



It's Not Like I Knew Her

Pat Spears

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It's Not Like I Knew Her shares the important and oft-neglected history of lesbian bars in twentieth-century America.

Pat Spears's *It's Not Like I Knew Her* is a vivid account of a young lesbian living in the deep South from the 1940s through the sixties. This dark tale captures the complexity of living a hidden life, covering poverty and hardship and remaining forthrightly queer.

Jodie Taylor grew up in poverty, the illegitimate child of an unstable mother and a father who was already married. It's not just Jodie's birth that sets her apart from those around her, but her own knowledge that she's not like the other girls. Eventually Jodie escapes her small town in the hope of finding a community of women like her. Her luck runs out in Selma, Alabama, where she is able to scrape together a life of tough work, a hidden lesbian bar, and a dependence on hard alcohol.

As dark as Jodie's story is, there are always moments of light. These are the moments wrestled from an intolerant society: the stolen kisses, the midnight meetings at a bar where women could dance with women, rare times of truth and honesty. Such moments allow Jodie and others in her marginalized, hidden community to survive in a world that will not even acknowledge them.

At times, Jodie seems to stumble into the various famous moments of her period. The civil rights movement gathers steam around her, though it only receives her passing glance, and fades away during most of the book. Such glances are intriguing and leave one wanting more.

It's Not Like I Knew Her shares the important and oft-neglected history of lesbian bars in twentieth-century America, bringing to life one isolated version of the enterprise, kept open only through bribery, and touched with danger for all patrons. As much as these places were areas of community, they also required great courage in the women who sought them out. *It's Not Like I Knew Her* is a story that will be appreciated by many lesbian and bisexual women looking to explore their history, as well as by any reader of realistic fiction.

CONSTANCE AUGUSTA A. ZABER (Fall 2016)

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