



Return to Summerfield

Dianne H. Lundy

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Return to Summerfield is a propulsive romance novel that highlights the importance of love, family, and second chances.

In Dianne H. Lundy's high-stakes romance novel *Return to Summerfield*, two women wind up in a small town under life-uprooting circumstances.

Luci receives a newspaper photograph that convinces her that her husband has been unfaithful. With her two young children in tow, she leaves New York City for Summerfield, hoping to start anew. Meanwhile, Regenia stumbles upon Summerfield after fleeing from her powerful, abusive ex-husband; she brings with her her two-year-old son and her teenage sister.

Soon after Luci establishes her Summerfield-based law practice, she takes on a murder case involving her high school sweetheart, a decision that serves as the driving force for the rest of her story. The motivation for Regenia's arrival is less clear, alternating between the struggle to survive (without money, a home, and a job) and the struggle to maintain a platonic relationship with her new boss, before eventually settling on the truth of how she ended up in Summerfield—her ex-husband.

The prose is direct but repetitive, with the overused dialogue tag "teased" as a standout offender. And the connection between Luci's and Regenia's stories isn't clear until late in the book, impeding its ultimate cohesion. Until then, both women's worlds are made rich thanks to secondary characters who not only fill out the setting but also enhance the complexity of both women's lives as they navigate new beginnings, old flames, and all that's in between. Still, the related subplots, while involving, are quite numerous. They include Jeremy's stubborn pursuit to win Luci back and Regenia's concealment of her tragic family past; they all either connect back to the foundational romance or emphasize the advantages of Summerfield as a close-knit community.

Insights into the characters' thoughts and feelings are limited—sometimes revealed through italics, but rarely venturing outside of the present and near-future problems that they face. This results in an overall neatness to the plot, which includes joyous family reunions, mended relationships, and happy endings for all; loose ends are wrapped up in tight spaces, and questions that threaten to undermine successes (as with Luci's outright refusal to hear Jeremy's explanation regarding the photograph and Jeremy's lack of urgency to leave for Summerfield) are underaddressed.

Still, *Return to Summerfield* is a propulsive romance novel whose cozy developments highlight the importance of love, family, and second chances.

CIERRA TAYLOR (October 21, 2023)

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