

The Roses Underneath

C. F. Yetmen

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A sophisticated Sherlock Holmes-like story illumines a dangerous time in European history with exquisite, genuine detail.

During the aftermath of World War II in devastated Germany, a resilient woman struggles to reunite with her family while helping the Americans retrieve looted art treasures. Also known as the Monuments Men, this specialized group of military personnel attempted to restore losses and return precious works to their original owners. This methodical procedure often met with unprofessional deceit, clandestine arrangements, and behind-the-scenes transactions.

The Roses Underneath opens in August 1945. Anna Klein works in the office at the Wiesbaden Central Collecting Point, a center where recovered art pieces are housed. Separated from her husband and supporting her six-year-old daughter, Anna lives from day to day, barely managing to survive until an American captain hires her as his translator. This partnership is the catalyst for a profound test of integrity as well as the beginning of a nerve-racking friendship and a tenuous trust. A stash of artwork, threats, interrogations, and prolonged disappearances put their relationship on a precarious edge, turning this piece of history into a Sherlock Holmes-type investigation.

Always on the brink of another disruption, the mood is nervous and paranoid. This is a world where no one is a hundred percent innocent or truthful. The book's most outstanding quality is the excellent development of Anna's character as she progresses through a complicated mess that forces her to make difficult choices under abusive circumstances.

A genuine feel for the time and place enhances this novel with authenticity. Every room, every scene conveys a sense of realism only a skilled writer can achieve. Though paced rather slowly, the ambling speed is used with purpose, allowing for detailed impressions that rapid-fire action fiction cannot create. At times, the organized progression of events reads like a mystery, giving rise to debating possibilities and seeking answers.

C. F. Yetmen is a nonfiction author. *The Roses Underneath* is her fiction debut. For those who enjoy furtive glances and double entendres, with sophisticated manipulation propelling the plot, this novel will not disappoint. JULIA ANN CHARPENTIER (Spring 2014)

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