



Wedding Vow: Love Whisper

Al Cadondon

iUniverse

Softcover \$13.99 (195pp)

978-1-5320-5697-0

Friendship and romance fit together in the historical novel Wedding Vow, in which two people lose the woman they love.

In Al Cadondon's romance novel *Wedding Vow*, a man who loses the love of his life finds an unexpected connection with his beloved's best friend.

During the Vietnam War era, Albert, who's in the navy, prepares to marry Glenda. When she dies before they can exchange their wedding vows, her best friend, Brenda, steps in to fill the void in Albert's life. Each hears whispers from Glenda, encouraging them to take care of one another. Their friendship becomes a romance. But with Albert deployed overseas, and Brenda facing a stalker situation at work, it becomes unclear whether that newfound love will survive.

Albert and Brenda, who were thrown together by circumstance, don't often seem like a strong or sympathetic couple. Their connection is superficial and troubling: he slaps her face to establish dominance, for example, and cheats on her while he is overseas. Later, he keeps his indiscretions a secret from her.

Also off-putting and inauthentic is the fact that all of the women whom Albert encounters flirt with him. Some sleep with him; he never mentions to them that he's attached. Though he hopes to reunite with Brenda after his tour of duty, Albert remains static throughout; his flaws and lack of growth make him unappealing. Meanwhile, Brenda is developed in terms of her continuing work as a nurse, and through how she weathers the dangerous attentions of a former patient.

Redundant descriptions proliferate the prose, whose characters act in ways that are contradictory to the book's descriptions. The cast's exchanges are wooden and repetitive, and too many characters are introduced who have little real impact on Albert and Brenda's story. The settings and era, both of which are significant, are under established, too. Frequent jumps between viewpoints slow the book's progression, and typographical and punctuation errors appear throughout the book, further impeding investment.

The fruition of the promised wedding is continually delayed by the characters' circumstances and decisions. The appearance of a butterfly is used to convey Glenda's late blessing upon the couple, but given the events that preceded it (including Albert's decision to flirt with Maryanne, Glenda's younger sister, and reignite his relationships with old flames abroad), it's an unconvincing development.

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JEANA JORGENSEN (December 28, 2021)

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