

## Space Heart: A Memoir in Stages

**Linda Buckmaster**

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Poetically composed vignettes form Linda Buckmaster's brilliant memoir *Space Heart*, which explores how cutting-edge technology and family life juxtapose in American culture. Buckmaster eloquently processes the difficulties she's faced with grace and skill.

Because she grew up in 1950s and '60s Florida near Cape Canaveral, Buckmaster is fully immersed in the culture of that time and place. The space race spurred by Sputnik, the Latin music and lifestyle brought to Florida by Cuban refugees, the peace-and-love mindset introduced by hippies: she is truly a product of her era and locale. Obsessed with astronauts and cowboys, she is a pioneer in her own right: when she was ten, she was one of the first open-heart surgery patients, the hole in her heart repaired with Teflon, the same material used in astronauts' suits.

The first half of the book explores Buckmaster's childhood. Her experiences are gorgeously rendered through her keen attention to detail. In the second half, she delves into the psychological impact of those events with a sense of nostalgia and yearning for comprehension of the past. Especially when she is writing about her brother and their strained relationship with their alcoholic, rocket engineer father, the depth of her intellectual understanding is heartrendingly revealed.

Each chapter could stand on its own as a prose-poetic essay. They reach far into the depths of the topics they explore. Woven together as they are, the chapters expose a puzzle of many mysterious pieces that fit beautifully together. From remembering mosquito trucks spewing DDT to watching the *Challenger* explosion live on television, all scenes are written with picturesque imagery and careful analysis of their purposefully included details.

A cathartic memoir, *Space Heart* offers cultural context for an extraordinary and unique life.

AIMEE JODOIN (November/December 2018)

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