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FORTY WAYS TO SQUARE A CIRCLE

A NOVEL BY NEIL HUMMASTI

"The question is—" Principal Plumpnut raised a finger to emphasize the point. "The question is, do we need an American Literature class? It may have served a purpose once," he conceded for the sake of staff morale. He stuck out his lower lip in a see-what-I'm-saying look that had the distorted pucker of an awkward first kiss. "It's not like when **we** went to school. The world has changed. The question is, do we need that old stuff when we got the new stuff?"

The year is 1996 and the coastal high school where Casey Merriman teaches English is about to go technology-mad and scrap the humanities. On the home front, Merriman is responsible for the care of an elderly aunt who battles a growing dementia. The two competing derangements will plunge Merriman into turbulent descent straight out of Dante and propel him toward a bizarre but redemptive climax.

"In *Forty Ways to Square a Circle* and the character Casey Merriman, Neil Hummasti has created a figure who strives to find a moral and ethical path through the quotidian of daily life but who finds himself facing external challenges and internal impediments to achieving desired ends. Merriman is a teacher in a small high school in coastal Oregon coping with caring for a beloved aunt suffering from dementia, confronting changes in the education system that run counter to everything he believes in, and wrestling with his feelings for a fellow teacher for whom he can't quite bring himself to declare his affection and romantic yearning. Along the way, the reader is treated to a vivid sketch of the communities, landscapes, and people of a particular corner of the Pacific Northwest. In a writing style that is precise and insightful, Hummasti takes his character on a journey fraught with trials and travails, only to achieve a delicate balance that leaves him in much changed circumstances—but also, finally, becomes validated in terms of his true values."

— Clyde Curley, author of the Detective Toussaint mysteries

In 2011, Astoria resident Neil Hummasti died from cancer. He left behind over half a million words of unpublished writing, perhaps the greatest trove of its kind in Oregon literary history. Svensen Pioneer Press presents phase one of publishing Neil's writing, which includes *Forty Ways to Square a Circle*. For more information on this extraordinary author, visit www.NeilHummasti.com

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