



Together They Overcame

Juliet C.B. Aharoni

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This touching, tender story of love in Israel will capture the hearts of romance enthusiasts seeking down-to-earth drama.

Cultural dominance rooted in tradition meets free-spirited passion in *Together They Overcame*, an absorbing tale of young love. Juliet C.B. Aharoni straightforwardly reveals what happens when indoctrinated expectations clash with natural urges. The title itself speaks volumes, for this story is an ongoing struggle, a fight to override the familial forces that threaten to keep an eager man and a sensible woman apart.

Set in Israel after the 1956 Sinai campaign, an eighteen-year-old nursing student leaves her home in South Africa, following her physician boyfriend to help wounded soldiers. While working at a hospital, Rosalind encounters Eyal, a Jewish patient. He boldly flirts with her and eventually talks her into marrying him. Initially, they live under the same roof as his parents. Though the stereotypical genre romance often ends with matrimony, marriage is where this book's conflict starts, forcing the plot into a juxtaposition of explicit sex scenes and domestic battles with a difficult mother-in-law.

Rosalind is from a German Catholic background, not ideally suited to a traditional living arrangement in Israel. As Eyal's family looks on with skepticism, she tries to adapt to her new environment and even adopts his faith, while choosing to teach instead of nurse. Strong emotional turbulence underlying the so-called conjugal bliss leads the newlyweds into awkward interludes. Verging on a series of ritualized procedures, the ingenue turns into a skilled lover as she strives to please her new husband.

The couple's sex-propelled relationship is deeply poignant; descriptions also include blatantly graphic details—Eyal's active member threatens to steal the show. They enjoy their bodies like any young couple in love, yet they seek more than sheer pleasure: "They moved to their bed where they used sex as a means to heal her pain and his confusion." Without question, Rosalind and Eyal care for each other and share a sincere bond of friendship, yet sex takes precedence over romance in their marriage. While this touching, tender story maintains high literary standards, the tendency to reduce the sex act to an obligatory and oft-repeated rite may dilute the appeal for those expecting lighthearted interaction.

The personalities of both hero and heroine emerge with powerful clarity. Rosalind's impressions of Eyal are mixed. "He had shown consideration and decency when they were alone. His conduct, when his family was present was something else; it lacked civility and kindness. He was rude mocking her accent when she tried to speak Hebrew. She felt assaulted by the family, when they used her as their punching bag." It is the dominance of Eyal's mother, along with Rosalind's lack of familiarity with the region, that creates the underlying insecurity. The compulsion to physically prove their affection seems intertwined with this psychological unrest.

The author has lived in Israel and deftly incorporates her experiences into this fiction debut. Her writing will capture the hearts of romance enthusiasts seeking down-to-earth drama rather than immersion in a mere storybook fantasy.

JULIA ANN CHARPENTIER (August 26, 2014)

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