

Sept 20, 2018

Study of guilt on a damaged artist

Everything That Follows

Meg Little Reilly, Mira, 2018.

"There is," opens the prologue, "a moment in any event when momentum takes over and dictates the direction and force of everything that follows."

This moment occurs after glass-blower Kat Weber, her long-time partner Sean, and their wealthy friend Hunter have celebrated the sale of Kat's first major sculpture. They have just left the bar at which other Martha's Vineyard "natives" have been drinking to the Colum-

bus Day exodus of tourists, and where Kat, increasingly tipsy, has talked enthusiastically to Kyle, the new bartender.

Sean leaves Kat to walk home, but Hunter suggests that she, Kyle, and he have a nightcap on his father's boat. Kat soon sees it's a mistake, for a few hundred yards from shore, Hunter idles the boat and sinks into a drunken daze, and Kyle's flirtation turns into a threatening advance. As he traps Kat against the cabin, she pushes him away,

Hunter staggers to her aid – and suddenly Kyle pitches overboard. Peering into the dark and choppy sea, they see nothing ... and do nothing.

Hunter pilots the boat back to the dock and begs Kat not to call the police. He's well-known as the dissolute son of Senator Briggs, who is up for reelection in November. More scandal, and his father will lose. Against her better judgment, Kat complies.

The rest of the book portrays the momentum that takes over as Kat and Hunter's failure to report the accident stretches out from hours to days to weeks. Was it an accident, or does his disappearance make them murderers? Senator Briggs's "fixer" doesn't care: he offers Kat \$1.3

million as hush money. She initially refuses, but she is haunted by the memory of Kyle's face as he pitched overboard and, after Kyle's body is found, terrified of being arrested. Noticing that Kat and Hunter are keeping something from him, Sean becomes jealous, but when

Kat tells him their secret, he is so shocked that he stops speaking to her. Meanwhile, in a scene suggesting symbolically how quickly life can change, the cliff on which the glass-blowing shop (owned by Sean's mother, Kat's mentor) is situated collapses, taking the studio and

Kat's apartment with it. With no place to live and beset by panic attacks, Kat has to question the "new self" she created to escape the effects of her abused childhood.

Among other things, she realizes that her relationship with moralistic Sean has been deeply affected by the Vineyard, a vacation land where "you can be forever suspended in a mythology of your own making."

Though this is billed as a thriller, it is actually a study of guilt's effect on a damaged but essentially decent artist and (to a lesser extent) a dissolute, unhappy scion of a political family. Though that study tends to be repetitious and a little slow, it is carried by the vivid portrait of off-season Martha's Vineyard.

The well-described scenery, the portrait of a vacationland without vacationers, the poignant portrayals of the immense

differences in income between wealthy summer folks and hard-up island dwellers are all extremely compelling.

Also of great interest are the scenes describing Kat's glass-blowing, an art with which few people are familiar, and which Reilly portrays in knowledgeable detail.



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