



Jake Miller's Wheel

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In this Dostoyevskian novel, Jake Miller, a minor character drawn from James Ostby's first literary work-*Men With Broken Faces*-is a homesteader in northeastern Montana who suffers life to a higher degree than do most people. Uneducated, though intelligent and noble of spirit, he plods on over the open prairie and the vast wheatfields of his life, trying to find solace in farming, everyday life, and through his somewhat ironic sense of humor. Jake is haunted by both his Wheel of Life and the Fatidic Light. His Wheel of Life, more like a grindstone, is a relentless psychological encumbrance that he has had to endure from childhood. Its severity varies from mild to unbearable, though Jake has no choice but to suffer it valiantly and with little complaint. The Fatidic Light is more frightening. It is an actual hallucination that Jake first sees as a harbinger of misery and doom. Only late in life does he discover its essence. A main thread through the book is Jake's ups and downs as he struggles for peace and normalcy. In his continual and noble efforts to endure his difficult existence, he turns to philosophy, religion, and to any other contrivance or device that makes his way easier. In the end Jake

Jake Miller's Wheel Details

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From Reader Review Jake Miller's Wheel for online ebook

Christina says

One of my favorite aspects of this book was the cross between characters from *Men With Broken Faces* (great book!) You actually meet Jake Miller and his wife in this earlier book, and follow through his treks as he seeks out the meaning of life in *Jake Miller's Wheel*. It was a deep book and had kept me thinking (and highlighting on my Kindle throughout!) When I hit Part IV, I was captivated by the turn of events. I did not see this turn coming... a good twist, just like in James Ostby's previous book I read. I'm still thinking about Jake Miller and his "Wheel of Life," pondering everything and the way it played out...

I received an ARC from Mr. Ostby to review and am so grateful I had the opportunity. See a full review on www.playingjokers.com.

Kerry says

"Life is a farce"

Amen to that Mr. Ostby. This is the second book I've read by Ostby and first off, that man is like a walking encyclopedia of words. It's phenomenal. No other author I've read uses such an expansive collection of near-borderline verbiage.

It's not a book that you read to lift your soul, though it does ask you to look at your own a little more. Was Jake Miller crazy or brilliant? Did he suffer more than your average human or did he just acknowledge more about the human condition? I think all of these can only be answered in each individual's personal reading of it, with no answer being wrong.

Though I did enjoy it, I will say....maybe not the time to read it after being depressed and delirious with cabin fever in Boston after our about fourth blizzard in a month or so....then again reading it in sunny summer might feel off too, choose yer own adventure kids!

Peggy Roberson says

I have yet to find a book written by Mr. Ostby that I haven't enjoyed reading, and this book is no exception. This book, in particular, will make you stop and think - more than once. It's more like a vignette on the story of the main character's life - actually a wheel of his life, hence the title. It takes place in Montana, in the early years of our Country - from 1913 on, and if you've read any of Mr. Ostby's other books, you should be familiar with the character in the book. Some chapters will make you chuckle, while others will choke you up a bit, but no two are the same, and each one is quite interesting. If you are a fan of Mr. Ostby as I am, you will enjoy this book as well. I won this book at Goodreads, was thrilled with the win, and it had no bearing whatsoever on my review of this book!!

Áine says

Jake Miller's Wheel by James Ostby.

"The land held great promise. The promise of Elysian Plain, the ancient Greek paradise."

"I'm here about Jake Miller."

Montana is a vast state (4th largest in the U.S.), dependent upon farming, ranching and hard rock mining. It has over 100 mountain ranges, hence its name. The summers are hot and the winters extremely cold. It is prairie country, It is Continental Divide country. In the 1930s it was Dust Bowl country, with barns, houses and souls literally buried by the howling winds.

Into this inhospitable environment, Ostby's protagonist, Jake Miller, trekked in 1913, only 24 years after Montana became a State. He planted himself 1,200 miles from his native Iowa. Why he left Iowa remains a question. But whatever the reason, it shadowed him for the rest of his life. The novel starts and ends in a grave yard.

'Jake crawled to the head of the grave, leaned against the stone marker, and pulled his knees under his chin. It was dark and cold, but the inscription on the headstone seared his back: "And know that I will wait for you."

"As the light enveloped him, and lifted him, Jake looked down and caught one last glimpse of his mortal form."

Jake Miller's Wheel is one of those rare nuggets we stumble across very occasionally while chipping away at our personal rock piles. Ostby's writing is rich, philosophical, sometimes a bit "preachy" but always intensely interesting. How many novels can we find in the modern era that ask us to consider: "The capacity of humans to reason, and where he disagreed with Kant, on realism vs. idealism."

"Are madmen aware of their madness? Most probably aren't, so, Jake concluded—though somewhat uncertainly—that he was not crazy. But he wouldn't bet the farm on it. "

Ostby and Jake tackle "the big questions" of life and death, as well as schizophrenia, guilt, grief, searing loneliness and human strength and frailty, with intelligence and compassion in a wholly readable way.

"For as long as [Jake] could remember, even as a young child, he had felt the burden of some vague, weighty, hovering, moving, unseen part of him. Like a wheel, or—at it's worst—a grindstone, that he could neither cast off nor control."

Was it the Hindu Mandala representing the universe? Was Jake's the square within the circle or the circle within the square? We shall leave that to the reader's discretion.

Ostby takes us through the 1930s affording us a glimpse into the spare lives of the Norwegian and German farmers, the Farm Labor Party and its attendant political struggles, the prairie Lutherans and their box socials.

The characters are many and varied, some well-developed, some less so representing points of view. Ostby has peopled his novel with farmers, a sheriff, a prairie psychiatrist, a fortune teller, a medium, a doctor, alcoholics, pool players, disembodied prophetic voices and Lights.

"The wind picked up again, and this time it stayed steady from the west. There would be no rain. The chickens kept eating, and Chaucer nuzzled Lars. "But I'm fighting it," Jake said. "I don't expect you to understand. People like you don't have a firm grip on reality."

"I'm here about Jake Miller." "Jake?"
What about him?" "What kind of a guy was he?"

Waiting for rain. Waiting for Fate. Waiting for Ostby's next novel.

Paul says

I received a free copy of this book as a Goodreads First Read

This is the first book I have read by this author. Whilst I was undecided after the first couple of chapters, I found myself gradually getting more into it and ultimately thoroughly enjoyed it. A good writing style and credible storyline. Recommended

Victoria Brinius says

I was glad to read this book and to go back to one of the characters from the author's other book (Men with Broken Faces). That book really touched me as a citizen, however this book had more of a paranormal feel to it. I liked that Jake kept "talking" to Mable and I enjoyed the way the author wrote about Jake's past. It made it easier to understand why he was the way he was. I enjoyed the ending, and I could picture Jake's character. This book has farming, bombs, phone calls, and of course dealing with the everyday depressions in life. I am giving this book a 4/5. I was given a copy to review, however all opinions are my own.

Darlene Cruz says

What do you want to believe, was he crazy or too smart for his own good. Jake, Jake The Non-church of the Non-religious Believers? The Congregation of the Unholy? The Temple of the Cosmos? Assembly of False Hope? If you want to make real money, start a religion, he was being silly. The Wheel never influenced him; he had controlled the Wheel, for better or worse. Aww..... here is story filled with a depressed drunkard soul contemplating constantly with himself and his inner spirit. Tragedy strikes how does he deal with it? I was taken back with the sorrow and his pitiful soul, so tragic indeed. Life events, questions questioning himself again and again spiraling downward. His forever, wife Mable forgiving him and overlooking his weakness and faults. Pioneer life with the struggles to settle down and fighting the inner demons. Faith, is there any left? Excellent read, writing great just like his other book, "Men With Broken Faces." Actually I'm sort of speechless after reading this book that it took me awhile just to write this review, sorry it's a short one though. I did feel Jake's pain and sorrow which the author captured perfectly, wish it wasn't so! I'm having difficulties finding the right words. This book was included with "Men With Broken Faces." Thank you very much, Darlene Cruz

Wendy Jensen says

All through the book I kept asking myself, what is wrong with Jake Miller. He does have problems as he struggles with his demons, his Wheel of Life and the Fatidic Light. It was a good thing that I read Men With Broken Faces first as this book carries on in a different light but with some of the same people from Men With Broken Faces so I knew their background. This book starts in 1913 and ends in 1937 and no I am not telling you the ending! Jake and his wife leave Iowa and homestead in northeastern Montana. Jake was a lot of different things to different people, described as: unbalanced, despondent, high strung, crazy, a melancholiac, strange sense of humor, misunderstood, aggravating, funny, close friend, unliked, extraordinary, too smart, neighbor or friend, or just downright batty! What do you think?

I received this book for free through Goodreads First Reads as a bonus book with Men With Broken Faces.
