ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

GENERAL

For All We Know: We May Never Meet Again
Abe S. Hoppenstein
AuthorHouse
978-1-4520-8859-4
Three Stars (out of Five)

War interferes with the flow of human lives. Not only does death loom large for soldiers and civilians alike, but loss of fortune, destroyed property, and geographical displacement reap additional heartache. Few individuals have the foresight to mitigate such grave consequences before the conflict begins. Even the most prescient plans can go awry when greed attempts to triumph over good intentions.

The appropriately-titled novel, *For All We Know: We May Never Meet Again*, tells the story of a wealthy Jewish family living in Europe in the uncertain times of the decade prior to World War II. Abe S. Hoppenstein centers his story on the determination of Baron Jacques Chevalmont to preserve his family's heritage. A merchant banker living in Paris with his beloved wife and daughter, he stands alone among his colleagues in voicing concern about the rise of Adolph Hitler. He gathers his cousins from Germany, Austria, Spain, and Holland to discuss the situation, and they agree to secure their jewels, fine art, and property deeds in Argentina. Chevalmont asks his daughter, Marie-Helene, her Italian husband, Count Caetano di Rosario, and their young son to relocate in Buenos Aires. Caetano follows his father-in-law's instructions to open an elite bank there, but Marie-Helene knows nothing about the underlying reason for this move.

Once in Argentina, Marie-Helene continues to question her father's reasons for sending them so far from home. She asks herself why Caetano, a strong-willed and ambitious man whom she doesn't entirely trust, agreed to such an abrupt relocation. Hoppenstein writes, "She concluded that she possibly did not have all the facts that influenced Caetano."

During this same time period, even though Manfred Lowen has just begun a law practice in Germany, he takes seriously the warning of his law partner, a Nazi party member, to leave his homeland. Manfred's father, a Christian convert and loyal German, considers himself no longer Jewish and thinks his son foolish. "His father was clearly shocked," the author says of their farewell. "He remained silent…Father and son rose stood and silently shook hands."

By the war's end, Manfred has become a respected lawyer in Buenos Aires. Two young Jewish refugees, whose families were killed in the Holocaust, arrive from Israel seeking his counsel. He arranges an interview with Marie-Helene, explaining that his investigation has revealed a plan that involves her extended family's material wealth. "We have now established that a Milanese Count, a banker, facilitated the transfer of those assets to Argentina," Manfred says.

The author has woven historical facts into a complex novel of plot and subplots, major and minor characters, which will pique reader interest. However, stilted dialogue and overly precise descriptions of character interaction rob this richly human story of sustainable interest. Errors in punctuation and word choice, use of ellipses to separate sentences, and abrupt transitions of time and place further compromise the narrative's appeal.

Despite this book's technical shortcomings, readers interested in reading a fictionalized account of the tragic events and human drama of this historical time of war will be rewarded.

Margaret Cullison