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Louisa

Simone Zelitch

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Louisa

Simone Zelitch

Louisa Simone Zelitch
"I smoked my first cigarette when I was six years old.... Now where the hell can I get a cigarette?"

The year is 1949 and Nora, a prickly, strong-willed survivor of the Holocaust, has just walked off the boat in Haifa with her German daughter-in-law, Louisa. Nora expects to be met by her cousin Bela, a Zionist pioneer she has loved since they were children. But Bela fails to appear, and the women enter an absorption camp for immigrants to await an uncertain future. How will they fit into a society that does not believe in looking back? Louisa, the German, proves a genius at self-invention,in many ways the perfect Israeli. Nora, the survivor, continues to search for Bela--who may not want to be found--and responds to her new home with a cranky and ironic distance that rises like a wall of barbed wire. What is she protecting behind that wall? The past, and its secrets.

In Louisa, Simone Zelitch brings to life, with all the authority and inventive power of an old master, a story of hidden passion, broken dreams, and unexpected reconciliation. Stranded in a new land that asks them to look to the future, both women are forced to face the past and the responsibility each bears for what they have lost. Nora knows how to survive. Louisa must teach her how to forgive.

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