



A Theory of Expanded Love

Caitlin Hicks

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Caitlin Hicks begins this story of tradition and redemption in the months leading up to Kennedy's assassination, when all manner of possibilities seemed open to good little Catholic girls. Enconced in the middle of a noisy Irish family of fifteen and perched at the edge of her teen years, Annie Shea knows that she's on the cusp of spiritual greatness. She weaves tales of her heavenward ascension for awed classmates, trading on the potential papacy of a family friend and her maybe-vocation as a selfless bride of Christ.

Yet Annie discovers that even very blessed Catholics are sometimes faced with tribulations. Hers begin with an uncovered and faded photograph of her mother in a wedding gown, standing next to a soldier who is most definitely not her father. Propelled by a thirst for the truth (and maybe even an older, less nettlesome sibling), Annie makes her way through the forbidden channels of family history. When her eldest sister finds herself facing a scandal, Annie alone will be equipped to discern the righteous choice from amongst the many, mostly straight-laced options available.

Hicks adopts Annie's precocious voice skillfully and draws from it self-effacing humor, spiritual bargaining, and enough charm to fill the corridors of Vatican City twice over. This is an involving tale of religious evolution that reminds us that good faith is what sometimes grows out of defying convention and braving the unknown.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (Summer 2015)

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