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Clarion Review

Fantasy

Once upon a Galaxy: In search of a lost true love...

Jacqueline Harvey
Hawthorne House
978-1-4628-6009-8
One Star (out of Five)

In this fantasy romance, Yvette believes she and Juan are destined to be together, and after eleven lifetimes of trying to find him, she is ready to give it one last try.

In *Once Upon a Galaxy: In Search of a Lost True Love*, Jacqueline Harvey's second novel, she conveys the love story of Yvette and Juan, two flame souls whose spirits take on a human, earthly form. In their human form, Juan is a professional musician on a world concert tour, while Yvette is a divorced mother of two grown children. She was initially married to Jean-Paul. They moved from their native Canada to southern California when the children were small, but when Jean-Paul left the family, Yvette was left to raise the children herself. Yvette now has a strained relationship with her son, who lives in Arizona, and her daughter, who is a recovering alcoholic, so she decides to turn her attention to reuniting with Juan, her true love. She follows him on his concert tour, traveling the world to see him perform.

While the premise is interesting and the story has the potential to captivate by allowing readers to escape into another world, the stream-of-consciousness, diary-like structure of the story, told from Yvette's viewpoint, results in a disorganized setting and plot. From the outset, the foundation of the fantasy world is not well established, so time frames are unclear, and characters,whose introductions are mostly through Yvette's vague summaries rather than active scenes, are underdeveloped. For example, when Yvette first discusses her children, she does not initially identify them as her children, and it takes several paragraphs to unpack the information. At other times, she describes the challenges her two adult children face, but then she suddenly shifts to discussing them as four- and seven-year-olds. Soon after, the discussion shifts from her trips to France, Madrid, and New York, to life back in California, without transitions or explanations to establish the time or setting change. As a result, the constant need to decipher the information takes the reader too far out of the story to engage and invest in Yvette's quest.

The narrative becomes repetitive, too. Throughout, Juan travels from city to city, Yvette follows, and their interactions are almost identical in every instance. As she follows him around the world while he is on tour, they have only passing contact with each other. And even though Juan treats Yvette badly, essentially ignoring her during the concerts, she maintains that she has "deep respect" for him. She appears to be more of a groupie than Juan's soul mate. As a result, the love story at the heart of the narrative is not fulfilling because while Yvette says Juan is her true love, there is little evidence of that.

Ultimately, the lack of a cohesive narrative structure results in a confusing story without a dramatic arc, making it difficult for readers to become fully immersed in this fantasy world.

Maria Siano