

***Always Something There to Remind Me* by Beth Harbison**
St. Martin's Press, 2011 358 pages

Erin Edwards found the love of her life at the age of fifteen. Nate Lawson was her first love and the only guy she could picture in her future. In 1985, she was confident that they'd marry, have a family and grow old together.

Their relationship ended one awful night in 1987. Erin made a mistake that Nate couldn't forgive. Their breakup was nearly Erin's undoing. She couldn't snap out of the misery that consumed her, and refused to believe that Nate would never take her back.

In 2011, Erin is a successful event planner for a posh hotel in northern Virginia. She's in the midst of planning a mega sweet sixteen birthday party for Roxanne, a spoiled rich girl who is accustomed to having her every wish granted instantly. To make matters even more stressful, the party is part of a TV reality show.

Erin's fifteen-year-old daughter, Camilla, is the complete opposite of Roxanne. She's a loving, happy and well-adjusted girl. Cam's dad died when she was three, and Erin has done a great job as a single mom.

Then there's Rick. Handsome, successful, stable Rick seems to be the total package. He's crazy about Erin, and Erin is content in her relationship with him. There's no breathtaking chemistry, but Erin believes that she missed her only chance for head-over-heels love before she graduated from high school.

All in all, Erin's life is as close to perfect as it's ever going to get. Which is why she's baffled when Rick proposes, and the only thing that pops into her mind is a name – Nate Lawson. Panicking, Erin asks Rick for some time to think about her answer as she tries to stuff the debris of her relationship with Nate back into the past.

Erin's best friend, Jordan, a psychologist and a firsthand witness to the devastating aftermath of the breakup with Nate, urges Erin to face the ghosts of her past and move forward with her life. Then a chance encounter with Nate brings the past to the front and center of Erin's present, and the tidy life she's built for herself begins to unravel.

Author Beth Harbison spins Erin's story in chapters that alternate between the eighties and the present day, skillfully placing her readers in the middle of every scene, no matter the time or place.

It was the characters that made Harbison's book so gripping. I cared about Erin and her dilemma from the first chapter, and couldn't resist skipping ahead to the last page for a preview of how it was all going to turn out. The secondary characters such as Jordan, Cam, Rick and even Roxanne added flashes of insight, tenderness and humor that made the story ring true over and over again.

Always Something There to Remind Me is by turns poignant, funny, nostalgic and scathingly truthful. Erin's efforts to come to terms with her past leave her facing a future that carries the possibility of true happiness along with the potential for heartbreak all over again.

Heather Holley-Hall is the Head of Branch Libraries with Alamance County Public Libraries. She may be reached at 336-570-6730 or hnhall@alamancelibraries.org.