Clarion Review

Young Adult Fiction

Woodcutter's Revival
Jerry Slauter
Prestige Internet Solutions
978-0-615-68302-7
Four Stars (out of Five)

Set in the pre-industrial revolution era, *Woodcutter's Revival* is the story of two young men who leave their farms in search of work and greater opportunity. Friends since childhood, Raymond and Stewart are very different people, and although they plan to meet again at the same destination, the two find themselves on disparate paths.

Woodcutter's Revival effectively compares and contrasts Raymond and Stewart's physical and spiritual journeys. To reach their mutual destination, Raymond takes a direct route, while Stewart opts for a more circuitous route through the mountains. Raymond finds work in the town of Discovery. Though he is displeased by his employer's greed and lack of concern for his workers, he avoids confrontation in order to keep his job and maintain the approval of Victoria, his boss's daughter. Meanwhile, Stewart saves the life of a man injured in the mountains and stays with him while he recuperates. Stewart is enlightened by the man's stories about his brother's betrayal and how he resolved his anger to finally find peace.

Although the plot is not complex, the story contains elements of adventure and romance. The characters reveal inner motivations that change even for secondary characters like Victoria, whose priorities shift when she realizes that standing up for what is right is more important than turning a blind eye to injustice in the name of peace. Author Jerry Slauter's simple writing style lends itself to the fable-like nature of this story while also allowing for different levels of interpretation and discussion. Young readers will appreciate the historical information about hunting, mining, and the age of steam, in addition to the detailed black-and-white illustrations that evoke the period. The story's themes of forgiveness, compassion, leadership, faith, and love will appeal to adults.

The story is spiritually based, with several biblical references, but it does not come across as preachy. Instead, Slauter uses religion as a parable and to inform the belief systems of

his characters. For example, using the parable of the miner who couldn't find silver although it was literally beneath his feet, Michael tells Stewart, "You won't recognize your dreams when you reach them without the light."

Despite redundancies in the story's details and some seemingly irrelevant elements, such as the introduction of a third travel companion,*Woodcutter's Revival* is a thoughtful tale of two men and the how their experiences and choices impact their lives.

Maya Fleischmann