

Loved it! 🥰

A short coming-of-age story with endearing characters, plenty of heart, and a refreshing amount of maturity.

Synopsis

It's never easy to go back, especially when the memories you've been running from suddenly resurface. When Annie returns to her home village after a long absence, she rediscovers the diary she kept the year she turned 16, the year that changed her life. Set in a small English village during World War II, follow Annie as she navigates a blossoming love story with a handsome soldier and her growing affection for an evacuee child. With tender and amusing moments, this story explores love, resilience and loss with a fresh new voice.

When preparing to confront the past, what better way to do so than to look through your old diary? That is the question posited in *One Year, One Night*, a historical fiction short story by S.L. Roman. Taking place in 1960, the story follows Annie, a woman returning to the fictional small village of Millside, England she grew up in. Annie is not happy when she realizes famous actress Suzie Bell is paying a visit to her village for an event. There seems to be bad blood between the two from previous encounters, and Annie is none too happy to see her again. While waiting for the event, Annie visits an old family friend for some tea. Upon walking downstairs, she finds her old diary from her teenage years and decides to read it, taking her back to 1939. Through a dual timeline between the diary and the present, the reader is taken on a poignant journey of self-discovery, love, and tragedy as Annie comes of age in her small community during World War II. This all culminates in an evocative climax, the aftermath of which explains and explores the rift between Annie and Suzie.

Much like a delicious meal made by a doting parent, there are plenty of ingredients present in *One Year, One Night* that make it instantly lovable. For starters, the cast of characters feels genuine, realistic, and endearing. From the sassy, strong Annie to the kind, sweet Ben even to the curmudgeonly Aunt Betty, the characters are all interesting and engaging. Even the secondary and tertiary characters all feel like they have their own distinct personalities--the mark of a truly capable and skilled author.

Another sign of a competent writer is being able to write believable and well-written character relationships, which are fully present in this short story. Annie details many of her relationships with other people, the arcs of which are ever-changing and complex. Three notable relationship arcs in Annie's story are her growing relationship with young evacuee Ben, her blossoming romance with a soldier named Remy, and her complex friendship with Peg. Finally, Roman's writing style is simple and assured, able to effectively write both humorous scenes and dramatic, mature themes with grace and tenderness. The mature themes are especially present when tragedy strikes near the end, the ramifications of which are detailed to full effect.

Overall, *One Year, One Night* is an exceptional novel with a sense of humor and plenty of heart. With a fun cast of characters and a plot that is both charming and daunting at times, Roman has written a cozy historical fiction and has *elevated* it with realistic drama and their capable pen. It is a short story that defies the pitfalls of many short stories before it: it really, *truly* feels whole. Human. Despite the dual timeline format being a bit confusing at first, the ensuing narrative rectifies this quickly, leading to a climax that is both powerful and emotionally devastating. **I would strongly recommend this novel, especially to lovers of historical fiction, World War II stories, and short love stories. A powerful meditation on the ever-changing nature of human relationships over time, *One Year, One Night* is a must-read.**

Reviewed by Jason Street (Reedsy & GoodReads)