Suite Francaise

Par Irne Nmirovsky
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Par Irne Nmirovsky : Suite Francaise before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Suite Francaise:

Description : Description du produitIrne Nmirovsky was arrested soon after completing the second part of Suite Franaise. Ten days later, on August 17, 1942, she died of typhus in Auschwitz- Birkenau. Her husband, Michel, perished in a gas chamber on November 6. Their daughters, Denise and Elizabeth, survived, hidden in safe houses and convents, carrying a suitcase packed with clothes, photographs, and their mothers manuscript written in tiny letters to save paper. For years, both girls thought it was a journal and couldnt bear to read it. Then, in the late 1980s, Denise began transcribing it with the help of a magnifying glass. Part One, "A Storm in June," is set in the chaos and mayhem of the massive 1940 exodus from Paris on the eve of the Nazi invasion. Part Two, "Dolce," opens in the provincial town of Bussy during the first influx of German soldiers. Each part features a rich cast of characters people who never should have met, but come to form ambiguous relationships as they are forced to endure circumstances beyond their control.

Prsentation de l'diteurRead the lost masterpiece behind the major new film starring Kristin Scott Thomas and Michelle WilliamsSet during the year that France fell to the Nazis, Suite Franaise falls into two parts. The first is a brilliant depiction of a group of Parisians as they flee the Nazi invasion; the second follows the inhabitants of a small rural community under occupation. Suite Franaise is a novel that teems with wonderful characters struggling with the new regime. However, amidst the mess of defeat, and all the hypocrisy and compromise, there is hope. True nobility and love exist, but often in surprising places. Irne Nmirovsky began writing Suite Franaise in 1940, but her death in Auschwitz prevented her from seeing the day, sixty-five years later, that the novel would be discovered by her daughter and hailed worldwide as a masterpiece.Extrait1War Hot, thought the Parisians. The warm air of spring. It was night, they were at war and there was an air raid. But dawn was near and the war far away. The first to hear the hum of the siren were those who couldnt sleepthe ill and bedridden, mothers with sons at the front, women crying for the men they loved. To them it began as a long breath, like air being forced into a deep sigh. It wasnt long before its wailing filled the sky. It came from afar, from beyond the horizon, slowly, almost lazily. Those still asleep dreamed of waves breaking over pebbles, a March storm whipping the woods, a herd of cows trampling the ground with their hooves, until finally sleep was shaken off and they struggled to open their eyes, murmuring, Is it an air raid?The women, more anxious, more alert, were already up, although some of them, after closing the windows and shutters, went back to bed. The night before Monday, 3 June bombs had fallen on Paris for the first time since the beginning of the war. Yet everyone remained calm. Even though the reports were terrible, no one believed them. No more so than if victory had been announced. We dont understand whats happening, people said.They had to dress their children by torchlight. Mothers lifted small, warm, heavy bodies into their arms: Come on, dont be afraid, dont cry. An air raid. All the lights were out, but beneath the clear, golden June sky, every house, every street was visible. As for the Seine, the river seemed to absorb even the faintest glimmers of light and reflect them back a hundred times brighter, like some multifaceted mirror. Badly blacked-out windows, glistening rooftops, the metal hinges of doors all shone in the water. There were a few red lights that stayed on longer than the others, no one knew why, and the Seine drew them in, capturing them and bouncing them playfully on its waves. From above, it could be seen flowing along, as white as a river of milk. It guided the enemy planes, some people thought. Others said that couldnt be so. In truth, no one really knew anything. Im staying in bed, sleepy voices murmured, Im not scared. All the same, it just takes one . . . the more sensible replied.Through the windows that ran along the service stairs in new apartment blocks, little flashes of light could be seen descending: the people living on the sixth floor were fleeing the upper storeys; they held their torches in front of them, in spite of the regulations. Do you think I want to fall on my face on the stairs! Are you coming, Emile? Everyone instinctively lowered their voices as if the enemys eyes and ears were everywhere. One after another, doors slammed shut. In the poorer neighbourhoods there was always a crowd in the Mtro, or the foul-smelling shelters. The wealthy simply went to sit with the concierge, straining to hear the shells bursting and the explosions that meant bombs were falling, their bodies as tense as frightened animals in dark woods as the hunter gets closer. Though the poor were just as afraid as the rich, and valued their lives just as much, they were more sheeplike: they needed one another, needed to link arms, to groan or laugh together.Day was breaking. A silvery blue light slid over the cobblestones, over the parapets along the quayside, over the towers of Notre-Dame. Bags of sand were piled halfway up all the important monuments, encircling Carpeauxs dancers on the faade of the Opera House, silencing the Marseillaise on the Arc de Triomphe.Still at some distance, great guns were firing; they drew nearer, and every window shuddered in reply. In hot rooms with blacked-out windows, children were born, and their cries made the women forget the sound of sirens and war. To the dying, the barrage of gunfire seemed far away, without any meaning whatsoever, just one more element in that vague, menacing whisper that washes over those on the brink of death. Children slept peacefully, held tight against their mothers sides, their lips making sucking noises, like little lambs. Street sellers carts lay abandoned, full of fresh flowers.The sun came up, fiery red, in a cloudless sky. A shell was fired, now so close to Paris that from the top of every monument birds rose into the sky. Great black birds, rarely seen at other times, stretched out their pink-tinged wings. Beautiful fat pigeons cooed; swallows wheeled; sparrows hopped peacefully in the deserted streets. Along the Seine each poplar tree held a cluster of little brown birds who sang as loudly as they could. From deep beneath the ground came the muffled noise everyone had been waiting for, a sort of three-tone fanfare. The air raid was over.2 In the Pricand household they listened in shocked silence to the evening news on the radio, but no one passed comment on the latest developments. The Pricands were a cultivated family: their traditions, their way of

thinking, their middle-class, Catholic background, their ties with the Church (their eldest son, Philippe Pricand, was a priest), all these things made them mistrustful of the government of France. On the other hand, Monsieur Pricands position as curator of one of the countrys national museums bound them to an administration that showered its faithful with honours and financial rewards.A cat held a little piece of bony fish tentatively between its sharp teeth. He was afraid to swallow it, but he couldnt bring himself to spit it out either.Madame Pricand finally decided that only a male mind could explain with clarity such strange, serious events. Neither her husband nor her eldest son was at home: her husband was dining with friends, her son was not in Paris. Charlotte Pricand, who ruled the familys daily life with an iron hand (whether it was managing the household, her childrens education or her husbands career), was not in the habit of seeking anyones opinion. But this was of a different order. She needed a voice of authority to tell her what to believe. Once pointed in the right direction, there would be no stopping her. Even if given absolute proof she was mistaken, she would reply with a cold, condescending smile, My father said so . . . My husband is very well-informed. And she would make a dismissive little gesture with her gloved hand.She took pride in her husbands position (she herself would have preferred a more domestic lifestyle, but following the example of our Dear Saviour, each of us has his cross to bear). She had come home between appointments to oversee her childrens studies, the babys bottles and the servants work, but she didnt have time to take off her hat and coat. For as long as the Pricand children could remember, their mother was always ready to go out, armed with hat and white gloves. (Since she was thrifty, her mended gloves had the faint smell of stain remover, a reminder of their passage through the dry-cleaners.)As soon as she had come in this evening, she had gone to stand in front of the radio in the drawing room. Her clothes were black, her hat a divine little creation in fashion that season, decorated with three flowers and topped with a silk pom-pom. Beneath it, her face was pale and anguished, emphasising the marks of age and fatigue. She was forty-seven years old and had five children. You would have thought, to look at her, that God had intended her to be a redhead. Her skin was extremely delicate, lined by the passing years. Freckles were dotted over her strong, majestic nose. The expression in her green eyes was as sharp as a cats. At the last minute, however, it seemed that Providence had wavered, or decided that a shock of red hair would not be appropriate, neither to Madame Pricands irreproachable morals nor to her social status, so she had been given mousy brown hair, which she was losing by the handful since shed had her last child. Monsieur Pricand was a man of great discipline: his religious scruples prohibited a number of pleasures and his concern for his reputation kept him away from places of ill repute. The youngest Pricand child was only two, and between Father Philippe and the baby, there were three other children, not counting the ones Madame Pricand discreetly referred to as the three accidents: babies she had carried almost to term before losing them, so that three times their mother had been on the verge of death.The drawing room, where the radio was now playing, was enormous and well-proportioned, with four windows overlooking the Boulevard Delessert. It was furnished in traditional style, with large armchairs and settees upholstered in golden yellow. Next to the balcony, the elder Monsieur Pricand sat in his wheelchair. He was an invalid whose advancing age meant that he sometimes lapsed back into childhood and only truly returned to his right mind when discussing his fortune, which was considerable (he was a Pricand-Maltte, heir of the Maltte family of Lyon). But the war, with its trials and tribulations, no longer affected him. He listened, indifferent, steadily nodding his beautiful silvery beard. The children stood in a semi-circle behind their mother, the youngest in his nannys arms. Nanny had three sons of her own at the front. She had brought the little boy downstairs to say goodnight to his family and took advantage of her brief entry into the drawing room to listen anxiously to what they were saying on the radio.The door was slightly ajar and Madame Pricand could sense the presence of the other servants outside. Madeleine, the maid, was so beside herself with worry that she came right up to the doorway. To Madame Pricand, such a breach of the normal rules seemed a frightening indication of things to com...From Publishers WeeklyStarred . Celebrated in pre-WWII France for her bestselling fiction, the Jewish Russian-born Nmirovsky was shipped to Auschwitz in the summer of 1942, months after this long-lost masterwork was composed. Nmirovsky, a convert to Catholicism, began a planned five-novel cycle as Nazi forces overran northern France in 1940. This gripping "suite," collecting the first two unpolished but wondrously literary sections of a work cut short, have surfaced more than six decades after her death. The first, "Storm in June," chronicles the connecting lives of a disparate clutch of Parisians, among them a snobbish author, a venal banker, a noble priest shepherding churlish orphans, a foppish aesthete and a loving lower-class couple, all fleeing city comforts for the chaotic countryside, mere hours ahead of the advancing Germans. The second, "Dolce," set in 1941 in a farming village under German occupation, tells how peasant farmers, their pretty

daughters and petit bourgeois collaborationists coexisted with their Nazi rulers. In a workbook entry penned just weeks before her arrest, Nmirovsky noted that her goal was to describe "daily life, the emotional life and especially the comedy it provides." This heroic work does just that, by focusingwith compassion and clarityon individual human dramas. (Apr. 18)