

The View From God's Front Porch

J.J. Nason

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Although an enjoyable read, the novel, *The View from God's Front Porch*, by J. J. Nason, is littered with semi-colons and obscured with sentences that run on nearly to the horizon.

Nason's memoir-like book follows the life of Tunk Merchant, from the day he tells his widowed mother he is entering the Army in 1972 through Tunk's return from his tour of duty in Vietnam and into married life in rural Maine. Along the way the reader is introduced to just about everyone who touches Tunk's life. However, this is not a war novel since very little detail of Tunk's experience in Vietnam is described in the book.

Nason's writing style gets in the way of his story telling. Explaining one of Tunk's friend's thoughts about family, he writes: "He had thought about this a lot even now; he knew he was given all he wanted, growing up, but he always felt there was something missing from his father, a connection that made him feel like he was really a part of him." It is not that the sentence lacks content, but rather that it contains several paragraphs of undeveloped ideas and emotions.

At other points in the story, too little is told about riveting and potentially devastating events. In barely five pages in Chapter 36, Penny and Tony's child is abducted by mobsters for payment of a bad debt. Penny engineers a response to recover their child, killing five bad guys along the way and escaping with \$250,000 cash. That tale alone could fill an entire novel.

Nason tries to depict Tunk's friend, Tony, as a typical Italian-American from New Jersey, a stereotype some would find offensive. When Tunk becomes interested in Tony's cousin, Gina, Tony's advice is "Be careful...aren't been anyone I know ever been able to hold that girl down." Nason could well use further editing of his story.

Although the tale often moves along like traffic on the New Jersey Turnpike, sometimes crawling at a snail's pace only to ratchet up to warp speed, it is an engaging epic. Tunk is a sympathetic and principled hero struggling to live a decent life. The novel is filled with characters both familiar and interesting. Getting to see *The View from God's Porch* is an effort, but, in the end, the scenery is pleasant.

JOHN MICHAEL SENGER (August 1, 2011)

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