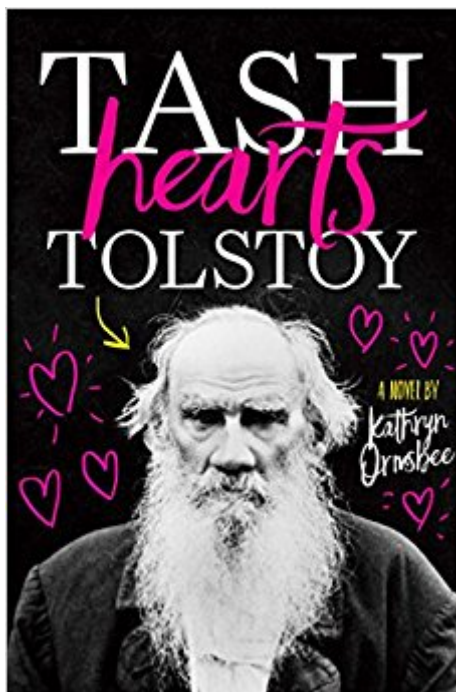


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Tash Hearts Tolstoy



Synopsis

After a shout-out from one of the Internet's superstar vloggers, Natasha "Tash" Zelenka suddenly finds herself and her obscure, amateur web series, *Unhappy Families*, thrust in the limelight: She's gone viral. Her show is a modern adaption of *Anna Karenina*--written by Tash's literary love Count Lev Nikolayevich "Leo" Tolstoy. Tash is a fan of the 40,000 new subscribers, their gushing tweets, and flashy Tumblr gifs. Not so much the pressure to deliver the best web series ever. And when *Unhappy Families* is nominated for a Golden Tuba award, Tash's cyber-flirtation with a fellow award nominee suddenly has the potential to become something IRL--if she can figure out how to tell said crush that she's romantic asexual. Tash wants to enjoy her newfound fame, but will she lose her friends in her rise to the top? What would Tolstoy do?

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Whip-smart, funny, flawed, and compassionate, these are characters readers will want to know and cheer for." (Kirkus, **STARRED REVIEW**) "It's beyond refreshing to see an asexual character, and the complexities of Tash's relationships with Thom, her friends, her sister, and, yes, fame make this a home run. The flip, irreverent tone, literary references, and peek into the creation of a web series are just icing on the cake." (Booklist, **STARRED REVIEW**) "[A] spot-on narrative voice, make this a compassionate and frank look into challenges that can seem to fly at teenagers from all directions." (Publishers Weekly)

Kathryn Ormsbee hails from the Bluegrass State and lives in Nashville, Tennessee. Once upon a time, she co-created a Shakespearean web series that is absolutely as nerdy as it sounds. *Lucky Few* was her first YA novel. She's also the author of *The Water and the Wild* fantasy novels. You can find her online at keormsbee.com.

This book was an absolute delight to read! I love YA contemporary as a genre because the books are always so fun and this one is not different. Tash the daughter of a second generation Czech immigrant and a first generation Kiwi immigrant from New Zealand the story was interesting from the start. You learn Tash is asexual and heteroromantic, meaning she likes men but doesn't want or need sex. It was an interesting story to read especially in YA Contemporary because it's such a genre filled with relationships and romance, cute teenage couples falling in love and learning how their bodies work. This one was about Tash's webseries of *Anna Karenina* updated for teenagers in modern times, I love the idea and are webseries of classic novels like a thing? I'm going to have to look into that. Anyways, the friendships between Jack and Paul her best friend and next door neighbors was so sweet and full of emotions. Their dad had cancer and she doesn't know how to deal with that often. Also she's learning how to work around being asexual and how that works with dating, especially other vloggers like Thom. I loved all the characters, there was so much representation throughout the story and the parents were actually involved! It was a joy to read, a good look at asexuality from what I understand of more than a view asexual reviewers. Overall I am glad I picked it up and would probably read it again if I didn't have a tbr list that was 7 miles long.

Tash Hearts Tolstoy was such a wonderful and heartwarming story. I really came to love all of the characters. I will admit though, the first couple of chapters were a bit slow and hard for me to get into. I also think the synopsis is a tad misleading, or at least to me it was. I thought the majority of the book was going to take place at the awards show but it doesn't. Once I realized this I flew through the story. However, looking back I'm glad the synopsis doesn't reveal too much of what happens in Tash's life because I liked discovering it at the same time she was. I really loved the characters of this book. Tash was well meaning and determined, Jack, though it took a bit for me to warm up to her, was a great friend and sister. Paul was wonderful and amazing and I wish he was real. I enjoyed seeing them film their webseries and read about what goes into making it. I also really liked the fact that Tash was asexual and that it was given a good part of the story to be talked about. It's great having this kind of representation in YA for those struggling. Overall, *Tash Hearts Tolstoy* was such a delight. I can't wait to reread it someday and read any future books of Kathryn's.

There's so much that I love here. The Zelenka family dynamics. Friend dynamics both specifically with Jack and Paul and with the full cast and crew of Unhappy Families. Dealing with a sudden spike in popularity, with fans, with criticism. I also really appreciate Tash's sense of humor and Jack's coldness, touch-aversion, and friendship. Ormsbee is really good at naturally incorporating information about people's backgrounds or personalities, and it made all the characters feel more real. The asexual representation is mostly well-written. Tash's asexuality is discussed early and often, and the split-attraction model is clearly articulated. There's some acemisia on page (internalized and not), but all of that is fought and shown to be wrong. However, there's significant and repeated conflation of asexuality with sex-aversion/repulsion, and that was a serious problem for me.

Y'all, this book is great. The main factor in me buying this book was that the main character, Tash, is ace. She is a romantic asexual. It was awesome to read such a genuine account of the struggle of wanting a romantic relationship but not a sexual one, and it's even better that this wasn't a main plot point. It was just a fact of Tash's life, and a good antagonist to a lot of things that come up in the story. It's really nice to see someone like Ormsbee who can separate asexual from aromantic and try to give her readers a decent understanding of that as well. We see Tash conflicted when it comes to romance and how to broach the subject with anyone since it seems to be a concept that sexual people (the vast majority) struggle with, and you see that here. You also see her strong feelings toward ace erasure (albeit a brief moment), and I totally relate to her there, I have strong feelings about that as well. It highlighted many of the internal struggles I face everyday in a way that I didn't ever expect to see, and I can't be happier. If you're interested in a fun YA book that features an ace character along with some other queer folk peppered in, it's a good read. I recommend it to anyone wanting to learn more about what it feels like to be a romantic asexual person in a highly sexual world. Bonus points being that the real main focus deals with the fact Tash and her friends have adapted Anna Karenina into a webseries that all of a sudden gets famous and most of the novel covers the struggles of overnight internet fame.

This book is smart, quirky, and full of heart. Highly recommend!!!

Such a great story! Inside the world of webseries and Internet fame. A great summer read!!

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