



The Queen of Beauty

Petra Durst-Benning, Edwin Miles (Translator)

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Petra Durst-Benning's captivating historical novel pays homage to the trailblazing women of the early twentieth century—like Elizabeth Arden and Estée Lauder—who shaped culture, shattered convention, and strived to make the world around them more beautiful.

Despite all that Clara Berg has achieved as a wife, mother, and chemist—especially for a woman in turn-of-the-century Berlin—ending her abusive marriage comes at great cost. The judge hands her inheritance—her parents' pharmacy—over to her ex-husband. Now, with her reputation in near ruins thanks to the scandal that rocked her marriage, no reputable chemist will hire her. Worst of all, she has lost all rights to her young son and daughter. Only her dearest friends, Josephine and Isabelle, themselves no strangers to hardship, remain steadfast.

With their encouragement, Clara decides to start over in the spa town of Lake Constance, where she creates a homemade cream and launches a cosmetics revolution. Against all convention, she teaches other women and herself how to face the challenges of each new day with confidence and beauty. Soon her renown brings prestige, professional accolades, even new romance. But through it all, her heart beats for her beloved children—will success finally bring the reunion she longs for?

The Queen of Beauty Details

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From Reader Review The Queen of Beauty for online ebook

Cynthia Daniel says

1900 Berlin was gery interesting. The ladies were fascinating. Their struggles added to their strengths. I wanted to read this book, now I'll keep it on my shelf to read again.

Maria Beltrami says

Nella Berlino dei primi del novecento, in tempi in cui una donna per bene non divorziava, Clara si inventa una relazione per poter divorziare dal marito violento, divorzio che però la porterà a perdere i beni ereditati dalla famiglia (casa e farmacia) e la possibilità di vedere i propri figli. Invece di piangersi addosso, e grazie ad alcune amiche fedeli, lascia la città per trasferirsi sul Lago di Costanza dove, grazie alla tenacia e al duro lavoro mette a frutto le ricette di creme e saponi lasciatele da suo padre e diventa, in breve tempo, la regina della bellezza. Storia d fantasia e palese omaggio da parte dell'autrice alle donne che fondarono la cosmetica, e che dovremmo ringraziare ogni volta che la mattina ci mettiamo un po' di crema sul viso permettendo alla nostra pelle di rimanere fresca e giovane. Ottimo spaccato della vita sociale dell'epoca e ritratti impietoso del disprezzo, che a quanto pare è scomparso solo a parole, nei confronti delle donne, considerate animali da fatica, da sfruttare fino al completo disfacimento.

Ringrazio AmazonCrossing e Netgalley per avermi fornito una copia gratuita in cambio di una recensione onesta.

In the early twentieth century Berlin, at a time when a good woman not divorced, Clara invents an affair to divorce her violent husband, divorce that unfortunately will lead to losing the assets inherited by her family (home and pharmacy) and the possibility to see her children. Rather than cry on, and thanks to some loyal friends, she leaves the town and moves to Lake Constance, where, thanks to her tenacity and hard work, she makes good use of creams and soaps recipes her father left her and become, in a short time, the queen of beauty. History of fantasy and clear tribute by the author to the women who founded the cosmetics, the ones we should thank each time in the morning we put a little cream on our faces allowing our skin to remain fresh and young. Great insight into the social life of the time and merciless portrait of the contempt, apparently disappeared only in word, to women, considered fatigue animals, to be used until complete breaking up.

Thank AmazonCrossing and Netgalley for giving me a free copy in exchange for an honest review.

Elizabeth Camden says

Sigh....this was a wonderful conclusion to the trilogy. I had a happy smile on my face through most of the book, even though poor Clara goes through a lot. I was sorry to say goodbye to the three women featured in this trilogy.

Alli Payne says

Yet another fantastic Reed

I chose this rating because I have been waiting for this book to come out period honestly I had already started another book of a different genre, and when I saw that this one was released, I began to read it right away and could not stop. I will be reading this author again and again.

Donna J says

The best trilogy ever...

What a way to end the best 3 books I've read as a series in a long time! The same wonderful girls who grew up together riding bicycles in competition at the turn of the century, who grew to be wives and mothers, and entrepreneurs. Clara came from an abused marriage who lost her family so she could seek a divorce. She was a woman who no longer could face anyone in Germany. She gets away with help from her girlfriends and her world changes for the best to the worst, with another bad relationship...but you'll have to read the rest.

Excellent book and I highly recommended it for all of you who love women who can beat the odds in a time where women were doormats.

Renate says

With its 1900 Berlin and Lake Constance setting, an abused divorcee (Clara) builds a cosmetic empire. This well researched novel starts with a German divorce court and how women had no rights in courts against abusive husbands in the early 1900s. Clara, along with her friends (Book 1 & Book 2) are trailblazers. Each forging a different path and supporting each other during difficult times. Well developed characters, twist and turn plot woven with historical details about women's rights, different German regions, and trailblazing the cosmetic industry.

Teresita says

I loved it. I think it is the weaker of the 3 books on the trilogy and yes you CAN read them out of order, but I wouldn't. So many bad things happen to poor Clara it would have been nice to actually give her a "happy ending" but it does end on a happy note. I love how much this character changes from how she is in the first book, I think she is the character that develops the most. I think the trilogy also shows how women can change and succeed at any age. It is a lovely story.

Sharon says

This is my second book from this author and every bit as fascinating as the first. The beginning of the

cosmetic industry in a time when women were only valued as homemakers and seen as second class, was intriguing. The characters were well delineated and interesting. I will now have to read more in this series, as I missed the first.

Patricia says

This novel had many historical events which the characters were surrounded by. This made the story of Clara more believable and richer in detail. The difficulties of women's lives during the turn of the century are often overlooked. Clara's fight to gain respect was finally rewarded. I highly recommend this continuation of the stories of four friends who were seeking their futures.

Chris says

These novels by a German author are my "fun" reads. She tells a great story and her series would be a nice mini series for TV!!

Jool says

This trilogy is absolutely amazing. About three women who are close friends (each book centers on a different one) in turn of the century Berlin. They defy all odds to become who they were meant to be. I cannot adequately explain how wonderful this series is. I absolutely highly recommend each book in the trilogy!!!

Melissa Guthrie says

What an Ending!

The end of a trilogy about women at the turn of the century. Love, friendship, and all the human emotions involved are nicely wrapped up in this book.

Gerti says

Ein würdiger Abschluss der Jahrhundertwindtrilogie, in der die Erlebnisse von Clara Berg, der dritten im Bund der drei Mädels aus Berlin geschildert werden.

Petra Durst-Benning versteht es, die Zeit der Jahrhundertwende und die Probleme der Frauen, sowie ihre mehr oder weniger gelingenden Versuche, ihre Situation zu ändern, zum Leben zu erwecken.

Wobei doch immer wieder sehr das Gut und Böse - Spiel durchkommt.

Aber es liest sich leicht und locker weg, die Sprache ist nicht anstrengend aber auch nicht zu flach um das Lesevergnügen einzutrüben.

Ein schönes Sommerbuch für den Urlaub oder auch schwere Stunden.

MAP says

I won a kindle version of this book as a Goodreads Giveaway.

This is the third book in a series, and I have not read the other two, so I can't speak to how it fits in the series. That said, I didn't feel as though I was constantly playing catch up or confused about characters.

The book begins with Clara Berg getting out of an abusive, miserable marriage and trying to make something of herself. She has a slight education, through her father, in working with ointments and such and decides to try to put her life back together by using these skills. She meets with some successes, some setbacks, and meets several interesting people along the way.

I found this book to be quite enjoyable - Clara's point of view was realistic and relatable, and her goals and successes felt grounded in reality. The town of Meersburg is populated with worthy side characters who help or hinder Clara, and who in and of themselves all feel like well-rounded people with their own lives (as opposed to some characters in media where it feels like they only exist to comment on the main characters.) The descriptions of Clara's work were detailed and well-researched without veering into Moby Dick territory.

I only have 2 small quibbles:

- 1) Some of the events seemed a little too happily coincidental - Clara needs something, 2 seconds later someone walks into her life to provide it.
- 2) The book was a bit long at 500 pages - I feel the story could have easily been told in 350 or so.

That said, I really enjoyed this book and I want to go back and read the first 2, as well.

Kayla Tornello says

I loved the setting of this book in turn-of-the-century Germany. The resort town on Lake Constance sounded beautiful. I appreciated the many historical details, even though the characters are actually fictional. The main character, Clara, starts a beauty shop business, which is fascinating to learn about. Like in many romance novels, I was frustrated at times with the heroine for being so incredibly stupid. Overall though, it was quite an enjoyable book.

I received this book as a Goodreads Giveaway. Yay!
