

Return to Tiffany's: (A Love Story) and Three Other True Short Stories

Jerome Mark Antil

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The settings in these stories are charmingly imagined; they delight even as they entertain.

With the four true short stories in *Return to Tiffany's*, Jerome Mark Antil offers delightful and often emotionally compelling scenes from his interesting life. From his childhood in 1950s New York to his later writing career in Texas, Antil shares his genuine enjoyment of a life well lived.

The title story, the longest of the bunch, follows Antil's love affair with model Pamela Berkin. They first met at a mutual friend's wedding, and it was love at first sight. However, they crossed paths only a few times over the next forty years until they began exchanging letters to each other across the country and rekindled their relationship.

Versions of a love story like theirs have been retold many times over, but the theme of true love that transcends time continues to appeal. Antil does name-drop often in this story—Pamela was a well-known model, after all—but he remains modest throughout. He admits his faults (spending years paying back the IRS for business mistakes), and his admiration for Pamela is contagious. His humility and obvious love for his wife make the tale most enjoyable to read.

The three other pieces delve into Antil's childhood. "Richard Leaves the Choir Breathless" and "Postwar Shortages and Shortfalls" are both humorous anecdotes in which his brother and mother respectively commit unexpectedly hilarious acts. Both are entertaining, and they share details of the era that add to the atmosphere of the book as a whole.

"A Cazenovia Christmas Past," the last tale, marks a change in tone, as Antil, his mother, and his seven siblings deal with his father's tuberculosis diagnosis. In the fifties, this could have been a death sentence, and its occurrence at Christmastime makes the stress all the more tragic.

The pacing of all four stories—the first in particular—is nearly perfect, with the ebb and flow of action urging continued reading. All settings in the book are charmingly imagined: the busy bank in which Antil's mother's underwear accidentally slips off beneath her dress; the community church, populated by strict nuns, in which his brother sings in a Christmas pageant; and the sanitarium where his father recovers from TB.

Only the book's presentation, from the large font to the cover image and back cover matter, lacks polish.

Return to Tiffany's delights even as it entertains. It would best be read during the Christmas season, as the setting and heartwarming familial themes align with the holiday. Expect both laughter and anticipatory tears in Jerome Mark Antil's autobiographical tales.

AIMÉE JODOIN (July 10, 2017)

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