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The Time It Takes to Fall: A Novel

Margaret Lazarus Dean

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It is the early 1980s, and America is in love with space. Growing up in the shadow of Cape Canaveral, young Dolores Gray has it particularly bad: she dreams of becoming an astronaut.

At school, Dolores finds herself caught between her desire for popularity and her secret friendship with the smartest and most unpopular boy in her class, whose father is NASA's Director of Launch Safety. At home, discord begins to grow between her parents when her father's job as a NASA technician is threatened.

Looking for escape, Dolores loses herself in her scrapbook, where she files away newspaper articles about the astronauts and the shuttles, weather reports on launch scrubs, and stories about her idol, Judith Resnik.

Then, on the morning of January 28, 1986, seventy-three seconds after liftoff, the space shuttle *Challenger* explodes, killing all seven astronauts on board -- including Judith Resnik. It is a moment that shakes America to its core, and nowhere is it more deeply felt than in central Florida. Dolores becomes determined to reconstruct what went wrong, both in her parent's marriage and at NASA, in the hope that she can save her father's job and keep her family together.

The Time It Takes to Fall is a coming-of-age novel that deftly weaves the story of one family's drama into the larger picture of a touchstone event in American history. It is at once an intimate look at a young girl's loss of innocence and a portrait of America's loss of innocence -- the end of an era that romanticized manned space flight and would never be the same again.

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