

Three Minutes on Love

Roccie Hill

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Rosie Kettle led a quiet life in the 1960s as an only child, growing up in a desert town. Her father taught math to military brats; her somewhat eccentric mother taught her the secrets of everything from the roots of pen-and-ink drawing to gambling to how to organize an antiwar group in a military town.

The unorthodox upbringing doesn't fully prepare Rosie for the life she finds when she leaves home to attend art school in San Francisco in 1968. By the time she arrives, the Summer of Love is already history, and the San Francisco counter culture is disintegrating into disease and drugs. Armed with a camera and a desire to become a professional photographer, Rosie documents what she sees—not just people, but the detritus of collapsing lives.

A chance meeting with a Hungarian refugee named Peter gives Rosie a unique opportunity: the chance to photograph Robert Clay, a true blues player performing with a new band. Her photographs will appear in Peter's music magazine, a nice way to break in to a photojournalism career. When Clay commits suicide a few days after the shoot, Rosie's photos—the last ones ever taken of him—guarantee her success. The encounter with Clay has another result: Rosie meets David Wilderspin, the bluesman's former guitarist. After Clay's death, David turns to rock 'n' roll. He and Rosie become a couple, have a child, and each approaches the music industry from their respective roles as rock star and photojournalist. But lives that seem perfect are rarely what they appear to be. When tragedy strikes, David and Rosie are sent spinning.

Hill writes authoritatively in this debut novel about the California music scene of the 1970s. This isn't a romantic view of rock 'n' roll; Rosie talks about the connections, or lack thereof, in David's band: "Some bands were like families and some, like us, were like companies. However hard they worked or partied on tour, nobody ever went home together." Readers interested in complex human relationships and the period will enjoy this book—even if it doesn't make anyone want to go back in time.

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