shape the kinds of men they become. That Jay's life is thoroughly shaken when his first long-term girlfriend dumps him becomes increasingly important to understanding his character as he matures. Bits of humor filter through on occasion, but any laughs tend to be at the expense of one person or another and are never enough to render the book "funny." In truth, the tale is often sad and depressing, and the outcome for Jay, in particular, is certainly anything but upbeat.

Jay, the son of unhappy and disillusioned Swedish immigrants, is an American-born only child. His mother is sickly and sad, and his father is a frightening man, a violently enraged alcoholic, tired of trying to eke out a living from the rough, rocky farmland of climate-challenged Vermont. Jay's friend Denny is Swedish born and arrived in Vermont at the age of ten. His parents are loving and kind, hardworking people who strive to create an efficient farm that they one day can leave to their son. For the most part, Denny happily works alongside them, sharing their goals.

Even while focusing on Jay and Denny, Edwards develops all of his characters admirably well. At the start of the book, his vivid descriptions make it easy to picture not only the boys, but also their families and their neighbors. Continuing into the young men's time in Europe, Edwards again presents distinct, identifiable new characters, and he deserves great

credit for his skill in making Jay's numerous sexual conquests so readily distinguishable from one another.

Jay reveals himself to be self-admittedly "critical and egotistical." Although he recognizes how horribly he treats people and even has nightmares about it, he is incapable of helping himself. When Denny finds his "perfect match" and takes her home to the farm in Vermont, Jay is left alone with his demons, making money and working his way through women in Europe.

Once he returns to Vermont, Denny's story is effectively over. Attacked and conflicted by his own memories, Jay's life is "stripped of human involvement," and he remains cold and calculated.

In the end, *The Road Show Saga* is well written yet depressing; there are minimal typographical errors but quite a few misplaced quotation marks, mismatched verbs, and the like. At one point, Denny tells Jay that he is "the most negative person" he has ever known, and sadly, he is right. There seems not one ray of hope for Jay, and since the author abandons him to his own despair, readers may well do the same. "I'm an expat from life itself," Jay claims, and while it may be easy to agree, it is also difficult to care.

Cheryl M. Hibbard