

...And She Named Him Chance

Roberts Essex

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As a man's connection to God matures, he finds strength and learns to deal with the painful repercussions of his mistakes in the lesson-filled novel ...And She Named Him Chance.

Roberts Essex's vibrant novel *...And She Named Him Chance* is about successes, mistakes, and Christian faith.

When Chance is born in 1956, doctors deem him likely to have a hard time making it in life. His mother, leaning on her faith and asking God to support her baby, chooses his name accordingly. But despite his parents' professions of faith and life lessons, Chance keeps struggling. He witnesses their bad habits and has a tumultuous home life.

In his twenties, Chance becomes lustful:

When they were together during those first few months, they were together. Mmm, yes, they were. As far as Chance was concerned, his girl had the body of Venus. She was the perfect little package for him.

This impedes his efforts to start a family and his career. But as his connection to God matures, he finds strength and learns to deal with the painful repercussions of his mistakes.

Made up of episodes focused on Chance's love and work life, the story starts slow. It devotes more space than is needed to experiences of slight intrigue, causing it to drag. Further, a bevy of characters are introduced and disappear without having made a significant contribution to Chance's story. The book comes to feel overstuffed, and interest wanes.

The tone of the prose is conversational, and Southern humor plays into the pages well. The book's religious themes are also balanced with skill: Chance's Christian faith surfaces at the right moments and is incorporated in a natural way. Faith also filters into his love life. Further, while Chance's faith is sometimes a background factor, it also often serves as his guide, resulting in nice contrasts.

Various historical events are alluded to and suggested to have an impact on Chance's directions in life. Still, the book becomes too repetitive as it progresses, and stories about Chance's work life in particular begin to drag. Often, the book's episodes end with funny punch lines, but these come at the expense of acknowledging the gravity of the related scenes. And as the book approaches its last act, Chance's marital struggles, career, and faith lead him to spiral, resulting in a sobering conclusion that imposes lessons about love, lust, and relationships onto the final pages.

...And She Named Him Chance is an insightful novel about the weight of an ordinary man's life choices and faith.

ANDREW MA (November 14, 2024)

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