

The Storm over Paris

William Ian Grubman

Dupapier Press (Sep 19, 2018)

\$13.99 (320pp)

978-1-73261-000-2

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William Ian Grubman's historical novel *The Storm over Paris* is a harrowing tale of art theft, war, and family.

In 1942, Mori Rothstein runs a prestigious art gallery and is widely respected. But German forces have recently captured Paris. Mori provides for his family and keeps the business running until he draws the eye of the feared Hermann Goering. Goering gives Mori a choice: appraise art to be cataloged and shipped to Hitler's private museum, or be deported and possibly executed.

Neither free nor a true prisoner, Mori sets about staying on the Nazis' "good" side, saving priceless art and his family. He enlists his son in the enterprise. The two concoct a plan to forge reproductions, swap them out, and smuggle the originals away. They are able to win Goering over, but a brutish officer revels in his hatred as the family races to escape with the art.

The narrative alternates between Mori and his son Emile. As Mori deals with the Nazis, Emile's sections aptly convey the personal difficulties he faces as a French Jew in Nazi-occupied France. He begins the story as a student excelling in a prestigious art academy with a small group of friends and a lovely young woman catching his eye. Over time, his story weaves tighter as he masterfully reproduces the artwork and sets up the smuggling operation. Both narratives are tense and tightly written; the text only opens up and relaxes during a touching epilogue.

The dialogue and prose are intimate, as in a discussion between Mori and a family friend: the conversation establishes the stakes and fleshes out their relationship in a sparing amount of time and words. Characters speak in almost hushed tones, giving the story a conspiratorial undertone. Scenes have just enough detail to let the events unfold at a realistic pace. Clever time jumps complement the mounting tension.

The small cast is fully realized, most especially Mori's wife, Ruth, who is instrumental in a pivotal scene and when it comes to protecting her family's fate. Conflicts are painful, feel unavoidable, and are established with thorough details.

This gripping tale never moves its lens from individuals. While the story is filled with death and pain, its messages about family and love are ever present. *The Storm over Paris* is a taut historical thriller brimming with heart and darkness.

JOHN M. MURRAY (November 26, 2018)

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