



The Nightingale Won't Let You Sleep

Steven Heighton

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From internationally acclaimed and Governor General's Award-winning author Steven Heighon comes a passionate novel of buried secrets, the repercussions of war and finding love among the ruins.

Elias Trifannis is desperate to belong somewhere. To make his dying ex-cop father happy, he joins the military--but in Afghanistan, by the time he realizes his last-minute bid for connection was a terrible mistake, it's too late and a tragedy has occurred.

In the aftermath, exhausted by nightmares, Elias is sent to Cyprus to recover, where he attempts to find comfort in the arms of Eylul, a beautiful Turkish journalist. But the lovers' reprieve ends in a moment of shocking brutality that drives Elias into Varosha, once a popular Greek-Cypriot resort town, abandoned since the Turkish invasion of 1974.

Hidden in the lush, overgrown ruins is a community of exiles and refugees living resourcefully but comfortably. Thanks to the cheerfully corrupt Colonel Kaya, who turns a blind eye, they live under the radar of the Turkish authorities.

As he begins to heal, Elias finds himself drawn to the enigmatic and secretive Kaiti while he learns at last to "simply belong." But just when it seems he has found sanctuary, events he himself set in motion have already begun to endanger it.

The Nightingale Won't Let You Sleep Details

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From Reader Review *The Nightingale* Won't Let You Sleep for online ebook

Trang Tran (Bookidote) says

See my full review on my blog here: <https://bookidote.com/2017/03/18/the-...>

Bewitchingly touching, this book is about humanity in all of its forms. When I first read the blurb, I expected a political and historical novel but it is so much more. What we have here is a protagonist, an ex-soldier, struggling with the traumas of war in Afghanistan and is sent to Cyprus to “recover”. But he spiraled down a path of no return: a brutal event happens to him and he ends up in an abandoned town populated by a group of exiles and refugees.

“RATIONALIZATIONS ARE DAYTIME CREATURES, LESS PLAUSIBLE BY NIGHT”

The focus of the novel is of course the evolution of Elias, and, oh my, the character development was on point. What’s really special is that as a starting point, Elias is already introduced to us as a broken man with his PTSD moments from Afghanistan. But it doesn’t stop there. He will undergo even more unfortunate events obliging him to fight his own demons while dealing with new encounters.

When arriving in Varosha, he wouldn’t understand the town at first. Because of its abandonment, it feels like a town frozen in time. The people wouldn’t know either what to make of him so he is treated like a prisoner at first. The dynamic between the two parties will transform into something else entirely: love and companionship, learning to trust and loyalty. Everyone in the group has their own peculiarity and with time, I learn you can make the best of everything even if you live in ruins.

Even if the psychological process of the characters is a major tour de force in this novel, the real magic resides in Steven Heighton’s prose. For the first time in a really long time, I read a book where I can precisely imagine every element of the historical period, moment and place. For example, when Elias has flashbacks from his traumas, the sound and the movements are so vivid. The gravity and suspense of the actions are what makes the reading experience even better.

The only reason why it’s not a 5 stars novel is because of the pace and the heavy content sometimes. Heavy political-wise content. It’s a novel that requires all of your attention. I’m usually really good at multitasking and I like reading in a coffee shop with a background noise. However, this book made me sit in a quiet room because if I happen to miss one or two words then I was completely lost.

Trang Tran
Book Blogger and Book Reviewer
<http://bookidote.com>

January Gray says

This book had potential, but I really could not get into it. Something is missing in the telling of the story.

Melissa says

I won a copy of this book in a Goodreads giveaway in exchange from an honest review.

I jumped into the story from the start, but had difficulty to keep up. In the end, I devoured the last 50-60 pages with my heart pounding, tore apart between finishing the book or stopping, just because I didn't want to know (but I really did) what was going to happen.

This is a beautiful story of love, redemption, and courage.

Justin Bunt says

Fantastic, poetic tale of a small lost Greek community in an abandoned, closed town in Turkish Cyprus. Some of my favourite characters ever, a gentle tale with love and sadness in equal measure.

DeB MaRtEnS says

Five big big stars! Be prepared for my superlatives- lots of them. Expect me to gush. Believe me when I tell you that "The Nightingale Won't Let You Sleep" by Steven Heighton is a novel that I will remember as being one of the Best of 2017.

I was simply blown away by this book, a win from Penguin Canada and a Goodreads Giveaway, which I knew nothing about except its short summary. Wow - such a win, indeed!

A majestic story, one created by the living history of ancient and modern invasions of the Republic of Cypress for the small Greek faction who refuse to accept the injuries done by the Turks which divided the island in 1974. They illegally live off the grid, behind the barbed wire of the abandoned, decaying village of Varosh. Into their midst is thrust Elias Trifannis, a Canadian soldier on medical leave caused by a nightmarish Afghanistan attack gone wrong, which has crippled him with PTSD. As he walks on the beach after drinks with the beautiful, uncompromising Turkish journalist Eylul, they are attacked by brutal Turkish soldiers, and he escapes with his life, but into a cover up that deems him dead and Eylul comatose in hospital.

Elias is injured when he jumps the fence, and the village group foster him, although he is a reluctant patient. Gradually he learns the stories of the people, begins to heal and discovers the unusual reciprocal relationship that they share with Colonel Kaya, the Turkish military assigned to the now abandoned Mediterranean resort area. Life has been peaceful for all of them for many years in their seclusion, but the Turkish military continue to be uneasy about Elias's disappearance and the political scandal that could result if he is actually alive. Life in Varosh suddenly becomes very complicated, for them all.

Urgency and suspense hang over the narrative, the story's pacing a marvel as it shifts from Elias, struggling with his inner demons and finding attachments in the eccentric group, to Kaya and his servant Ali, living in a luscious if faded splendour and the encroaching doom of power hungry politicians, armed soldiers and assassins. I could not put this book down, once I began to read. How would it all end? I had to find out.

Love among the ruins. A wonderful twist or two that I didn't anticipate. Characters who were immensely likeable, all tragic to a degree but purposeful survivors. A gorgeous setting, elegantly described. Sounds, scents...and food! Homemade cheese, yogurt, fresh figs, sumptuous stews - a rustic, simple droolingly aromatic menu of Greek food! Guns. Tennis. And best of all, in the end, optimism.

The Nightingale Won't Let You Sleep will be available on March 14, 2017. Highly recommended. Five stars...more if I could.

Wanda says

I received an ARC of Steven Heighton's "The Nightingale Won't Let You Sleep" compliments of Goodreads Firstreads Giveaway and appreciated the opportunity.

I will start by saying that I was truly looking forward to this book, more specifically it piqued my interest in learning more about Varosha and the long standing controversy and intrigue the abandoned city brings. The idea of a village of people living communally in Varosha is not far out of reach and it holds such an alluring suggestion. This fictional story is a side effect of the Cyprus dispute of 1974 with the Turkish invasion and their war with Greece. The fallout held an everlasting impact on both nations respective Cypriots and is a morose tale.

Fast forward to modern day and the story introduces the main character Elias Trifannis, a Canadian soldier (with post war trauma from his time in Afghanistan) who finds himself in Varosha through a series of complicated events. The book highlights the concept of survival through multiple characters, across several nations and with heartfelt emotions. There are unique love stories and complex relationships, all exuding passion and despair.

Some of the writing reads like poetry with a WOW factor that is deep and haunting. And yet some of it was a confusing and tangled mess of languages. I felt the story was on the cusp of brilliance and yet something about it felt dragged out and confusing. Perhaps the writing exceeds my appreciation and intelligence, I'm left unsettled. It took me several attempts to finish the book around the mid-mark, but am glad I persevered as the last third of the book was of a faster pace and more engaging. I did want to know how it all ends and am glad I kept with it for as long as I did.

I give it 3 stars, not blown away but also not disappointed.

Friederike Knabe says

"PLEASE
I LEFT MY SOUL IN THERE
OPEN UP"

The message, found on a scrap of paper among the overgrown ruins of an abandoned town, reflects not only the emotions of Steven Heighton's protagonists but those of many who are forced to abandon their homes,

physical and spiritual. And, not surprising to those who are familiar with Heighton's earlier novels, he captures the personal aspiration, dreams and traumas beautifully and explores them in borderline places... and in this novel the aftermath of war...

The Nightingale Won't Let You Sleep is a multi-layered story of love and resilience, of loss, recovery and healing. Set in the "dead zone" of Varosha, an abandoned part of Famagusta, near the Green Line that divides the Greek and the Turkish parts of Cyprus, the place and its political precariousness play a central role in the novel. Yet the novel reaches far beyond the historical context. Heighton loves to explore lesser known historical facts of a place and enriches these and more by spinning a dramatic and probable narrative around actual and imagined characters. Here, the individuals, having returned secretly or having found refuge among the dilapidated buildings, have been building a survivors' community. They created something like a temporary haven or, in the imagination of some, a small patch of paradise, and they will do almost anything to defend it if threatened by outsiders.

Heighton evokes the landscape, the lush surroundings, the delicious wild foods that are found in season with the intimacy of a connoisseur and lover. The reader is easily pulled into the celebrations of the villagers. The central characters are convincingly developed, their back stories answering questions why they ended up in this place. Building a community of such a motley group takes patience and talent. And still, challenges remain... just think of communicating with limited knowledge of any common language other than their own! A Greek-Canadian, a German, Turkish colonels, a few Cypriots (Greek), etc. Misunderstandings are likely. Heighton integrates this aspect into the dialogs with ease.

There is much more I could say about this, for me totally absorbing novel.

Mary Anne says

This is a beautiful look at consequences of seemingly simple actions, set primarily in a no-man land between Turkish and Greek territories.

Susan Chow-Dukhan says

Elias Trifannis is a Canadian soldier, sent to Cyprus to be treated for stress, as his past haunts his nightmares. Steven Heighton's writing style has the action and pace of the novel coinciding with Elias's emotions and physical health. A chance sexual encounter with a Turkish journalist results in Elias hiding in Varosha, an abandoned Greek-Cypriot resort town.

Like flotsam on the ocean, Elias encounters a cast of diversified characters, that will affect his outlook on life. The descriptive prose of the surroundings and events creates a connection with the reader. Our mood changes based on what we read is reflective of the emotional mood of the main character.

Paltia says

There is usually magic in the language when a poet writes a novel. This is definitely the case with this one. Even when the content is war, aggression, or boorishness Mr. Heighton expresses it beautifully. The characters in this story are described so vividly it is as if you are right there with them. This story is set in the

present yet when I was reading it I felt I was in some distant past. A very creative piece about second and even third chances in life to find where and with who you ultimately feel you belong.

James Fisher says

After reading *Afterlands* I had to read another Heighton book to ensure this guy is the real deal. He is. My newest favourite author. I especially like the settings he chooses and the people he places in them. He can juggle two or three protagonists and pull it off. To say any more would encroach on the spoiler territory. Thrilling and suspenseful, conflicting and introspective.

Susan says

This was an absolutely beautiful story about grief, healing, and finding family among strangers. When I first started reading I was a bit worried that it would be very depressing as it deals with heavy topics like PTSD and politics in Cyprus. It starts with violence and murder but develops into something entirely different. The quirky group of people that take refuge in the abandoned city are a bunch of real characters. There is a lot of humour and tons of heart. It really was extremely touching and I admit that I cried during the end.

The setting was so realistically portrayed that I feel like I was in Cyprus along with the characters. The sights, the scents, the sounds were so vivid and clear. I'm pretty sure that I could find my way around Varosha just from the descriptions! And the food! OMG! I can taste the roasted chicken with lemons and the fresh figs just picked off the tree. For a bunch of refugees hiding in the ruins they sure eat well!

The writing was beautiful, the story was engaging and emotional. I highly recommend taking this trip to Cyprus along with me. I'll meet you on the beach! :)

I received this book for free through a Goodreads Firstreads giveaway but this has not influenced my review in any way.

Memphistigergal says

Elias Trifannis joined the military to make his father happy. The irony is that it didn't do that. He is sent to Cyprus to recover after an incident in Afghanistan that causes PTSD. He meets a Turkish journalist and finds temporary comfort only to have her ripped away from him by an act of violence. He escapes into Verosha, a city that was invaded in 1974 and then abandoned. He discovers a small group of refugees living in this city that seems frozen in time. The citizens of this city are protected by Colonel Kaya, who protects their secret. Elias finds love and companionship there and is finally able to feel "at home". However, plans are in motion to endanger their community.

I have recently read quite a few historical novels. This one is very different from anything I have read. I did enjoy it. I think the idea of an abandoned city that is just left as a snapshot of 1974 is an intriguing concept. My issue with this story, was that it took a long time for it to develop and an equally long time for me to start

“bonding” with the characters. In addition, there were a few pieces of the story that I felt were unnecessary and didn’t really add anything to the book. About 70% of the way through, I was finally able to get into a rhythm and finish the novel.

I found the basis for the story very intriguing. I read that this is Heighton’s fourth book and I’m interested in looking at some of his previous novels. I would give this one a 3 out of 5 stars. Thanks to netgalley and the publisher for providing me a copy of this novel in exchange for an honest review.

Penny (Literary Hoarders) says

Woohoo! I won The Nightingale Won't Let You Sleep from a Goodreads Giveaway! It's been years since I've won anything from Goodreads!

Magdelanye says

review in process
