



Insight

Diana Greenwood

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Some secrets won't let you go. Elvira Witsil lives about as far away from civilization as you can get, in a remote corner of Wisconsin where nothing much ever happens. In a house crowded with her mother, her cantankerous grandmother, and her little sister, Jessie, Elvira feels forgotten and alone. Their house also contains numerous secrets, and Elvira's family holds their secrets closely. Secrets about the father that Jessie never knew, and that Elvira can't forget. Secrets about that day five years ago. And the one secret that Elvira can't quite understand: that Jessie sees things no one else can see. These secrets will lead Elvira and her family on a journey far away from home—on a journey toward redemption and healing—if she can just bring herself to believe.

Insight Details

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Author : Diana Greenwood

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From Reader Review Insight for online ebook

Alisa says

I am very excited to read this book.. I won it on Good Reads Giveaways...

Ok, This is a good book.. I was not ready for so much talk of finding God but then I thought about it, and if you are faithless, wouldnt you be searching for... something.

Elvira is a 14yr old girl wwho carries a lot of guilt around on her shoulders. She has a mother whom, to me, seems so self involved... everything is happening to "Her" and not to her family as a whole. Their Grandmother is possibly one of the most horrid, mean spirited characters that I have read in a long time and I feel that the only nice thing she did in the book was pretty much when she told her daughter to shut it and leave Elvira alone. Jesse is a sweet little girl whom is a "seer" and gets used and exploited by her mother for money on their trip out west...

All in all a good book.. it was a little slow here and there and only gave me enough to go back from time to time to finish the book... Yes, I wanted to know what happened at the end.. but No, I didnt need to read it all in one sitting.

Brie says

I won this book in a Goodreads giveaway.

It is a pleasant read, set in post World War 2 rural America. It deals with a family that has lost it's father in the war...a father that had an alcohol problem to begin with so that the family was poor. Elvira is the main character in the book and she tells of her younger sister who is a "seer". Jessie (the younger sister) being a seer lead the family on a journey across the US as she is used by her mother to try and make money off what she sees in the future.

It was a book that is definitely geared for teens and doesn't deal as deeply as it should with the family dysfunction. But that is expected in a teen novel. It also is a tiny bit bland and vague in areas when it comes to the story but I was able to stay interested in the story and finish reading the book.

I would probably have checked this book out from the library instead of owned it if I had decided I wanted to read it on my own. It was a pleasantly told story but not anything terribly gripping or life changing in content. It didn't connect deep within me as other books have.

Karen says

This is a story about a girl, Elvira and her family, in the 1940's. Even though it takes place during that time period I couldn't really tell.

Elvira has a rocky home life with a father who drinks and sometimes is gone for days and a mother who doesn't notice her and when she does it isn't to say anything nice.

One day her father enlists in the service and is gone. Her grandmother comes to stay with her and her mother and before long her mother gives birth to a baby girl.

Elvira talks about how life is and the struggles her and her family go through while her father is gone. She talks about how her sister is different then other kids and the road trip her and her family take with another, a near stranger, in search of something that they are positive they will find.

The story has religion in it and talks about God quite often. Elvira tells us how she went from not believing in God to believing and what it took for her to get there. Even though it had this in the story it is not in a preachy way.

And even though the tagline for this book is, "What if you could see things before they happen?", that is not the main point or idea of the story. It does wrap up the story and draw us to the end of the story, but not in the way that you would think.

This story is a coming of age story and I enjoyed it for that reason. I really loved the authors writing and the story line, but I do wish the tagline was more prominent in the story.

Michele says

I won an advanced reading copy of this teen fiction novel. The novel moved along at a quick pace and told the story of a coming-of-age girl (Elvira) with a dysfunctional family. The setting is 1940's rural America. I did not realize this book would have a spiritual/religious theme until I got to the end, but have to say that for a book with a didactic element it was not overly preachy. The faith element comes in as the main character (Elvira) comes to terms with her missing father. Elvira's little sister who is called a "seer" is introduced as a significant character and is described on the jacket as a main driving character in the story, though I would say that even though little sis's story runs a thread through the novel, it is the "preacher" who is the catalyst for the main character's growth throughout the novel.

I think if a young teen novel is set in a historical time period it should perhaps have a bit more of a historical context. I felt that the only purpose served by the setting was to give the father a place to have disappeared to (the war). It did not otherwise really portray much about what life was like during that era (though some was present) and perhaps therefore a contemporary setting would be more attractive to young readers (and still provide a backdrop for the theme of the book which was really about the burden of guilt, finding God, and reconciling with the life you are given, including those who are in your family. This could really have taken place in any time period.)

I found the characters of the mother and the grandmother a bit incredible. They are both very mean and inattentive to the main character and the grandmother is equally mean to the mother. I did not feel the explanation at the end was enough to justify the grandmother's behavior and I found the sudden reconciliation between the main character and her mother a bit too much of a sudden change in the dynamics. As I read the ending, I really "saw" a completely different person in the mother than I had pictured throughout the book. I did like that the missing father was remembered with love and fondness despite the fact that he had some very real flaws; I felt his character (though not really present in the story) was excellently developed.

It was a good story that wrapped up well at the end. The author did a nice job of a first person narrative.

Theresa says

I won a ARC copy of Insight from the First Reads program on November 20 2011 and received my copy on December 17 2011. Due to my college schedule I have not been able to get much pleasure reading in as you can tell by my updates. However, every time I read a bit of this book I just wanted more, and last night I picked up where I left off on page 43 and read straight through the book.

I really enjoyed this book.

While the cover art and the tag line, "What if you could see things before they happened?" lead you believe the book is about the paranormal, that is not quite the case. The story is about a young girl, Elvira, in the post war 1940s. The book opens with Elvira's mother giving birth. We soon learn that Elvira lives with her grandmother and mother who are always at odds with each other and her little sister Jesse, who never speaks. Elvira's father went missing in action in the war. The story is about this dysfunctional family and how Jesse brings about a big change in their lives when she finally begins to say random words at four years old.

It is a coming of age story (of sorts) not only for Elvira, but for her mother and grandmother as well.

The book had a religious/spiritual theme as you get to the end, but it was in no way preachy or in your face. All in all it was a beautifully told story and I would recommend it to my friends and family.

Talia Smart says

*4.75 stars

I loved this book so much. The writing was amazing, each of the characters maintained a set of traits and behaviors throughout the entire book, and the story was intriguing and interesting. It centers around a poor family in the late 1940s.

This story is told through the eyes of Elvira, who is the daughter of Connie and Ray Witsil. Ray, a drunk, abandons the family to enlist in the army. Within a few months, the family receives a letter that tells them that he is MIA, and most likely dead. Soon after that, Connie's mother moves into their small house to help out. Her way of "helping out," however, mainly consists of shouting matches with her daughter and cold silent periods in which Elvira is forced to carry notes between her mother and grandmother.

Nine months after Ray left, Jessie is born. Jessie is not a normal toddler. She starts talking much later than most children, and when she finally does, she will only say words like "damnation" and "surgery." She often gets a glazed look over her eyes, as if she's seeing something other than what's going on around her. A visit from a peddler to tell the family the latest gossip helps them realize the truth: Jessie is a seer, some sort of psychic.

The family is forced to move out of town to escape judgement from the local citizens. Joining them is a traveling preacher. They embark on a cross-country trip, to a destination not known by Elvira.

I adored this story, but the one thing I didn't like was how preachy the writing was. At the start of the book, Elvira didn't believe in God, but by the end she was practically a missionary. I don't mind religion in writing AT ALL, it's just when it becomes the center focus of an otherwise brilliant story that I get annoyed. So that's why I took of a quarter of a star :P I can't wait for more from this author, hopefully somewhat less centered

around religion.

Cover: I really liked the cover of this book, because I felt that it really related to a key part of the story :)

Kayla Eklund says

Insight was a good inspirational novel. I wasn't expecting the time period of the book to be in the 1940's. Usually I don't read things set in a war time era. However, this book was really good, and didn't focus on World War II much. The plot went along fairly well. Parts of the plot got a little boring at times, such as the stopping along the side of the road a few times to rest. I thought it was cool how the author wrote a few A.A. references into the book. She also wrote a couple of snippets about A.A. history. The ending of the book completely shocked me. I was expecting a totally different ending. I think I liked this ending better than the one I expected. I liked most of the characters. The grandma got a little annoying at times. I think my favorite character was Don, the preacher. I liked how kind and wise he was. He took the family almost cross country without knowing much about them. This was a great novel with a powerful message. The message it gave was to not let guilt consume you. Another message the book gave was that God will help you through your problems, no matter how big they may seem. I recommend this book to anyone looking for a good read.

Aanchal (Book Flame) says

Review from www.bookflame.blogspot.com

Imagine living in the 1940's, dirt poor in the middle of nowhere. With a mother who only notices you when you do something wrong, a grandmother who has nothing better than to constantly insult your mother for marrying your now dead father and a little sister who can see into the future. That is exactly the type of home in which Elvira Witsil grew up in.

Family secrets, loss, strained relationships all wrapped up with a small glimmer of hope.

Insight was a breath of fresh air. I was sucked into this novel within the first few pages. Diana Greenwood did an excellent job with the character development. I especially loved being inside the head of Elvira. She was such an interesting character, there were moments where I couldn't help but laugh at some of the thoughts that ran through her mind while other times my heart just ached for her.

Jessie was another favorite of mine. For such a small child she showed more thoughtfulness and wisdom than anyone else in her family.

Insight was an all around well written novel. Full of tense drama, emotional struggles and a family's journey to grow, heal and love.

Elaine says

Young adult 2 book. World War II era. Elvira, age 14, living in a small town in Wisconsin away from town

with mother, 4-year-old sister Jessie, and grandmother. Father Ray was a dysfunctional alcoholic father, enlisted in the military, and has been declared missing in action in the Pacific. Elvira is lonely and feels 'different' due to their lifestyle, her father's dysfunction and her guilt that she indirectly caused her father's death. Little sister is 'different' and when she finally speaks her first words at age 4, they reveal something that she could not have known. Therefore, she is thought to be a seer. From there, the family meets up with a traveling preacher and travels cross-country to California, where Jessie has revealed they will see their father. The story is told from Elvira's point of view. I enjoyed the character of Elvira - - it is deep, well developed, and believable. The character of the grandmother is unresolved and that kind of bothered me because the grandmother is such an ugly, bitter lady. The other characters resolved their issues, but the grandmother was just sort of dropped from the story? The story line is interesting - - the typical journey (literally and figuratively) to find self-awareness and peace, but it felt just a bit shallow at some points, with some events really fitting in. The story has a very strong religious aspect to it - - lots of references to finding God. Elvira and her sister have an after-life experience while nearly drowning, and they see and speak with their father. Elvira finds God throughout the course of the story, and the story ends with a strong statement about faith. So, before recommending this book, make sure this religious aspect would be okay for the reader. Definitely a "girl" book - - discussions about female puberty.

Screenplaydiva says

Beautiful and imagined, *INSIGHT* by debut novelist Diana Greenwood, is a story about family, dreams and finding faith in something greater than themselves. A spiritual and enlightening novel, you don't have to be a religious believer or follower to enjoy the power behind the story. Although, published by Zondervan, HarperCollins Christian imprint, *INSIGHT* is a book for anyone who enjoys a story that hugs at the heart-strings with flawed, but interesting characters who are searching for their place in the world.

The story takes place during the 1940's in rural Wisconsin. Elvira Witsil is the book's young protagonist. She lives with her mother, grandmother and younger sister, Jessie. Her mother is upset over the disappearance of her husband who was fighting overseas in the war. Her grandmother is crass and mean and never has a kind word to say, especially toward Elvira's father, Ray who is known as the town's drunken loser. Elvira loves her father, faults and all, and desperately misses him. Her sister, Jessie, is cute and sweet, but also a little strange. Jessie lives in her daydreams, rarely talks and does the most peculiar things. As the book's blurb states: Jessie sees things that no one else can see. And what Jessie sees is the future.

Growing up with Jessie is difficult for Elvira because caring for her falls onto Elvira's shoulders and she's just a kid herself. But Elvira loves her sister even though her crazy antics drive her nuts. When Elvira's mother decides to move her small family across country to learn the meaning behind Jessie's psychic gifts, the journey and the people Elvira meets challenges her beliefs, but discovers that Jessie's power is that "seeing is believing."

INSIGHT is one of those novels when you start reading you don't want to let go of the story and its characters. Reminiscent of the curious and magical voice of Scout in *To Kill a Mockingbird* and the atmospheric and psychological turmoil of Ellen Foster, *INSIGHT* features a charismatic heroine who sees the world behind critical and thoughtful eyes. She yearns for a place to belong, a more stable home environment, a mother's love and a father whose memory she clings to. Elvira is lonely and has no friends, except for Jessie. She loves books, even though her strict grandmother forbids her to read certain kinds, like *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*. But most of all Elvira questions how anyone could believe in a higher power because of all the sadness and disappointment she's seen her short life. At times tender, humorous and even

heart-wrenching with a touch of the paranormal, INSIGHT will pick you up and lift your soul.

I love the cover of INSIGHT with Elvira under a sea-green water. The cover has to do with the story and is one of my favorites of 2011.

Review posted on my blog "That's Swell!" and Copyrighted by Reel Swell Productions.

Elizabeth "Liza" says

This is the first time I in a novel! Believe I have entered many contests, but I finally won.. and what is even better, the book is dedicated to me and I also received a button and a bookmark!

I didn't know what to expect for this book, I think the synopsis doesn't describe very well what the book is about. I am really happy that I won this novel, because I really liked it. The story takes place in the 1940s and is told by Elvira. Vira is a strong character, even though her short life has been anything but easy, she tells her story with a bright sense of humor that had me laughing out loud more than one.

The relationship between all the members of the family is somewhat strained, but in the mend. Elvira's determination is a force to be reckon with, and Jessie is ever-knowing and so sweet and mature for her age.

This is a novel worth reading. The cover is lovely too, and it represents a very important part of the plot.

Charli M. says

Insight
Dina Greenwood
218 pages
Realistic fiction

Elvira.... seems like she doesnt even exist. Ever scince her sister, Jessie, was born, seems like no one in the world would know her name. Once she finds out that her family is moving, she gets angry because she has had memorys with her father at that house. They have played and had many laughs. But the one reason they are leaving is because: Jessie is a Seer. A Seer is a Prophet. In this case: a prophet for God. Elvira's family is very poor and they thought they could make some money off of Jessies talent. But of course, they needed help because 1. They had no idea where they were going to go. A preacher came to the rescue. He helped them get to a destination where they could stay. But it wasn't like a hotel. I can't tell you where they went because it would be a spoiler alert! But Jessie, she is only 5 or 6 years old. Imagine being a prophet for God being that age! That would be hard.

I loved this book! It was very realistic and this could happen but, I have no idea if it did to anyone. This book has some what of a connection to me because I know what it feels like when you feel like you are ignored. Except, for me, I wasn't actually ignored. Elvira was. Her grandmaw was very mean and her mother really didn't seem to care about Elvira at all. But I have a little sister. She is my best friend sister. I love her so much.

This book symbolizes forgiveness because they eventually come to God.

Tracy Holczer says

What an incredible read! Elvira's voice grabbed me from the first sentence and didn't let go until the very end. Elvira, her mother and grandmother, her little sister Jessie and all the other characters along the way were interesting and flawed, which made them real and sometimes heartbreaking. How can you resist a character whose first word is, "Damnation?"

On a journey that takes them away from home, secrets are uncovered and tensions rise as little Jessie seems to know things she shouldn't. Set during World War II the family travels to a church revival where Jessie is asked to "perform", and then on to a higher calling - one that might finally put to rest the fate of their father.

Populated with colorful characters, setting and wit, this would be a great read for anyone who loves historicals or mysteries (or just a plain old fashioned good book!)

Avry15 says

originally appeared on: Bookshelf Confessions

I enjoyed this book a lot.

The cover of this book doesn't really have anything to do with the story-my own opinion-. It suggest a paranormal one, while actually even if there is some supernatural things in the book, it doesn't deal mostly in it. But I loved the cover just as well. It's eye-catching and interesting.

This book is about self-discovery, love and loss, life and death, acceptance and understanding, past and future, hope and faith, forgiveness, healing and God's love. This is a complete journey into the lives of ordinary people who found themselves and God along the way.

With the author's writing, I found myself in the road in 1940's with the main character Elvira. I really empathized with her. I cried and laughed along, carried and felt the guilt she have over her father's presumed dead. I also felt her mother's neglect and meanness towards her. I struggled with her in her transformation toward a woman of faith.

Ms. Greenwood brought her story to real life and inspires readers like me a lot. Her characters are developed well-enough that they'd stay in the reader's hearts even long after reading Insight.

This book wonderfully stated the thoughts and feelings every teen and to-be-teen experienced. It's a hard thing turning from a child to a teen, but it's much harder when there's no one to guide you, especially when you needed the most your parents.

Insight is a great reminder, that we don't only have problems to worry about. We have blessings and every little thing we should be thankful for. Faith and the questions that comes along with it are detailed without really making the reader uncomfortable with the religion-subtext.

All in all, *Insight* is a fast-read, all-pack book I would recommend to kids, teens and adults 9 and above. INSPIRING. Highly Recommended. :)

Precious says

4.5 rounded up!

Elvira's family was poor and far from perfect. Her mother always seemed to be angry, noticing her every wrong move and only noticing her when she could be useful. Her grandmother was always criticizing her mother or her father. Her little sister, Jessie, was sweet, lovely but also strange. Jessie spoke rarely and when she did, they were words that a child would not think of saying. In their house, she felt unnoticed – only noticed when people need her help with household chores. There was so much tension in their house, born from the mistakes of her mother and the drinking of her father.

The bonds of the family were quite worn and fragile but somehow, they made it through the years. Their grandmother stuck with their mother. There was love but it was shown in a different way. Underneath the criticizing, the nagging and the fighting, it was there. Elvira never felt that she was loved by her mother. They were not close. With Jessie around, she lost all chances of gaining attention. The only person who loved her was her father but he was gone, reported to be missing in action during the war. I was touched with how Elvira loved her father despite his imperfection. He could not hold a job for more than a few weeks. He was usually drunk. He got into fights and landed in jail a couple of times. He was nowhere near the ideal father but he loved her and he made sure that he showed that to her.

Jessie was a Seer, having words for the right moment and the right people. It was a difficult life to bear the knowledge of the past, present and future that would become her secrets and warnings to the people around her.

Beautifully written, *Insight* was able to captivate me. The guilt, the sadness, the pain, the anger in every page was so strong and overwhelming. I felt for Elvira. She was an atheist belonging to a messed up family with a cute little Seer who was mysterious and confusing. As she and her family journeyed away from their home, they were getting closer to the surface of the truth. But with all the secrets and the lies, would they be able to finally see it and leave behind all the negativity wrapped around them?

Insight is an unforgettable debut about hope, forgiveness redemption, love and family, wonderfully written that the words alone would mesmerize readers. Shocking and heart-shattering, this was the next strongest novel to *Forbidden*. Although some of the things were predictable, I often found myself shocked with the revelations. There was also a hint of romance near the end – refreshingly sweet and innocent. I wish there was more! I recommend this to people who like novels about emotional struggles, family and insight and to believers.
