

Her Own Revolution

Debra Borchert

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In Debra Borchert's suspenseful historical novel *Her Own Revolution*, a woman is pulled between a sense of duty to her French family and her personal beliefs.

Geneviève is a strong-willed Parisienne who resents that she doesn't have the same freedom, safety, and rights as a man. Thus, she dresses like a man to achieve her goals, including attending university and earning passage to America to reunite with her lover, Henri. Her choices are risky; her father is a public prosecutor under whom she works as a clerk, and he would make an example out of her if he knew. And Geneviève's conscience strikes her when an executioner's list passes through her hands, inspiring her to save a former classmate, Louis.

Geneviève delivers keen insights into her own desires and reveals 1790s France in the process. The book's details about the era's prisons, restrictions, cautious citizenry, and anti-royalism are visceral. The story moves from the countryside to dank underground tunnels, revealing Geneviève's stepmother's Sèvres-set dining table and a Paris printshop that forges identity papers alongside instances of violence and public barbarism.

Amid broader moral concerns and the duplicity involved in hiding her actions to save people from execution, Geneviève's story is intimate, too, drawing forth her uncertainty about Henri's intentions. The risk of being discovered is constant; her sense of duty leads to daring rescues, including of orphans. As Geneviève trades between acting as both a man and a woman for safety, she develops fresh resolve, staying humane despite the turbulence. Louis, in turn, proves to be her resourceful, surprising equal.

An engrossing depiction of feminine courage, the novel *Her Own Revolution* features a renegade heroine whose compassion for innocent people leads to both loss and love.

KAREN RIGBY (July / August 2023)

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