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Clarion Review ★★☆☆☆ ROMANCE

A Moment in Time

Lyn Marill
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A Moment in Time *is a melancholy romance in which lost love has long-lasting impacts.*

In Lyn Marill's tragic romance *A Moment in Time*, a retired actress faces heartbreak and a lifetime of regret.

Micaela has just been diagnosed with cancer. She explores alternative treatments despite her daughter's insistence that she see an oncologist. Stress leads her to dream of her past. She recalls her time in college in Florida, where she met Connor, who became her fiancé.

Sections alternate between the present and the past, with Micaela's dreams functioning as the tidy bridge. The present is an astute portrait of Micaela as a mother who brushes her family's concerns off with white lies. Her bristling character is an eloquent example of grief and of cancer's tendency to bring mortality into sharp focus.

In the past, Micaela expresses teenage hopes and frustration and is less grounded. Her romance with Connor gathers intensity after a handful of meetings. Connor is a familiar romantic type: the disenchanted son of wealthy parents, he hides a sordid secret. He's written with red flags that Micaela ignores, and she seems more naïve than her intelligence suggests.

Romantic encounters are set at carefree house parties, on Connor's charter boat, and at a club. These cinematic settings evoke the wealthy eighties, especially as seen in pop culture. They're nostalgic, tense stages for Micaela's transition to adulthood. A loose side plot introduces Bonnie, a troubled young woman who's obsessed with Connor and who is an obstacle for Micaela. However, Bonnie is too one-sided to function as a powerful foil.

Amid the tangled dynamic between the main characters and because of uneven plotting, Vini, Micaela's best friend, carries the book. She's an outspoken woman of action who defends Micaela. From her first bold introduction to her deathbed letter to Micaela, her loyalty is laced with richness and vulnerability.

A few topical issues crop up, including racism and homophobia. They hint at broader social ills without direct bearing on Micaela. Religion arises in context of Micaela's loss of faith, but is dropped without further development. Connor's autistic brother seems present only to bring a softer side to Connor's rebellious persona.

Sudden events include a storm at sea; a heart attack; and the bombing of a gay club. All of these underscore the book's tagline—"One moment can change your life forever"—but are not foreshadowed. That Micaela suffers PTSD in the present as an explanation for why she's forgotten the past also comes across as more convenient than well-established; her condition is undisclosed until near the end.

A melancholy novel about mental trauma, *A Moment in Time* focuses on the long-ranging damage of lost love.

KAREN RIGBY (August 19, 2019)

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