

“The Aftermath”

By Helen Lutz

Living in the United States, we are truly blessed. We’ve experienced riots and terrorist actions; however, the Civil War was the last war to scar our homeland. During a visit to South Korea with a girlfriend, we had the unfortunate opportunity to have our plane diverted from Seoul (Osan Air Base) which is close to the middle of the country and the DMZ to the far end of the Korean Peninsula. The challenge, after finally figuring how to get us off a huge plane now located on a fighter base, was travelling to our destination and hotel roughly 170 miles north. Yes, it consisted of a bumpy bus ride, with no air conditioning but with chickens – just like we’ve all seen in movies. At least there wasn’t a pig along for the ride.



My trip was in the early 1980’s and the main thing I remember was seeing a land which had been ravaged by war. So many years after the Korean War I could still see where parts of the Earth had been blown away and the skeletal frames of burnt out homes standing as a reminder of days past. Director James Kent brings a new World War II movie to theater screens in the film “The Aftermath.” The fighting is over, VE Day declared and Hitler dead; what remains is an empty shell of what had once been a thriving society.

British Colonel Lewis Morgan (Jason Clarke) is assigned to bombed out Hamburg, Germany to spearhead the rebuilding effort. The scene is bleak as housing and food are scarce and bodies are still being pulled from the rubble. As one might imagine, many Germans are not too welcoming of the Allied newcomers even to a point of mounting a resistance with 88 (standing for Heil Hitler) branded into their arms.

Into the turmoil which is Hamburg, Colonel Morgan welcomes his wife Rachael (Kiera Knightley). Morgan has secured the undamaged mansion belonging to architect Stephen Lubert (Alexander Skarsgard) and his teenage daughter Freda (Flora Thiemann) as his and Rachael’s living quarters. Instead of requiring Lubert and his daughter to move into one of the refugee camps, he permits them to continue to reside in the premises on an upper floor.

Rachael is less than excited about the prospect of living in a devastated Germany; however, she realizes that it is the only way in which she can stay close to her husband. She is even less excited about the house guests occupying the upper attic floor. Lewis’ work keeps him busy most of the time which leaves Stephen ample time to cut firewood and mill around the property. We see some of the bitterness felt between the Germans and the occupying force during staff conversations when dinner is served. Feelings are not hurt and animosity not noticed when there is a language barrier.

“The Aftermath” brings together several plots. The pain and anger felt by the Morgans having lost their 11 year old son in the German bombing of London. It divides Lewis and Rachael as they each deal with the holes left in their hearts. Stephen and Freda also feel the pain and anger as Stephen’s wife was killed in the bombing of Hamburg. Each character deals with their loss, pain and anger in different ways, some of which can be very dangerous.

Lewis dives into his work sorting out riots and avoiding assassination attempts by the rebellious 88 and Freda wanders into the unseen world buried in the rubble of Hamburg befriending the very people who would seek to destroy Lewis and Rachael. Meanwhile Stephen and Rachael find solace in one another’s arms leading to a very complicated love triangle.

Kent does an excellent job of creating Hamburg post World War II and the horrors it held for its residents. We don’t always realize that all is not hunky dory once the shooting stops. Billed as a love story, “The Aftermath” takes us through a healing process between Stephen and Rachael, however, their on-screen characters never really convince us that what they have is true love – or is it? On a scale of one to four Hart Beats I give “The Aftermath” ♡♡ 1/2 HARTS. The story is interesting; opening our eyes to what happens once the bombing stops.