

VENTURA BOOK REVIEWS

Where will the next book take you?

THOSE WHO SAVE US

by Jenna Blum



If I were to sum up *Those Who Save Us* with one sentence, it would be the following one from the novel: “Each person has this choice to make about how to live with the past, this dignity, this inviolable right” (474). The book is written from a different perspective during World War II than I am used to. It is not about a Jew in a prison camp but about a German woman named Anna who lived near a camp and what she went through during those years. The story is also about her daughter, Trudy, who only remembers bits and pieces of her disturbing background. Mind you, the novel is fiction, but Blum definitely did enough research to make the story seem realistic.

The novel switches from the mother’s point of view to the daughter’s throughout the novel so the reader experiences both sides. One can sense the emotional and mental trauma both had faced during their lifetimes. The reader’s heart is able to ache for the two women as their stories are shared. Anna’s story is much more traumatizing and is easier to sympathize with, although Trudy’s is relevant to demonstrate the trickle-down effects from Anna. You will have to read the book to understand what I am saying without any spoilers being added in here.

The story flows easily even with the switch from the late 1930’s to 1997. It is easy to visualize the scenes even when there is little description. Sometimes the story is disturbing and may make your skin crawl, but that only proves that Blum did her job.

The novel was not the best book I have ever read. Some things induced questions from me where I think one last revision would have fixed it. I don’t want to say what or where and ruin the novel for future readers but just a couple places had me confused about Trudy’s character. As I got closer to the end, I was curious how the story could be wrapped up and was not very impressed by it. I admire Blum’s choice on how to end it from Anna’s perspective but I think Trudy needs another novel just for herself. A little irk I have with the *Those Who Save Us* is that there are no quotation marks at all. The other punctuation is correct, but quotations were left out for some reason I will never understand.

Those Who Save Us, published in 2004, was Jenna Blum’s first novel. Since then she has published two other novels, *The Stormchasers* (2011) and *Grand Central* (2014). Her first novel is one I will easily forget but I am eager to read one of the other novels and compare the writing style.

Reviewed by Grace Ventura