



Unfinished Stories of Women in Crisis

Rajendra Gour

Partridge Singapore (Mar 26, 2018)

Softcover \$11.99 (254pp)

978-1-5437-4530-6

Unfinished Stories of Women in Crisis is an absorbing, moving look at the damage that injustice, inequality, and war cause to all people, but particularly to women.

Rajendra Gour's *Unfinished Stories of Women in Crisis* contains two novellas about the hardships women face in peace and in war. The stories are absorbing while also being explicitly didactic, meant to teach compassion, justice, and pacifism.

The first piece, "Skirmishes at Home and Battles in Society," tells the story of Tara, a young Indian woman in an arranged marriage with an abusive husband. When she bears a daughter instead of the desired son, she is banished with her infant and makes her way to a temple, where she meets a couple who take her in. Tara begins to blossom, learning how to read and taking a leadership role helping the village women improve their lives and educate their children.

The second novella, "War beyond Borders," is set in the early 1940s. It follows a group of women and one man in Singapore who attempt to escape Japanese-occupied territory, chased by soldiers and haunted by the fear and devastation war brings.

Gour conjures up full lives in the space of a few sentences. Tara is an especially compelling character, her personal growth brought to life by the book's unadorned yet evocative and lively style. Both novellas abound with characters who are memorable not for their depth and complexity but for the pathos of their situations and the courage they display.

Each story is introduced with a brief sketch of the subject and a statement of the lesson each is meant to teach, situating them in the realm of fables or parables. They successfully balance their didacticism with entertainment.

The more nuanced story is the first, which aims to show Tara's struggle "to rise above herself in 'man's world.'" It documents the unjust treatment of women, focusing on their lack of educational opportunities and their total subjection to their husbands. The second story is an argument against war, successfully making its point by showing the range of ways that war harms women, particularly in their physical and sexual vulnerability.

The stories are "unfinished" because they relate societal struggles that continue to this day: women are still oppressed by the patriarchies they inhabit, and wars still rage around the world. The unfinished nature of these stories is an invitation to a global audience to continue the fight for justice and peace that the characters begin.

Typos and confusing punctuation, particularly when a piece of dialogue ends without closing quotation marks, mar the text. In places, the narrator's presence is awkwardly felt, with the insertion of terminology or cultural explanations disrupting the flow of the stories.

Unfinished Stories of Women in Crisis is an absorbing, moving look at the damage that injustice, inequality, and war

cause to all people, but particularly to women. Its two novellas teach valuable lessons about compassion and humanity.

REBECCA HUSSEY (July 20, 2018)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book and paid a small fee to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. Foreword Reviews and Clarion Reviews make no guarantee that the publisher will receive a positive review. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.