

Ain't No Grave

Mary Glickman

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Love overcomes racial and religious barriers in Mary Glickman's historical novel *Ain't No Grave*, set against the backdrop of the lynching of Leo Frank and the founding of the Anti-Defamation League.

Max and Ruby are friends and outsiders. Max is the only child of the only Jewish family in town, and Ruby is tall, gangly, and Black. They worry that their friendship is doomed: in Jim Crow-era Georgia, children of different races only play together until they are old enough to know "better." Indeed, forces outside of the children's control end up pulling them apart. But later, their orbits recollide: Ruby comes to Max for help after having been assaulted by her boyfriend. Max helps Ruby disappear from town; she heads to Atlanta for a new life, with Max not far behind.

The pacing is manipulated to the benefit of narrative tension, with Ruby's perilous move to Atlanta covered in detail: the city "dazzled her. She'd never seen so many huge buildings ... She'd never seen a paved street... Everything around her looked bright and new." Meanwhile, the same period in Max's life is summarized, reflecting his feelings of having been left behind.

Later, as a reporter for an Atlanta newspaper in 1915, Max covers the trial of Jewish factory superintendent Leo Frank for the murder of Mary Phagan. Fearing for his life as a fellow Jew, Max witnesses how antisemitic fervor takes hold. Frank is lynched by a mob whose members decide to take "justice" into their own hands, and Georgia's Jewish community is shattered. At the same time, Max and Ruby reunite and fall in love, hoping for a better future together.

The novel *Ain't No Grave* is an eventful coming-of-age novel about the precariousness of Black and Jewish lives in the South.

ERIKA HARLITZ KERN (July / August 2024)

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