Clarion Review

General

Twist of Fate
Kaye Dion
AuthorHouse
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Two Stars (out of Five)

Ruin and redemption are the major themes in Kaye Dion's latest novel, *Twist of Fate*. Dion exposes the darkest side of severe mental illness in this slim volume that follows the downward spiral of Jessie, a young man with schizophrenia. Through Jessie's sister and caretaker, Irene, Dion also ponders the limits of forgiveness.

Launching immediately into the sibling dialogue that carries much of Jessie's story, Dion wastes no time in getting to the point. Readers meet Jessie and Irene on the day of Jessie's psychiatrist appointment, and soon learn that he has struggled with schizophrenia for years, is apt to skip his medication, and sometimes hears voices. He starts a new prescription regimen, but his condition deteriorates and he rapidly descends into a madness that compels him to listen to those voices when they urge him toward pedophilia and murder.

It's a story that should cause one to shudder, but Dion's sparse, dispassionate writing creates a sense of detachment. The simple, mechanical dialogue suggests the first reading of a new script by actors who have not yet developed their characters' emotions and personality. The siblings address each other formally, more like acquaintances than relations. Many conversations serve as expository vehicles, like Irene's unexpected explanation of the circumstances of their parent's death to a brother who surely knows the story already.

While she sometimes provides oddly comprehensive background information like this, Dion offers only superficial explanation of the book's action. Scenes change abruptly, covering a lot of ground in just under sixty pages. Jessie's downfall is startlingly swift: he is enjoying dinner with his sister and then a few pages later, he is kidnapping a young girl, with only a cursory glimpse at the distorted thoughts that led him to his crime. It's not far from there to prison, and ultimately, to the "twist of fate" foreshadowed in the title. The profound theme of redemption receives the same perfunctory treatment and is similarly lacking in emotional

underpinnings.

Dion has several previously published books to her name, including a medical thriller and a memoir of her nursing career. *Twist of Fate* combines these two genres, and the outcome is a story in search of an audience. Those looking for a mystery to solve will be frustrated by Dion's transparent narrative, which tells all and tells it right away. Readers wanting some insight into the mind of a schizophrenic patient may be interested in the authentic medical details Dion offers, but Jessie's unique inner life remains largely hidden from view.

In the end, Jessie's life does make a positive difference in the lives of man through a surprising end-of-life bequest, and this is the compelling idea at the heart of Dion's underdeveloped story. A more complete treatment of the issues would be most thought provoking.

Sheila M. Trask