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## Review of Coincidence by J. W. Ironmonger

Kevin Clouther

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## Coincidence.

By J. W. Ironmonger.

Mar. 2014. 304p. HarperPerennial, paper, \$14.99 (9780062309891).

Ironmonger's first novel published in the U.S. charts Azalea Lewis and her complicated family across the British Isles and East Africa. The unlikely organizing principle is the seeming inevitability of disaster on Midsummer's Day, a fatal date across several decades. Although Ironmonger uses multiple characters and points of view, the novel centers on a love story between Azalea and an academic, Thomas Post, whose research focuses on probability. Ironmonger's prose is easy to follow, even with his peripatetic approach. His extended discussions of free will flirt with big questions, though the playful sparring stops short of challenging the reader. Ironmonger is at his best when he's able to link the various stories in a manner that's neither forced nor indulgent, in a modest but nevertheless lyric style: "That fisherman would be the son of a fisherman, and he the son of another, and so it would go back into the past and perhaps into the future as if the pages of the book had already been written." —*Kevin Cloutier*

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