



## Early One Morning

*Virginia Baily*

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**Two women's decision to save a child during WWII will have powerful reverberations over the years.**

Chiara Ravello is about to flee occupied Rome when she locks eyes with a woman being herded on to a truck with her family.

Claiming the woman's son, Daniele, as her own nephew, Chiara demands his return; only as the trucks depart does she realize what she has done. She is twenty-seven, with a sister who needs her constant care, a hazardous journey ahead, and now a child in her charge.

Several decades later, Chiara lives alone in Rome, a self-contained woman working as a translator. Always in the background is the shadow of Daniele, whose absence and the havoc he wrought on Chiara's world haunt her. Then she receives a phone call from a teenager claiming to be his daughter, and Chiara knows it is time to face up to the past.

## Early One Morning Details

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Author : Virginia Baily

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## From Reader Review Early One Morning for online ebook

### Sophie Narey (Bookreview- aholic) says

Published: 23/07/2015

Author: Virginia Baily

This book is first set 1943 in Rome where the main characters meet for the very first time. One of the characters Chiara is just about to flee the city of Rome when she see's a women, her husband and their young children being loaded onto a truck at gunpoint. Chiara makes a rather rash desicion (which she will late on have to live the consequences of) and says that the young boy is her nephew which releases the boy from the truck and into the possession. Only three decades later does Chiara realise just what she had done, we learn of the heart ache that the little boy (Daniele) caused her and the havoc he filled her life with.

This is an incredibly well written book by a clearly very talented author. At first when you read that she has rescued this little boy you think that it is going to be a touching and heartwarming story about the good deed that she did...but that couldn't be further from the truth! Although this book is about Europe in the war time and the effect i made, it is also about how the choices we make in our lives had a impact on how the future will turn out for us. It is a very powerful, moving and inspiration novel that really makes you think. Chiara is forced to face upto her past and face upto the fact that she knows she will never be able to replace the other that Daniele once had.

When reading this novel I found it very hard to put down and it was one that lost me alot of sleep as I just had to keep reading it and finding out what would hapen next and what else we would uncover from Chiara's past

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### Barbara says

Hugely disappointing and thoroughly unsatisfying.

Unless I'm ready science fiction or fantasy, I need a book to be realistic. What mother would allow a cantankerous 16yr old to travel to Italy to stay with an unknown woman? How can a young woman who's listened to a few Italian CDs appear to be following conversations a few weeks later? How can someone be translating Keats one moment and struggling for words the next? How can we believe that an elderly woman with a stick is walking gingerly one moment and then racing around Rome the next? How can a frightened Maria who's just caught a fragile, falling woman, in the very next breath correct her English?

I longed to see the relationship between Chiara and Daniele as he grew up. I wanted to discover more of how Daniele came to be the absent person that he was. Sadly, this element was neglected.

It's not a novel these days if we don't see the action switching between the present and one or more points in the past. This generally worked well except for the enormous gap between Antonio going away and his return as the story reached its climax.

Little depth to the characters, little empathy for them.

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## Bettie? says

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b06gw3jz>

Description: *Italy 1943. Chiara flees Rome for the countryside with her sister, Cecilia and Daniele, the small Jewish boy she has saved from the Nazis' clearance of the Rome ghetto.*

*Thirty years later, in 1973, Chiara has lost touch with her troubled, junkie adoptive son, but she must now decide how to deal with the young Welsh teenager who keep phoning her and who claims to be Daniele's daughter.*

*Greta Scacchi, Juliet Aubrey and Sophie Melville star in a dramatization of Virginia Baily's new novel, which moves between Nazi-occupied Rome and 1973.*

1/10: Rome 1943. A split-second decision is about to change Chiara's life forever.

2/10: Rome 1943: Chiara has to flee Rome with the Jewish boy she is sheltering.

3/10: Chiara leaves Rome for the countryside with her charge, Daniele.

4/10: Chiara has to learn how to be a mother

5/10: Chiara prepares to host Welsh teenager who claims to be Daniele's daughter.

6/10: Italy 1943. Chiara and Cecilia are living with their grandmother in a remote farmhouse, where they shelter passing deserters and Daniele, the small Jewish boy Chiara saved from the Nazis.

7/10: Italy 1943. A Nazi officer arrives at the remote farmhouse where Chiara is hiding her young Jewish charge, Daniele. Thirty years later, in Rome 1973, Chiara is showing Welsh teenager, Maria, around Rome. Maria believes that Chiara is Daniele's former landlady and knows nothing about Daniele's past, or that Chiara has not seen her troubled adoptive son in over a decade.

8/10: Italy 1944. Chiara and her young Jewish charge, Daniele, are back in Rome, where food supplies are scarce. Thirty years later, in 1973, Chiara struggles to know what to say to Daniele's daughter, a Welsh teenager called Maria, who is staying with her over the summer. Maria knows nothing of Daniele's past, nor that Chiara has not been in touch with her troubled, adoptive son in over a decade.

9/10: 1944. As American soldiers parade through Rome, Chiara receives some devastating news. 1973. Chiara confides in her oldest friend about her dilemma over Daniele's teenage daughter, Maria, who doesn't yet know anything about her father's past.

10/10: Rome 1973. With Simone's encouragement, Chiara determines to tell Maria the truth about Daniele and confront her own past.

Somewhat disjointed and messy in execution.

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## **Laura says**

*From BBC Radio 4 - 15 Minute Drama:*

*Rome 1943. A split-second decision is about to change Chiara's life forever.*

*Cardiff 1973. Welsh teenager Maria learns some shocking news about her past.*

*Episode 1 of 2: Rome 1943. A split-second decision is about to change Chiara's life forever.*

*Episode 2 of 2: Chiara is hiding Daniele, a young Jewish boy, in a remote farmhouse.*

*Greta Scacchi, Juliet Aubrey and Sophie Melville star in Miranda Emmerson's dramatization of Virginia Baily's powerful new novel of love, loss and learning to be a mother. The action moves between Nazi-occupied Rome and 1973.*

*Directed by Emma Harding.*

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b06gqdwt>

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## **Manchester Military History Society (MMHS) says**

### **Vivid historical fiction**

A gut reaction saves the life of a young Jewish boy as Chiara Ravello claims young Daniele Levi as her nephew, to save him from being rounded up by the Nazis and taken to a labour camp with the rest of his family.

This is a powerful story of secrets and missed opportunities with a dual time frame that is delivered as a personal drama set against Rome in World War 2 and the 1970s.

Virginia Baily has created a rich set of characters that you see warts and all combined with a well paced and vivid prose make this book very memorable.

A memorable read.

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## **Barb says**

"Early One Morning" by Virginia Baily is set during WWII and present day Rome. I wish I could say that I loved this book, but it just didn't captivate me as others of this genre have done. It took quite a while to get into the narrative due to the structure, long descriptive passages, and internal random thought musings by the main character, Chiara. I'm disappointed because the bones of a great story were there, but to me it just fell short...with a hurried up ending. I do see from other reviews that I'm in a minority here.

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### **John Herbert says**

Don't be fooled by the hype!

Don't be lured into believing that when the boy is rescued from the lorry taking the Jews to the death camps, that you will get exciting dodging and ducking from the Nazis.

It's all a big red herring.

And of course I got caught too.

What you do get is that exciting early chapter when Chiara takes the boy from the lorry as if he's her own, in order to save him from his parents' fate, and then the rest of the book is one big mini soap opera of Chiara and pals debating not very much, all churned up with spaghetti and meatballs!

The modern day link is equally unexciting and fails to save the day.

Quite a disappointment, but of course other reviewers will disagree.

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### **Rebecca Foster says**

Like the Roberto Benigni film *Life Is Beautiful*, Virginia Baily's second novel\* shows how the Holocaust affected Italy's Jews. It's not a Holocaust novel, though; it's a before-and-after story that's more about adoption, coming of age when you don't know who you are, and adapting to motherhood. It's about choices, inevitabilities, regrets and a love that endures.

October 1943: Chiara Ravello is walking near Rome's Jewish ghetto when she spots a large group of people being herded into trucks. A Jewish woman catches her eye and directs her seven-year-old son to go with Chiara. Pretending the boy is her nephew, Chiara saves him from certain death. The war years have been a hard time for the Ravello family: Chiara's father and her fiancé both died about five years ago, and her mother perished in a bombing a few months. Now she and her epileptic sister Cecilia are preparing to flee the occupation by taking refuge in their grandmother's home in the hills above Rome. Chiara never expected to be a mother after Carlo's death, but now she has the chance to raise Daniele Levi as her own.

That's where many novels would have ended it: with a hopeful conclusion after a time of hardship; with a new beginning spooling out in the future. Instead, this is where Baily starts her bittersweet tale. It's no happily ever after for Chiara and Daniele; indeed, over the years that Daniele is a silent, sullen boy, then a rebellious teenager, and finally a drug addict, Chiara will frequently question the impulsive choice she made that morning in 1943. She seems doomed, in Daniele's eyes at least, to be "the wicked stepmother, half-provider, half-tyrant." This gives the novel something of the flavor of Lionel Shriver's *We Need to Talk about Kevin*, another rare instance of fictional ambivalence about motherhood.

There's an extra layer to the novel, however. In 1973, Chiara learns that Daniele has a daughter he never knew: Maria, now 16, lives with her mother in Wales. Angry and unsure of her new identity, Maria has boycotted her school leaving exams and asks to live with Chiara for the summer instead. Baily describes these two very different characters equally well, and does a great job of capturing the feel of Rome and its

surroundings, especially through Maria's viewpoint. She also moves deftly between the events of 1943–44 and those of 1973 in alternating chapters, giving subtle clues as to the time period through her interesting choice of tense: right up to the last chapter, she uses the present tense to describe past action, and the past tense for current action.

Through the flashbacks, we learn surprising truths about how Chiara abandoned a family member and gained a best friend. She made dubious choices during the war, but also showed great bravery and generosity. Baily gives just enough away, and so gradually that the novel's nearly 400 pages pass quickly. In touching on World War II and the Holocaust only peripherally, the novel avoids well-worn, clichéd narratives and does something new.

The writing does not draw attention to itself; there are no long-winded descriptions or ornate sentences. Baily relies more on food (as in “[Maria’s] insides were lubricated with olive oil”) and period fashion to add detail and local color. Still, where there is metaphorical language it usually refers to animals and seems both appropriate and evocative. I also love the warm, earthy tones of the book’s cover, which reminds me of my time spent in Tuscany last year. However, I’m not sure the novel’s title works; it doesn’t say enough about the book.

Still, I admire how Baily takes what seems like a familiar Holocaust rescue story and turns it on its head. A late passage in which Chiara watches over Daniele as he sleeps off a hangover hints at the emotional ambiguities she conveys here:

Funny how sometimes she used to think that because he had this horseshoe birthmark, a talisman of good fortune imprinted in his skin, he carried his luck with him. How she persisted in thinking it was luck that had saved him when the rest of his family had perished, and not, as he seems to want to demonstrate to her, its opposite.

‘I don’t blame you, Ma,’ he has told her more than once.

‘So why are you so intent on throwing your life away?’ she has asked him, but he doesn’t seem to have an answer.

I would particularly recommend this novel to fans of Maggie O’Farrell and Anthony Doerr. Read this alongside Julia Blackburn’s *Thin Paths* or another choice from my Italian summer reading list – it’s the next best thing to being there.

\*At first I presumed this was a debut, but it turns out she wrote one novel previously, under the name Ginny Baily, *Africa Junction* (2011).

*Many thanks to Virago for my free copy, received through a newsletter giveaway.*

(Originally published with images at my blog, Bookish Beck.)

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**Debbie Robson says**

“A grey dawn in 1943: on a street in Rome, two young women, complete strangers to each other, lock eyes for a single moment.”

I was gripped immediately by this wonderful narrative. Baily’s writing is evocative particularly in the later sections when we see Rome in 1973 from Maria’s point of view.

To start with though there is Rome occupied by the Nazis:

“When she turns into Via del Portico d’Ottavia, she falters. A column of grey-clad soldiers are lined up along the pavement, the officers standing at strategic intervals. One of them is addressing the soldiers, instructing them. Gennaro’s bar is shut, locked up, the blind pulled down behind the glass. Beyond, where the Theatre of Marcellus looms up, massive and ancient as if untouchable, three lorries with dark tarpaulins are parked. Suddenly, the men all start to shout, a terrible bellowing roar that makes the hair on her body stand on end and the damp place between her shoulder blades throb. Just as suddenly, they stop. Then they disperse, in groups of two or three, disappearing down various streets of the ghetto.”

In interweaving chapters we discover what happens to Chiara Ravello when she takes the Jewish boy to save his life from the Nazis and how she struggles to take care of him along with her disabled sister. In 1973 a young Welsh girl Maria discovers that her father is not her real father. Her real father is Daniele Levi, the boy that Chiara saves all grown up into a troubled young man.

I must say that I loved Maria’s first encounter with Rome. I was the same age as her in 1973 and a little bit of me is envious of Maria’s experience of discovering the city at such a young age. But the strength of the novel is the far reaching impact of Chiara’s decision in 1943. The story moves inexorably forward from that point and Chiara thirty years older is brilliantly revealed bearing the burden of that decision. Chiara from Maria’s point of view is a surprise but cleverly done.

I have only one complaint and that is the circumstances of Maria’s return to Rome after escaping to the country. I felt there was a gap that I, as the reader, couldn’t reconcile with. Something was missing but other readers might disagree. Otherwise an enjoyable read.

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### **Lesley says**

What a waste of time. So unbelievable and pathetic!

I can not believe I fell for the back of the book description at the store without looking at Goodreads reviews first!

The whole back of book description happens in the first chapter! All goes downhill from there.  
So disappointing!

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### **Katie says**

Disappointing. This struck me as hovering uncertainly between a literary novel and a commercial page turner. Ultimately it didn’t work for me as either. The premise promises much – Chiara Ravello rescues a young Jewish boy who is about to be carted off by the Nazis in the Rome ghetto. But the structure, alternating between past and present, quickly removes all tension from the WW2 section. We know the young Jewish boy will survive the war by page thirty or so. As a result the entire WW2 part of this novel was dependent on the quality of characterisation and writing to keep the reader engaged and fell flat for me on both counts. Chiara is miles more interesting as an old woman than she is as a young woman. The young boy is never much more than a formulaic unhappy child. And the third major character, Chiara’s backward and epileptic sister, Cecelia is lame as a character and implausible as a plot device. In All the Light Doerr couples two characters with almost insurmountable handicaps where surviving a war is concerned, the blind Marie

with the agoraphobic uncle. It's a tactic that exerts an almost exaggerated pull on our sympathy but it works because both characters are brilliantly drawn and fundamental to the story. Bailey also couples two handicapped characters, the Jewish child and the epileptic sister but here it feels like gratuitous overkill. The supposedly pivotal moment of the WW2 section involving Cecelia feels both forced and implausible. Also, I never saw or smelt or heard Rome under Nazi occupation; there was no atmosphere, no texture; instead I was fed a succession of very generic WW2 scenarios – food queues, bomb damage, shouting German soldiers. In short, a failure of both imagination and research on the part of the author – surely you only have to watch *Roma, Citta Aperta* to get a feel for Rome under the Nazis.

Surprisingly, the more contemporary part was much more successful. As I said, from a rather nondescript young woman Chiara became much more interesting and engaging as an older woman and the young girl, Maria, travelling to Italy for the first time had some nice moments. I lived in Rome for a year when I was nineteen and found echoes of my own experience of the eternal city in Maria's. The excitement of opening shutters rather than curtains (reminded me of opening advent calendar doors as a child rather than making me feel "sexier and rounder" as it does Maria though!); the effect on one's wellbeing of the beauty everywhere: "The beauty got inside her and she felt herself more lovely, gilded by it. It was fanciful but she felt that in Rome sometimes, off and on like a defective lightbulb, she shone"; and the joy of acquiring command of Italian: "She was shouting in her new Italian voice which was richer and stronger than her English one."

But it's also a baggy novel. Often the dialogue has no purpose except as padding – it takes Chiara two pages to explain to Maria what porcini mushrooms are - and scenes which in a more accomplished novelist's hands might occupy only a few pages here drag on into double figures. Basically I think this would have been a better novel had it been structured more courageously. The rather formulaic structure of alternating timelines demands a certain symmetry which means the war section covers as much of the book as the later section. I couldn't help feeling the war section required no more than a hundred pages but was eked out for the sake of this symmetry. The author was much more in command of her material once it entered a time she herself lived through. Virago has done a great job of marketing this – super enticing cover and a premise that promises high and deeply engaging drama. Unfortunately, you can't always judge a book by its cover.

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### **Menia says**

B.R.A.CE 2018 8/37 ?να βιβλ?ο απ? τις εκδ?σεις ?καρος  
3,5 αστερ?κια  
ε?χε αρκετ? σημε?α που μακριγορο?σε αλλ? στο σ?νολο μου ?ρεσε

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### **Petra says**

About 40% through and still waiting to hear the story of Daniele.....

Finished. Boring. No substance.

There are pages of descriptions of scenery and the locations of Rome. There are ample descriptions of outfits and one of Maria's attributes are her "large, milky breasts" (this was not from a romantic scene; just a general description of a 16-year old girl going through a turmoil). Ugh!

Daniele's story is hidden in tiny, unemotional snippets throughout. Convenient situations arise to deal with

people needing to be written out of the story. And the ending.....ugh!  
Glad this one is off my TBR list.

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### **Angela M says**

In the beginning I was heartbroken and uplifted in the same moment by the depth of the bravery of two women who know each other only by a stare and an understanding and then a silent agreement - one of the women would give her 7 year old son to the other . It's 1943 and the Nazi's are rounding up the Jews in Italy and Daniele Levi's mother chooses to save her son aided by Chiara Ravello , a young woman , of the resistance movement.

I was taken in from the beginning by the writing and then by wanting to know Daniel Levi's story . I couldn't stop reading because I wanted to know Chiara's story too and I read this in two days . As the story unfolds across the years by flashbacks , Chiara remembers the day she saved Daniele , the hard time he gave her as a teenager to the worse time as an adult as he breaks this woman's heart and puts her in ruin with his drug addiction. She also remembers the sadness and trauma this boy experienced.

This was not what I expected the book to be . I thought it would be a book about the holocaust and about the war , but while these events shape these characters, they loom in the background . It's Daniele's story even though he is not present for most of the book . We know him as the young traumatized and broken boy , separated from his family and then as the story moves ahead several decades , he is estranged from Chiara. But mostly it's Chiara's story . Of course my sympathies were with her - she lost a love , cares for a mentally disabled sister and takes this young boy into her life but yet she is not a pathetic character . I admired her as she goes on with her life even though heartbroken . Enter a Welch teenage girl named , Maria , who discovers that Daniele is her biological father and Chiara comes to life again.

I found this to be well written, and as well as a heart and head gripping story , about inner strength, bravery , identity , kindness and love and forgiveness. Highly recommended.

Thanks to Hachette Book Group and Edelweiss

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### **Susan says**

We first meet Chiara Ravello in Rome, during 1943. Her mother was killed in the Allied bombings, her fiancé taken away because of anti-fascist activities and she lives with her sister, Cecilia in a small apartment. Cecilia suffers from fits and Chiara feels responsible for her, but a decision taken one day in October that year will change her life forever. The ghetto is being cleared and Chiara watches as families are put onto trucks to be taken away, as her fiancé Carlo was. As Chiara stands, she meets the eyes of a mother, standing with her husband and children and, in unspoken agreement, claims the young boy of the mother as her nephew. Before she has thought the act through, the young Daniele Levi is being hustled away by Chiara and the ghetto left behind.

However, this is far from being an over sentimental story of a good deed, for things – as they rarely do in life – do not go to plan. Chiara's sister, Cecilia, does not welcome Daniele with open arms and Daniele himself

reacts badly from being ripped from his mother and taken away. Distrustful, suspicious and often openly warring, Chiara tries to take her two charges to the countryside and out of harm's way. Meanwhile, another strand of the story takes place many years after the war, when a young Welsh girl called Maria discovers a secret about her past that brings her to Chiara's door and forces her to face her past.

This is an intriguing novel which begins as one thing and then develops into something far more interesting. Far from being just another story about wartime Europe, this is far more about how our choices change our life. Daniele is not the grateful, compliant recipient of Chiara's sudden decision to save him. He is, as realistically he would be, an unsettled and confused little boy. Far from being a 'happy ever after' scenario, Daniel brings difficulties to Chiara – she obviously feels responsible for him and loves him, but he becomes a trouble young man and causes her problems and heartache. As Maria attempts to discover her past, Chiara finds that she needs to come to terms with her feelings for the little boy whose life she saved, but whose mother she could not replace. This is a moving read, which would have a lot to offer reading groups, with much to discuss. Lastly, I received a copy of this book from the publisher, via NetGalley, for review.

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### **Emma says**

I think I am in a minority here, but I just couldn't get into this book. I was expecting to be completely wowed but unfortunately that didn't happen. I have to say I believe this was my mind set at the time of reading and if I'd read this at a different time I probably would have loved it! I don't like writing negative reviews and I do have positives! The descriptions of Italy and Rome are wonderful and you get a real sense of the country, both during World War Two and the 1970's. Chiara is a great character, and despite everything she goes through, she remains positive. To take on another person's child at any point is a life-altering commitment, but to do it at the time Chiara does is commendable. Anyone who enjoys novels set around World War Two will really love this.

I also have to say I felt the ending was a little rushed and the whole story became wrapped up within a matter of paragraphs. I do feel however this was due to me trying to get to the end and then feeling let down that there wasn't more to it. I'm positive that other readers will enjoy this book.

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### **Tina Tamman says**

This is a disappointing novel although the ingredients are good. If you like a story where the middle part is missing, you may feel differently, but the first chapters led me to believe that an interesting if difficult relationship would follow. There is a 30-year-old woman who has just taken charge of a stranger's child who is rebellious, keen to run away. Isn't that a promise of an interesting relationship to follow? However, it never materialised. The subsequent events are instead told by a priest, an outsider. And yet we were told umpteen times that the woman was very attached to the child, even when he grew up, but we were never shown why. Why would an unmarried woman who is already looking after an ill sister want to look after somebody else's child as well, particularly if there is a war on? Hence my difficulty with the book. How was I to take on board the final part, crowded with all kinds of other people and incidents, if the middle part was missing?

There are good scenes, particularly those in Rome - very atmospheric. But my overall impression is that the author has devoted too much attention to the initial difficulties the woman has when the child is aged seven

and then skipped the subsequent decades.

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### **Anne says**

The opening chapter of Early One Morning takes place on a Rome street in October 1943. It is a haunting and poignant chapter that sets the pace for a story that spans decades and considers the consequences of a spur of the moment action.

Chiara is grieving for her parents and her fiance, all victims of the war raging in Europe. Chiara is now responsible for her sister Cecilia who is unwell and suffers from fits. They plan to leave the city and live in their grandparent's house, away from the fighting. When Chiara makes a snap decision, and finds herself the guardian of a small boy; snatched away from certain death, as his family are taken away to a concentration camp. Her life changes, as does that of her young charge Daniele.

In Wales, in 1973, sixteen-year-old Maria discovers that she is not who she thought she was. When Maria contacts her, Chiara's memories of Daniele and his effect on her life are reawakened, and she now has to consider her past.

Although Early One Morning is set during the War, it is not a war novel, nor is it a Holocaust novel. It is a gently paced and emotive journey, travelling alongside larger than life, beautifully created characters and set in a wonderfully detailed place.

Virginia Baily's voice is very assured, she writes with an air of authority and authenticity, and creates people and places that are captivating. This could have been a story of joy and selflessness, it could have been a story of reunions and sentimentality, but it isn't. Chiara can be a obstinate and prickly character. Daniele is difficult, with issues that simmer just beneath the surface, resulting in heartache and regrets. Despite this, I fell in love with Chiara, and especially resonated with her struggle to quit her smoking habit which the author describes so very very well.

Early One Morning is a story to be savoured. Filled with characters who are far from perfect people, who complement and contrast so well, it really is incredibly well written, the pages fly by so quickly, the story totally consumed me. I was left with lots of questions about identity, about upbringing and parental influence, and how our lives are shaped by those around us.

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### **Vasileios says**

<http://dreamersandco.com/2016/07/ena-...>

Π?λεμος, το ζ?τημα δεν ε?ναι μ?νο π?ς θα βγεις νικητ?ς απ? αυτ?v, αλλ? και π?ς θα καταφ?ρεις να τον νικ?ς στην καθημεριν?τητ? σου, στην ησυχ?α σου. Το μυθιστ?ρημα της Virginia Baily ?να πρω?, νωρ?ς (εκδ?σεις ?καρος, 2016), ε?ναι βαθι? συγκινητικ?, μας υπενθυμ?ζει τον τρ?μο των δ?σκολων στιγμ?v και των επιπτ?σεων των Πολ?μων. Μου ?ρεσε κυρ?ως για τη μεγαλοψυχ?α πολλ?v απ? τους χαρακτ?ρες του.

?να πρω?, νωρ?ς: ?νας μαγικ?ς τ?τλος που συμβολ?ζει πολλ?, το ξεκ?νημα μιας ?λλης ζω?ς. ?να πρωιν? που ?ρχεται να αλλ?ζει τα π?ντα.

Τον Οκτ?βριο του 1944 η Κι?ρα Ραβ?λο και εν? ε?ναι ?τοιμη να εγκαταλε?ψει τη Ρ?μη, καταφ?ρνει να σ?σει ?να επτ?χρονο εβραι?πουλο απ? β?βαιο θ?νατο. Οι γονε?ς του αναγκασμ?νοι να επιβιβαστο?ν στο τρα?νο που θα τους οδηγ?σει στο ?ουσβιτς, αφ?νουν στα χ?ρια μιας ?γνωστης τον μον?κριβ? γιο τους. Η γυνα?κα αυτ? δεν ε?ναι ?λλη απ? την Κι?ρα, η οπο?α με ?κρα μυστικ?τητα απ? τη Γερμανικ? αστυνομ?α που τους επιτηρε? διαρκ?ς αποφασ?ζει να σ?σει τον Ντανι?λε και να τον μεγαλ?σει σαν δικ? της παιδ?.

Ο Ντανι?λε, ?μως δεν ε?ναι ?να συνηθισμ?νο αγ?ρι, κουβαλ?ει πολλ? τρα?ματα: αρχικ? δεν μπορε? να αποδεχθε? την Κι?ρα ως τη μοναδικ? πλ?ον προστ?τιδ? του, εν? αντιμετωπ?ζει σοβαρ? προβλ?ματα και με τις ασταμ?τητες τ?σεις φυγ?ς του. ?σως και η μο?ρα του να μην του ?χει δ?σει και ?λλες επιλογ?ς. ?που πηγα?νουν με την Κι?ρα, αφ?νει διαρκ?ς σημει?ματα προορισμ?να για τη μητ?ρα του, ζητ?ντας της να ?ρθει να τον συναντ?σει.

Σ?ντομα τα ναρκωτικ? θα ?ρθουν στη ζω? του και π?λι ?μως αυτ? το κεν? δεν θα μπορ?σει να το καλ?ψει. Τα πρ?γματα θα συνεχ?σουν να εξελ?σσονται περ?εργα για την Κι?ρα η οπο?α ξαφνικ? θα χ?σει τα ?χνη του Ντανι?λε, και τα μυστικ? της θα αναμιχθο?ν με τη σκληρ? πραγματικ?τητα. Ο Ντανι?λε ?μως δεν θα ε?ναι πλ?ον εκε?, ?σο και αν τον αναζητ?σει. Του ?σωσε μια φορ? τη ζω?, τ?ρα π?ς θα μπορ?σει να τον προστατε?σει;

Η ιστορ?α του ?να πρω?, νωρ?ς αναπτ?σσεται σε 3 επ?πεδα: το παρελθ?ν, το κοντιν? παρελθ?ν και το σ?μερα, στα οπο?α μεταφερ?μαστε με πολ? ενδιαφ?ροντα γυρ?σματα.

Στο σ?μερα η Μαρ?α, μια Βρεταν?δα φοιτ?τρια θα συνδεθε? περ?εργα με την Κι?ρα, καθ?ς φα?νεται να υποστηρ?ζει ?τι ε?ναι η κ?ρη του Ντανι?λε μετ? απ? μια περιστασιακ? σχ?ση που ε?χε η μητ?ρα της μαζ? του και θ?λει να τον συναντ?σει. Κανε?ς ?μως δεν ξ?ρει που ε?ναι. Η μο?ρα τις φ?ρνει κοντ? και μαζ? θα ?ρθουν στο φως και ?λα τα μυστικ? του παρελθ?ντος.

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**Arwen56 says**

Suppongo che la signora Baily fosse un tantino distratta a scuola e avesse faccende più importanti di cui occuparsi. Il che andrebbe benissimo, per carità, contenta lei, contenti tutti. Tuttavia, la cosa diventa un po' problematica nel momento in cui, "da grande", la signora in questione decide di voler fare la scrittrice. Orbene, "fare la scrittrice" significa che si deve scrivere. E se si deve scrivere, bisogna che lo si sappia fare. Invece, ahimè, non pare proprio che le cose stiano così.

Questo romanzo è di una sciatteria linguistica notevole. Tutti i periodi sono all'indicativo presente, forse per evitare di ingarbugliarsi in tempi e modi verbali troppo complessi, che, magari, avrebbero potuto sfociare in quel perfetto sconosciuto che è ormai diventato il congiuntivo, spesso foriero di oscure subordinate, che si sa dove cominciano, ma non dove finiscono, nonché zeppi di identici concetti ripetuti sino alla nausea, dialoghi da bambini di quinta elementare, divagazioni su questioni del tutto superflue e avulse dal contesto, nell'evidente intento di tirare per le lunghe quelle poche e per niente originali idee che sono alla base del racconto. Lo sfondo storico è molto riduttivo, limitato com'è per lo più a indicazioni geografiche e

toponomastiche, senza alcun solido *background* che riesca a rendere la drammatica e confusa atmosfera dei giorni che precedettero l'arrivo delle truppe americane a Roma. Le tante problematiche messe sul tappeto, non ultima delle quali il tema dell'abbandono, sono affrontate alla stregua di meri accadimenti, accenni che mai entrano nel merito e tanto meno indagano sulle conseguenze che suscitano. L'ottimistico e frettoloso finale sembra capitombolare giù da un altro pianeta, oltre che far venire il latte alle ginocchia. Tutto resta sempre e solo a livello epidermico.

Dunque, mi corre l'obbligo di avvisare l'autrice che non è sufficiente infilare in un libro, e soprattutto così superficialmente, il dramma dell'olocausto per poter ritenere di aver scritto qualcosa che valga davvero la pena di mettere nero su bianco. Ho la netta impressione che ormai molti "ci marcino" su questo crinale di dubbio gusto e, francamente, comincio a trovarlo offensivo, sia come lettrice, sia come persona. Quando una narrazione è fiacca e non sorretta da motivazioni che siano anche interiori, lo si percepisce benissimo.

Sarebbe oltremodo opportuno che scrivessero, e pubblicassero, solo coloro che hanno davvero qualcosa da dire. Gli altri, tutt'al più, possono tenere un diario. Ecchecavolo.

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