



Grounds for Divorce

Remy Maisel

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In Remy Maisel's light, charming novel *Grounds for Divorce*, an outmatched paralegal attempts to solve the Israel-Palestine conflict in an unusual way.

Emily, a dedicated underachiever who's just been fired from an unpaid internship, is out of options when she elects to answer a mysterious summons from the state department. Though she is most decidedly not the Emily they sent for, she takes on the gargantuan job placed before her. She will be Israel's legal representative in the task of resolving Israel-Palestine disputes via mediated divorce proceedings. Her legal experience may be nil, but her childhood made her "a certifiable expert in un-amicable divorces." Thus, Emily jets toward Jerusalem to fix a fracas four thousand years in the making—with the help of her ex, Mike, a biblical expert teaching at Hebrew University.

Maisel's is a carefree approach to the conflict. Israel is developed in terms of Bamba consumption and Shabbat observance, and Palestine in terms of privation. Such shorthand renders the conflict itself somewhat of a foil: the story is much more about millennial ennui than it is about politics. Emily, an American Jew of a certain age, is more concerned with finding personal meaning than she is with the Middle East. She's looped into the scheme by a US official's apparent mistake, which he covers with the raucous, prejudiced assumption that Emily, by virtue of her heritage, "must know all about the conflict and stuff." And while Emily knows that she's not the perfect person to solve the dispute, she's willing to try. She looks world leaders in the face, is infuriatingly reasonable—and thus, despite others' double-dealing, may just be the one to broker a deal.

A wish-fulfillment fantasy for an underappreciated generation, *Grounds for Divorce* is a frothy, sometimes satirical take on looming political and social conflicts.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (November / December 2021)

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