



The Girl from Venice

Martin Cruz Smith

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The highly anticipated new standalone novel from Martin Cruz Smith, whom *The Washington Post* has declared “that uncommon phenomenon: a popular and well-regarded crime novelist who is also a writer of real distinction,” *The Girl from Venice* is a suspenseful World War II love story set against the beauty, mystery, and danger of occupied Venice.

Venice, 1945. The war may be waning, but the city known as La Serenissima is still occupied and the people of Italy fear the power of the Third Reich. One night, under a canopy of stars, a fisherman named Cenzo comes across a young woman’s body floating in the lagoon and soon discovers that she is still alive and in trouble.

Born to a wealthy Jewish family, Giulia is on the run from the SS. Cenzo chooses to protect Giulia rather than hand her over to the Nazis. This act of kindness leads them into the world of Partisans, random executions, the arts of forgery and high explosives, Mussolini’s broken promises, the black market and gold, and, everywhere, the enigmatic maze of the Venice Lagoon.

The Girl from Venice is a thriller, a mystery, and a retelling of Italian history that will take your breath away. Most of all it is a love story.

The Girl from Venice Details

Date : Published October 18th 2016 by Simon Schuster

ISBN : 9781439140239

Author : Martin Cruz Smith

Format : Hardcover 320 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Fiction, Mystery, Cultural, Italy, War, World War II

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From Reader Review The Girl from Venice for online ebook

Erika says

I just wanted to lose myself in a story, and this was the perfect fit. I'm not sure why but it reminded me a little of Beautiful Ruins with the way it meandered around the different characters without a real beginning or end but just sort of took a vacation and landed plop in the middle of their lives. I loved it.

Lewis Weinstein says

I re-read this novel as a book club read ... the beginning is superb: two well-developed characters and a fascinating plot opening. There is reason to expect a wonderful love story set against the end of WWII in Italy. However, after 75 or so pages, the book falls apart. The plot expands to include uninteresting and confusing side stories. The girl, who is the glue, disappears. By the time she returns at the end, it is too late to save the story, and the ending is weak anyway. This was a great opportunity lost.

Susan Johnson says

I don't know how to say this any other way but I loved this book. Cenzo Vianello is one of my favorite characters in a book ever. He is exactly what he is, a fisherman in the lagoons near Venice, Italy. I had no idea that they fished there. I always just pictured it was full of gondolas but apparently before and during WWII, they did.

Besides being a fisherman he is the brother of Italy's famous and handsome actor and Mussolini spokesman, Giorgio. Giorgio had seduced Cenzo's wife and swept her away before she was killed in the war. He had another brother killed in the war whose widow is desperate to marry him much against his wishes.

One night while fishing he picks up an apparent dead body of a young woman. The only problem? She's not dead and she is a Jew running from the Germans who desperately want to kill her. It's a wonderful family story who are just trying to survive the ending days of the War.

It was interesting to note that by unspoken agreement that Venice was not bombed during the fighting. Thank goodness for that. As the war is ending, all these different groups come out- the fleeing Germans, the remaining Italians with ties to the Germans, fascists, partisans, and those that just want desperately left alone. Cenzo just wants to fish. He had piloted a reconnaissance plane in Ethiopia earlier in the war but refused to drop poison gas on the natives. He was relieved of his service and labeled a coward. He vowed then to keep to himself.

You may think you don't want to read another WWII novel but this is different. It is just so entertaining. The picture of Mussolini going from bank to bank trying to amass some money so he can start over is funny. He is portrayed as so dithering that it's hard to imagine anybody following him.

I hope you will read this and fall in love with Cenzo as I did. Thanks to Net Galley and Simon and Schuster for a copy of this book in exchange for a fair review.

Empress Reece (Hooked on Books) says

The Girl From Venice- 2.5 stars...

When I opted to read *The Girl From Venice* I was hoping for an engaging war story rich in the Venetian atmosphere but instead of feeling completely immersed in the story and time period, I felt more like an outsider looking in. If you've ever been with a group of people that are talking about something that happened when you weren't there, so you don't quite get what the fuss is about, then you'll understand how I felt about the author's writing. It seemed like we were only given scattered parts of the whole story and the political dynamics among the major players- Mussolini, Fascists, Partisans, Italy, Germany, America etc., weren't fleshed out well enough for me to fully engage in it.

The characters were also very flat. Normally if I read a really good historical war story, I feel emotionally involved in the characters and sympathize with their circumstances but in this story I didn't feel anything at all for any of the characters. There just wasn't enough character development and the stage wasn't set adequately enough for me to get invested in either the characters or the story.

If you already have a deep understanding of the Italy's role in the war then you may appreciate the story more than I did but if you don't, then you'll probably come away from it feeling like you're missing crucial parts of this historical period.

*I received this ARC from NetGalley and Simon & Schuster in exchange for an honest review. Thank you!

Kemper says

I received a free ARC from NetGalley of this for review.

A book with the word *Girl* in the title? I've never seen that before....*cough*

In the last days of World War II in Europe an Italian fisherman named Cenzo hauls in what he thinks is the body of a dead young woman. Only she's just playing possum, and Cenzo quickly finds out that Giulia is Jewish and on the run from Nazis who just killed her family.

Cenzo hides Giulia, but it turns out that she has a secret that someone is desperate to cover up by killing her. Things get more complicated when his estranged brother who has been doing propaganda films for Mussolini's government shows up, and Cenzo finds himself drawn into the circle of once powerful people who are now looking for the exits as the Allies approach.

I've been a longtime fan of Martin Cruz Smith, particularly his series about Russian detective, Arkady Renko. Like Renko and many of his other characters, Cenzo is a smart guy who generally wants nothing to do with the schemes of the corrupt people above him in society, and yet he's also incapable of just letting an obvious injustice happen. It's another Smith staple that many around Cenzo see him as a pawn to use for

their own purposes, but he's got a knack for turning the tables on them while he pursues his own agenda. Smith is also great at setting stories in historically interesting places and periods, and he makes the most out of this one.

This isn't an action thriller, and it's also not a straight up whodunit historical fiction. It kind of falls into the category of character drama with some of those elements. Overall it's Smith doing his usual thing, but there's certainly nothing wrong with that.

3.58 stars.

Jaksen says

I won this book in a Goodreads giveaway; thank you Goodreads.

Sort of disappointing overall...

The story of Cenzo, a fisherman from Venice, who helps a Jewish girl, Giulia, at the end of WWII. She escapes - when her family is betrayed and arrested - by diving into the lagoon where Cenzo is fishing and what happens after...

It's too contrived, too confusing and seriously, every character in this book has the same 'voice' or personality. They're wise-cracking smart alecks. Everything's a joke or has a double or triple meaning. The book is dialogue-rich, which doesn't bother me. (I love dialogue!) But if you took out 'Cenzo said,' or 'Giulia replied,' you'd have no idea who's talking to who. Seriously, from the Fascist Italians to the bartender, even to Cenzo's mother, they're all the same person, the same voice. There's the wife of the Argentinian consul, same voice. The friend of Mussolini's lover, same voice. The Nazis, the Italians, the film producers, same, same, same. No one says anything to anyone without being a wise guy. It got tiring. Even the partisans who 'help' Cenzo by promising to get Giulia to safety speak in the same tone.

As for the writing itself? It's sort of 'choppy.' It sounded - in my head while I read - like someone tapping out a rather monotone, musical arrangement on piano. Dah-dah-dah-dah-dah and maybe a 'dum' thrown in there. A book to get sleepy by.

Still and all, decent enough story. Three stars.

Or, C-.

Erin says

Find this and other reviews at: <http://flashlightcommentary.blogspot....>

The phrase "highly anticipated" should set off warning bells, but I ignored my misgivings and jumped at

Martin Cruz Smith's The Girl from Venice. I'm a WWII junkie and have absolutely no restraint when considering literature set against the conflict, but looking back, I wish I'd have listened to my gut and passed on the narrative.

Please excuse my assessment, but Smith's character development felt remarkably thin. As a reader, I couldn't connect to a single member of the cast which made it intensely difficult to care how their stories turned out. I appreciated the brisk pace of the story, but I felt the individuals themselves were clichéd and forgettable.

Factually there are a few interesting points peppered throughout the narrative, but creating an atmosphere and transporting his readers wasn't Smith's priority. The Girl from Venice is first and foremost a mystery and at the end of the day, I feel the piece best suited to fans of that genre. The novel happens to take place during WWII, but when push comes to shove, it lacks the depth and detail I associate with good historic fiction.

At the end of the day I can't say I was particularly impressed with The Girl from Venice and I don't think I'll be recommending it to others any time soon. It failed to satisfy any of my expectations and left no impression whatsoever.

Paromjit says

This is an engaging historical thriller set in Venice and Salo in Italy in 1945. This is an Italy in turmoil, overflowing with German troops, some looking for vengeance as it becomes clear that Hitler has lost power, a confined Mussolini trying to escape with his mistress, and Italian families having divided loyalties and the uncertainties that come with new realities. Cenzo, a fisherman, has conflicting relationships with his family, his mother is trying to hitch him up with Celestina, Hugo, his brother is dead, a casualty of the war and Giorgio, his other brother is a prominent fascist and actor who had gotten involved with Gina, Cenzo's now dead wife. Needless to say, Cenzo is a seething mass of hate and resentment when it comes to Giorgio. Cenzo's painting of Hugo holds secrets that unfold through the story. Vittorio and Adele Silber, were well assimilated rich Jews in Italian society, who believed that the race laws did not apply to them. They are betrayed and killed, their daughter, Giulia manages to escape.

Out night fishing, Cenzo discovers what he thinks is a dead girl in the water. He discovers Giulia is not dead, and ends up killing a German SS officer to protect her. Despite the initial abrasiveness of Giulia, Cenzo is determined to protect her. She is disguised as his assistant, and becomes able at fishing. Cenzo organises for her to get a safe getaway only to find his plans go awry later as she goes missing. This leads to Cenzo going to Salo to find her, only to encounter a place where there is much intrigue, betrayal, executions, forged passports, the partisans looking for revenge, the drama that is the fate of Mussolini, film makers, actors and actresses. The author captures the intense atmosphere and the lives and caprices of the characters in tumultuous and changing times. Cenzo searches for Giulia, determined to find out what happened to her.

This is a love story set in the difficult times, as the second world war concludes. It covers Italy's experiences at this time in an authentic manner. It took me a while to get into the story, but once I got engrossed, I was hooked. I particularly enjoyed the descriptions of fishing in the book. This is a well constructed story that I enjoyed reading. Highly recommended. Thanks to Simon and Schuster for an ARC.

Cindy Burnett says

3.5 stars

The Girl from Venice takes place in Italy towards the end of World War II. Martin Cruz Smith starts the book as the war is almost at a close and chose occupied Venice as the setting. As I was starting this book, I realized that I have read a ton of World War II fiction, but not a single book that took place in Italy during the war. Occupied Venice is a fascinating place with a number of warring factions, which at times I found a little hard to keep straight. While the Italians are waiting on the Americans to arrive and liberate them, the Nazis are attempting to wipe out every Jew that they can and punish those Italians who were not loyal supporters of the Nazis.

As the story opens, Cenzo, a local fisherman is out fishing at night on the Venice lagoon when he pulls a young girl from the water. He soon discovers that the Nazis are searching for her because she is Jewish and is the lone survivor of a coordinated attack on a group that had been in hiding for several years. Cenzo chooses to protect her, and this choice draws him into the world of the SS, spies, the Partisans, and numerous other individuals.

I thoroughly enjoyed learning about the historical aspects of Venice and neighboring Salo at the end of the war though I found it to be fairly confusing at times trying to distinguish who was who exactly. I did think there was way too much time spent on the fishing aspects early on and skimmed some of those sections.

The Girl from Venice was an interesting read, and I felt I learned a lot. Thanks to Simon and Schuster and NetGalley for the chance to read this ARC in exchange for an honest review.

Diane S ? says

3.5 Three brothers, Hugo whose death provides fodder later on, Giorgio who becomes an actor, the lion of Italy and later Mussolini's propaganda chief and Cenzo, who wants only to be a fisherman on his island Pellistrina , plying his trade on the Ventian canals. On one such trip he discovers a young girl floating in the canal, a Jewish girl who has escaped the death of her father and others. Cenzo's life as a peaceful fisherman will come to an abrupt end.

I found this an engaging read, much of it takes place in Sala at the end of the war, occupied by German soldiers, partisans, diplomats, a fading Mussolini, who is basically a well kept prisoner of the Germans and an invading American force. So this covers many different types of genres, historical, adventure and a love story.

I loved the lighter tone, enjoyed Canzo and some of my favorite parts were learning about fishing the canals and how to catch the different fish. Also takes place in an area I have read little of and a time in history of which I knew nothing. Seems I have read little of Italy's history during WWII. Engaging story, family quarrels and Cenzo trying to save Giuila while surviving the many different forces in play. A lighter historical but a good one.

ARC from Netgalley.

Brenda says

Innocenzo (Cenzo) Vianello was a fisherman; he called himself just a “simple fisherman” who worked the canals at night and slept during the day. The little shack he called home was perched on the edge of the river next to where he moored his fishing vessel. When he lost his brother Hugo to the war, their father was so traumatised that his own death came soon afterwards. His other brother Giorgio became an actor but the bad blood between Cenzo and Giorgio was known throughout the community. Cenzo was grieving deeply; he was also angry.

The night Cenzo spied a body floating in the lagoon was the beginning of a string of episodes that was to change many lives. Giulia was a Jewish girl who had escaped the SS – Cenzo was determined to keep her safe from the Nazis who would execute her immediately. What followed took Cenzo out of the comfort of his fishing life in Pellestrina and into a world of partisans, murder and intense danger...

Set at the end of WWII in northern Italy and Venice, *The Girl from Venice* by Martin Cruz Smith started off in an engaging way. I enjoyed getting to know Cenzo and how much he loved the craft he’d plied for so long. The descriptions of the lagoons, the appearances of the German gunboats during the night to “check on the fishermen”; all proved haunting and atmospheric. But the pace was slow, the characters (other than Cenzo and Giulia) felt to me like they had no depth. So I was a little disappointed the story didn’t continue in the same vein. But that said, I would still recommend this one.

With thanks to NetGalley and the publisher for this copy to read in exchange for my honest review.

Marita says

3.5 stars

“Rumor had it that Mussolini was hiding with the cardinal in Milan. That loyal Fascists were rallying by the thousands to his banner. That he was going into retirement to write his memoirs. That Germans and Allies were joining forces to attack communist Russia. None of these stories were true. But it was the eve of something enormous, a collective breath held, a sense that a great wave was on the horizon.”

This story takes place during the last gasps of World War II. The fascist **RSI or Repubblica Sociale Italiana** (The Italian Social Republic) existed during the years 1943-1945, and its capital was the town of Salò in Northern Italy with Benito Mussolini (1883-1945) at the helm. It was also known as the Republic of Salò. *“It was, after all, the capital of the Italian Socialist Republic, the RSI, a puppet regime but a regime nonetheless”* *“Salò is the ultimate confusion, like having different operas take place on the same stage at the same time.”* It was a time of uncertainty and much speculation. The action moves between the village of Pellestrina in the Venetian Lagoon and Salò, and takes us through the period of Mussolini’s ignominious

demise.

Into this political situation the author introduces the Vianello brothers, Cenzo (or Innocenzo) and Giorgio. Another brother, Hugo, died before this story gets underway. There is not much brotherly love between Cenzo the fisherman and Giorgio the influential and famous actor, as they have their own history to deal with. To complicate matters, enter Jewish teenager Giulia Silber, fished from the water by Cenzo, and sought by the Germans. Giorgio has no problem collaborating with the Germans, but Cenzo, whilst not quite the innocent his name suggests, is certainly incorruptible as all the different factions (fascists, partisans and miscellaneous others) discover. As one of the characters says of Cenzo: ““Well, be careful. You look far too honorable. That is a handicap in Salò.”” Is Cenzo being used as bait or a decoy, or is he his own man? In the simple but certainly not stupid fisherman, Mr Smith has created a really likeable character.

Another likeable character is Nido the barman with his pragmatic approach: ““Okay. As for contacts, you know how it is. All types come into the bar and you think you know who is what, but if you approach someone you think is a partisan and guess wrong, you’ll be put against a wall and shot. If they are partisan and they think you’re trying to infiltrate them, you’ll be marched to a tree and shot. Either way, it’s not good for business.”” Nido tells a horrific yet delightful story about a pet python, which is very apt to the situation in the novel. Elsewhere in the novel we find brothers Cenzo and Giorgio “like two snakes in a basket”.

I had to suspend disbelief fairly often in this yarn. There are several examples, but I hesitate to say too much as I do not wish to spoil the plot. And the plot isn’t spoiled by the suspension of disbelief.

As most of the Italian characters have Italian names, why use Hugo and Maximo and not Ugo and Massimo?

A fairly enjoyable read, but it doesn’t make four stars for me.

Katie says

I’m thankful to this novel for proving that I haven’t grown so cynical, after an acrimonious divorce this year, that I can’t still enjoy a good love story well told and that I can still enjoy lighter fiction without the dreaded literary snob within rising up and telling me off for wasting my reading time.

This is a WW2 story set in Venice. A fisherman out on his boat at night discovers the body of a young female in the water. At first he assumes she’s dead. However she isn’t dead; she’s a Jewess who has just escaped an SS roundup at the hospital where she was hiding with her family. She’s from a very wealthy sophisticated family.

What made this novel so enjoyable was the vitality and love with which it was told. It’s witty, it’s sophisticated and it’s fabulously researched. If at times it’s a bit outlandish it gets away with it because of the liveliness of the writing. I loved learning about fishing in Venice’s lagoons. And I loved the depiction of the Italians (I have Italian blood). It’s largely motored by dialogue rather than long descriptive passages which makes it very easy to read. The plot keeps you involved with murderous sibling rivalries, deceitful friends, interfering mothers and a truly engaging love story which manages to avoid cliché and cheese completely.

It won’t be anyone’s favourite novel they’ve read this year and it won’t win any literary prizes but I

thoroughly enjoyed it. And, of course, it was wonderful to spend Christmas in Venice, albeit only in imagination. Happy New Year to all my fabulous GR friends. My first year here and I've loved it!

Liz says

2.5 stars

It's been awhile since I've read a book by Martin Cruz Smith. I enjoyed Gorky Park and a few others in the Arkady Renko series but then didn't care for one and gave up on him. So I was pleased that netgalley provided me with an advance copy of The Girl From Venice so I could give him another chance.

Cruz Smith's writing is sparse. He tells the story without much in the way of embellishment. The story takes place at the end of WWII in Italy. The Germans are desperate and no one knows who to trust. Cruz Smith does a good job of portraying that horrible sense of unease.

Cenzo is a "simple" fisherman. So there's lots of talk about fishing. And while it may help explain Cenzo, it's also boring as hell. But then, as the plot progresses, he always have the skill necessary.

This is not a fast paced book. It takes a while to get to the meat of the plot. And once there, it still takes its time. It was interesting from a historic point of view. Unlike Germany, I haven't read much about Italy at the end of the war. But it just didn't grab me. The characters felt flat. Cruz Smith's attempts to flesh them out just didn't make me care for them. And I'm a reader that wants/needs to care about the characters of a book. And there were some major gaps in the storyline which left me feeling very dissatisfied.

Thank you to netgalley and Simon & Schuster for this ARC.

Thomas says

I enjoyed this stand alone by the author. I have read ten of his books and enjoyed all of them. This book starts with Cenzo, a simple fisherman in Venice, who finds the body of a young woman in a lagoon where he is fishing in the dark. Quote: "Fisherman were nocturnal creatures who slept by day and fished by night." He brings the girl aboard his boat, but then a German gunboat comes to him and boards his boat. They search his boat, but don't find the girl. She is alive and slipped into the water. She is a Jewish escapee from a hospital where she was hiding with her family. But they and other Jews were betrayed and Giulia can identify the traitor. Only Giulia escaped and the Nazi SS are hunting her. Cenzo decides to shelter her. He is led gradually into a web of intrigue, with Fascists, Partisans and his brother Giorgio all interacting with Cenzo. This book takes place in at the end of the war--1945 and everyone is trying to survive.

Cenzo and Giorgio have a difficult relationship. Cenzo's wife left him for Giorgio, who is a film star and is a magnet for women.

I thought the characters were realistic and the plot moved along at a very good pace. Recommended for Cruz Smith fans. I rate it 4 out 5 stars.

Thanks to NetGalley for this ARC.

Bam says

*3.5 stars. The Girl from Venice is an engaging thriller and love story set in Venice and its countryside waterways in the waning days of WWII. Cenzo Vianello, a young fisherman of Salo, is fishing at night when he discovers the body of a young girl floating in the water. Thinking she is dead, he pulls the body aboard the Fatima and covers her with a tarp. Soon afterward, a German gunboat appears and soldiers board his boat, searching for something...the girl? She has disappeared so she must be alive but where did she go?

When she does reappear, she tells Cenzo her story: she is a wealthy Jewish girl named Giulia who has been in hiding for two years in Venice with her family and friends. Recently they were betrayed by a man named DaCosta and her father helped her alone to escape. She has found her way into the lagoons but the Germans are hot on her trail. How far will Cenzo go to help her? Things are complicated by the large number of wartime allegiances. Whom should he trust? The partisans? The black market smugglers? Certainly not his brother Giorgio, the famous movie actor who once made a cuckold of his brother, nor any of Giorgio's wealthy society friends.

Martin Cruz Smith takes the reader fishing in the streams, lagoons and mudflats of the Italian countryside, and then to the war-torn streets of Venice, where they are awaiting the arrival of the American army, the Liberators, with mixed emotions. Along the way, we meet some pretty interesting characters--a few heroes but many others who are desperate, greedy and despicable.

I enjoyed the way the plot built momentum to its exciting conclusion and felt the scenario described was an unique perspective from which to tell a love story. I would expect to see a movie version done some day. This is all very Bogart-esque, especially the night scenes on the water. Great stuff!

Thanks to NetGalley, the publisher and the author for an ARC of this new thriller by the author of Gorky Park.

Barbara says

After reading this book I understand why it isn't more popular. Set in Venice during the last days of World War II, it is the story of Cenzo, a fisherman, who rescues Giulia, who has escaped the Nazis. The character Cenzo is a bit of a schemer and jokester. There are scant descriptions of Venice, and I prefer stories of wartime that are serious. This was "almost good" but not quite.

Michael says

An entertaining historical thriller with the atmospherics of a romance in war time that gives it that "Casablanca" flavor. Cenzo is a thirty-something fisherman who saves an aristocratic Jewish teen, Giulia, from the Nazis and tries to keep her safe in an environment in which virtually no one can be trusted. The sense of the world going to hell in a handbasket and death looming behind every door is often the backdrop

for romance, but the bonds in this case feel more like a case of creating a provisional family to stand against the madness afoot and to make up for the losses both characters have sustained.

Cenzo fishes a lot at night on the lagoon, and his first encounter with Giula is of her floating on the water pretending to be dead. Despite just escaping the SS she is resourceful enough to fool him. He lets her stay at his shack, and slowly they develop enough trust to share some of their secrets. We come to learn that she is not just a bubble-brained privileged teenager, and he is not just a low-class, ignorant peasant. Their friendship was delightful to see emerge, especially when she dresses as a boy and takes up as his assistant at fishing:

He taught her how to set a circle of nets at high tide and collect stranded fish at low. How to rake clams. How to spear a ray. How to get behind and push the boat when it ran aground. At night, watching the stars from the deck of the shack, how to track the Great Bear as he swung by its tail. How to earn the right to ask questions.

Eventually, the inspections by patrol boats become too dangerous, and he feels obligated to negotiate a hand-off to communist partisans to smuggle her out of the country. Later, he learns that the operation was betrayed and that she has disappeared. Different factions are looking for her for some reason. His cold detachment gives way to a desperate urge to either avenge her death or free her from whoever has her. His first step is to engage the help of his older brother whom he hates, which we learn is well justified, but has a lot of connections with the Fascist regime through his work as a radio propagandist.

The plot at this point brings in a host of interesting and colorful characters in the city of Salo, where Mussolini's government has set up shop in the face of the Allies slowly fighting their way toward Rome from their Sicily invasion. A lot of fishing metaphors come in handy, such as those that relate to camouflage. Some people he sees as corrupt and selfish turn out to be good eggs, and some that appear benign turn out to be very dangerous indeed. As the war appears to be near the end, everyone is trying to make the right move to survive well into the future. Even Mussolini has to choose where to take his gold and whether to face the end with his wife or his mistress. Cenzo has to deal with a lot of madness and traps. He had fighting experience from a tour with Italy's imperial campaigns in North Africa, so his amazing courage has some foundation.

I appreciate Smith's portrayal of the rich complexities of this unusual time and place, the dialog, and cast of characters. I've enjoyed 8 of 9 of his Cold War series featuring downtrodden Soviet detective Arkady Renko, but the two I appreciated most for his creative ingenuity have been his World War 2 espionage thrillers, "Stallion Gate" (intrigue at the A-bomb project in New Mexico) and "December 6" (a British anti-hero trying to survive in Tokyo on the verge of Pearl Harbor). This is not quite as good, so my rating is 3.5 stars rounded up.

This book was provided by the publisher through the Netgalley program and is due for publication on October 18.

Chelsea Humphrey says

3.5 STARS

Venice, 1945. The war may be waning, but the city known as La Serenissima is still occupied and the people of Italy fear the power of the Third Reich. One night, under a canopy of stars, a fisherman named Cenzo comes across a young woman's body floating in the lagoon and soon discovers that she is still alive and in trouble.

Born to a wealthy Jewish family, Giulia is on the run from the SS. Cenzo chooses to protect Giulia rather than hand her over to the Nazis. This act of kindness leads them into the world of Partisans, random executions, the arts of forgery and high explosives, Mussolini's broken promises, the black market and gold, and, everywhere, the enigmatic maze of the Venice Lagoon.

This was a different read for me; like many others stated in their reviews, I realized I had not read any books pertaining to Italy during WWII. Granted, this one begins as the war is coming to a close, but it still gave me a totally different perspective on a time that so many books have been written about. There's no hiding the fact that WWII historical fiction has been uber popular this year, and at first I saw the jacket summary and thought "Dear God, ANOTHER WWII BOOK?!", but this one held it's own and gave a unique read with thriller and mystery-esque traits. If you are reading this thinking "Wow I like thrillers", this isn't really a thriller per say. It's not really chocked full of action scenes and the pages didn't fly for me; that being said I DID enjoy this for what it was.

It did take me a bit to really get into this one, and the pacing is very steady, but I felt the pay off in the end was worth the time it took me to get there. I've come to realize this year that books aren't about how fast you can read them (ok, but sometimes they are). I'M GROWING UP Y'ALL! :) This one definitely had a lighter feel than I expected; again, not a criticism, just an unexpected observation. It was fairly short in length but I felt the author tapped into everything he needed to in terms of fleshing out the story. The love story was a nice touch and I thought the development of Giorgio and his evilness was really well done. I've not read any of the author's other work, but would like to check them out per recommendations of friends.

Many thanks to the publisher for providing my copy via Goodreads Giveaway!

Bandit says

This is the latest stand alone by the ever prolific Martin Cruz Smith. The author is primarily known for his series and I'm not a fan of series as such, so I haven't read him until now. This book, though, looked interesting enough and was available on Netgalley, so why not. Set in the last days of WWII in Italy, it's a love story of impossible odds between a fisherman from a small village and a young Jewish woman he rescues. It starts off relatively small, but later as the protagonist, Cenzo, goes after the girl, navigating the choppy waters of the waning Republic of Salo (aka Italian Socialist Republic) and the high society of fascinating characters doing their best to stay afloat, it gets more evolved and complex. I'm not sure which part I preferred, both worked quite well. It's such an interesting setting, such an interesting time. The novel is dynamic, very dialogue driven, moves along swimmingly for its size. For all its positive qualities, though, I can't quite say that I loved it, though I enjoyed reading it. It's a competently written book, Smith has had decades to perfect his skills, he does particularly well with the moral ambiguities (used often as sheer survival techniques) of its cast, it just missed something...that something that makes one emotionally respond to the book. Still though not great, solidly good read. Pardon the H2O puns, but Venice is in the title. Thanks Netgalley.

