

# KIRKUS REVIEWS

## TITLE INFORMATION

### THE WRONG KIND OF INDIAN

Jey Tehya

Wyatt-MacKenzie Publishing (326 pp.)

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## BOOK REVIEW

A debut novel about love and personal growth that spans cultural and geographic boundaries.

Jennifer Taylor, the daughter of a white woman and a Native American man, falls in love with Chirag, an Indian living in the United States. Jennifer, who ran away from home at 16 with an abusive boyfriend, has more success at drinking, dieting, and jumping from one partner to another than she does at finding direction in her life and settling into adulthood as she approaches 30. Loving Chirag gives her a purpose, but it's not an effective one, because although he loves her, he says he can't imagine marrying anyone but an Indian woman. Jennifer continues on a path of self-destruction, following another boyfriend to Costa Rica and speeding her weight loss with major plastic surgery. She eventually returns to the United States and moves in with Chirag, but her preoccupation with weight loss turns into a full-scale eating disorder. She works through it by coming to terms with parts of her personal history, ending friendships that do her more harm than good, finding success as a poet, and becoming a responsible adult partner in her relationship with Chirag. Author Tehya sprinkles her writing with moments of vivid prose ("the student loan iron maiden was already inching close") and portrays the book's settings—Portland, Oregon; Costa Rica; India—in evocative detail. The author, like her protagonist, is a member of the Cherokee Nation, which brings a layer of authenticity to her narration of life in the Taylor family, just as her own experience as a runner shapes the later chapters regarding Jennifer's development as a marathoner. Some readers may find the book's frequent, explicit depictions of sex excessive, the flashbacks to Jennifer's youth unremittingly bleak, and her reckless behavior more frustrating than compelling. Others, however, will appreciate this story of healing, redemption, and a journey to emotional maturity.

A complex and compelling, though often difficult, story of romance, forgiveness, and loyalty.

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