

Booklist

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Kantika.

By Elizabeth Graver

Apr. 2023. 304p. Holt/Metropolitan, \$27.99 (9781250869845)

With great reverence and respect, Graver fictionalizes the saga of her maternal grandmother, Rebecca Levy, weaving a personal historical tale that follows the determined and courageous Sephardic young woman from her early high-class childhood in Istanbul to her family's migration to Spain in the late 1920s to a peripatetic adulthood that brings her to Cuba and New York in the 1930s as the world braces for the onset of WWII. Following an unsatisfying marriage that ends with the premature death of her husband, Rebecca and her two sons seize an opportunity to relocate to America via an arranged marriage to Sam, the widower of Rebecca's best friend. Sam not only needs a wife, he needs a mother for his daughter, Luna, who has cerebral palsy. Rebecca's love for Sam is almost instantaneous. Her affection for the challenging Luna takes longer, but it blossoms into a deep maternal love that launches Luna into a full and vibrant maturity. Graver's paean to resolve and resiliency paints a vivid portrait of spirit and grit.

— Carol Haggas