

My friend marilyn: the new great american destination

Literature



Everything in *My Friend Marilyn*, by Christopher Lentz, was adorably extra-large, from the fiery, chubby heroine who charms everyone in her path to the secrets she uncovers in her sweet, small town. When our heroine Penny, a dime-store cashier, wins a week as Marilyn Monroe's personal assistant, all kinds of adventures are set in motion. There's no typical narrative arc, instead, readers are pulled along with Penny as she meets a handsome and mysterious stranger, goes in drag with Jack Lemmon and Tony Curtis, discovers family secrets, rescues a little boy from a dangerous undertow and becomes best girlfriends with Marilyn Monroe. Oh yeah, and she sees ghosts. I can't cram this drama-filled week at the Del Coronado into an easy logline, simply because so much happens. I loved the way secrets were revealed and without giving away spoilers there really were a lot of dramatic secrets revealed in this novel. Penny takes a lot in stride, responding with cheerful quips, but I was stunned to discover the family secrets, Marilyn's secrets, Penny's secret admirer, and more. Fans of family sagas, historical novels or just old Hollywood glamour will love this too. You'll have to overlook some practical questions as you read. Penny doesn't seem to actually do anything as Marilyn's assistant, and loads of people conveniently wander by when needed. But ignore the practicalities of how anyone in this town ever gets any work done for the sweet fairytale romance in this book.

There are quite a few errors with line breaks, either unnecessary ones after a dialogue tag and before the same character finishes speaking, or missing ones after a dialogue tag, before a different character begins speaking. The personality-infused dialogue made it easy to reread and tell who was saying what, unfortunately, many formatting errors made it necessary to reread.

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There are some mistakes with homonyms (discrete for discreet, for example), but nothing that made it hard to understand the story. It just felt a bit unpolished. I didn't love the fade out - fade in between each scene. I thought it was unnecessarily gimmicky. I could see Penny's love of film in everything she said and, so there was no need to pretend the novel was a script.

The small coastal town made a lovely setting, although with characters like Penny and Marilyn Monroe in the foreground, the background was just icing on the cake. There's real love for the Del Coronado hotel here, and I savored those descriptions. We read to imagine ourselves elsewhere, don't we? And this vintage beach hotel, with layers of secrets and drama, was a perfect escape. I also really enjoyed the attention to period details, like tapioca pudding and waist cinchers, in every description.

My Friend Marilyn was a charming, creative story with that touch of old Hollywood magic. I rate this book 3 out of 4 stars, and hope that a future update will fix the formatting errors.