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Unravelled



Synopsis

"No one heard us. They decided not to, to turn their heads away. It was too much to bear. Too much to know. Too hard to swallow. But now that the world knows, now that the world has heard, it all seems so simple, so easy to defray. I screamed and no one heard. Next time, will you be listening?" Aliz and her twin sister, Hajna, are enjoying their playful, carefree and comfortable life with their parents in Szeged, Hungary just before the Nazis invade. Seemingly overnight, their lives change drastically as they are transported to the ghetto on the outskirts of the city and then to Auschwitz to be used in Mengele's deadly twin experiments. After several months of brutal torture, Aliz is liberated to find that she is the only survivor in her family. At not even 11 years old, Aliz must make the journey to San Francisco alone, an entire world away from everything she's known, in order to live with her only known relatives whom she has never met-- a depressed aunt and teenage cousin who is more than ready to escape her mother's melancholy. Told through the eyes of both Aliz and her cousin Isabelle, Unravelled tells a powerful story of survival, hope, family and the lives war and genocide haunt long after liberation. It is a truly moving piece of historical fiction, based heavily on historical facts. NOTE: This is a new edition featuring further edits and a historical note.

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Customer Reviews

Read this review and more on my blog, [Roxie Writes], at [...]ÃœNo one heard us. They decided not to, to turn their heads away. It was too much to bear. Too much to know. Too hard to swallow. But now that the world knows, now that the world has heard, it all seems so simple, so easy to defray. I screamed and no one heard. Next time, will you be listening?ÃœUnravellÃœ™ tells the story, in three parts, of Aliz and Hanja Stern, twin sisters from Szeged, Hungary who are ripped from their happy, carefree lives when the Nazis invade. After travelling for days, crammed like sardines in a train car with other Jews, they arrive at Auschwitz with their mother, father, and an older half-sister, all of whom are almost immediately ripped away from them, leaving them to face the nightmare of life in the concentration camp with only each other. Being identical twins, Aliz and Hanja catch the attention of Doctor Josef Mengele. Mengele is infamous for his experiments on twins, people with dwarfism, and those with heterochromia iridum. His experiments were so cruel, and he had such little regard for those he experimented on, that he is known as ÃœThe Angel of DeathÃœ. Under him, Aliz and Hanja suffer terribly, Hanja particularly, as Aliz is the Ãœcontrol twinÃœ. Doctor Mengele injects Hanja with countless untold poisons, nearly blinds her, and all the while, Aliz is left healing her and holding them both together through a living hell. Eventually, the war ends and the Nazis are defeated, but not before MengeleÃœs experiments ruin poor Hanja entirely. A ten-year-old girlÃœs body can only take so much. Without Hanja, Aliz is all alone in the world. SheÃœs sent to an orphanage for a little while until her aunt in San Francisco, all the way in America, discovers sheÃœs survived and takes her in. This is where the point of view of the book changes to Isabelle, AlizÃœs teenage cousin in San Francisco, who is trying desperately to find herself and her place in the world as a woman post-WWII. Her mother is perpetually haunted by her family taken and lost by the Nazis. They haunt their house, their lives, like ghosts sheÃœs never met. She desperately wants to go to college and make a life for herself beyond being a housewife, but she feels obligated to take care of her mother, even more so when she finds out her cousin, Aliz, an eleven-year-old, traumatized, holocaust survivor, is going to be living with them. No one really understands Aliz, but Isabelle tries. The third part of the book switches back to AlizÃœs point of view after she fears she may get sent away again, having her life turned upside down again. After Auschwitz, she is traumatized and acts out in scary ways, ways people

didn't quite know how to handle at the time. There had never been something quite so horrific as the holocaust before. I read this book as part of my #yearofindiewomen. I didn't understand the title of this book, and from reading other reviews, it seems I wasn't the only one. I am a subscriber of Anna Scanlon's on YouTube, so I was excited to read her novels. I enjoy her YouTube content more than I enjoyed this book. The plot had a lot of potential and Scanlon's characters are good, but it fell flat for me. I felt like the first part of the book was too short. It's not that I wanted there to be horrific holocaust details; that's not necessary, but I felt there wasn't time for me to get sufficiently attached to Aliz's family. We all know that what happened then is terrible and that is enough of a reason to be heartbroken for what happens to them as a whole, but as a reader, I want to care about each character individually, if that makes sense, and there wasn't enough there to make me feel that way about Scanlon's characters. The second part of the book, the part about Isabelle, was slightly better. I liked how she handled Isabelle's desire to be an independent woman. That was relatable, and I think a lot of girls probably felt that way in that day and age. (Hell, we still do.) Again, though, I felt there was a little something missing, but I'm not really sure what. The closing part, though, the return to Aliz's point of view, was the book's redemption. I think if the book would have spent more time in her point of view, it would have been much better. This part of the book had heart. It made me feel. I was disappointed when it ended because it felt like it finally started to get really good when it was over. Anna has a couple more books. I will probably read them because, like I said, I am a fan of her YouTube content and this was her first novel. While this book may not have been my favorite, one of her others may end up being among my them.

Unravalled was a really interesting read. It is always interesting to read something about the Holocaust while living in Germany. It just makes it more. This city has a lot of information about the atrocities that happened and to be surrounded by that and reading a book about them just intensifies it for me. Makes it more impactful since I am surrounded by it. At first this book was not that bad, not that hard to read. The events are terrible, but it is not written in a way that made me feel as much if that makes sense. Aliz and her family live in Hungary and she is quite young when the Germans invade. They are forced to move to the ghetto and things just keep changing until one night they are put on a train with so many others. They arrive at Auschwitz days later, hungry, tired, broken. This is where the story really became heartbreaking. Aliz and her twin are singled out and placed in a bunkhouse with other twins. They don't have to work like the others, they get more food

than the others, but every few days their numbers are called and they must go get experimented on. It wasn't even described in that much detail or anything, but it was just horrible imagining what it must have been like. I guess I did know they the Nazis did things like this, but I had forgotten. Really this book is fiction, but it has suggestions for non-fiction books about the twin experiments written by one of those who went through it and I really would like to read her story. It will be heartbreaking and hard to read, but worthwhile. Aliz manages to make it through the war, but her family does not. The only family she knows is in San Francisco, but she doesn't really know them. The second part of the book was told from her cousin Isabelle's point of view. It starts shortly before Aliz shows up at their house and I loved this section. Seeing how people try to deal with living through something so horrible is not something I read about often. Seeing the effects, how Aliz tries to cope, was just heartbreaking. Seeing how other reacted to her and her situation, especially since it is a few years after the war, was so sad. Isabelle is so kind to her, tries to help Aliz however she can. This book was hard to read at times, but it also seems to be softened a bit so it is not as difficult. A really great read. It made me think about aspects of the war I never really thought about. I will be checking out some of the non-fiction books the author recommended at the end. This review was originally posted to Jen in Bookland

This book was awful. Not awful in the sense that it was a bad book, it is a really well written book with wonderful characters. This book is awful because it tells the worse story of mankind and the only thing I can think about is how can a human being do that to another human being? How can a group of person send a little eight year old girl in a cattle train to an extermination camp where she will be taken away from her family and experience on for years? How can the liberator be telling children to dress up for the video camera before even taking care of them? The world through Aliz's eye is one of pain even before she allows herself to think she has been right down to hell. And when she is finally physically free from the nightmares, she is not understood as a traumatized child, but as a child who should just behave normally. Everybody expects her to be alright when she is still deep in the memories of Auschwitz. And humanity hasn't learned yet. This book was a wonderful read, but it was still awful.

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