FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Literary

What Cheer
Zachary Michael Jack
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Looking for a companion in the twenty-first century may require online dating services, computerized matchmaking, and nights in the city at known singles establishments such as bars and nightclubs. A fortunate few will meet and fall in love via work or travel, avoiding the cold procedure of electronic categorizing and subsequent pairing.

Zachary Michael Jack puts an endearing, small-town twist on contemporary romance in *What Cheer*. He maintains a modern focus throughout his lighthearted novel, but evokes nostalgia for the warmth of the past in this entertaining story about a Chicago magazine writer recently jilted by his long-term girlfriend. Jeremy Shipley is a popular columnist for *Single Style* with a distant admirer named Heidi. As the publication's sales increase, their publicized relationship turns into a comedic fiasco involving his managing editor Chase Marquette on a road trip to find this mysterious woman in What Cheer, Iowa.

Of special interest in this exploration of genuine love and devastating loss is Jeremy's roommate Heather Schultz, his childhood friend and roommate. The two have a platonic living arrangement and remain loyal confidantes. She joins him on his excursion to What Cheer. The sparkling dialogue between Jeremy and "Schultzie" is worth the time spent to read it. Like sidekicks, they bounce humorous one-liners off each other at a rapid pace. The author has a special talent for exposing painful emotions by presenting these unsettling feelings in situations the reader will find funny rather than disturbing.

Critics are raving about Jack's touching tribute to midwestern values, but this may be an oversimplification of the underlying message in *What Cheer*. Above all, this book contrasts urban and rural life. The differences in daily routine and subtle variations in attitude toward romantic love make a prominent appearance throughout this brilliant novel.

An associate professor of English at North Central College, Zachary Michael Jack, great-grandson of soil conservation writer Walter Thomas Jack, is an award-winning author and editor

of over fifteen titles, he earned the Prentice Hall Prize and has been nominated twice for the Pushcart Prize. Fiction and nonfiction, as well as poetry, essays, and literary journalism, have earned this gifted writer an important place in modern literature. He still considers his farm in eastern Iowa his home.

Though some have seen this story as a romp through America's Heartland propelled by old-fashioned values, the sophistication of its presentation points to a deeper significance related to our personal definition of love itself. Real happiness may reside in unexpected places, and not everyone looks in the same place.

Julia Ann Charpentier