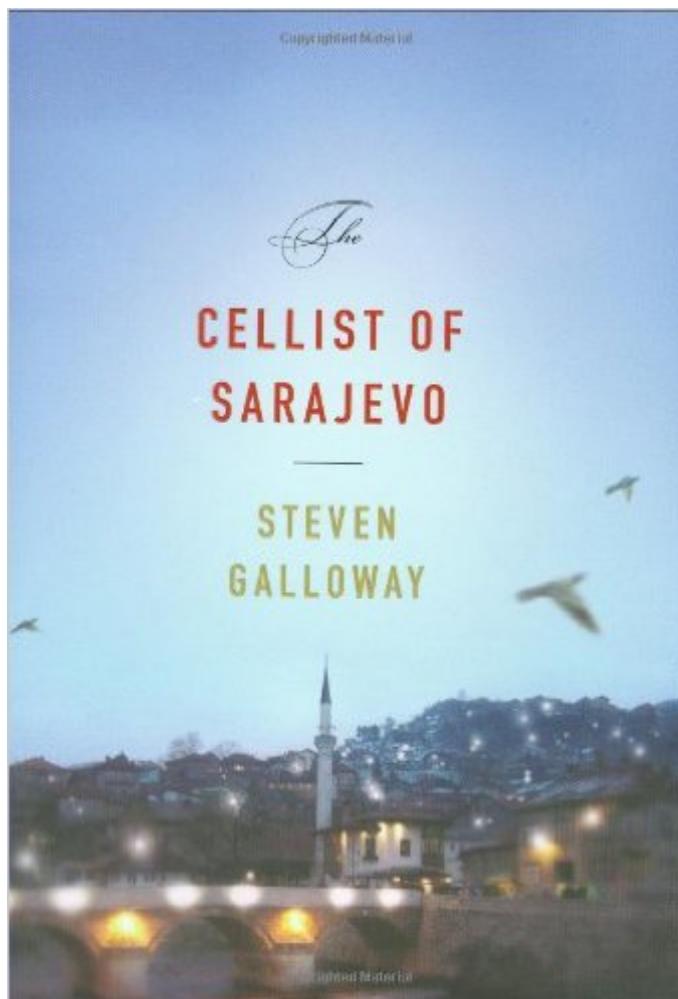


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The Cellist Of Sarajevo



Synopsis

Sarajevo, in the 1990s, is a hellish place. The ongoing war devours human life, tears families apart and transforms even banal routines, such as acquiring water, into life-threatening expeditions. Day after day, a cellist stations himself in the midst of the devastation, defying the ever-present snipers to play tributes to victims of a massacre. A true story of a cellist's resistance helps to form this pivotal event in Steven Galloway's extraordinary novel. Against this, the author touchingly describes three ordinary townspeople and their efforts to retain their humanity, sanity and autonomy as war takes hold of their lives. This bestselling novel is immediate, vivid and deeply affecting on audiobook, fully immersing the listener in the havoc of war. --This text refers to the MP3 CD edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a novel so well-written and thought-provoking that not only did I read it in one sitting, but the very next night I read it again. I would encourage everyone to read the excerpt available via the Search-Inside feature, for it introduces the 28-year-old female sniper who goes by the pseudonym Arrow "so that the person who fought and killed could someday be put away." So riveting is her thinking and so powerful the last sentence of the novel that her story will stay vividly with me for a lifetime. Other reviews, including the excellent one from the Washington Post (click on "See all editorial reviews"), have rightly focused on the characters around which the novel is centered. But also compelling is the plight of the city itself. Although Sarajevo became familiar to me during the Olympic games, one does not need to have seen the pre-war city to shudder at what happened to it. As one of the characters takes circuitous routes to get to his work and food, he recalls its past as he's faced with its present: "Every day," he muses, "the Sarajevo he thinks he remembers slips

away from him a little at a time, like water cupped in the palms of his hands, and when it's gone, he wonders what will be left. He isn't sure what it will be like to live without remembering how life used to be, what it was like to live in a beautiful city." Or, I thought, what it would be like to try to cope with the destruction of wherever one lives, whatever the cause. In more ways than one, the author of "The Kite Runner" was absolutely correct when he called "The Cellist of Sarajevo" a "universal story.

Steven Galloway's spare novel The Cellist of Sarajevo will be haunting me for a long time. I honestly couldn't tell you when a work of fiction made me stop and think so hard about the world we live in. As the novel opens, the siege of Sarajevo is underway, and 22 innocent civilians have just died from a shelling attack while they were waiting in line to buy bread. The eponymous cellist watched it all from his window. They were his friends and neighbors. For reasons never explained (and without need of explanation) the unnamed cellist decides he will play an adagio on the spot of the attack for the next 22 days. This small gesture of beauty in the midst of senseless violence and horror makes the man a target. The attackers of the city, described only as "the men on the hill" will want to make a lesson of him--though exactly what that lesson is I'm not sure. The military men defending the city want the cellist protected. They assign that job to the second of four central characters the novel revolves around. She is a sniper, going only by the name Arrow. She was once a happy student at the University, but now she is a weapon in human form. Every day she struggles with her personal moral compass. The third character is Kenan, a mild-mannered husband and father. The gauntlet he runs every few days is the long trek across town to collect fresh water for his family. No one is Sarajevo is safe. Every time they step outside, they are facing death (although staying inside is no safer with buildings being bombed daily). Kenan's terror at leaving home is echoed by the fourth character, Dagnan, a baker on the way to work who is literally paralyzed by the prospect of crossing the street. If he crosses the street, will he be shot?

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