ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

GENERAL

Wandering Hearts
Donna J. Grisanti
Phoenix Publishing Corp.
978-0-9708860-9-5
Four Stars (out of Five)

Beautiful auburn-haired nineteen-year-old Raine Foster lives in the leaky ruin of her family horse farm with her demented grandmother. While that's disheartening enough the local aristocratic is hot to saddle her up and use her as a brood mare. Unfortunately he's no prince. He's mean and he's a drunk but that's okay because Raine's no shrinking violet. From the beginning she's a woman who knows how to take control of her life and spot on devises a means of escape through gentle deception. But wait the plot thickens: two young cousins show up two forlorn orphan mouths to feed and tether to her runaway scheme. Should she accept them from the social worker or send them on their way?

Raine opens her arms to the children as she opens her arms to everyone in this great big romance of the southern land and the people who live on it. And it's Raine's generosity and kindness that form the gentle force drawing good people to her side in times of trouble. Wandering Hearts begins in the spring of 1941. While many urban Americans began to experience a lightening of the Great Depression hardships first-time author Donna J. Grisanti portrays the relentless backbreaking world of poor farmers. The mindless contemporary chores of washing for example — dishes clothes blankets floors bodies — becomes a statement of the family's personality and intent in the way it so completely overwhelms the hours of their days. Grisanti's characters prove themselves by doing and her loving descriptions of their housekeeping and sewing orchardry and cooking confirm that attention is the ultimate compliment.

There is however some unnecessary repetition or rather recounting of action that most certainly occurs in reality but should be omitted from fiction. Grisanti also refers several times the "first world war" when there was no way anyone knew for certain there'd be a second.

As the hard times channel Raine and her family through the years of America's involvement in World War II so a single major theme compels the drama of Wandering Hearts: bigotry. Grisanti's novel is populated with rich and poor black and white native and foreigner

but the real division is between the generous and the intolerant. Other minor themes run through Grisanti's work like alcoholism and all are treated with both tact and lack of prejudice. At no time does the author succumb to the temptation to sermonize through the mouths of her characters — and this even with the presence of two pastors!

Wandering Hearts is a romance for men and women who love to work the earth and tend the home. Grisanti documents with skill and compassion a way of life that has disappeared from the consciousness of younger Americans although not from their grandparent's. Bounteous thoughtful unselfish kindhearted it's the story of people who deserve these adjectives and the hard work that hides behind them.