



The Ivory Tower

Kirstin Pulioff

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277 –the number sewn into Simone’s shirt. The number that dictates her life at the protection camp. Regulated by a system of ringing bells, fortified cars, and rations, the survivors are protected from residual contaminates on the other side of the wall.

Breaking the monotony of the highly structured camp, Simone and her friend skip school to enjoy one of the last nice days of fall. An afternoon game leads them to a new part of the forest, uncovering more than they expected. All thoughts of protection and rules are shattered by the appearance of the ivory tower. A tower riddled with a history of danger and death.

When her friend shows up with a bruised face and thinly veiled threats, Simone has to decide how much she is willing to risk to find out the truth of the tower.

The Ivory Tower Details

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From Reader Review The Ivory Tower for online ebook

Aj Willis says

A young girl Simone faces troubled times in a camp because she wants to explore the outside world. She is not able to because the world is contaminated. Will she disobey the rules and leave anyway or will she end up like her mother, dead?

I like how even though the book was short it gave specific details about the events that took place. For instance, Simone explains how her mother died from being contaminated because she left the camp instead of staying safe.

I like how Simone tries to experiment the outside world when she isn't supposed to. Even though she left the camp and got contaminated she survived and had a learning experience.

I also like how they made a civilized camp with rules so that everyone can stay safe. They had special assignments and they did them via bells. The first bell assigned the kids/young adults to go to school. The second bell was for the Sargent. And the third bell alarmed the women to proceed to the factories and the men to the field.

I dislike how it lacked detail about everything overall, like the mother and how the world became contaminated. I wanted to learn more about the tower and how her mom's life was at the camp.

This book would be made for people that had family that went through some type of enslavement. I say that because back then they had people at camps with "no freedom".

Warning, do not read this book so fast. Enjoy and understand every moment because it's a very short story.

Wood Dickinson says

This is a well written short story that I wish hadn't ended where it did. I think there's a lot more story yet to tell. Well worth the price and time to read it. Write more please. What happens next?

Dianne says

When a rebellious and headstrong young girl pushed the limits of the rules of her "protection" camp too far, she learns the secrets of the outer boundaries, as well as the consequences for going too far. In a stifling military-type environment where the citizens are numbered according to their usefulness in their society, Simone, whose number ranks her as being near the bottom of the pecking order dares to go where all are forbidden to go. Will her curiosity and daring be rewarded or will the truths she sees be used against her? Will she be forever "different?"

The Ivory Tower by Kristin Pulioff packs a powerful punch with few words as she builds a bleak world where fear of an unknown evil rules its people. While most of the characters are only shades of color,

Simone, is fully fleshed out and feels real, the central focus of a lens that blurs all around her. With few pages, Ms. Pulioff engages the reader and moves along from start to finish smoothly and efficiently in this quick read. The unanswered questions leave room for more in the future, while allowing me to create several “what-if” scenarios on my own!

Publication Date: September 29, 2013

Publisher: Kristin Pulioff

Genre: YA Fantasy

Number of Pages: 24

Available from: Amazon

Tina Taylor says

The world of this short story has people living in bordered camps to protect them from what's outside. They don't know exactly what is outside but there are stories of the past that failing crops, violence, anarchy and disasters, left everywhere too dangerous to inhabit. Most are too afraid to go near the boundaries, let alone venture outside, because anyone who does go comes back different. Inhabitants of the protection camp are kept to strict routine, they live their lives by the ringing of bells overseen by a military regime. Food is rationed, with the lowliest people in the camp (those assigned the highest numbers) receiving scraps or nothing at all. Number 277, 15 year old Simone, likes to break the routine and push boundaries. One day in the forest surrounding the camp she and her friend Christine find themselves near the outer boundaries and see an ivory tower outside the fence. Struck with fear at being so close to the outside they return to camp but Simone's curiosity is stirred and she later decides to venture out and explore the tower. What she finds is disturbing, and experiences firsthand the reason why people who come back are different.

I liked this story, the author's descriptive style really made me feel I was there. I like the world she built, it really felt gloomy and oppressive in camp but colourful and freeing in the forest. Simone and Christine were very likeable girls with a strong friendship despite having fairly different personalities as well as being at opposites ends of the social hierarchy such as it is.

This story intrigued me, it raised a lot of questions, only some of which are answered. For this reason it feels like it could be a prequel or a teaser, and I'd be very happy to read more and find out exactly what's going on. It would be nice to see interaction with others, maybe the Bookers, find out their experiences, build on the story. Simone checked out the farm boys, possible love interest? What's with the weird guards' grinning and stuff? There are lots more questions I'd like to know the answers to. So I hope we see more of Simone, Christine et al. If we don't, if this is all we get, I will be disappointed, but this was still a very enjoyable read.

Thanks to the author, Kirstin Pulioff, who gave me a free copy in exchange for a review.

Lilian says

I enjoyed this short story and the beautiful descriptions composed by the author to portray scenes and people. I compare them to a gifted artist who uses his paint brush and colours to create an interesting picture. The story is about two friends, Simone and Christine; the former adventurous and inquisitive, and the other,

prudent and wary.

Both girls study in the same school, knowing that when they finish, they will work on the farm, where Christine's parents work, and where Simone's mother worked until her mysterious death.

One day, whilst Christine is counting for their hide-n'-seek game, Simone grasps the occasion to seek for the 'forbidden' ivory tower. She knows that her friend's warning to stay away from the tower is sound advice, but curiosity gets the better of her, and she ventures on. She wanders into the woods, crosses a stream and finds herself at the base of the tower. She is undaunted by the barbed wire fencing, which she scrambles over. The spiral stairway leads her to a big door, which she pushes open, and enters a spacious room. She is astonished by the screens on the walls, monitoring all workers on the farm. Her curiosity drives her to explore yet further, but she is soon caught by a guard. Although she struggles and does her utmost to escape, the guard overpowers her.

Simone wakes up in a hospital bed and sees Christine on the chair beside her, trying to comfort her.

Unfortunately, she does not remember her adventure in the ivory tower or why her hand is bandaged.

As I read the last paragraph of this story, I imagined an ending to my liking, as I do with many stories. This time, the author's ending did not coincide with mine.

Abigail says

What a short but extremely powerful read. Every ounce of this 24 page short story is packed tight with intense emotion and well placed aspects that a true dystopian story. I will argue this is a young adult in label because it is a story anyone could and should read. The reason I believe it is being labeled as young adult is because of the age of the children and the message but, truly!? WOW!

I am beyond picky about dystopian reads, to many are written with a message of hope. Oh heck no! No one should wear a pair of rose color glasses.. you need a pair of grimy industrial goggles to go with your mud caked outfit, and your own number sewn on the cuff of your sleeve.

Living in an area with birch trees a plenty, I probably will not be playing hide and seek anytime soon. I like living in my dysfunctional bubble of denial! Great job. Perfect for a dreary and rainy afternoon of dystopian delight.

I am giving this a solid 9 out of 10

Katherine says

Colour me disappointed in this book which is really too bad because initially I quite enjoyed it.

This was a well paced short story showing this world that our lead lives in, a camp as much protective as it is restrictive and prison like. Learning about the Ivory Tower and Simone's immediate pull to it is fascinating- I do wish Pulioff got more into why she felt such a pull to the Tower. I loved the actions Simone takes because of its discovery. Then the discovery within the Tower was great, very interesting, and I was curious if the story would end right there. But it didn't and that is where it lost me.

(view spoiler)

Barbara Ann says

The Ivory Tower

Written by Kirstin Pulioff

This is a well written short story set in a dystopian world where fear and repression are the norms of everyday living. The colorful descriptions and lively verbs guide the reader on an adventure in which she will be eager to proceed on course with the heroine, Simone, and at the same time, be terrified of the outcome.

As the story opens, the reader meets two young friends named Simone and Christine, who are on very different social levels in the camp and bear totally opposite personalities. Simone is number 277 because she is an orphan. Sometimes she does not even receive food rations. Christine is number 35; she and her family are considered productive citizens. The army is present to protect the citizens by keeping them in a restricted area which is free from contaminants of a recent disaster. Young children attend school, but begin laboring in the factory as soon as they are old enough. Everyone is prohibited from going near an old rusted tower that lies at the end of the forest.

Simone and Christine are enjoying their last days of freedom before factory assignments. They are playing hide and seek when Simone gets near the fence and spies the tower. Christine urges her to retreat because she gets in trouble and is beaten by her parents when they find out she has been near the edge of the forest. They warn her of the contaminants and punishment for risking disease by going there. A few days later, Simone urges Christine to play hide and seek one more time. Reluctantly, she agrees. Of course the fearless and curious Simone takes off straight to the tower. While Christine waits outside, Simone gains entrance. She finds duplicate pictures of those in the camp and monitors that are spying on its citizens. Soon she hears footsteps and the approach of one of the soldiers. Desperately, she tries to make her escape. He informs her that they are there to “protect all citizens” whether they realize that or not.

Before the close of the story, Christine and her friend are reunited in the hospital, but Simone is wounded and branded. Will she become another dutiful citizen or do further adventures await this young citizen who does not appear willing and able to conform to camp life? Can their friendship survive?

Children ages eight and up, especially those who love dystopian adventures, will surely enjoy this fast paced and well written short story. This reader is already looking forward to a sequel.

Simon Okill says

The Ivory Tower by Kirstin Pulioff is a captivating YA fantasy short story that captured my imagination. Number 277, Simone, has been inquisitive to the point of having to know what lies beyond the boundary of barbed wire surrounding their camp. She uses her friend Christine to play hide and seek in the woods to search beyond the boundary and discovers the dreaded Ivory Tower, an ancient monolith of moss covered bricks painted white. She must find out its secret no matter the cost.

This is a classic rendering of curiosity kills the cat set in a dystopian society rebuilding from a massive

disaster. Everyone at the camp has been told the Ivory Tower is evil and must stay clear of its influence. Simone, being an orphan and deemed the lowest on the human ladder of society disobeys. What does she discover in the tower that could change everything. Read this wonderful short story to find out.
A FIVE STAR fantasy suitable for the whole family.

Olga Miret says

A sharp, shiny and precise jewel of a dystopian novella.

I read *The Ivory Tower* very quickly some time ago and have finally managed to catch up with a review. This dystopian story is brief but hides a good punch. I'm always in two minds with regards to shorter stories. On the one hand I want to know more, but on the other hand, the best of them are like perfect jewels, nicely shaped, shiny and precise. Sharp with no rounded edges. I suspect some of that precision and the effect might be lost if they were longer.

The Ivory Tower is one of those stories. The reader is given some details but not the full story behind the situation or the reasons why the characters live as they do. And that makes you think and imagine. It also works because when the main character finds herself in a situation that she cannot quite understand, you are in her shoes and as astounded as her by what happens. The sense of menace and threat increases as one reads and the writing helps create an atmospheric and intriguing tale. Although there are no unduly lengthy descriptions, the reader knows where s/he is. And the ending...

If you only have a little time and want a good story (not a feel good story, though) go and grab *The Ivory Tower*, quick!

Sarah Aisling says

The Ivory Tower is a short story of approximately forty-eight pages. I was in Kirstin Pulioff's grip from page one. My innate desire to know the answer to absolutely everything was not quenched by this story; however, the part of the story shared was fantastic. I wish this was a full-length novel with all the nitty gritty.

From the blurb:

277 –the number sewn into Simone's shirt. The number that dictates her life

at the protection camp. Regulated by a system of ringing bells, fortified cars, and

rations, the survivors are protected from residual contaminants on the other side of

the wall.

Breaking the monotony of the highly structured camp, Simone and her friend skip

school to enjoy one of the last nice days of fall. An afternoon game leads them to a new part of the forest, uncovering more than they expected. All thoughts of

protection and rules are shattered by the appearance of the ivory tower. A tower

riddled with a history of danger and death.

A numbered hierarchy by class, rations, guards, being forced to work in the factory . . . it all sounds so familiar. It doesn't sound like protection, though that's what they're told it is. Fear keeps many in, blind faith works for others.

Kirstin Pulioff's writing is exquisite. I was there in the woods with Simone. My heart was pounding along with hers. The descriptions are so rich.

Here's an example:

She had never been this close to the edge before. They had run this small stretch of woods in the back of the camp for years, but never ventured to the outer boundaries. She focused on the barbed wire camouflaged into the stacked brambles and woody debris. Rust and moss grew around the sharp teeth of the corroded metal. And beyond it, what she'd taken for a white trunk revealed itself as the brick base of a tower.

The skillful, tidy stacks of bricks had worn over the years. White paint flecked off the sides. The dilapidated mortar left exposed gaps and piles at the base. At the top, the tower widened. A row of shattered windows looked out behind them, towards the camp. Squinting, Simone glimpsed writing on the dangling threshold marker. The soft charcoal letters described the tower with one word.

"Restricted," she whispered, her breath clouding the air.

Do you have the shivers yet? I don't want to talk about the story too much and give anything away. Just read it. My only complaint was the brevity of this piece. This is a story with so many possibilities that you can really sink your teeth into, and it was over much too soon. Despite the short length, I felt satisfied after reading it, even if it didn't end the way I wanted.

I'd definitely like to read more from this author.

4.5 stars rounded to 5

Read more reviews on my website: www.sarahaisling.com

Amalie Jahn says

I love reading short stories and this one did not disappoint. Set in a dystopian future, Kirstin Pulioff drew me in with her concise writing style and descriptive imagery. She immediately transported me to the protection camp where Simone and Christine struggle to survive a horrific caste system and deplorable conditions. Without having to explain the back story of the world in which they live, Pulioff created a meaningful story which left me emotionally tied to the characters. Highly recommend to anyone looking for a quick, thought-provoking read.

Katie Cross says

This is a really fast read that was enjoyable to read.

There were several things I liked about Ivory Tower. Pulioff has great characters here. They have traits that stay very consistent. The MC, Simone, is a stubborn, independent orphan. I liked those characteristics because then I rooted for her. Her friend Christine was sufficiently wary and stayed that way.

Organizationally, it felt like a pretty well put together story.

She builds the suspense over The Ivory Tower really well. I couldn't wait to see what that was about.

Overall, however, it lacked a sense of originality from the rest of the dystopian stories that I've read. This didn't make it a bad read, but it didn't make it one that stuck out, either. By the time we actually got into the anticipated Ivory Tower, I had already predicted what would be in there.

Puliof created a dystopian world, but with such a short space for storytelling, the details were given in a way that felt anti climactic and similar to other stories. How many ways can the world end, I guess?

To give Puliof credit, it's hard to create any kind of original dystopian world, especially in a novella, but that's always what I was hoping for. The ending was good because it was realistic, but again, not surprising.

At the end of the day, it was an enjoyable read, one that was fast and easy. Because of this novella, I plan to read more of Pulioff's work, and already have her other full length novel on my Kindle to read.

Christoph Fischer says

"The Ivory Tower - a short story" by Kirstin Pulioff shows what a skilled writer can achieve with a greatly set up short story that others cannot pull off in an entire book.

Pulioff describes in some detail the life in a protection camp, a post-apocalyptic setting where people are protected from the effects of a prior world wide contamination. Within a few pages I felt as if I was in the camp with 15 year old Simone and had the same questions, doubts and experiences.

The descriptive style pays off many times over as a futuristic setting comes very much alive for protagonists and readers.

The scenario raises many questions about freedom and quality of life that are sometimes clearly implied and sometimes spoken out loudly by the characters. Through the well presented narrative and the dialogue, Simone, the heroine of this story, becomes familiar very quickly as a strong individual and someone I could relate to.

The almost hypnotic writing pulled me through the story in what appeared no time, leaving me with a powerful ending and a strong impression.

It reminds me how poignant a successful short story can be in ways that 3 hour movies or thick novels often cannot achieve, The brief snapshot - if done well, as in this case - can point out the claustrophobic feel so much more efficient.

This is really good.

John Dolan says

'The Ivory Tower' is a well-written YA dystopian short story from the author of the Princess Madeline series.

Ms Pulioff's prose is tight, and this which allows her to paint a believable vision of a possible future for our self-destructive species in a tale of only a few thousand words.

Good characters, good story, recommended read.
