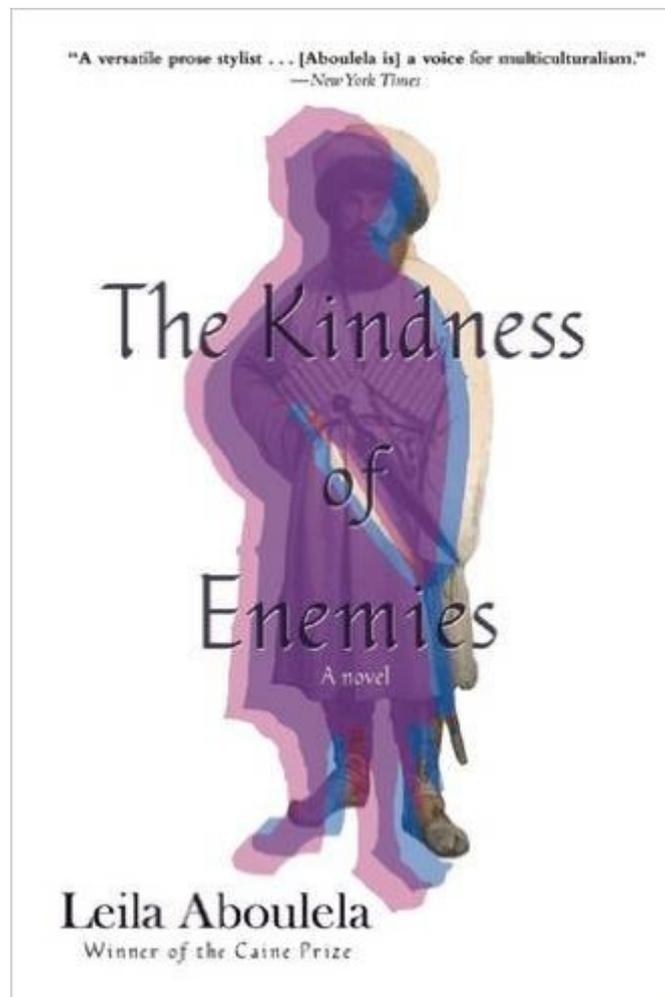


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# The Kindness Of Enemies: A Novel



## Synopsis

A versatile prose stylist... [Aboulela's] lyrical style and incisive portrayal of Muslims living in the West received praise from the Nobel Prize winner J. M. Coetzee... [she is] a voice for multiculturalism. • New York Times's 2010 and Natasha, a half Russian, half Sudanese professor of history, is researching the life of Imam Shamil, the 19th century Muslim leader who led the anti-Russian resistance in the Caucasian War. When shy, single Natasha discovers that her star student, Oz, is not only descended from the warrior but also possesses Shamil's priceless sword, the Imam's story comes vividly to life. As Natasha's relationship with Oz and his alluring actress mother intensifies, Natasha is forced to confront issues she had long tried to avoid; that of her Muslim heritage. When Oz is suddenly arrested at his home one morning, Natasha realizes that everything she values stands in jeopardy. Told with Aboulela's inimitable elegance and narrated from the point of view of both Natasha and the historical characters she is researching, *The Kindness of Enemies* is both an engrossing story of a provocative period in history and an important examination of what it is to be a Muslim in a post 9/11 world.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

• "The Kindness of Enemies", a novel by Leila Aboulela, is actually 2 books in one, with more than 160 years separating the 2 story lines. The stories are connected only loosely (and inconsequentially) by the 2010 story-teller of Book 1 and her research interest in an enduring leader from the never-ending battle of resistance in the 1850s in the Caucasus Mountains in the small Asian country we know as Georgia. Book 1 is told in first person. Book 2 is narrated. There is a

strong theme of praise for Islam throughout the book, with many key players being Muslim. Book 2 is a far better book. It is more interesting, better written, and far more engrossing -- from beginning to end. The characters are more fascinating than the modern day persons in Book 1, (which takes place in Scotland and The Sudan), especially the primary players. The first-person story-teller of Book 1 is, unfortunately, not very likable and suffers from over-self-indulgence, spending too much time in her head, and with serious identity confusion, whereas the 3 or 4 primary characters in Book 2 are each and collectively sympathetic, likable and almost regal. How this writing, plotting, and literary dichotomy between the modern day and 1850s stories occurred is a mystery. It's almost as if the writing itself reflects a possible decline of elegance and sophistication implicit in modern society. But its divisive effect dimmed my appreciation for the author's skill and imagination. A reader really needs Book 2 to endure the much less appealing story in Book 1, despite the unsuccessful attempt to insert a Muslim "terrorist" sub-plot at one point.

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