



Street Boys

Lorenzo Carcaterra

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Naples, Italy, during four fateful days in the fall of 1943. The only people left in the shattered, bombed-out city are the lost, abandoned children whose only goal is to survive another day. None could imagine that they would become fearless fighters and the unlikeliest heroes of World War II. They are the warriors immortalized in *Street Boys*, Lorenzo Carcaterra's exhilarating new novel, a book that exceeds even his bestselling *Sleepers* as a riveting reading experience.

It's late September. The war in Europe is almost won. Italy is leaderless, Mussolini already arrested by anti-Fascists. The German army has evacuated the city of Naples. Adults, even entire families, have been marched off to work camps or simply sent off to their deaths. Now, the German army is moving toward Naples to finish the job. Their chilling instructions are: If the city can't belong to Hitler, it will belong to no one.

No one but children. Children who have been orphaned or hidden by parents in a last, defiant gesture against the Nazis. Children, some as young as ten years old, armed with just a handful of guns, unexploded bombs, and their own ingenuity. Children who are determined to take on the advancing enemy and save the city—or die trying.

There is Vincenzo Soldari, a sixteen-year-old history buff who is determined to make history by leading others with courage and self-confidence; Carlo Maldini, a middle-aged drunkard desperate to redeem himself by adding his experience to the raw exuberance of the young fighters; Nunzia Maldini, his nineteen-year-old daughter, who helps her father regain his self-respect—and loses her heart to an American G.I.; Corporal Steve Connors, a soldier sent out on reconnaissance, then cut off from his comrades—with no choice but to aid the street boys; Colonel Rudolph Van Klaus, the proud Nazi commander shamed by his own sadistic mission; and, of course, the dozens of young boys who use their few skills and great heart to try to save their city, their country, and themselves.

In its compassionate portrait of the rootless young, and its pitiless portrayal of the violence that is at once their world and their way out, *Street Boys* continues and deepens Lorenzo Carcaterra's trademark themes. In its awesome scope and pure page-turning excitement, it stands as a stirring tribute to the underdog in us all—and as a singular addition to the novels about World War II.

From the Hardcover edition.

Street Boys Details

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From Reader Review Street Boys for online ebook

Mick says

This is a dreadful book-in fact it's not a book it's a kids comic.

Only gave it 1 star as zero wasn't an option.

Devoid of literary style, repetitive on the incidents described, no characterisation, no meaningful dialogue, and cynical in the way it moves us round the city of Naples with little narrative justification just to allow the writer to introduce us to the most superficial of trip- advisor snapshots of the history of this great city's buildings and historic sites .

A computer could have produced this-maybe it did.

Can't believe publisher paid money for this!

Pat says

PL recommended after we read the Ferrante series in Naples. I have to imagine they've made this book into a movie.

Pamela McLaren says

I was immediately attracted to the description of this book but for a long while I was not eager to start it. Once I did, however, I couldn't stop reading. This is an amazing story that draws you in from the beginning. You are drawn to the main characters and you will root for them to succeed but it's not sappy or anything like that. I found myself hugely satisfied after reading it and wanting to know more about this period of history.

The book opens in the fall of 1943. The Germans know, at least those on the front lines, that the battles are not going their way. With the Americans and British a short distance away from Naples, the German high command orders a troop division to enter the town and bring it down to the ground, so there is nothing left for their enemies. And that includes the individuals still hiding out in the bombed out ruins of the town.

The Americans send three men into the town to see if any of their troops are there as they wait for orders to enter and take over Naples. Two are killed but Cpl. Steve Connors makes it into the town. What he finds is 200 orphaned children who have decided that after losing family and home, they were not going to leave their town. Together, they battle against seemingly impossible odds against better equipped, more experienced German soldiers but with the one weapon the Nazis don't have: heart. An absolutely amazing read.

Rui says

It was a good story of adults (minority) helping, rather than leading or simply 'saving' children and youth (the majority).

Lots of action and strategy going on.

Definitely a good read.

At the same time, this book makes me think: If you're against child soldiers, would you enjoy this book, and would your opinion or stance be different, before and after reading?

With regards to that fact/fiction pingpong going around about this book: I admit it's 99% fiction and 1% fact - while the story is inspired by truth, I don't think that "documenting what really happened" is the point of this book, so I wouldn't give the facts more credit than to give birth to this interesting historical fiction. But, it's a wonderfully expanded and multi-depth take on the kids-in-control scenario (for which I'm also very fond of, if only to see the different ways different people choose to portray it, or the different interpretations and expectations of different people, with regards to the intelligence, skills, cohesiveness, and abilities of youth and children).

Harry Casey-Woodward says

I'm surprised the events of this novel aren't more well known and have inspired more books and films. It's a great story. I think the writer could have cut down on the over-emotional dialogue and some war story cliches. I think in the hands of a writer like Louis de Bernieres say this book could have been a masterpiece. The weaknesses in the writing, however, are made up by the second half of the novel, which is just non-stop, street-fighting children vs Nazis action. It would make a fantastic movie, perhaps if directed by Spielberg or somebody. A cracking read.

John says

This book starts out with a great premise (a few hundred street kids protecting their city from an invading Nazi regiment), and then wastes every opportunity to fully take advantage of it. The end result is like an uncomfortable marriage between Inglorious Basterds and a Disney cartoon: It's violent and completely out of touch with reality. For example, a kid kills Nazis by intentionally kicking a soccer ball directly onto a land mine, an old woman appears out of nowhere and throws a knife into a Nazi's chest like she's Steven Seagal (then, of course, we never hear from her again), kids are able to build large catapults for attacking the enemy tanks, kids shoot machine guns more accurately and effectively than trained soldiers, etc., etc. The motivations of the characters aren't all that clear, either. We're told that the Nazi commander could easily wipe out all the street kids at a moment's notice, but sees that as being unethical--as if shooting them all one at a time is somehow more morally acceptable. And what it is exactly that the American soldier at the hub of all this is trying to accomplish is never really made clear, either. Carcaterra does a great job with the setting, but once the action starts, everything just seems formulaic, predictable, and repetitive. The romance angle is stale, and way too many people are saved in the nick of time by someone who happens to arrive on the scene at just the last moment. Cue old woman with the throwing knife. The Nazi soldiers are stupid and ineffective. For some reason, they often end up trying to kill the kids with their bare hands instead of by using their weapons. Needless to say, this tactic doesn't pan out very well for them. Lastly, there's too many melodramatic moments to try to make up for the fact that the story doesn't contain much tension at all, especially for a book about a bunch of kids being in constant danger.

Ambar Nepomuceno says

Se dice que los héroes no nacen, se hacen. Y durante cuatro fatídicos días del año de 1943, esos héroes, se hicieron en Italia. Al escribir este relato, Lorenzo Carcaterra se inspiró en su propia vida en las calles, no como huérfano en Nápoles sino como niño en uno de los barrios más peligrosos de Nueva York. Tanto Nápoles, destruida durante la guerra, como la leyenda de los temerarios niños de la calle que enfrentaron a los nazis, constituyen una parte imborrable de la infancia de Carcaterra, en el núcleo de ésta novela, hay una verdad sencilla: Una banda de niños, despojados de lo más importante en su vida, se enfrentó con uno de los ejércitos más poderosos del mundo y, sin duda, el más sanguinario entre todos los que invadieron sus tierras a lo largo de la historia. La historia de estos niños que desafiaron a los alemanes se ha convertido en un cuento popular y en Nápoles, mucha gente habla de estos sucesos.

Tamara says

Carcaterra tells a good story...

Helenlouise66 says

this is not my normal type of read but once i started i could not put it down, these kids were so brave and went through hell against a german tank division in Naples after being left behind to fend for themselves. Although it says boys girls were involved also, it shows the enthusiasm of children left behind and the determination of self survival.

Brilliant read .

Jim B says

This World War II action novel purports to tell the story of how a couple hundred boys in Naples under the leadership of an American soldier fought off the Nazi army intent on destroying the city as it retreated from Italy. I think that teenage boys especially might enjoy the story which moves from one battle to another in which the boys are hopelessly outnumbered but using elements of surprise and street smarts (together with the military strategy of an American soldier and an Italian veteran) they beat the bad guys. When I was a teenager, I read "The Guns of Navarone" and I think that though teenage boys would enjoy both, they would remember Navarone long after they forgot this book.

When I was a teenager, I had a dream in which the United States was overrun by some enemy, and the soldiers had gotten to within a mile of my house, but we fought back. For years afterward, in idle moments I would look at the landscape in my hometown and imagine how to fight a battle there. This book probably satisfies a young person's desire to be a hero, to overcome the odds, etc.

For me, the audiobook was easy to listen to (Joe Montegna did well with various voices), but felt more like a TV show than a group of real people I cared about.

Priyanka Das says

The story of the arrival of the World War II which brought a brutal halt to the childhood dreams, passion, innocent smiles, daily chores and forces the people of Naples awaken to the darkest nightmare.

The destruction of the Naples was designed by the Nazis in phases, first phase was to evacuate anyone with the strength to walk out of the city and phase two was to have a night time firing and bombing to destroy everything that could be used as haven by the enemies.

Somewhere in the middle of this destruction, there started a story of two hundred boys beautifully woven in words by the author, touching the right emotional cord, who survived the war at the cost far greater than their age could bear, by losing their family, neighbor, friends, the whole city in which they spent their few former years of childhood and the rest of which was blown along with their houses, stripped off everything that mattered to them, that did nothing but invigorated the thirst of revenge in them.

The book is exciting, with the story well written, throwing light on different aspects of the war, not just from the victim's point of view but it also tried to bring the unhappy part of a soldier to the lime light, that remains hidden behind the glory of the uniform and the glitters of medals, that they are left with no other option but to kill innocent people in the battlefield.

Book is addictive as the story sprouts with each page turned about how the band of boys under the leadership of "Vincenzo" a sixteen year old, aided by a lone Allied soldier "Connor" cut off from his regiment, managed to fight with the well-equipped Nazi army with just handful of guns, unexploded bombs and loads of bravery. It's a complete page turning thrill.

Donn Lorber says

A surprising story of street kids in 1943 fighting the Nazis in Naples.. a fictional version of real events.. well done

Otis Chandler says

A very interesting WW2 book that chronicles how a gang of street orphans fought the nazis. I love to hear different perspectives, so this was very enjoyable.

Jessica says

There's some history that this story is based on, I'm told, but I'm also told that it's very loosely based on that history. Still, all in all, fantasticly presented!

The orphaned children that have been left behind in Naples to fend for, and ultimately defend, themselves are

written to convey their bravery and at the same time their vulnerability. The boys and handful of girls are at once determined to stay alive, and afraid of what their future will bring them.

I couldn't help falling for these kids. They're smart, they're tough, and though their parents are either gone or dead, they know they can depend on each other.

The imagination that they used to fight the advancing Nazi army amazed me. I don't know how much was fictionalized and how much was a matter of fact, but it made me appreciate the kids more, seeing all that gumption!

Trilby says

The more popular novels I read, the more I realize how few ideas are circulating via *vox populi*. This amateurish opus has fewer than most. I did not listen to the last CD of this audio book. Why bother? The previous CD's were steaming piles of WWII derivative fantasy "inspired by" a legend involving children's resistance to the German Army in Naples, Italy, in 1943. This novel, which uses many sources, from "Saving Pvt. Ryan" to "Sleepers", is utterly unrealistic. The plucky street urchins are led by a corporal in the US Army and his loyal mastiff dog. Handy for the American, the urchins include a smoldering but wholesome 17-year-old virgin beauty. (Kids, can you say, "Statutory rape"?) With the GI leading them, during the first two days the street boys manage to kill dozens of Germans, destroy a dozen tanks, and blow up a German tanker--with not one casualty among them. The Germans are all called "Nazis," even though only a minority belonged to the party. Even though the GI is a college grad, with a couple years of law school, he is a mere corporal. Preposterous. Men with only two years of college were automatically made officers during WWII. Joe Mantegna gamely reads through this tripe, taking on phony German or Italian accents when the need arises. Sorry, Joe. I don't think I can respect you after this sorry performance. 'Better stick to B-TV series.
