

The Heart Is a Star

Megan Rogers

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Megan Rogers's engrossing novel *The Heart Is a Star* dissects life, love, and truth.

Layla, a troubled mother, wife, and anesthesiologist, navigates a turbulent life and an uncomfortable past. When her distant mother calls with suicidal thoughts near Christmas, Layla sets off to stop her. She also pursues long-desired answers about her late father.

Layla is an engaging if sorrowful heroine who dedicates her time and attention to caring for others, but repeated arguments with her husband and past abuses leave her feeling confused about how best to care for herself. This leads to an affair that serves only as a distraction, a medical oversight that results in the death of a patient, and mishandling difficult situations by retreating to nostalgic mementos and memories.

Layla's aunt is a strong presence throughout, accompanying her as both a confidant and an emotional anchor. Her late father is given a great deal of focus as well through flashbacks, and Layla returns to his astronomical teachings for comfort and direction: "The only thing an astronomer can do is decipher the past... . When we look at Sirius in the night sky, we are not seeing it as it is now but how it was 8.6 years ago."

The book is set primarily in the seaside town of Layla's past, a place of unpredictable weather, domineering nature, and a close-knit community whose residents Layla knows well. Many act as extended family members upon her return, including former neighbors and an old flame. All have their own struggles and secrets. And although lengthy descriptions and abundant flashbacks impede the book's pace, Layla's struggles and searches lead her to a satisfying, if bittersweet, place in time.

A novel with much to ponder, *The Heart Is a Star* follows a woman as she faces old wounds in order to heal.

BRANDON PAWLICKI (January / February 2025)

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