ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

LITERARY

Whatever Sticks Most
Darren Hogarth
Hoge Publishing
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Five Stars (out of Five)

For those whose only experience with Jamaica is a cruise ship stop at Ocho Rios and an excursion to swim with dolphins or zip line in the jungle, Darren Hogarth's *Whatever Sticks Most* will fill in many of the missing details. His is a story about the real Jamaica, and the truth makes for a most pleasant surprise. Hogarth clearly knows the country, and his familiarity allows him to reveal much more of the island's true culture than most tourists will ever be lucky enough to encounter.

Hogarth introduces his main character, Myles, as a workaholic long focused on financial success and little else. Proud owner of a Mercedes-Benz and a home on the south side of Lakeshore Boulevard in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada, he is young and successful but ultimately unfulfilled. Suffering physically from a herniated disc and emotionally from the demise of a long-term relationship, Myles is a man in serious pain. When the stresses of his life find him refusing to take time off on Valentine's Day to be with his live-in girlfriend, he screams at her: "I can't delegate what needs to be done. I'm in this position for a reason. If anyone else could do my job, I wouldn't have it." Everyone can see the handwriting on the wall: Myles is about to break.

When a friend packs Myles off to the magical island of Jamaica—almost against his will—for a six-week recuperation from what ails him, Myles is in for some very unanticipated healing. Only once he settles in Jamaica does the young man discover that it is his soul, above all, that needs to mend. What he experiences in Jamaica, from sun and warmth to friendship, love, and spiritual enlightenment, allows Myles to "stop for a moment and see what really matters." Doing so helps him get nearer to the inner balance and happiness that will slowly bring him back to life.

Whatever Sticks Most is more complex than it initially appears. Dealing with the concept of achieving balance in life, Hogarth contrasts upper-middle-class Canada and its shortcomings with Jamaica's "doing without" lifestyle in order to emphasize what matters most. The locals

Myles comes to know on the island may not have as much material wealth as he does, but theirs is “life with a pace that [keeps] them healthy and roots that [make] them whole.” Myles observes a religion that is a far cry from his Anglican upbringing, one that actually makes sense to him. His eyes are opened to both the fun side of the island—the friendly people, the beaches, the food, the ever-present alcohol and ganja—and the serious side, including crime-ridden Kingston and severe poverty. Everything he sees and learns in Jamaica involves some kind of balance.

Hogarth develops his characters splendidly. Myles has an entire complement of friends and teachers to help him learn the Jamaican way. These are truly memorable characters to be cherished.

While Myles may be the one who actually travels to Jamaica, it is Hogarth’s readers who will learn the most from his journey. Hogarth knows Jamaica, and he graciously shares his knowledge here, subtly blending information and instruction into the storyline. *Whatever Sticks Most* is an entertaining book, for certain, but it also contains messages that will reverberate for a long time after its covers are closed.

Cheryl M. Hibbard