

The Watchman's Son

R. J. Stachofsky

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In the pleasant novel The Watchman's Son, an everyman works toward forgiveness and love.

In R. J. Stachofsky's reflective novel *The Watchman's Son*, a teenager travels the back roads of Oregon, searching for more.

Jacob is a lifelong wanderer who's unable to settle or call a place home, though he's tired of running from the emotional trauma that haunts him. When he meets the Harris family, they welcome him into their home and help him to realize the rewards of settling down. For the first time in a long time, Jacob grows accustomed to a settled lifestyle, sharing his life experiences and forming steady relationships. But his domestic bliss does not last; he comes face-to-face with the repercussions of his past.

Set in pre-industrialized America, this story of emotional, psychological, and spiritual growth unfolds with Jacob as its compelling lead. Though he is flawed, has wronged people, and has been in drunken brawls, he also risks his life to save a little girl from drowning. He grows from a runaway into an introspective adult who works to make amends to the people he's hurt. He hopes to transcend his bad habits and cultivate inner peace. His quirks—sticking to old ways of living, and finding humor in being nearly trampled by a bull—make him all the more endearing.

The Harris's homestead proves to be a good place for Jacob to work on his self-improvement. It's on the brink of modernization; within the story, characters travel by carriage and cook on a wood stoves, fleshing out the period. Sam Harris runs lumber and ferry businesses while Judith, his wife, takes care of the household, and Nathan, their teenage son, helps when it comes to trading logs. The family's dog and livestock are anthropomorphized, and their personalities make them a welcome addition to the mix.

Jacob's presence at the Harrises' place causes tension with Sam and Judith, who withstood tough events in the past; Sam's insecurities lead him to question Judith's loyalty. Beyond these struggles, though, are daily habits and pastoral scenes. The text includes aspen groves and a river to capture the picturesque countryside. Such details contribute to the book's pleasant tempo. Black-and-white drawings, as of a bow and arrow to illustrate Jacob's nomadic days of hunting rabbits and sleeping under the stars, are included to complement moments within the story.

In the novel *The Watchman's Son*, an everyman works toward forgiveness and love.

CRISTINA STAN (September 23, 2020)

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