The German Heiress

by Anika Scott



About the Book

For readers of THE ALICE NETWORK and THE LOST GIRLS OF PARIS, an immersive, heart-pounding debut about a German heiress on the run in post-World War II Germany.

Clara Falkenberg, once Germany?s most eligible and lauded heiress, earned the nickname ?the Iron Fräulein? during World War II for her role operating her family?s ironworks empire. It?s been nearly two years since the war ended, and she?s left with nothing but a false identification card and a series of burning questions about her family?s past. With nowhere else to run to, she decides to return home and take refuge with her dear friend, Elisa.

Narrowly escaping a near-disastrous interrogation by a British officer who?s hell-bent on arresting her for war crimes, she arrives home to discover the city in ruins, and Elisa missing. As Clara begins tracking down Elisa, she encounters Jakob, a charismatic young man working on the black market, who, for his own reasons, is also searching for Elisa. Clara and Jakob soon discover how they might help each other --- if only they can stay ahead of the officer determined to make Clara answer for her actions during the war.

Propulsive, meticulously researched and action-fueled, THE GERMAN HEIRESS is a mesmerizing page-turner that questions the meaning of justice and morality, deftly shining the spotlight on the often-overlooked perspective of Germans who were caught in the crossfire of the Nazi regime and had nowhere to turn.

Discussion Guide

1. During the war, Clara had to navigate a path between loyalty to her family and her conscience. Did she succeed in doing justice to both? Is such a thing even possible, given the circumstances?

2. If you had been in Clara?s position during the war, would you have acted differently? What would you have done, and

what might have been the consequences?

3. How would you describe the affair between the teenage Elisa and Willy?s father? Is it predatory, based on his power over her? Is there love? How do their later actions illuminate their relationship?

4. What hope do you see for Willy?s future? How do you envision his future relationship with Clara?

5. Clara?s father was the defining influence of her life, and she struggles to break free of him. Why is it so difficult for her? Have you ever had to distance yourself from a loved one, and if so, did you face similar challenges to Clara?

6. Captain Fenshaw is known for his poetic justice, such as when he put Clara in the same kind of locker that some forced laborers had to endure as punishment during the war. Do you think these methods were a necessary element of his investigation, or a personal expression of disgust at Clara?s crimes? Are such acts justified when carried out by someone who is seeking justice?

7. Clara?s mother, Anne, is an Englishwoman, yet she was cooperating with the Nazi government. Following the war, she embraced her British roots during denazification. Is she treacherous, or just resourceful? In what ways does wartime impact one?s loyalty to their heritage and allegiances?

8. How do you think Jakob has adjusted so well to the challenges of life in the ruins, despite his severe war wound? What makes him so resilient, particularly compared to other veterans who had a more difficult time readjusting?

9. At one point, Clara mentions to Jakob that, as a soldier, he had captured some of the people who were transported to Clara?s factories as slave labor. Does that make him an accessory to the crimes committed under Clara?s watch? How responsible is each individual for crimes that are sanctioned by their government? Is it different in a democracy versus a police state? Wartime versus peace?

10. In the end, Clara realizes that she has a debt to pay for the actions she took during the war, and the crimes she allowed to happen. Do you feel that Fenshaw?s ultimate sentencing of her is fair? Is it possible for Clara to repay her debt, and if so, how long would it take? Who decides if and when this debt is repaid?

11. Do you think Clara would be convicted as a war criminal if she were put on trial? How would you weigh her good and bad actions on a scale of her deeds?

12. Did you learn anything that surprised you about life for the Germans under Allied occupation? Has this new knowledge of their situation changed your feelings toward the German people during and after World War II?

Author Bio

Anika Scott grew up outside Detroit, Michigan and has a BA in International Relations from Michigan State University and an MS in Journalism from Columbia University in New York. She worked as a staff writer at the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and the *Chicago Tribune* before moving to Germany in 2001. Since then she has freelanced for US and

European media including Deutschlandfunk, and taught journalism at the Technical University in Chemnitz. She now lives in Essen with her husband and two daughters. She is the bestselling author of THE GERMAN HEIRESS, THE SOVIET SISTERS and SINNERS OF STARLIGHT CITY.

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