ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

ROMANCE

Autumn Colors
Dawn Lajeunesse
Author Hive
978-1-58982-759-2
Four Stars (out of Five)

Grieving for a lover may be the most painful experience a person can endure, particularly when the death is premature and unexpected. Whether due to an accident or sudden illness, the trauma can last for decades. Moved by a tragedy in her own past, Dawn Lajeunesse fictionalizes the complex feelings that a woman endures when she loses her fiancé shortly before her wedding in *Autumn Colors*.

This is the story of Kerry Waite, a resilient heroine who cannot let go of Tom, the first man she ever adored, even after his fateful death forced them apart thirty years ago. Unable to bond with her husband, Charles, in a twenty-year marriage, she must face her inner resistance to love again and embrace the companion in her present life, rather than lingering with a ghost in her past. A 2005 memorial service for an elderly acquaintance brings Kerry's emotion to a climax in this introspective novel told in time-travel sequences. Speeding back to 1968, then into the 1970s and 1980s, Lajeunesse takes the reader on a journey to the depths of a passionate woman's soul in a touching delivery. Though marketed as a romance, this book is steeped in agonizing realism. A simple funeral turns into a situational catharsis, triggering an outpouring of memories and painful self-realizations for the protagonist.

This talented author knows how to evoke emotion, so much so that delving into her work hurts. The heartbreak in her story takes place in the past, however, which tends to distance the audience. Kerry Waite is focused on her previous existence rather than living her current life fully, and, unfortunately, this leads to a certain loss of sympathy for the main character. Kerry is still in love with Tom. Since her inability to let go of a prior relationship is the point of the plot, this weakness cannot be deemed a flaw, yet at certain moments the novel meanders into reminiscing rather than true storytelling, detracting from what could have been a five-star presentation. The better part of the book is told in flashback, meeting with the present in the occasional scene to ground the reader in the here-and-now and provide a fleeting sense of immediacy. Dawn Lajeunesse has been writing for over twenty years and published articles on a

variety of topics. A registered nurse, she holds a master's degree in health administration. She lives in a log home in the Adirondacks in Upstate New York.

Autumn Colors is an enlightening, though often aching, reflection on young love brought to a catastrophic end and a poignant description of spiritual healing. Expect more from this gifted writer.

Julia Ann Charpentier