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Landline - Rainbow Rowell

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Nostalgia is a curious thing. Each of us has memories littered with objects that especially resonate, for one reason or another, when we stumble across them again. For example, when I was a teenager, my parents had an old, heavy, yellow rotary dial [phone](#). The heavy yellow receiver was connected to the phone with a coiled yellow cord. I have memories of sitting on the floor in the dark, that old yellow phone cradled in my lap, sharing hours-long conversations filled with teenage angst. Memories like that match those of Georgie McCool, the protagonist of Rainbow Rowell's latest book, *Landline*.

The audiobook version of Rowell's book, wonderfully expressed by reader Rebecca Lowman, introduced me to one of the most interesting characters I've ever encountered. Georgie McCool, unlike the protagonists in a number of other books I've read, has all of the flaws that many of us struggle with: self-doubt and recrimination, physical imperfections, forgetfulness and other time-management challenges, a tendency toward being single-minded (at the expense of other priorities or people), a [desire](#) to be the center of attention. In short, Rainbow Rowell's Georgie McCool comes across as a very real character who is likable in spite of her flaws (or, perhaps, because of them) and whom you'll want to learn more about.

Georgie's story is that of a talented television comedy writer who, after meeting and marrying her college sweetheart, starts writing for subsequently better and better sitcoms. At the story's beginning, she's one of the head writers for a hit sitcom, and a [network](#) executive has just green-lighted a sitcom that Georgie and her writing partner, Seth, have dreamed of producing their entire professional [lives](#). It's a dream come true...or is it?

When Georgie's forced to choose between her professional dream and a family vacation to visit her in-laws, the seemingly obvious choice that she makes causes her to realize that her other dream—of a loving marriage with her husband, Neal, and sharing in the raising of their two daughters—has been slipping away. Unable to concentrate on [work](#) and feeling utterly alone over the holidays, Georgie heads to her mom's place, and, unable to reach Neal on his [cell phone](#), makes one last attempt to [call](#) her in-laws' landline using the old, heavy, yellow rotary dial phone in her childhood bedroom. When someone answers, Georgie is initially ecstatic...until she realizes that she's speaking to her late father-in-law, who passed away years before, and the Neal she ends up talking to is the college boyfriend who also left her to travel [home](#) to Omaha for Christmas 15 years before.

Unable to reach her Neal, the Neal of the present, Georgie continues to call the Neal she originally fell in love with using that [old phone](#). That "magic phone"—or possibly that cursed phone. Is it magic or insanity? Can conversations with someone in the past help save a relationship in the present? And, perhaps most importantly, is that why she's been given this opportunity—so she can save her marriage? Or is the crazy situation that she's found herself in simply forcing her to consider other, bleaker alternatives that, though unwanted, might be better for everyone else but her?

Landline took me on a very emotional and intensely romantic journey. It speaks about the nature of love, the challenge of balancing a career and family, the importance of family and friends. Mostly though, Rainbow Rowell's book reminded me of the need to maintain and nurture the relationships we value most. Because, if we allow the day-to-day challenges of life to get in the way, we may lose more than we can imagine. And that's a most valuable lesson indeed.

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