

★ Look to the Sun

Emmie Mears

BHC Press (Oct 28, 2021)

Hardcover \$30.00 (332pp)

978-1-64397-157-5

In Emmie Mears's dystopian novel of political unrest *Look to the Sun*, a book, a pocket watch, and an unknown history bring two individuals together to combat an oppressive government.

As a political party called the National People's Voice (NPV) fights for "natural" families, and the destruction of women's rights gains popularity, with women's livelihoods placed under threat, Rose loses her father's beloved watch during a protest in Sanmarian. A photographer, Beo, finds it and takes a discreet photograph of Rose sobbing about the lost watch and all it represents to her. Beo and Rose then search for each other in the midst of growing chaos, joining forces with an organized group of rebels to ensure that the NPV never takes power.

Powerful cliffhangers and a sense of foreboding pull the story forward. The NPV's influence escalates; Rose's aunt's business is imperiled; and Beo's long-lost family members reemerge. The progression of Sanmarian from a city with pockets of unrest to one on the verge of collapse, with women and their allies flooding from it as refugees, happens at an exponential pace that mirrors reality. The creepy, overt positivity of the NPV's propaganda is a further source of disturbing realism.

Rose and Beo are enjoyable everyperson leads, wrapped up in the increasing drama of their world and becoming more involved as their personal investments grow. Their burgeoning potential romance, and their mutual love of a little-known book, are sweet subplots that ensure the book isn't all doom and gloom. Indeed, there's a hopeful story of fated friendship in the face of social and political unrest waiting here.

The terrifying timeliness of *Look to the Sun's* oppressive regime puts this book on par with the best of dystopian novels.

AIMEE JODOIN (November / December 2021)

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