

THE US Review of Books



I Will Always Love You

by Darlene Porter

Authors' Tranquility Press

book review by Mihir Shah

"With her attention focused inward, Jonathan had occasion to consider the person who had become closer to him than any other had ever been."

Set in Chicago, this story is a Cinderella meets *Pride and Prejudice* romance. Orphan Genevieve Davidsley is sent on a path to become a nurse in a convent. However, when she is kicked out due to her penchant for running, she has no choice but to return to abusive aunts who seem determined to make her life a living hell. A chance encounter while running with the family dog leads to a collision that alters the trajectory of her fortunes.

Audiences get a glimpse into the historical context of Genevieve's life: her father dies young from influenza, which consumes the mother and Genevieve's little brother as well. For all intents and purposes, Genevieve is the scapegoat in the eyes of her archaic aunts, yet when she runs into Jonathan, literally, she finds someone her age who values her youthful exuberance. What begins with unceasing letters to the home—much to the disdain of the aunts—evolves into a full-fledged romance between a cowboy, Jonathan, and Genevieve, the Cinderella-esque, down-on-her-luck, damsel in distress whose illness has her knocking on death's door.

Despite being kicked out when he comes to check on Genevieve, Jonathan is smitten and determined to glean information on her well-being. Porter's character development shines with the entrance of Molly, the youngest servant of the Davidsley household. With her character playing the vital role of the messenger, two complete strangers, Jonathan and Genevieve, now have a medium through which they can communicate. Throughout the novel, impeccable character development yields seamless plot flow, allowing the characters to evoke the maximum level of emotion. Even the aunts, for instance, excel in their ruthlessness and oppression of Genevieve, as best encapsulated by the protagonist's burnt hand during her illness.

Interestingly, the call to sisterhood pursues Genevieve (Ginny) like her own shadow, leading her to a tortuous path where she is unable to explore her own feelings. Yet, time and time again, just as the dark clouds seem like they are going to part, the darkness once again encapsulates her. Her journey of trials and tribulations is undoubtedly tragic, yet it appears that the depth of Ginny and Jonathan's bond will only be realized with more obstacles crowding their path to becoming one.

Porter's novel features polar opposites in the abusive aunts and the unconditional kindness of the Hamiltons, especially Aunt Veronica. As the main characters endure their own ordeals, the plot assumes a breakneck pace where it becomes a race against time to determine if everything will work out for Ginny in the end. In this work, Ginny is unquestionably a representation of all that is good and innocent, while there are numerous characters who represent the vile nature of mankind. While it is a travesty that Ginny is the subject of many tragedies in the novel, it is also a testament to reality, where the innocent suffer, and the wealthy emerge victorious, albeit temporarily. Above all else, Porter's work is an intriguing fusion of character development and never-ending plot twists and turns. The result is an entertaining read.



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