



Keepsakes and Other Stories

Jon Hassler

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From Publishers Weekly These seven gentle tales set in Minnesota and North Dakota and all written during the 1970s treat fans of novelist Hassler (*A Green Journey*; *Jemmy*) to the earliest fruits of his talent. Some are folksy portraits of small-town characters, while others are drier and more plot driven. Both the title story and "Resident Priest" feature crusty, 74-year-old Father Fogarty, a pastor who's leaving his parish after 23 years. In "Chief Larson," a seven-year-old Indian boy, known (rather improbably) only as "chief" on the reservation, rebels in a small but telling way against his white adoptive family. "Good News in Culver Bend" tracks two city reporters who travel to a small town and discover "the heart of Christmas." "Chase" and "Christopher, Moony, and the Birds" show how frustrated residents of small towns seek solace. The former, so brief it's nearly a prose poem, hints at Hassler's own adolescent discovery of his talent for fiction; the latter follows a lonely 50-year-old college professor as he goes on a consolatory walk with a student's awkward wife and child, watching "birds on family outings, hopping and halting on the grass." The cleverest story, "Yesterday's Garbage," follows a "garbologist" who finds the truth about a murder in a trash bin, and is then led to commit one himself. The publisher plans to issue Hassler's later short fiction in three more volumes, starting in the year 2000. (Sept.)

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