

★ **The Ribbon Leaf**

Lori Weber

Red Deer Press (Oct 30, 2022)

Softcover \$16.95 (496pp)

978-0-88995-663-6

In Lori Weber's enthralling historical novel *The Ribbon Leaf*, a girls' friendship changes after Kristallnacht, though their memories still sustain them across an ocean and a decade.

In 1938 in Germany, twelve-year-old Sabine is saddened by the nation's edicts against Jewish people. Her friendship with Edie, a Jewish classmate who dreams of stardom, is forbidden. Then Edie and her relatives emigrate to Montreal, leaving Edie's father behind. Sabine joins the League of German Girls, hiding her alarm about her brother's zeal for the führer and her own moral beliefs.

The girl's alternating viewpoints span the war and the years just after it, tracing as they grow into perceptive teenagers and young women. Time tracks alongside their increasing burdens. They absorb the tensions of their loved ones, yet they maintain their courage. Sabine takes risks to help others, and Edie has vivid brushes with Canada's war efforts. There are details about the era's music, clothing, news, and icons, including Greta Garbo.

Impressionistic, poetic vignettes highlight images and scenes from each of the girls' emotional lives: Sabine misses her friend, though she finds sympathetic companions around her; Edie is delighted by her new city, despite her concern over her father's safety and her worries about how much she should disclose about herself to others.

In the end, Sabine and Edie are normal teenagers living in an extraordinary time. Loss and love propel them, though neither girl knows what became of the other. Their parallel stories are poignant, as is their underlying awareness of how their strong, early bonds molded them. When their stories converge in the aftermath of the war, it's a rewarding culmination of people's numerous, suspended hopes.

Two girls mature through times of hardship in the moving historical novel *The Ribbon Leaf*.

KAREN RIGBY (November / December 2022)

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