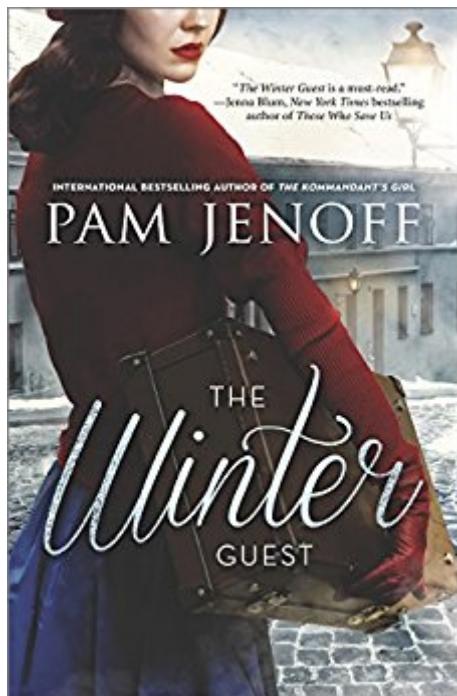


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The Winter Guest: A Novel



Synopsis

A stirring novel of first love in a time of war and the unbearable choices that could tear sisters apart, from the New York Times bestselling author of *The Orphan's Tale* Life is a constant struggle for the eighteen-year-old Nowak twins as they raise their three younger siblings in rural Poland under the shadow of the Nazi occupation. The constant threat of arrest has made everyone in their village a spy, and turned neighbor against neighbor. Though rugged, independent Helena and pretty, gentle Ruth couldn't be more different, they are staunch allies in protecting their family from the threats the war brings closer to their doorstep with each passing day. Then Helena discovers an American paratrooper stranded outside their small mountain village, wounded, but alive. Risking the safety of herself and her family, she hides Sam—a Jew—but Helena's concern for the American grows into something much deeper. Defying the perils that render a future together all but impossible, Sam and Helena make plans for the family to flee. But Helena is forced to contend with the jealousy her choices have sparked in Ruth, culminating in a singular act of betrayal that endangers them all—and setting in motion a chain of events that will reverberate across continents and decades.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The Winter Guest by Pam Jenoff is rooted in Poland during the Nazi occupation of World War II and tells the anecdote of twin sisters, Helena and Ruth, as they are just trying to survive during a dim time in the world. Their situation becomes peril when Helena finds a Jewish-American soldier named Sam who is injured. Unafraid of the consequences that might fall her, she cares for the soldier and soon begins to fall in love with him. Has Helena let love and the possible future with this man cloud her judgment and what effects will her actions have on her sister Ruth? Will the sisters ever be the same or has Helena set into motion choices that will forever change Ruth? Author, Pam Jenoff brings the pain and devastation of the time to life through a dear love story of Helena and Sam set to the resentful feeling of sister Ruth. Over the course of the book, Pam Jenoff radiantly details the ramifications that will affect all involved for years to come during a dark time in history for all. 

This is one of the best WWII books I have read, and I am a real fan of this era of historical fiction. It is right up there with The Nightingale, in my opinion. This one is set in Poland and features a family of young people - twin sisters caring for 3 younger siblings in the absence of their parents and their interaction with a downed American pilot. The plot moves along well, and it definitely held my interest right up to the very end. I am a fan of Pam Jenoff (The Orphan Tale) and I think it is probably her best work so far.

A little too much trekking through the snow but definitely a page turner. Interesting to think about how the little towns and isolated families fared during a tough period--the war, shortages, missing family members. Of course women took over, saved their families, joined the effort against the invaders, never losing the ability to love. Really admired Helena, strong, loyal, responsible yet had no trouble making room in her heart for a wounded man--a stranger who needed her. Ruth had her own strengths also; not as admirable as her sister, even despicable at times but she came through when needed.

This was a good read but I kept questioning many parts that didn't have explanations. How did Sam survive for days with no food or water? After it snowed Helena's tracks in and out of the church would have been a dead give away.

First of all, I'd like to say I love Pam Jenoff's work and have read and thoroughly enjoyed her other books. Unfortunately this one does not measure up to her previous novels. It seems to be a "hurried up" job and shows up in many facets throughout the story. There are many grammatical errors; the book needs a good editor. The first and last chapters are a rushed attempt to set the stage and bring it all together. We never find out how Sam "stumbles" across his son while his mother was incarcerated; very strange and frustrating since her pregnancy was a focus of the plot. So many of the core principles of the story are far fetched, unrealistic and unbelievable. I have read everything I can get my hands on relating to the horrible circumstances created for so many because of Hitler. This one lacks "meat" and comes off as "light weight chick lit". I would welcome title suggestions from serious readers of this time period. And, I WILL give Pam Jenoff another chance!

I would give this book to any teenager in the world. Open your eyes world. This is still reality. Start with yourself and make changes. Reading this story you feel the textures of the world.

I enjoyed it - I liked reading from the perspective of a teenage Polish girl living through the Nazi occupation from the innocent beginning of living in rural Poland, to the end where the truly unbelievable was actually happening. It portrays what the Jewish community was like in Poland for so many years - safe but separate as a community. It is told partly as a romance, but it isn't all romance and does a realistic job of describing what it meant to be on rations, to have travel restricted, to face constant dilemmas and have to choose between safety and what's "right." Not a great book, but easy and interesting, and I read it fast like a good summer book.

It started out promising enough with a lot of history and details of the time period. Then it just kind of dropped that line and started in with a twisted love story. It's like two different people wrote the book. The first part was beautiful and I didn't want to put it down. The second half got into petty jealousies between twin sisters and their twisted love stories. Then it's like the author wasn't sure how to end it so she just fast forwarded a few years and wrote a couple of rambling pages. I would have loved to have learned more about the harrowing escape on the train, through the frozen countryside and across the ocean or more about Sam and Ruth's experiences after they all split up. It was not a satisfying book to read. Stick with either historical fiction or sordid love stories, but don't stop writing one to change over to the other half way through.

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