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The Rescuer (Kindle Single)



Synopsis

In 1941, a young Harvard-educated classicist named Varian Fry arrived in occupied France on a daring mission to rescue more than 2,000 of Europe's leading writers, artists, and intellectuals from the Nazis. Hounded by the Gestapo, he smuggled Marcel Duchamp, Marc Chagall, Hannah Arendt and dozens of other 20th century cultural luminaries out of France and brought them to America. So why did even the people Fry saved want to forget him? In this fascinating psychological profile, acclaimed novelist Dara Horn, chosen by Granta magazine as one of the 25 best young novelists in America, follows the peculiar life and legacy of an American Oskar Schindler. In the process, she reveals the secrets of a man who risked his life when others were silent and the unforeseen consequences, personal and cultural, of his bravery.

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Customer Reviews

The Rescuer is the reason I now own a Kindle. I heard Ms Horn interviewed on Vox Tablet (an excellent podcast) and then read an excerpt of The Rescuer on the Tablet website. I had to read the rest and had wanted a Kindle, so by the very next morning it had been delivered (thank you !) and The Rescuer was the first thing I downloaded and read. It is a fascinating, little known and tragic

story which addresses profoundly difficult truths such as; who we choose to value (who we choose to save first - famous artists vs non famous humans), the ingratitude and boorish behavior towards their savior of some of the elites saved (painful to admit), the policy of our State Department in choosing good relations with Vichy France over saving Jews, and the reasons that the very few risked everything to save others they did not know. Highly, highly recommended.

Dara Horn gives a very good portrait of a young man, Varian Fry, who risked his life during WWII to rescue some of the most brilliant thinkers, artists, and writers of that time. She seeks to explore why would someone do this? Especially someone who isn't related or connected in anyway. And why did those he rescue, Chagall, Hannah Arendt, Max Ernst, Franz Werfel, for example not acknowledge the part he played in bringing them to the United States. Working with another person, Le Chamlon, who also interviewed Fry, she tries to develop her theory. It is a very interesting book for anyone interested in Righteous Gentiles. Or in this day why people go into war torn countries to work as volunteers. To be their own type of rescuers. Dara Horn writes a fascinating essay as to why some people become rescuers, such as those who worked to save Jewish writers, composers, musicians, and artists from the Nazis, and why some do not. She explores the story of Varian Fry, a person unknown to me, who worked with the Emergency Rescue Committee in France to save such individuals as Chagall, Hannah Arendt, Marcel Duchamp, Max Ernst, and Franz Werfel. She interviewed LeChambon who conducted extensive interviews of his own to find out why Fry risked his life to save others. He decided that rescuers had a strong sense of self, and they were secure, happy people. Horn questions thT

When I first saw Dara Horn's *The Rescuer* on the list of Kindle Singles I assumed it would be another telling of *Schindler's List*, but with a different cast of characters. I couldn't have been more wrong. True, the essay focuses on Varian Fry, an idealist American who volunteers to travel to occupied France to help leading artists, composers, writers and intellectuals of the day escape the spreading horrors of the Nazis. But Horn goes beyond the mere facts of Fry's heroism to pose the question of what makes a "rescuer," someone who puts his own life at risk to save others. She also ponders the psychology of the rescued as well, many of whom were indifferent to Fry after their escape to America. And what about the morality of deciding who is worthy of being spared while millions of others were ground up in the Nazi death machine? Horn poses that issue also in the brief essay. I have to admit that when I first started publishing Kindle Singles I had my doubts. Who, after all, would want to purchase just an essay or short story? Now I regularly scan the titles published as

Kindle Singles. I've read some fascinating pieces of journalism, essays and fiction in the Singles format and Horn's *The Rescuer* is one of the most provocative titles I've encountered. It resonated with me long after I had finished and left me wishing the Single could have been a far longer work. But in the meantime I will content myself with re-reading the essay, certain that when I do fresh insights will pop out at me.

"The Rescuer" is a partial biography by author Dara Horn. This is a Kindle e-book that was a 117 Kb download and was priced at \$1.99. (free for prime members) This is a true story of Varian Fry, an American who was sent into Marseille, France in 1940 to try to rescue intellectuals from then Nazi occupied France. Marseille unoccupied, but was controlled during this time by the Vichy government who ruled under the direct thumb of Nazi occupied northern France. Varian Fry and his associates at the Emergency Rescue Committee (ERC) during their time of operation (1940-41), were able to save 2000 people from extermination in German concentration camps. What is somewhat unusual about the story is that almost no one knows of this man, despite his deeds of heroics. It was author's intent to discover why... she talked to several people and read as many articles and interviews she could find to try to glean a little more information about this man and his life (before, during and after the war). Some revealing findings about his personality... it appeared that Fry was difficult to get along with most people and as a result had few friends, had a labile temperament, had trouble holding jobs (when at home) both before and after the war, and had two unsuccessful marriages. In her investigation she is confronted with some disturbing facts. 1.) the premise of the ERC was to try to save the intellectuals... prevent the best brains in Europe from falling into the wrong hands. Most of who were classified as undesirables, and were thus destined for extermination. As a result many 'normal' people were rejected from being 'saved' because they weren't famous enough. 2.) the lack of gratitude on part of those saved towards the 'rescuers'. Many interviews of now famous and successful persons who were rescued, when asked about this period of their lives, consistently omit the merest mention of this feat of heroics or a simple thank-you to those that risked their lives for them. One can only surmise that his (Fry's) unpopularity, his general unlike-ability must have rubbed off on those being rescued in some way. But still, it's hard to believe that you could so annoy those you were saving that they'd completely forget you afterwards. Yet the facts remain, and this 'trend' of forgetting him, somehow speaks volumes. 3.) and maybe most revealing, at least about Varian Fry own story, was the fact that there appeared to be more than just 'righteous' intentions in his desire of leading the ERC in their rescue efforts. Apparently he'd volunteered for the job so he could associate with those intellectuals and artists who he really

admired. He felt his period in Nazi controlled France in the early 1940s was the best time of his life. It's as if he was doing all the right things, but not necessarily for all the right reasons. Cover Art...rather simplistic, yet somehow completely appropriate and effective for the telling of the tale found between the covers. Conclusion: An interesting account of one of WWII little known rescuers. In addition to providing some intriguing facts on this unusual man, we learn many tidbits that give us some insights into the political goings-on of this era. As it is...5 Stars Ray Nicholson

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