Clarion Review

General

Insignificant Moments
Jeremy Asher
iUniverse
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Four Stars (out of Five)

Each life has its share of turning points—of sometimes seemingly small moments that have the potential to change everything. In *Insignificant Moments*, debut author Jeremy Asher explores this concept and follows his characters as they discover how deeply such unanticipated moments can affect their lives.

Asher's story begins with Jaye, an assistant librarian whose dissatisfaction with his life leads him to an uncharacteristic attempt to hike up a formidable mountain. While there, he meets an injured young woman to whom he feels an instant attraction. Yet he fails to act on his instincts and allows her to slip away before even learning her name.

Disappointed in himself, Jaye is inspired to write an email in which he explores the importance of finding courage. "This moment is the greatest gift you will ever receive, for in this moment anything and everything can be enjoyed," he writes. The email goes viral, becomes an inspiration for other people who feel similarly stymied, and provides a thread that eventually weaves together the lives of several people in their quest for individual fulfillment.

Though the story begins with Jaye, it follows the stories of several other characters as well. Among these is Julie, an accountant who commits to an unfulfilling marriage and begins to lose her sense of self; Anna, a young widow trying to find the strength to make her way in a world she had never imagined facing alone; and Philip, a talented doctor whose self-absorption ultimately affects both his marriage and his medical practice in the worst possible ways.

Asher has an appealing writing style, and his technique for tying together the seemingly unconnected story lines is clever. The novel is virtually free of grammatical errors, and, for the most part, dialogue is natural.

Although the writing is crisp and mechanically sound, there is an occasional tendency to tell rather than show. For instance, a doctor updates his patient on an illness by first

summarizing all that has occurred during past appointments. This forced attempt to provide backstory through dialogue lacks credibility and interrupts the narrative's natural flow.

Asher's creative treatment of multiple story lines does build anticipation and hold the reader's interest, but the narrative structure itself can be confusing. Switching from character to character—and from past to present and back again—may leave some readers floundering to make sense of the chronology. This technique also leaves a few blank spots in terms of the development of personal relationships.

Asher's spare style will appeal to many readers, and *Insignificant Moments* remains a satisfying read with interesting characters and an uplifting message. This is a solid debut from a skilled writer who is worth watching.

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