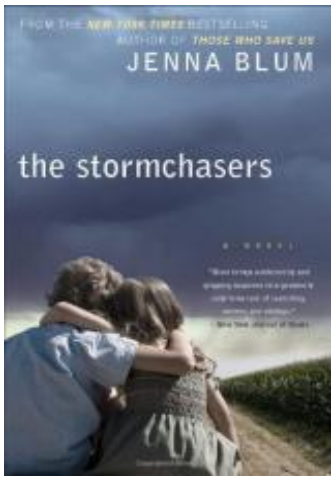
The Stormchasers

by Jenna Blum



About the Book

In **Those Who Save Us**, Jenna Blum proved herself a master storyteller with brilliant insight into the spectrum of human emotion. Now, Blum turns her sights to the most intimate and mysterious of family relationships --- that between twins --- in her powerful and provocative second novel.

As a teenager, Karena Jorge had always been the one to look out for her twin brother Charles, who suffers from bipolar disorder. But as Charles begins to refuse medication and his manic tendencies worsen, Karena finds herself caught between her loyalty to her brother and her fear for his life. Always obsessed with the weather --- enraptured by its magical unpredictability that seemed to mirror his own impulses --- Charles begins chasing storms, and his behavior grows increasingly erratic?until a terrifying storm chase with Karena ends with deadly consequences, tearing the twins apart and changing both of their lives forever.

Two decades later, Karena gets a call from a psychiatric ward in Wichita, Kansas, to come pick up her brother, whom she hasn?t seen or spoken to for twenty years. She soon discovers that Charles has lied to the doctors, taken medication that could make him dangerously manic, and disappeared again. Having exhausted every resource to try and track him down, Karena realizes she has only one last chance of finding him: the storms. Wherever the tornadoes are, that?s where he?ll be. Karena joins a team of professional stormchasers --- passionate adventurers who will transform her life and give her a chance at love and redemption --- and embarks on an odyssey to find her brother before he reveals the violent secret from their past and does more damage to himself?or to someone else.

Discussion Guide

1. Besides being the book?s title, **The Stormchasers** comprise a major part of Blum?s novel. Why do you think Blum chose stormchasing as a context for this story? How do you think the novel would have been different without the storms? In what ways do the storms function as metaphors for the novel?s central themes?

2. Discuss the storms: How did you react to the descriptions of severe weather? Did this novel make you think differently about stormchasing? Would you ever go stormchasing? Why or why not? How does Kevin?s rationale for pursuing dangerous weather differ from Charles?s? From Karena?s? Does Karena?s attitude toward storms change over the course of the novel, and if so, how?

3. The Hallingdahl family: Would you describe it as functional or dysfunctional? Which of their patterns and attitudes made you say this? How has Charles?s bipolarity affected the family? What might Frank, Siri, Karena and Charles?s relationships been like if Charles did not have bipolar disorder?

4. Siri: What do you think of Siri?s handling of Charles?s bipolarity? Why do you think she makes the choices she does? In what ways do you empathize with her? Disagree with her? In what ways might Siri be typical of the mother of a bipolar child? Atypical?

5. Discuss Karena. If you had to choose one word to describe her, how would it be? Did your reactions to her change over the course of the novel? If so, how and why? How are Karena's adolescent experiences reflected in her adult life? What has affected her most: secrecy, guilt over not having Charles's bipolar disorder, being a "twinless twin"? Has Karena changed throughout the novel, and how?

6. Explore your feelings for Charles. Did you admire him? Dislike him? Did your feelings change throughout the course of the novel? If so, how and why?

7. Charles?s bipolar disorder is described throughout the novel as a separate entity: ?the djinn,? ?the Stranger.? Why does Blum do this? Do you know anyone in your life with bipolar disorder? What has that experience been like? Discuss the characters? struggles with medication, side effects, extreme moods, and secrecy. Which of the novel?s descriptions of the disorder resonate most with you, and why?

8. What might Charles have been like if he didn?t have bipolar disorder? Beyond his disorder, how would you describe his personality?

9. Charles and Karena have very different views about how Charles should manage his bipolarity: Karena insisting Charles seek medical help, Charles insisting on holistic and alternative measures. Whom do you tend to side with on this issue, Charles or Karena? Why?

10. Consider Karena?s decisions throughout the novel:
a) protecting Charles?s secret;
b) stormchasing to pursue Charles;
c) taking him into her home;
d) the decision she reaches at the end.
Would you have made the same choices? Why or why not?

11. Discuss the ?twindar relationship.? To what extent does Karena?s being Charles?s twin play into her actions and decisions? How has being a twin shaped her? Charles? If you are a twin or know twins, how are Karena and Charles typical? Different?

12. Discuss Kevin: If you had to describe him with one adjective, what would it be? What do you think draws Karena to Kevin and vice versa? In your opinion, are Kevin and Karena a good match? Why or why not?

13. Both Karena and Kevin turn Charles over for psychological intervention at some point in the book. Do you think this helped or hurt Charles? How did their separate but similar decisions affect their relationships with him?

14. How would you feel about having a serious relationship with someone who has a troubled or sick sibling? Would you consider what your responsibility might be? What do you think about how Kevin handled this? Discuss Kevin's immediate reaction to Karena when he finds out her secret: understandable or extreme?

15. The book?s ending: Were you surprised by Karena?s decision? Do you think the twins got what they deserved? What do you think happens to Karena after the book ends? To Charles?

Author Bio

Jenna Blum is the *New York Times* and # 1 internationally bestselling author of the novels THOSE WHO SAVE US, THE STORMCHASERS, THE LOST FAMILY and MURDER YOUR DARLINGS; the memoir WOODROW ON THE BENCH; the audiocourse ?The Author at Work: The Art of Writing Fiction?; and the WWII podcast ?The Key of Love.?

As the CEO of the online author interview company A Mighty Blaze, which she cofounded during the COVID-19 pandemic, Jenna earned a reputation as a publishing industry community builder and innovator. As an on-air host, she has conducted hundreds of interviews for the Blaze, from literary legends to new voices.

Jenna is one of Oprah.com readers? Top 30 Women Writers. She earned her MA at Boston University in Creative Writing and has taught workshops for Boston University, Grub Street Writers, A Mighty Blaze and numerous other institutions for over 25 years. She interviewed Holocaust survivors for Steven Spielberg?s Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation and is a professional public speaker, traveling nationally and internationally to speak about her work.

Jenna is based in downtown Boston, where she?s the proud human of her black Lab, Henry Higgins.

Critical Praise

"Jenna Blum's novel, **The Stormchasers**, is an emotional rollercoaster of a story, the constant being Jenna's incredible descriptions of the beauty and awe of the most powerful natural force. The parallels Jenna draws between tornadoes and the human condition is genius and makes for a must-read novel."

The Stormchasers

by Jenna Blum

Publication Date: April 26, 2011
Paperback: 384 pages
Publisher: Plume
ISBN-10: 0452297133
ISBN-13: 9780452297135