

In the Blink of an Eye

Joyce Lovely

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In the Blink of an Eye is the autobiography of a woman who has experienced hardships and great tragedy. Joyce Lovely begins her book with stories of growing up in New England with eight brothers and sisters. She goes on to discuss the various jobs she held the neighbors she befriended and how she got along with her large family.

Many of these early anecdotes are told with little detail and produce the effect of flipping through a stranger's photo album. Some of Lovely's stories draw readers in only to disappoint when they are left with no conclusion such as her description of a Christmas at her grandmother's house. Joyce and her siblings grow tired of watching their spoiled cousin June open dozens of gifts while they receive only one apiece. She tells readers that her family started a new tradition the next year and ends the episode without details about this new tradition or any more about June the cousin who was practically adopted by their grandmother who never had a daughter.

Because most of the book describes Joyce's life with her husband and children the details and stories from her early life could have been omitted to produce a more focused memoir. The author hits her stride after she moves to Maine. In this section of the book conversations are related and funny anecdotes are told with descriptive detail.

Joyce had a good job working for a kind man when she met her future husband Dana Lovely. Their short marriage was rocky. Dana was terrible with money and couldn't hold a job for more than a few weeks. The couple and their children moved often and were evicted from a couple locations. Lovely looks back on the situation with derision: "I know someone must have performed a lobotomy on me because anyone in his or her right mind would have known by now that this marriage was a lost cause." Eventually they divorced and she declared bankruptcy.

Much of the book details her various bosses and her success as a paralegal and bill collector. Other sections deal with her troubled children. As a teenager her son used drugs and spent a lot of time in jail. He eventually became addicted to heroin and was diagnosed with HIV. He died at a young age at an unlicensed drug rehabilitation clinic. Joyce and her daughter Connie experienced some ups and downs but enjoyed a close friendship. When Connie married a man who couldn't hold a job the author played a large role in raising their daughter and continually loaned them money. Connie died of a brain aneurysm a few years after her brother. Joyce has remained close to her only grandchild.

Lovely could have produced a more interesting book by being selective about the story she wished to tell and including less foreshadowing of future events. Her family and friends will be most interested in the book. General readers will wish for a tighter focus and more detail about significant events—and less detail about such things as finances and funeral arrangements. Despite the book's drawbacks it is a revealing story about a woman who has retained her faith and optimism in the face of heartbreak.

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