



Ordinary Love and Good Will

By Jane Smiley

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These exquisite twin novellas chronicle the difficult choices that reshape the lives of two very different families. In *Ordinary Love*, Smiley focuses on a woman's infidelity and the lasting, indelible effects it leaves on her children long after her departure. *Good Will* portrays a father who realizes how his son has been affected by his decision to lead a counterculture life and move his family to a farm. As both stories unfold, Smiley gracefully raises the questions that confront all families with the characteristic style and insight that has marked all of her work.

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Ordinary Love and Good Will By Jane Smiley Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

After her long novel *The Greenlanders*, Smiley returns to the novella form of the masterly *The Age of Grief*, and this double bill exhibits her finely honed talent in impeccable form. In both stories Smiley movingly illustrates the price children pay for their parents' mistakes. The ironic title of the first novella refers to the desire of its protagonist, a 50-year-old mother of five, to pretend that her relationship to her grown children is an "ordinary" one. But she forfeited that right 20 years ago when she announced her extramarital affair: her husband whisked their young children off to Europe, keeping the youngsters away from her for many years. Now, on a weekend of family reunion, she realizes how much they have all been damaged; that they, as well as she, will always "have the settled darkness of expectation." The leisurely unfolding of the narrative, its quotidian details mixed with flashes of revelation, provides a grave, heart-wrenching credibility. In the second tale, a man who is self-righteously proud that he, his wife and seven-year-old son pursue a self-sufficient, exaggeratedly simple lifestyle, on an organic farm isolated from the general culture, learns too late that his son is a victim of his obsession. Wise, powerful and resonantly memorable, these stories are sure to be classics.

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From Library Journal

Here are two memorable novellas--complete, evocative worlds in miniature--by the author of *The Greenlanders* (LJ 4/15/88). In "Ordinary Love," a mother explores her tentative relationship with her five grown children on the return of one of her twin boys from two years in India. After she reveals to them information about the brief affair that caused the collapse of her marriage to their father 20 years earlier, and her loss of custody, they tell heartbreaking details of their years without her. "Good Will" is a powerhouse: the careful, totally "organic" lifestyle of a rural couple disintegrates before their eyes when their seven-year-old son confronts the "real world" at school, with anguishing results. Remarkable work; Smiley is a genuine, first-rate talent.

- Ann H. Fisher, Radford P.L., Va.

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Review

"With this volume, Jane Smiley ratifies her claim as one of her generation's most eloquent chroniclers of ordinary familial love."

—*The New York Times*

"An extraordinary achievement. . . . Smiley's stories lucidly explore the complexities of contemporary sexual and domestic life. The emotional and moral complexity that she uncovers in the characters of these resonant novellas confirms Jane Smiley's singular talent." —*The Washington Post Book World*

"*Ordinary Love & Good Will* are unforgettable novellas, built on lucid characterizations and elegant prose. Jane Smiley accomplishes a dazzling feat--without so much as a flashy phrase."

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Brandy Hagaman:

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John Charlie:

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Victoria Owen:

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