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Synopsis Books:

In 1963, when poet Barrington was 19, an event sliced her life in two: the cruise ship Lakonia departed Southampton, England, with her parents aboard. Three days later, north of Madeira, a fire broke out, and 131 passengers, including her parents, were left stranded without lifeboats and drowned. (Her mother had often predicted she would die at sea, yet Barrington's father had been fond of egging his wife into sailing races and other water sports.)

In this accomplished memoir, Barrington recalls the three years that followed this incident, in which she fled to a small town in northern Spain; her book doubles as the lesbian coming-out story of a young woman who must resolve her truncated relationship with her parents. Flashbacks to a lonely childhood in which she couldn't connect with either parent and particularly despised her "pigheaded" father give way to a future in which Barrington is finally able to achieve a degree of resolution around her loss. And as Barrington recounts her adventures in Catalonia, where she worked as the tour guide at a busy winery, the narrative reveals the complex ways in which she began to find, and accept, herself.

Throughout, her writing is superb; she evokes smalltown Spain under Franco in lush detail with solid philosophical insight into the tragedy that changed her life: "What I had gleaned from my parents' death was not that ships are dangerous, but that what you fear most is." Among the growing number of memoirs, this is a gem. -- *Publishers Weekly*

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