



Over det kinesiske hav

Gaute Heivoll

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Like før krigen får et ektepar reist sitt eget forpleiningshjem for «åndssvake» i den vesle bygda helt sør i Norge. Snart fylles rommene med pasienter; den religiøse grubleren Christian Jensen, den tause, alltid ruggende Matiassen, og Onkel Josef, som er blant de mest beleste i bygda. En søskenflokk på fem barn flytter inn i «galehuset» som det blir kalt. Josef kaller dem bare «tullingene fra Stavanger», men de blir likevel raskt en del av familien. Krigen tar slutt, men den usedvanlige familien skal få alt annet enn fred. For snart rammes de av en stor tragedie som kommer til å forfølge dem alle resten av livet.

Med en ny historie basert på virkelige hendelser og autentiske personer har Gaute Heivoll skrevet om mennesker som kanskje kunne kalles «åndssvake», men som gjennom sine liv og sine handlinger viser et hvert menneskes verdighet og iboende styrke.

Over det kinesiske hav Details

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Author : Gaute Heivoll

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Bigi Parsons says

Gaute Heivoll's novel of his family and the children his parents sheltered is so plainly written it is stark with few sparks of joy. One gets the sense that the author is so badly scarred by his early childhood at the end of the Soviet invasion of Norway and the death of a sister that he is unable to find joy in his adult life. His family life living with mentally disabled foster children was by any stretch of the imagination unusual and poignant.

Marie says

3.5 stars. I really loved the setting of this novel and the family it focused on. I wish there had been more narrative about the term "mentally disabled" and that the timeline had been a bit stronger. Still, a strong translation.

Anne says

A lovely, peaceful little book that tells the story of a couple and their children who were caregivers in rural Norway. It is told in vignettes of memory interspersed with present day as the son of the family cleans out the house after his mother's death. There is sadness and tragedy but the stories are told in a straightforward, non-emotional way. Even without emotion or sentimentality it is a powerful book.

Rhonda Siserir says

This is a very moving book about a man who is going through his family's things after his mother dies. We learn that the family cared for people who were mentally disabled. The love and care the family provided for those they care for was tremendous and at times at the expense of the family. However, they grew tight close bonds.

I just finished reading the book. I fell in love with this family :) A good read!

I received this book for free from Goodreads.

Julianne says

Beautifully written and at times heartbreaking, an account of a man's life from childhood living in a house of twelve in WWII era Norway. The narrator relives the everyday experiences of sharing a home with his parents and sister, along with 5 children and 3 adults, each with varying degrees of mental illness. Each scene is carefully described in honest detail and made this an enjoyable read.

Linda says

Loved this very touching story of a Norwegian family--the mother and father trained in the 1930s as medical workers in institutions for the intellectually disabled. At the very start of World War II, they realize their dream of building a house on their inherited land in a rural area to accommodate several patients. Josef is the 50 year old uncle of Mama. Injured in a fall when young, he will be the highest functioning person in their care. The narrator, their own son, tells how he and his little sister Tone, were cradled as babies in an old orange crate that had come "across the China sea." But there is nothing exotic about their lives, just quiet strength and gentleness as two more traumatically injured adult men, and then five young handicapped siblings join the "family." Tragedy strikes when an accident mirroring Josef's kills little Tone. This book is touching in so many ways--that all the characters are real people and I came to love them and feel deep sympathy for them. That they are anchored and motivated by a traditional Norwegian Christian faith. Lacking abilities though they are, the siblings always begin meals in their own room by singing a hymn of grace. The narrator notes that they are "almost a family." But not quite. As he cleans out his parents' home after their deaths, he finds mementos of that time, and remembers. And the beautiful moment when they were truly a family with Mama as mother to all of them came the Christmas Eve after Tone died and his mother had been persuaded to sing at the church service. Very touching, very beautiful, with Nature and kind human goodness interwoven.

Lynne says

This is such a beautiful, spare, novel. Each of the mentally disabled people cared for by a couple in their home in a small Norwegian village is seen with acceptance and respect by the narrator, their son. They all become as family in the years they live together. A grave sense of what is lost, especially for the mother, haunts the book. The setting details are lovely. Excellent reader (Alex Block).

Gosia says

Fantastisk skrevet, men handler liksom om ingenting...

Lillian says

Wonderfully insightful portrait of an unconventional family in Southern Norway headed by a couple filled with unbounded compassion.
A must read in these times.

Geraldine Presley says

It is a story about a female and male nurse who are married and have children. They live in Norway and

build a big house to be able to have three adult men with mental difficulties and five mentally handicapped children live with them and look after them until they are adults.

It is the son telling the story.

I found it interesting, enjoyable, and sad. It was translated from Norwegian into English by Nadia Christensen.

Linden says

Quietly moving story about a Norwegian family who takes in mentally disabled people and treats them with loving kindness.

Amanda says

A deeply moving novel, one in which memories swim in and out of the narrator's consciousness in such a way that the reader feels content just to float on that slow current of time. The plot is simple, an unnamed man recalls a constellation of lives which might be called a family, except that his is a unique family: mother, father, sisters and seven mentally disabled wards (two adult men and five siblings ranging in age from toddler to teenager). His recollections are like dots on a pointillist tableau, the tiny travails and triumphs composing a life that, when viewed as a whole, shimmer with depth and poignancy. Add to this the soaring descriptions of Norwegian countryside - personally, I love the winter, but I'm sure anyone will long to see a glittering blanket of snow after reading this novel. Nadia Christiansen's nuanced translation breathes quiet beauty into the text, perfectly capturing a novel that will linger long after the last page.

Rebecca Kightlinger says

Across the China Sea

Gaute Heivoll, Greywolf Press, 2017, \$16.00, pb, 232 pp, 9781555977849

(Trans. Nadia Christensen)

“This is what the new world was like: Our own asylum, in the midst of a forest, in the midst of the parish, forty kilometers from the coast.”

Norway, 1945.

?

“Is this the end of the world?”

Stepping off the bus and standing at the edge of the road in the rural parish where she is about to begin a new life with her husband, her son (the story's narrator), and the daughter she is carrying, Karin is dismayed by the silence.

Karin and her husband, nurses specially trained in caring for the “mentally disabled,” have built a many-roomed house in the south of Norway, where they will raise their family while caring for clients. The first three are adult men who have suffered physical or emotional trauma that has rendered them incapable of living on their own. Soon, the family is joined by five young siblings whose ability to function has been

impaired through poverty, malnutrition, and social deprivation.

As a boy, the narrator initially sees the men as “crazy,” but as he comes to know them, he accepts them as individuals, just as he does the siblings: Ingrid, who howls; Nils, Erling, and Sverre, boys who speak but do not fully engage; and Lilly, who cares for her siblings as if she were their mother.

Told without sentimentality, this compelling tale is neither a tell-all nor a potboiler. It is the intimate account of a family’s life told with dignity, the chapters often ending on a note that invites the reader to linger for a moment rather than plunge ahead. The story may pick up in another time or place, but the skillfully crafted nonlinear narrative never confuses; and the thoughtful delivery of each character’s journey always calls the reader back. Recommended.

Rebecca Kightlinger

Originally published in *Historical Novels Review*, Issue 81, Aug, 2017.

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<https://historicalnovelsociety.org/re...?>

Laurel Deloria says

The title is obscure, but it is from the crate used as a cradle for he and his sisters, which was used to bring oranges to the Orient. The book is dark, like you might expect from the authors heritage, and the setting of the book. It is written by the son of a couple who built a house to be used to care for those who have mental issues arising from accident or birth.

Amazon:

An atmospheric and affecting novel set in rural Norway, by the award-winning author of *Before I Burn*.

In the waning days of the German occupation of Norway, Karin and her husband move from Oslo to a tiny village in the south with their young son, the narrator. There they aim to live out their dream of caring for those who can’t look after themselves. They have spent months building a modest house with rooms for patients, and it’s soon filled with three adult men who are psychologically unstable—including Karin’s uncle Josef, who suffered a head injury in a carriage accident—and five siblings whose parents have been declared unfit, and who are the subjects of much conversation in the village. This small and idiosyncratic community persists for nearly three decades.

After his parents’ deaths, the son returns to clean out this unusual home. The objects of his childhood retain a talisman-like power over him, and key objects—including an orange crate where he and his sister slept as infants, Josef’s medal of honor, his mother’s beloved piano, and many others—unlock vivid memories. In recounting the ways that the siblings both are and are not a part of his family, he reveals his special relationship with Ingrid, who cannot speak, and his sister’s accidental death, which occurred when they were playing together, and its quiet yet tragic effects on the extended family.

With warmth, gentle humor, and deep compassion, Gaute Heivoll portrays an unconventional family as it navigates an uncertain and often unkind world.

Barbara says

Deeply absorbing story of the quiet, meaningful, lives of a family in Norway.
