FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Historical

In the King's Arms
Sonia Taitz
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It is said that there are no new stories, only new ways of telling the same ones: jealousy, revenge, ambition, and of course, love—imperfect love, unrequited love, and naturally, inconvenient love that crosses taboo boundaries. This last, when it's finely done, is the province of gifted poets, playwrights, and novelists, and when it's done badly results in many terrible young adult novels and Lifetime movies. Thankfully, author Sonia Taitz has written a book that is more Masterpiece Theater.

Mid-1970s London may be thirty years postwar, but New Yorker Lily Taub, who embarks for graduate studies at Oxford University, can't seem to neatly cover the territory between the Europe her Holocaust survivor parents remember—and burned into her own consciousness—and the bright, shining new world she longs to prove exists, and to inhabit.

Once across the pond, she falls ill and a bit too easily into a too tiny group of friends, spending her energies on two brothers. One seems cut of the same temperamental cloth as Lily, though naturally it's the other, more mercurial, seemingly unsuited knave sibling to whom she's drawn; and with Julian, they're giddy moths to one another's flames, mutual, smoldering and inevitable.

However, the reception offered to Lily on a holiday visit to the brother's home is less a beckoning hearth, and more a barely contained, and not always polite, firestorm; an unapologetic anti-Semitic and archly ethnocentric undercurrent prevails, though Taitz is careful to create complicated characters whose actions and attitudes may disgust, but who nonetheless retain an underlying and hopeful humanity.

Lily trudges through Christmas dinner and British customs, but when a New Year's Eve accident is misinterpreted, she knows she must leave not just the house, but the brothers, too. Months pass, and in the end it is a child who leads them all to a new place, which Lily recognizes from the war stories that live in her as one where everyone always wants to be:

connected.

This novel is richly embroidered, each page a highly polished prose gem, rendered with a loving literary hand, a gift to readers, a mitzvah. In the end, Lily and Julian, human, young, and in love, are not just enough, but everything. ?(

Lisa Romeo