

Delivering Virtue

Brian Kindall

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Threads of satire are skillfully woven into this tapestry of humor and pathos, magical realism, and historical fact.

Brian Kindall's splendid allegorical odyssey, *Delivering Virtue*, features ne'er-do-well wannabe-poet Didier Rain, chosen to transport the cherubic infant Virtue to her intended groom, Nehi, prophet of a Mormon splinter sect known as the Church of the Restructured Truth.

Set in the American West of 1854, the tale is written in pitch-perfect, florid 19th-century prose: "And so it came to pass...that a baby girl, two geldings, a she-goat, and one so-called Deliverer set off on the long and onerous journey to the City of Rocks." A tragicomic story, *Delivering Virtue* employs biting social commentary and stinging critiques of a variety of religious faiths with Chaucerian ribaldry. Threads of satire are skillfully woven into a tapestry of humor and pathos, magical realism, and historical fact, along with swashbuckling adventure, depraved violence, and moments of heartrending tenderness.

Kindall's characters are deftly drawn. Protagonist Didier Rain is riddled with foibles; he easily succumbs to the pleasures of both demon rum and carnal temptations. But at his core, he is a gentle soul capable of handling whatever danger confronts him, even if he doesn't know his own cunning. His flawed persona is perfect counterpoint to the angelic Virtue, who grows by surrealistic leaps and bounds while under the care and protection of her rough-and-tumble companion. Throughout their perilous journey, the unlikely duo encounter trials and tribulations grand enough to test the mettle of even Sir Galahad. Always, their steadfast steeds stand ready to serve as collective Sancho Panza to their beloved Don Quixote. Thus, through thick and thin, they persevere—a ragtag band well worth cheering on.

Delivering Virtue turns decidedly darker when the Deliverer repeatedly fails to realize that his bouts of bacchanalia inevitably result in tragedy. His debauchery raises crucial questions: Will Didier Rain's devilish underbelly ultimately destroy all that is good? Or can "even the lowliest beast...rise to scruples when pressed"?

Brian Kindall is author of two previous books, *Blue Sky* and *Pearl*, both coming-of-age fantasies for younger readers. *Delivering Virtue* is his first—but hopefully not his last—novel for adults. It, too, is a coming-of-age tale, although one wonders just which character—biped or quadruped—eventually ripens into maturity.

Delivering Virtue will appeal to bibliophiles who appreciate allegory, sophisticated satire, and impressive vocabularies, as well as to anyone who identifies with the perennial struggle between good and evil that we all endure in life.

NANCY WALKER (March 15, 2016)

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