Clarion Review

General

The Manuscript
B. Fuschetti
iUniverse
978-0-595-52943-8
Four Stars (out of Five)

A child never understands why a father walks out, even in a conflict-ridden home. The loss and betrayal often haunts the individual into adulthood, especially if the parent is never seen again. Abandonment embeds a long-lasting pain that may live in the heart of a mature, stable person decades later. This common scenario appears in works of fiction over and over again.

The Manuscript is a touching story about Bess Harper, a New York City editor who encounters an eerie manuscript by a well-known author that triggers memories and evokes the emotions she experienced when her father left. She recalls the day he drove away, putting his pastel box into her hands. Now, thirty years later, she must relive these agonizing moments while reading the carefully crafted words of a skilled writer who hits a tad too close to reality.

During the holiday season Bess travels to finalize the sale of her deceased father's house located on the eastern shore of Virginia. She looks at his home one last time before seeking necessary closure in her life. Yet the uncanny manuscript will not let her rest, and she is forced to replay events from her own past.

This poignant novel is an excellent short read that will appeal to a wide audience, but it falls short in production quality—especially the prominent back cover blurb, which is riddled with mistakes a copy editor should have detected. The front cover is a nondescript, low-budget presentation. This fascinating page-turner is an unfortunate example of a good book propelled at high speed through the stages of publication.

B. Fuschetti wrote *The Manuscript* following the death of her own father. After twenty years without contact, she saw him by chance only one week before he died. The pastel box in her story and a treasured picture are real mementos she incorporates into the novel, which was clearly written as a catharsis. She states that forgiveness was left in the wake of his passing, opening a door to new beginnings.

This talented newcomer delivers an enlightening, soul-searching book that does more than entertain. Fuschetti's realistic portrayal of estrangement between parent and child will elicit empathy in countless readers who may find themselves enjoying this gripping story from beginning to end without laying it down.

Julia Ann Charpentier