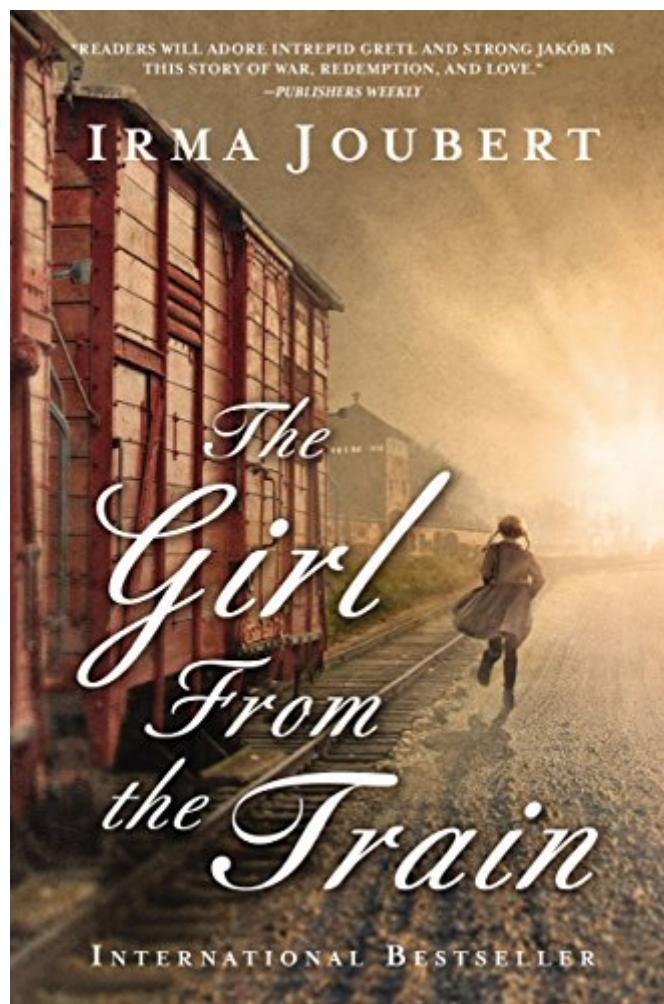


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The Girl From The Train



Synopsis

Six-year-old Gretl Schmidt is on a train bound for Auschwitz. Jakub Kowalski is planting a bomb on the tracks. As World War II draws to a close, Jakub fights with the Polish resistance against the crushing forces of Germany and Russia. They intend to destroy a German troop transport, but Gretl's unscheduled train reaches the bomb first. Gretl is the only survivor. Though spared from the concentration camp, the orphaned German Jew finds herself lost in a country hostile to her people. When Jakub discovers her, guilt and fatherly compassion prompt him to take her in. For three years, the young man and little girl form a bond over the secrets they must hide from his Catholic family. But she can't stay with him forever. Jakub sends Gretl to South Africa, where German war orphans are promised bright futures with adoptive Protestant families "so long as Gretl's Jewish roots, Catholic education, and connections to communist Poland are never discovered. Separated by continents, politics, religion, language, and years, Jakub and Gretl will likely never see each other again. But the events they have both survived and their belief that the human spirit can triumph over the ravages of war have formed a bond of love that no circumstances can overcome.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is one of the loveliest tales I have read in a long time. I normally don't like reading what passes for "Christian literature" these days; not because of its contents, but because of its poorer language structure. This book is written well and obviously, well-edited. I have read a lot of books about the Holocaust, both fiction and nonfiction. This one doesn't really qualify as a Holocaust book because it didn't delve into the deeper issues that faced the countries at the time. It was the starting point for the novel, but it is a personal novel about 2 people who connected because of the war. Gretl Schmidt is a young girl who lost her mother and grandmother and her sister. Jakob is a Polish student working to liberate Poland from the Germans when he rescued her. He had found her in the woods after Gretl jumped off the train. His family took care of her till he read of an organization taking German kids to South Africa to people who wanted to adopt orphans. There are historical facts woven into the story of Gretl and Jakob; their lives after the war went separate ways. The author, Irma Joubert is a teacher who turned to writing and it shows in this book. The stories of the two characters are interwoven in a seamless path as they grew up in different parts of the world only to be reunited years later. There are stories of how Poland became a communist country; there are stories of how the Catholic faith colors the lives of the people in Poland and how people in South Africa view the Catholic church through the personal viewpoints of varying characters. There are historical tidbits interwoven through the every day lives of the characters. It is also a love story. It is a lovely story. It is a story of faith as well.

The Girl from the Train uniquely spans over around 15 years from the time Gretl is six to age 21. During this time, Gretl learns to adapt to different environments and changes her identity as needed. This novel is a coming of age story. It is also about overcoming tragedy and resiliency. There is a great deal of history woven into this novel; history of WWII, Poland and Africa specifically. At times the storyline of The Girl from the Train got a little to "political" for my liking, but that might be because political reading is just not my thing. The author does a great job in getting the details right in the harsh settings of occupied Poland, both Nazi and Soviet. The world of secrecy, betrayal, and societal fear makes the reader sweat bullets right along with Jacob. The story, while based upon tragic historical events, was very hopeful and I enjoyed the historical action intertwined within the plot. It was about a little girl who was on her way to Auschwitz but fled from the train at six years old.

and was found by a young Polish man, Jakob who is a freedom fighter. He takes Gretl to his family farm where he can protect and keep her safe, and she stays there for three years. There grows friendship between two of them, even there is 13 years gap in age. Jakob's family is growing and his mother tells him he must find a new home for the Jewish girl. Jakob finds an article in the paper where they are looking for Aryans to be adopted by South Africans. Jakob takes Gretl to some orphanages until he finally ends up at a Red Cross, where they are aware of the project and they say they will take Gretl. (Personally, I never knew German orphans were sent to South Africa.

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