

One Year, One Night

S. L. Roman

Kevin Hopgood, Illustrator

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S. L. Roman's historical novel *One Year, One Night* is centered by a teenager's World War II diary.

In 1960, Annie returns to Millside for a World War II commemoration that a famous actress is expected to attend. While there, she recalls her upbringing as the daughter of a hardware shop owner and a misfit mother during the war. Her whimsical childhood diary is there to assist with its sketches of family members and community members. Annie's annoying younger brother seemed to be favored; her aunt became a long-term visitor in her household; and her family took in a young evacuee. After her father enlisted, the family faced further hardships.

Annie as a child is a humorous narrator who proffers sometimes sharp opinions about her friends and neighbors. In her view, Millside is old-fashioned, with news traveling fast and resulting in sometimes harsh judgments between neighbors. And its citizens are susceptible to wartime propaganda too: when evacuees arrive, housing them is hard, bringing forth antisemitic sentiments and revealing expectations regarding free farm labor. There is some excitement after an army regiment arrives in town—and some prudishness and fear for the town's young women. Through it all, Annie is upbeat; even through dark moments, her account is breezy.

Annie also records observations of Millside's resident fusspot, who sounds the air-raid sirens, and about the parson's daughter, her rival. She meets a soldier toward whom she feels romantic interest; at a community dance, eyebrows are raised. Otherwise, Annie's memories of the war are quite general: people ration and make do with what their gardens produce.

Made up, in part, of a girl's diary entries, the historical novel *One Year, One Night* is a lively account of life in Britain during World War II.

KAREN RIGBY (July / August 2024)

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