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Orinda Author Discusses Sequel at Orinda Books

By Lou Fancher



Tamara Ireland Stone Photo provided

Orinda author Tamara Ireland Stone catapulted onto the young adult fiction scene in 2012 with "Time Between Us," her debut novel about young romance set against a time-travel landscape. Scheduled to appear at Orinda Books Dec. 7, Stone will discuss and sign copies of the recently-released sequel companion book, "Time After Time" (Disney-Hyperion, Oct. 2013).

Stone's first book introduced readers to Anna, an Evanston, Ill., 16-year-old who chases her travel dreams by running track, hoping a college scholarship will be her magic carpet out of town. It's 1995 and Anna feels stuck, until one day when she meets Bennett, a boy she's fated to know but never supposed to meet. Sound edgy? Well, it almost is, because Bennett actually lives in San Francisco - in 2012. He time travels into Anna's life from the land of cell phones and Coldplay, long after pay phones and annual Michael Jackson hits have become mere memories.

As their chemistry swirls into a heady, young-love elixir, Bennett realizes time warps' impending complications and attempts to stay away. Unable to resist, he returns multiple times: looking for his sister, Brooke, who he lost in 1994, whisking Anna off to tiny islands in Thailand or to Paris, and getting "knocked back" to 2012 whenever he comes close to encountering his (1995) baby-self.

In one complicated "do over" - Bennett can bounce back hours or days within the 1995 frame - they avert a devastating car accident that threatens to end the life of Anna's best friend, Emma. Their traveling causes residual severe nausea and desperate thirst, but more, playing with fate leads both characters to wrestle with each other and the ethical consequences of time travel.

Stone handles the push of infatuation with skill, capturing the gush of a young teen's thoughts and words without derogatory, adult shadings. Anna's voice, as

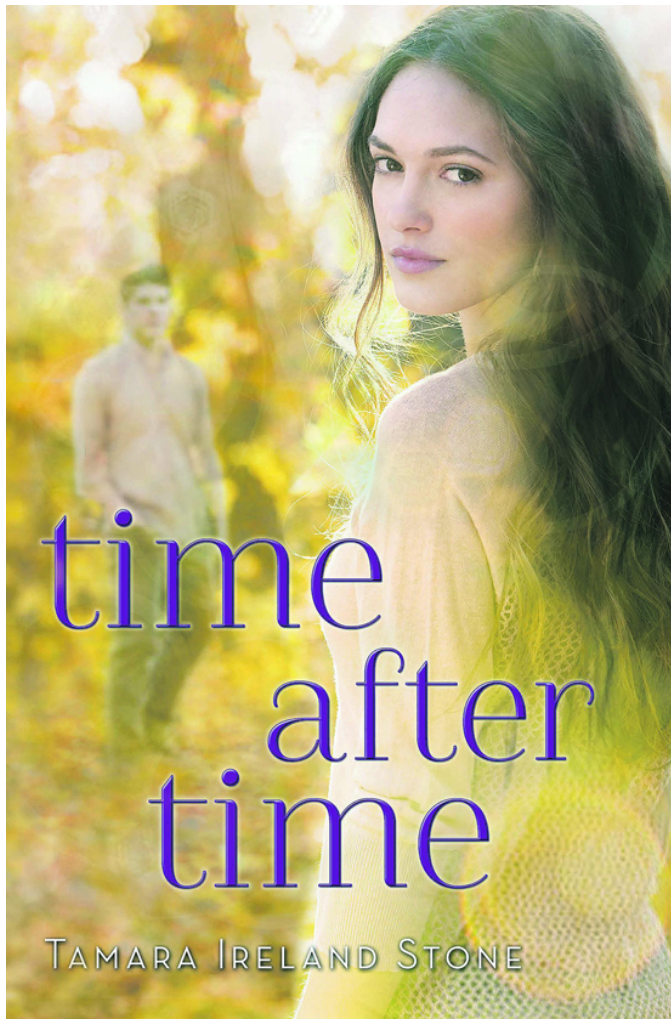
narrator, is convincing, especially in the mix of feelings she has for Emma, when her long-time friend becomes involved with Anna's almost-love-interest, Justin. The plot tangles slightly, and Stone drops a major plot line (the sister) entirely, but her first book's crisp action and sweet romantic angle have translated into its being printed in over 20 countries and optioned for film by CBS Films.

"Time After Time" switches the narrative to Bennett's viewpoint, allowing readers to climb inside his thoughts as he and Anna fight to find consistency between their surreal calendars. Bennett engages in more "do overs" and Bay Area readers will recognize local stories. (A father and two children on bicycles, struck by a speeding driver parallels the tragic deaths of Soliaman Nuri and his daughters in Concord in 2012.) Bennett's headaches escalate into prolonged nose bleeds and near blackouts. He and Anna rip at their relationship when they begin to disagree about the wisdom of manipulating events.

Regretfully, Stone's writing is far more layered and believable with Anna as the protagonist than with Bennett at the helm. In this second book, we learn more about Bennett's family and his morality, but fail to move beyond a repetitious, shallow treatment that ultimately bogs down the book's momentum. Despite Bennett's increasing anger - at his father and Anna for pushing him to "fix the world," and at himself, for giving into it - the tension isn't enough to sustain a transformational arc. Stone's solid writing chops keeps it from becoming droll, and it's a double-edged criticism to say that "Time After Time" fails to propel page-turning in the same way as its predecessor.

Fans - and there are many, "liking" Stone on Facebook and lining up the stars on Goodreads' review site - clearly relish this paired book set. Readers who encounter the time-travel novels by reading out of sequence can follow the plot without having read the debut book. But if you do read "Time After Time" first, don't be afraid to time travel backwards yourself: "Time Between Us" is available for purchase and offers Stone's best writing to date.

Tamara Ireland Stone will discuss and sign copies of "Time After Time" at 3 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 7 at Orinda Books, 276 Village Square in Orinda. For information, visit orindabooks.com.



Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

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