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CLARION REVIEW ★★★★★ LGBT FICTION

Unmentionables

David Greene
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The American Civil War was one of the most complicated periods in US history. Though filled with violence, this era inspires creative artists in all forms of media. Writers cover the gamut, from romanticized sagas of plantation life to realistic accounts of brutality and inequality.

Though long and detailed, David Greene's work surpasses the majority of Civil War novels by bringing together two enthralling love stories. In *Unmentionables,* Greene primarily focuses on the touching affinity between Jimmy, a black field worker, and Cato, an educated, half-white servant from a neighboring plantation. Cato also happens to be the illegitimate son of Augustus Askew, his owner. The passionate love between Jimmy and Cato is a fascinating, behind-the-scenes glimpse of gay romance in the 1800s. When Cato is caught reading, he's chained and whipped by his father, triggering a retaliatory backlash from Jimmy. This tragic event takes their story onto a dangerous path that will change their lives forever.

Alongside this relationship is a complex romance between Dorothy Holland, an abolitionist, and William Askew, the legitimate son of Augustus and a Confederate. Dorothy's parents own Jimmy, and she is friends with Cato, which puts her in the unfortunate position of balancing her ideals with her affection for her lover. Her relationship with William has some expected conflicts, such as loyalty to the Confederacy versus devotion to a soul mate, yet Greene keeps his portrayal of these characters fresh.

David Greene is a renowned photographer and independent filmmaker. His work has been exhibited in San Francisco, Chicago, New York, and Zurich and other major cities. "Shameless" captured international attention after the exhibit opened in Berkeley in 1974. This famous collection is a photographic commentary on gender roles. He also contributed to *Men Loving Men and Black Men/White Men,* released by the Gay Sunshine Press. In addition to his photography, he wrote and directed the surreal movie *Pamela and Ian,* in which the characters realize they are mere "shadows of light" to the audience. *Unmentionables* is his first novel.

Any reader looking for a departure from the tradition of *Gone with the Wind,* will find this novel an excellent alternative. *Unmentionables* is superb historical fiction with a contemporary angle; an enlightening look at the hidden elements of our past.

JULIA ANN CHARPENTIER (September 27, 2010)

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