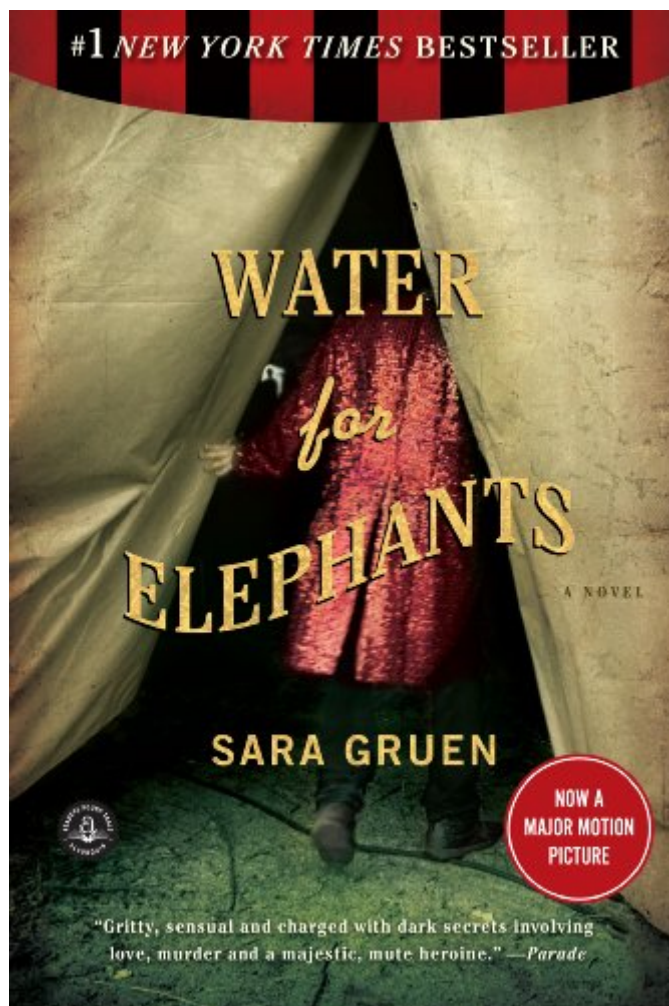


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Water For Elephants: A Novel



Synopsis

Over 10,000,000 copies in print worldwide #1 New York Times Bestseller A Los Angeles Times Bestseller A Wall Street Journal Bestseller A Newsday Favorite Book of 2006 A USA Today Bestseller A Major Motion Picture starring Reese Witherspoon, Robert Pattinson, and Christoph Waltz

— Jacob Janowski — His luck had run out--orphaned and penniless, he had no direction until he landed on a rickety train that was home to the Benzini Brothers Most Spectacular Show on Earth. A veterinary student just shy of a degree, he was put in charge of caring for the circus menagerie. It was the Great Depression and for Jacob the circus was both his salvation and a living hell. There he met Marlena, the beautiful equestrian star married to August, the charismatic but brutal animal trainer. And he met Rosie, an untrainable elephant who was the great hope for this third-rate traveling show. The bond that grew among this group of misfits was one of love and trust, and ultimately, it was their only hope for survival.

Book Information

File Size: 1873 KB

Print Length: 364 pages

Publisher: Algonquin Books (May 1, 2007)

Publication Date: May 1, 2007

Sold by: Amazon Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B003I1WY2A

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #5,856 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #25

in Books > Romance > Historical > 20th Century #42 in Kindle Store > Whispersync for Voice > Education & Reference #88 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Literature & Fiction > Literary Fiction > Romance

Customer Reviews

This is a book where I had actually seen the movie first, which then made me want to read the

novel. The circus seems to bring out the optimistic and wide-eyed child in us all, and this story was no different. You come to care about the animal and humans alike in this novel and find yourself wrapped inside their world before you know it. I fairly much inhaled this book over two evenings, and seeing the movie didn't curb my sense of excitement and mystery as I worked through the story. At the end I had the thought, yet again, that we all seemed to be doomed nowadays to reaching our end of life years and being forgotten by our families regardless of how amazing our former selves have lived our lives. This book helps to remind us all that ordinary people have extraordinary tales to tell if we would just bother to slow down and listen.

Since I'm a few years behind for this 2013 best seller, I won't give a review of the story's content. There's thousands of reviews that cover this book better than I ever could. I was fortunate enough to be able to experience this book in three different mediums. I read the book, listened to it by audio book, and I watched the movie. The reading of the book is rated 4 stars. The audio book is rated 5 stars. The movie only gets 2. I averaged it out and it's 3 2/3 stars. If you have the opportunity, give this book a try by listening to it by audio book. They use two actors to read old Jacob and young Jacob. The narrators do an outstanding job and they enhance the story and bring it to life beautifully. Highly recommended.

This book reminded me of the movie, "Benjamin Button". The format of an old man looking back at his life was reminiscent of the regretful and poignant tone in the movie. The story is told by Jacob, half about his life now as a 90-year old man, forgotten by his family in a nursing home. The other half is about Jacob's life as a young man in the circus. Jacob runs off to join the circus, literally, when he is just about to graduate from college. Devastated by the loss of his family and fortune, he turns to the only thing he knows and loves--the one connection he has to his veterinarian father--the animals. Jacob gets a job 'watering the elephants', and one grouchy elephant in particular, as he works as the circus animal veterinarian. Jacob also has the really dumb luck of falling for Marlena, a trick horse rider. Marlena just happens to be married to the circus boss, a sadistic man who beats her and the elephants. The whole situation is a powder keg waiting to explode. Interspersed with this is the story of present-day Jacob and his longing, so tender and sad, that pulls on the heartstrings. It is a sweet, tragic romance. I loved the parts that explained how the traveling carnivals worked. It was so fascinating knowing that many incidents were based on real, actual events. A heavy book with lots of good ingredients that will leave you satisfied.

I held off reading this book because everyone I knew who had read it or was reading it loved it but kept referring to it as "depressing" or "violent" or with other strong negative adjectives. I wasn't in the mood for a "downer." Nothing else in my "recommended for you" list appealed to me so I downloaded the free sample. This book is everything everyone said it would be...violence, cruelty, betrayal, death but somehow the story grabs you and won't let go. Told by a 90 or 93 year old vet from a circus, the story is as personal as a biography and engrossing as a news account of the circus in the 1930s. I read it in 24 hours. Buy, borrow it or download it...it will not disappoint!

This book begins and ends with the main character, Jacob Jankowski, in his 90's and residing in a nursing home. He doesn't remember how old he is or even the people that take turns coming to visit him. But what he does remember more than makes up for his current state of boredom. The beginning reminded me of Stephen King's "The Green Mile". The author obviously had to do a great deal of research into circus life during the depression in order to write this book. What she found does not make a pleasant story. Being an animal lover, the cruelty displayed toward the animals, especially Rosie the elephant, really disturbed me. I still have a hard time believing that Jacob, who had nearly received his degree as a veterinarian and loved Rosie, would not have done more to prevent it. The cruelty displayed towards the employees was just as bad. Railroad goons would actually push workers off moving trains in the middle of the night rather than pay them. I thought the affair between Jacob and Marlena was not as torrid as it should have been. Rosie was my favorite character - she was described in human terms which made the cruelty more difficult to endure. In the end, both the peon workers and Rosie got even. But that was not even the ending that made this book such a great read. I was so excited when I read the ending, I had to tell someone about it! It was the best ending ever!!

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