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*Ann Rinaldi*

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## **In My Father's House** Ann Rinaldi

For two sisters growing up surrounded by the Civil War, there is conflict both outside and inside their house.

## **In My Father's House Details**

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# From Reader Review In My Father's House for online ebook

**Katie Hanna says**

*In my Father's house are many mansions.*

*I go to prepare a place for you . . . that where I am, there ye may be also.*

Guys, I . . . I don't really know what to say about this book.

IT'S SO GOOD.

I had heard it was good, and I hoped it would be good--but it was so much more beautiful than even I had hoped. It's a brilliant, masterful work of historical fiction; and I say that, remember, as a professional-historian-in-training myself :-). But more than that, it's a wonderful portrait of a young girl's relationship with her stepfather--a relationship which, while often strained and occasionally downright explosive, is yet something rare and precious and beautiful.

Something you'll only find once in a lifetime. And if you know what's good for you, you hold on to it.

And that's the thing about Oscie Mason, our heroine, and Will McLean, her stepdad . . . they *do* know what's good for them. They're not perfect, by any stretch of the imagination. But they know they need each other; and by the end of the story, they're not afraid to admit it. They're each proud and stubborn and hot-tempered, fiercely protective of those they care about, and oh-so-similar in both their strengths and weaknesses. It's hilarious to watch them go head to head, working to get the best of each other; but when they finally try to say, *I love you* . . . GET READY FOR A FEELS OVERLOAD, MY DARLINGS. Because you're going to have one. Also get some Kleenex ready, because you might need that, too.

I really loved how Ann Rinaldi didn't try to gloss over their flaws--either Oscie's or her dad's. These aren't stock characters from some fluffy Hallmark movie; these are real people, with real sins and temptations to overcome. But overcome them they do, in the best way. And it's pretty awesome to watch.

The message of forgiveness and healing in this book is so beautifully handled--not shoved in your face, but it's THERE and you can't miss it, either. There was one scene I can't talk about, because of #spoilers . . . but I give you my word, I was almost crying. Powerful stuff.

And the way Rinaldi incorporated those verses from St. John's Gospel--"*In my Father's house are many mansions*"--it pretty much blew me away. So, so good.

What else can I say?

GO READ IT.

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## Eden says

Oscie was only around seven when her father died. And soon a new man came into her life. Her mother fell in love with Will McLean and although Oscie didn't like him very much, she wanted her mother to be happy.

But Will McLean wasn't the only change in Oscie's life. For years tensions had been building between the North and the South. Will told her that change is coming whether the South wants it or not, that their way of life will soon be different. Oscie doesn't want to believe it, but growing up through the war, she learns that it is true and the South will never be the same again.

I must admit I didn't find the characters very likable at first. Oscie seemed a little spoiled, too much wanting things her way. And Will McLean. . . Well, I just didn't like how he talked to Oscie in the beginning. But as the story goes on, the characters develop much more. There is more to Oscie than just seeming spoiled, more to Will McLean than just seeming harsh. The characters become much more likable, especially Oscie.

And the story is very good. Living in the times of slavery, of the civil war, etc can be hard to imagine, but I think this book does a good job of trying to help a person know what it might have been like. For many people, I'm sure they were confusing times. So much tension. So many conflicting emotions. Adjusting to a new way of life, struggling between what is wrong and what is right. I'm sure they were tough times and this book covers all of that.

I greatly enjoyed this book. It was hard to put down and it was a very memorable read that gave me lots to think about. If I could, I'd give it four and half stars. It was a very good read.

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## Melinda Christensen says

This remarkable story takes place in the old south during the Civil War. To escape the war, Oscie's stepfather moves the family to Appomattox; however, they can't seem to get away from the war which occurs outside and inside her home. The tension between stepfather and stepfather is intense. How will it be resolved? I could not put this book down, it was that good!

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## Meredith says

This seems to be a common analysis, but the first two thirds of the book were rather boring, and the last third was quite gripping. I've said the same about so many other books I've read this year, I'm beginning to detect a pattern. :)

I did like this book. I liked the characters, especially Thomas, and Oscie's interesting relationship with her father. **\*Spoiler\*** A little more repentance on both sides of the Oscie/Alex mix-up would have been nice. Neither seemed truly sorry, but...at least they stopped. **\*End of Spoiler\*** I've decided the world needs more quality Civil War fiction. :)

There were some instances of language and a few other "mature" elements, but nothing too much.

P.S. I picked up a copy of this at a thrift store and, eep!, it was signed. :D Unfortunately it was also addressed to Elizabeth, which isn't my name, but I'll overlook it. ;)

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### **Yossor Jamal says**

Full of powerful feelings and emotions and opinions

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### **Éowyn says**

*Love is like light and there are two kinds, the bursting fireworks of the moment and the solid, fixed stars that sometimes become obscured in the heavens, but are always there, year after year, for a lifetime. - "In My Father's House"*

Someday I might marshal my thoughts to write a proper review of this story, but not today, as my mind's in a whirl of wonderment, and I'm not sure when I'm properly coming down.

All I can say is go read Olivia, Natalie, and Jessica's reviews, because they express the aching loveliness and deep magic of this story more perfectly than I ever I could.

Also, see Olivia's movie casting; it's pure brilliance.

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### **Julie says**

I can't believe that I haven't read more of Ann Rinaldi's books. I should be ashamed of myself because I was a junior high librarian and all her books are young adult books. But I am so excited to keep reading them. I have always loved Civil War books and now I can add this one to my list. As always, Ann Rinaldi takes the lives of people who have actually lived and events that have actually happened and weaves in a fictional story. This book is told in the first person by Oscie Mason and is about her life in Virginia just before the war starts and continuing until its dramatic conclusion. At the heart of the book is her relationship with her step father, Will McLean. It paints such an emotional picture of the lives of the people in the South and the ending of the way of life that they so loved. So many of this book's characters knew that the battle to secede from the Union was hopeless from the beginning, but had to keep fighting for what they believed. Freeing the Blacks was only a small part of it. Interesting side note, today I went to Robert Redford's new movie, "The Conspirator." It is an amazing movie that I would recommend to everyone and is the story of the only woman to stand trial in the death of Abraham Lincoln. It raised some amazing questions about the protection of the right to a fair trial for everyone, versus the action the government and military must take during war to protect the people. Something we are still facing today.

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### **Maria says**

The thing I liked most about this book was that it had the same feel as the YA books I read in the late 70s and early 80s. A coming of age tale during the course of the civil war; teenage rebellion, but very innocent

stuff; romance involved, but very innocent stuff. An interesting way to learn about the historical McLeans -- with the name being seen all around Northern Virginia.

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### **Alyssa says**

This is a favorite childhood book, and one of the early books that first got me into historical fiction, my favorite genre. I read it multiple times in my middle school years, and as such my copy (which I still have) is yellowed and stained and bent and worn out. But really, this is excellent historical fiction that readers of any age can appreciate, and gives a perspective on the Civil War from that of a young Southerner, which is interesting and different from many other books about the period. Oscie is a remarkable heroine, and one to whom I could relate.

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### **Tarin Hardemon says**

This is my 1st time reading this book I enjoyed it By an extraordinarily quirk, the McLean family entertainment confederates at their Manassas home just before the battle of Bull Run and also hosted the peace negotiations at Appomattox, where they had moved to escape the war. Staying close to documented facts, as detailed in an excellent note, Rinaldi uses the McLean's lives to dramatize the war's moral dilemmas. From his marriage In 1852 , Will McLean has an uneasy relationship with his feisty seven year old stepdaughter Osceola ( Oscie"), the narrator; though she loves and respects the northern governess Will hires, and absorbs many of her ideas, Oscie is uneasy with Will's progressive stance toward slavery and, later, with his profiteering. Some of Rinaldi's inventions are unevenly developed Oscie's long held suspicions of one slave ( dispelled when she understands her true story). A couple of romances typical of the era though they do fill out the story. The most compelling relationship is between Oscie and Will, strong minded characters, often opposed, whose mutual respect turns believably into a father daughter bond, touchingly acknowledge in the last scene. Meanwhile, the author skillfully weaves history into her story offstage battles, resentment against profiteers, a remarkable depiction of the northern generals taking the McLean's furniture as memorabilia of Lee's surrender, Despite some weaknesses ( Oscie at seven is unbelievable mature, and there's a 20th century feel to some of the dialogue): a sweeping, dramatic overview of the war, authentic and compelling. Bibliography; chronology.

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### **Malissa says**

A simple story based on a real family who lived in northern Virginia during the Civil War. The book doesn't seem to address or capture the complexity of slavery or the violence of the war... more of a romance novel really - and yet the book abruptly ends before the main character's romance plot can be concluded. Interesting read, but it could have been better.

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### **Andrea says**

I thought the book had a great little secret to reveal. However, the characters seemed determined to avoid talking about the slavery issue. Describing the southern perspective, it was believable but ethnocentric. Is

that really acceptable?

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## **Olivia says**

### **August/September 2017 Re-read**

Still amazing. The ending remains one of the most poignant, well-written endings I've ever read; one that still moves me deeply.

I don't know that there's much I can say about this book that's not said in my original review (below), so I will simply close with this:

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

"What I was about to say, before you so rudely interrupted, is that I have no qualms about your going. But what will you do if, when you get there, your Thomas doesn't want to come back? Have you pondered on that, Oscie Mason?"

"Yessir."

"And?"

"I'll come back here. To this house."

*To my father's house.*

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

### **Original August 2016 Review**

**Gahh.**

Guys, this *book*! Holy cow.

I picked this up on a shopping expedition to Goodwill the other day, because I'd heard of it, thought I might have read bits of it before, and was familiar with the author. Plus it just looked good. But I wasn't expecting to read it in the course of one evening.

IT WAS EPIC. Like, super epic. It was hard-and-fast, real, dynamic, powerful historical fiction. When I started it at around, oh, I don't know, 6:30, it was good, but not anything life-changing. However, it kept my interest, and by the time I finished it, sometime around midnight in bed after having scarcely put it down all evening, my inner person was all choked up with the emotion and the drama and the gahh-ness of it all, and GUYS I WANT A MOVIE!

At the beginning, and also in certain parts during the middle, I was slightly concerned it was going to go into...murky water, let us say, but it never did, and now when I reread it (which I'm sure I will be doing) I can just enjoy the little touch of suspense that those themes add. I still might rather have those parts left out,

but it's not too bad: one of the slaves is suspected of voodoo, and the heroine falls in love with a married soldier (but nothing happens, I promise, and the resolution of that is actually SUPER emotional and good and--hark, spoilers draweth nigh).

The only other negative comment I have is that I didn't warm up to Oscie for quite some time. In the end, however, I did. She's not my favorite heroine, but I like her well enough, and mah word, is she a strong character. (Also, there is some language, but nothing that detracted from the storyline, in my opinion.)

NOW, on to more of the good stuff ;)

Can we all just take a moment to appreciate OSCIE MASON'S AND WILL MCLEAN'S RELATIONSHIP?!  
*I mean.* Just...no words.

I liked how romance wasn't a major component of the storyline--enough to keep me interested in the story, but relationally, the book was more driven by the dynamic between Oscie and Will, and HEAVENS ABOVE IS IT AMAZING OR WHAT.

I'm going to refrain, through great force of will, from raving about the ending, because I really, really want you all to experience it for yourselves if you read it (wait, are you still contemplating *not* reading it??), but...GAHH IT WAS INCREDIBLE. In all seriousness, that was quite possibly one of THE best book endings I have ever read. Ever. The more I think about it, the more I fangirl.

So, to close, here are three particularly good bits from the book itself (I'm dyyyyyying to include the last sentence, but I won't):

*The evening air was like silk, and the spring lawns and pastures, lush with green and iced with pink and white blossoms, were a sight for the eyes.*

*This was not just an ordinary Yankee, I conjectured. Yankees were ill-mannered and coarse factory boys. Or backwoods people without any refinements. Surely they did not have blue eyes that laughed at you and grew soft when you spoke. Or such fine chestnut curls, or white teeth. God had not made Yankees with no-nonsense jaws and fine straight noses and dimples in their chins. Surely someone would have told us, if He had.*

*"I may be a fool, General Sheridan," Daddy Will said, "but I do not indulge in petty larceny. Yet, what can I expect from the man who laid waste to the Shenandoah Valley and reduced the populace to starvation." The silence in the room was heavy...*

**Just go read it. Just do.**

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## **Audrey says**

Overall, this was an okay book. It prompted me to look up some stuff about the Civil War that I didn't know about before (like Mosby's Rangers). I find this a very interesting period and I generally enjoy books about it, so I can't say this really disappointed.

I thought some of the language used was a bit contemporary. For example, according to this Wikipedia



article, the term "feminist" was not used in the U.S. until the early 1900s. It appears in this book in what is supposed to be around the year 1851. It doesn't really matter, I suppose; I just thought it was interesting.

There is a bit of cursing in this, but it's not especially pervasive. I could have definitely done without it, but it's still pretty PG rated.

Until the author's note at the end, I didn't realize that this was actually based on a real family (although fictionalized for the sake of the novel). I was actually a bit surprised that, all things considered, they came through the war relatively unscathed. I guess I'm just used to Civil War books showing a lot of massive upheaval. Of course they lost their estate, but beyond material possessions there was little that dramatically influenced them (and due to Will's speculating, they were rarely even wanting for material comforts). If I recall correctly, I don't think they even knew of anyone close to them that died (other than Allie, but he was a pretty minor character). To a certain extent, it's kind of refreshing that the author didn't feel the need to put a lot of sad things in, but I just don't know how realistic that was. They kept saying how the war changed them, but how did it really?

The main character in this was fine and I liked her, but I never felt especially invested in her or any of the other characters. It all just felt a little flat to me. Along the same lines, I never really bought Oscie's relationship with Thomas. It was just suddenly *there*.

I would give this book 2.5 stars if I could (but since I can't, I'm rounding up). It was just between "okay" and "I liked it." I did like it, I guess, but it was still just okay...if that makes sense!

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## **Natalie says**

Olivia and Jessica, I'm sorry to say this did not become a new favorite....but I DID like it quite a bit. It was realistic, and it was poignant. Oscie is an admirable heroine (though she has flaws, like us all), and I was shocked to find myself one minute approving of Will McClean's actions, and then detesting them the next. I expected this to be a clear-cut story of a girl with an "evil" stepfather, but it wasn't at all. Like all people, these characters make both good and bad decisions, and they have to live with them, and grow because of them. I guess I don't really have the words to describe what I felt about this story yet....but I would definitely read it again someday. It was fascinating.

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