



## The White Rose

By Jean Hanff Korelitz

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Passion, infidelity, social climbing, and one very special white rose weave a seductive narrative in this intelligent and tender novel.

At forty-eight, Marian Kahn, a professor of history at Columbia, has reached a comfortable perch. Married, wealthy, and the famed discoverer of the eighteenth-century adventuress, Lady Charlotte Wilcox, she ought to be content. Instead, she is horrified to find herself profoundly in love with twenty-six-year-old Oliver, the son of her eldest friend. When Marian's cousin, the snobbish Barton, announces his engagement to Sophie, a graduate student in Marian's department, Marian, Oliver, and Sophie find their lives woefully entangled, and their hearts turned in unfamiliar directions. All three of them will learn that love may seldom be straightforward, but it's always a gift.

From the West Village to the Upper East Side, from the Hamptons to Millbrook, **THE WHITE ROSE** is at once a nuanced and affectionate reimagining of Strauss's beloved opera, *Der Rosenkavalier*, and a mesmerizing novel of our own time and place. *\*Includes Reading Group Guide\**

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## Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Korelitz, known for her intelligent thrillers (*The Sabbathday River*, etc.), strikes off in a new direction with this mordant story of aging, love and self-discovery, a reimagining of the Strauss opera *Der Rosenkavalier* set in upper-class Jewish New York City. Marian Kahn, gracefully aging at 48, is a respected history professor at Columbia, author of a bestselling book of popular history and solidly ensconced in a satisfactory if not brilliant marriage when suddenly she's swept away by the wild but dangerous joy of an affair with the son of her oldest friend. Twenty-six-year-old Oliver, owner of a flower shop called the White Rose, is truly in love, but when he meets graduate student and heiress Sophie Klein, the fiancée of Marian's pompous cousin, Barton Ochstein, he's blindsided and must question his still strong love for Marian. Sophie is swept away, too, by the knowledge that she may want something more out of life than the academic satisfaction she derives from the study of her own White Rose, a group of German dissidents who agitated against the Nazis. The belief that love always involves sacrifice and is worth the sacrifice it demands drives this warm, worldly novel. Even when their own comfort is at stake, Korelitz's characters succumb to generous impulses, making this a satisfying, emotionally rich read.

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From [The New Yorker](#)

This novel transfers the plot of "Der Rosenkavalier" from Vienna to pre-millennial Manhattan. The Marschallin of the opera has become a professor at Columbia, married and nearing fifty, who is also the author of a best-selling book about an eighteenth-century courtesan. The Marschallin's lover, Octavian, is, in this version, a young florist. The precipitating event is her social-climbing cousin's announcement of his engagement to a graduate student in her department who is from an élite New York family. Things get more complicated when the florist, suitably armed with roses, falls for the same girl. The series of coincidental meetings and near-misses that ensues strains credulity more on the page than it does when sung. Still, Korelitz is alert both to New York's social geometry and to the melancholy that underlies the glittering surface of her model.

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From [Booklist](#)

Inspired by an opera (Strauss' *Der Rosenkavalier*) but with country-and-western ("somebody done somebody wrong") overtones, Korelitz's latest novel is a departure from her previous mysteries. Instead, it chronicles the May-December romance between 26-year-old Oliver, an innovative and passionate florist, and Marian, a 48-year-old respected professor and acclaimed author. Not only is Marian old enough to be Oliver's mother, she is, in fact, his mother's very close friend. The unseemliness of this relationship is all too apparent to Marian, who knows their affair is destined to end. Clinging to the illusion that he and Marian may one day "be together," Oliver is devastated when Marian begins to reject him. On the rebound, he falls headlong into an intense relationship with the more age-appropriate Sophie, who, in another coincidental twist, is engaged to Marian's unctuous cousin, Barton. Though Korelitz constructs an elaborate, and perhaps unbelievable, love triangle, she persuasively conveys the depth of her paramours' emotions and perceptively gauges their motivations in an insightful, sensitive, and poignant romance. *Carol Haggas*

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