Clarion Review

Mystery

Fortune's Mail
Greg Wright
AuthorHouse
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Two Stars (out of Five)

“Through a fortunate discovery by our investigative branch, we were able to locate many parcels of mail determined to have been lost. As required by law and our obligation to you, we are completing the service you have entrusted us with.” In *Fortune’s Mail*, a small post office on the verge of closure is the scene for the discovery of bags full of mail, hidden for months, even years, by a mentally ill carrier. Greg Wright uses the motif of the undelivered letter to craft this collection of mysterious tales.

Upon being forwarded to its intended recipient, each letter unlocks a story from the past, provoking long-awaited conclusions or fresh beginnings. Each story is named for the recipient (for example, “Vanessa’s Letter”). In perhaps the brightest of Wright’s tales, a confused young woman wins a lottery ticket and is able to take a new direction in life.

Other stories are darker, more complex: a man whose estrangement from his wife after the disappearance of their son finds closure in the jungles of Chile; a bitter old woman receives, too late, the invitation for which she was longing; a faithful wife learns that her husband didn’t honor their vows; a mobster exacts brutal revenge after he gets a long-delayed letter from an old partner in crime; three siblings find a missing piece of the family puzzle.

Despite good editing throughout and some well-crafted plots, there are awkward moments. Not every image works; not all of Wright’s language flows. For example, the description of Nathan gathered up the bones of his lost son reads, “he gently picked up each piece, as if they were crystal itself.” The mobster Sal, gazing at his receding hairline in the mirror, concludes that “it gave him a sense of maturity he never had as a young man.” “Arthur’s Letter” ends, “He slowly walked away through the arboreal canopied walks.”

Similarly, some of the stories are less effective than others. The opening tale of a missing father has an emotionally satisfying conclusion. The twist in the tale of a wife receiving a

belated love letter is just right. But “Nathan’s Letter,” the saga of the young man lost in Chile, is far too long, as though the author had started on a novel and thought better of it.

“Jeremy’s Letter” is burdened with such extraneous family detail that the reader is too exhausted to care about the surprise ending when it finally comes. And the introductory segment that focuses on the demented mail carrier is a red herring with a thin premise; it should have been much shorter.

The book’s cover is unremarkable, and there are only two sentences about the author at the end of the book. If the author digs in to sell it, *Fortune’s Mail* might have a chance as a scripted miniseries. In its current form, it’s unlikely to garner much attention.

Barbara Bamberger Scott