

The Sun Will Befriend Them

V.C. Goldenbrook

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Walking a tightrope, placing one foot carefully in front of the other, cradling the rope with the insole of each foot, arms extended for balance, each step accompanied by an impending, yet fleeting vertigo, the tightrope walker moves precariously from one end of the rope to the other. Goldenbrook attains much the same sensation in her second novel *The Sun Will Befriend Them* by creating a tale of two distinct, yet seemingly symbiotic, young women. The narration alternates between first and third person point of view creating the slightly confusing but curiously fitting psychological verisimilitude of two different women.

The story of River, a teenage runaway, is presented in the first person, while Raven, a young woman of both white and American Indian descent, is presented with a third person point of view. The first chapter alternates between the two personalities while successive chapters are distinct to each personality. The book culminates in the two young women becoming one in a shamanistic waking dream through the guidance of a Medicine Woman known as Sister Crow.

The portrayals of both River and Raven are at once realistic and symbolic. The mysteriousness inherent in both names is present throughout the narrative. The inevitable motion of River's painful and often harsh experiences are very river-like, in that her life seems to be moved along by a current that she rarely anticipates and often must struggle against. Similarly, Raven, whose namesake has long been a symbol in American Indian stories, exemplifies the soulful discovery that evolves from her journey toward the Medicine Woman, River, and ultimately a complete awareness of herself.

"The old man had said that what she sought was not far from here. True, it was not a long walk, but the old one failed to mention the vertical climb." Goldenbrook presents her characters (Raven/River) both horizontally and vertically, or if you will, physically and spiritually. Although *The Sun Will Befriend Them* is more of an inward journey, it moves externally as well. With settings from South Dakota's Badlands to California and Mexico's Playa Del Carmen and Chichen Itza the plot covers much ground presenting physical landscape that is interwoven with the mental and spiritual landscape of both Raven and River. The use of American Indian ideology, terminology, and locations also adds credence to the somewhat nebulous plot.

By virtue of its narrators, *The Sun Will Befriend Them* has a definite feminine focus; however, the metaphysical appeal of Goldenbrook's novella is much wider and is worth the investigation.

JIM FILKINS (July / August 2000)

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