FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Clarion Review

Historical

Sunshine Follows the Rain
Polly Holden
AuthorHouse UK
978-1-4685-7910-9
Three Stars (out of Five)

This captivating story of postwar Britain features unique characters facing complicated changes in their lives and in society.

An innocent but forbidden romance and a country recovering from the ravages of World War II have a lot in common in this novel by Polly Holden. From both vantage points the pain of misunderstanding and conflict is ultimately rewarded with forgiveness and hope.

Though described on the jacket as young Sylvia's coming-of-age story, the heroine of *Sunshine Follows the Rain* is really the girl's mother, Peggy, who tactfully guides the story through the realities of rationing, prejudice, abandonment, and atonement in postwar England.

Peggy is a dutiful wife, raising a daughter of her own along with two evacuee children from London. She works in houses of the more socially elite villagers; her day revolves around cleaning and laundering for others and preparing meals for her husband, who works on a nearby farm. She is a voice of reason for a flurry of women who still believe in the importance of their social influence; a confidant for the neighbor next door who fell in love with an American soldier while her husband was away; and a good friend to a wounded man living as a recluse in one of the homes where she is employed.

Although Sylvia is a secondary character, her relationship with Karl, a German POW, is a tonic against the discord in postwar England. Karl has to process the role Germany played in the war and somehow accept that he can't help his mother and sister who are left behind in Russian-ruled East Germany. The profundity of the issues beneath their bashful courtship makes the relationship between Sylvia and Karl more heroic and satisfying.

The development of unique characters and the graceful setting of each room in Peggy's home and village make *Sunshine Follows the Rain* a charming read. The war has brought much

complexity to the otherwise simple lives of the characters, and the shift toward social liberation and gender equality is on the horizon as well.

While the story is captivating, reading it can be frustrating. The front and back covers are completely disjointed from each other, and neither is relevant to the book. On the front, a somber black-and-white photograph of a young girl appears to be from the turn of the century rather than 1945-1947. The back cover is a more modern scene depicting what might be the writer's own sitting room.

The text contains misused punctuation and misspellings, which is disappointing, given the high quality of the story itself. Some missing or confusing punctuation may have been an attempt to create a more conversational voice, but the effect is lost amid the errors. Yet the book delivers a meaningful look at postwar communities. The great tragedies that impact the characters do not overpower their successes, allowing for a more intimate celebration of the human spirit.

Sara Budzik