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Clarion Review

Lifelines
Victoria Anne Wofford
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Past and present blur for New York City attorney Rhiannon O'Rourke, resulting in nightmares, daydreams, and flashbacks to her past lives as she attempts to defend her friend Allegra against murder charges. In addition to the case and her disturbing episodes, Rhiannon must negotiate her growing affection for detective Daniel McKenzie. In this debut novel, Victoria Anne Wofford weaves a compelling tale of a love across space and time.

Both Rhiannon and Daniel are practical people, and they have a hard time deciding whether or not Rhiannon's visions are real. But when they become more frequent and broader in scope, Daniel admits to having similar experiences. Against the drama of the murder trial and their tumultuous relationship, the two grapple with the significance of their psychic episodes.

Rhiannon, Daniel, and most of the secondary characters are vividly drawn. They speak and act like real people with complex motives. Wofford captures the way a couple's response to a situation can change over time, and how the slightest remark can reopen an old wound. While Rhiannon and Daniel butt heads over the metaphysical issue of past-life flashbacks, Wofford chronicles the ebb and flow of their rapport with astonishing realism. Many of the supporting characters come alive with their own distinct opinions and aspirations. In fact, the Big Apple itself becomes a character as readers follow Rhiannon through the city, absorbing the author's descriptions of different hot spots. In contrast to other players, though, Rhiannon's friend Allegra is flat; she is often described by other characters, but does very little.

Such a glitch is easily ignored in the face of lush romance and detailed description. Wofford creates rich worlds and characters in the past lives of Rhiannon and Daniel. Without missing a beat, the story bounces in and out of flashbacks, making each new setting as real as the story's present. No matter what era they are in, Wofford skillfully adapts the affair between Rhiannon and Daniel's counterparts to each particular setting. Snappy dialogue and the author's habit of dropping readers in medias res keep Lifelines moving at a pleasing clip.

Even so, some aspects of the book may jar readers. Near the end, the lovers' past lives take a turn that seems inconsistent with previous reincarnations. This odd course of events opens

up a new vista, but then leaves this possibility inadequately explored. Additionally, a key scene possesses potentially homophobic undertones. Overall, however, Lifelines takes readers on a sweeping sexy psychic sojourn.

Jill Allen