ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

ROMANCE

Doubt of Love
Constance Anne Scott
Tapscott Press
978-0-9798042-0-5
Four Stars (out of Five)

Teen pregnancy and runaways…sexual assault…losing a spouse to premature death…drinking to alleviate psychological pain: these are subjects the majority find depressing. A combination of all events in the same novel classified as a romance may lead some readers to consider checking out at the beginning, unless handled by a skilled writer who knows how to infuse a story with the appropriate mixture of anguish and tenderness.

Doubt of Love is clearly mainstream fiction, not genre romance, with a deserted, foreboding Irish graveyard on the cover that brings to mind the creepy Gothics of bygone days, often with a damsel in distress lurking in the shadows, which this photograph pointedly lacks. Despite initial reservations on seeing the cemetery on a "Heartflame Romance," this exceptionally well-written book will surprise even a confused skeptic.

Topnotch editing and a succinct style save this story from sinking six feet under. Excellent development of the characters, exhibiting the flaws and idiosyncrasies of real people, bring to life a cast that centers primarily on Sarah Adams, a fifty-two-year-old widow who travels to Ireland to overcome grief after her secretive husband dies. The trip does not go exactly as anticipated, however, when a runaway pregnant girl named Mary Anne lands in her care and takes Sarah to the arms of a bereft widower, a simple carpenter from a quaint village—the teen's father. Sarah's reaction to Thomas O'Brien is straight out of a formulaic, sweet romance, but this newly established family is contending with solemn social issues in a conservative environment that is culturally indoctrinated by the church.

Scott's novel falls short of a five-star rating for the simple reason that it veers in too many directions at once. A raped teenager choosing to keep her child strikes too many serious chords of distress to come across as a love song in prose. The slant of this novel is a cause for concern among true romance connoisseurs who tend to recoil from social issues involving minors, especially those that may have a religious basis. Though nothing is "wrong" with the literary aspect of this book, its standard classification and mawkish presentation adorned with

gravestones are off-putting and an unfortunate strike against the overall impression.

Constance Anne Scott is also the author of *Return to Hunter Springs*. A sequel to *Doubt of Love*, titled *Courage of Love*, is planned for release. Scott lives in rural northeast Texas. *Doubt of Love* is a touching story with an unusual conglomeration of inspirational romance and subtle intrigue—with a dash of heady realism. Not for readers who avoid dealing with the gritty truth on the path to idyllic bliss.

Julia Ann Charpentier