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The Nightingale



Synopsis

Audie Award, Fiction, 2016 In love we find out who we want to be. In war we find out who we are. France, 1939 In the quiet village of Carriveau, Vianne Mauriac says goodbye to her husband, Antoine, as he heads for the Front. She doesn't believe that the Nazis will invade France...but invade they do, in droves of marching soldiers, in caravans of trucks and tanks, in planes that fill the skies and drop bombs upon the innocent. When a German captain requisitions Vianne's home, she and her daughter must live with the enemy or lose everything. Without food or money or hope, as danger escalates all around them, she is forced to make one impossible choice after another to keep her family alive. Vianne's sister, Isabelle, is a rebellious eighteen-year-old girl, searching for purpose with all the reckless passion of youth. While thousands of Parisians march into the unknown terrors of war, she meets GÃ©tane, a partisan who believes the French can fight the Nazis from within France, and she falls in love as only the young can...completely. But when he betrays her, Isabelle joins the Resistance and never looks back, risking her life time and again to save others. With courage, grace and powerful insight, bestselling author Kristin Hannah captures the epic panorama of WWII and illuminates an intimate part of history seldom seen: the women's war. The Nightingale tells the stories of two sisters, separated by years and experience, by ideals, passion and circumstance, each embarking on her own dangerous path toward survival, love, and freedom in German-occupied, war-torn France--a heartbreakingly beautiful novel that celebrates the resilience of the human spirit and the durability of women. It is a novel for everyone, a novel for a lifetime.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I very much enjoyed Kristin Hannah character development and story. This book is written better than many books about WWII. The reader experiences the struggles and fear of those living in a Nazi occupied country. I am very, very troubled however. When I read about Isabelle organizing an escape route for airmen whose planes were shot down in France and then escorting them safely to Spain with the assistance of reluctant Basque, I had to stop because I clearly remembered reading this before. I vaguely also remember a black white movie or documentary about this. I searched and found the once read story of the Belgium, Andree de Jongh who actually did what the fictional character Isabelle did in the novel. Much, much, much of the book parallels de Jongh's true story - the description of the heroine; the number of people (118 by de Jongh and 117 by Isabelle) escorted through this escape route: this escape route having a code name (Nightingale in the book and Comet in real life); the description of the airmen's instructions on the train and staying behind the heroine when they walked in German occupied cities; de Jongh's/Isabelle father executed by firing squad; the reaction of the airmen to this female who was going to be the one who to lead them out of France; de Jongh's/Isabelle's invisibility to the Germans because she was "just" a woman: collaborating with the British to fund the escape of airmen from France; de Jongh's/Isabelle's capture in the Pyrenees by the Nazi's then interrogation and Nazi's disbelief and rejection of the idea that a woman was capable of doing this; and de Jongh's/Isabelle's imprisonment in Ravensbruck women's concentration camp. Why am I troubled? I searched the book, several interviews with the author and Ms. Hannah website and there was no mention of specific name "Andree de Jongh." Hannah acknowledged on her website that her search led her to "a story of a young Belgian woman who created an escape route out of Nazi occupied France." I strongly believe that the author should have dedicated, credited or acknowledge the name of Andree de Jongh in the book where it was easily visible to the reader. de Jongh is as invisible to the author as she was to the Germans and in a book that celebrated the bravery of women during war. Was Vianne's character based on a brave woman who also deserved bold recognition? This makes me sad.

The Nightingale opens with this amazing first line: "If I have learned anything in this long life of mine, it is this: In love we find out who we want to be; in war we find out who we are." - pg 1
This story is about what it's like to be a woman during war. The author says on her website that "In war, women's stories are all too often forgotten or overlooked." I had

never thought about how true that really was until I read this book. Vianne and Isabelle are two sisters that we follow through World War II. One stays home and takes care of her kids and one helps in the war effort. Their story showed me that this statement is not true: "And it's a fact that women are useless in war. Your job is to wait for our return." - pg 26 What a beautiful reminder not overlook women and their strength. Even as a woman, I'm guilty of doing that sometimes. Since this is an historical-fiction story, I felt like there should have been an afterword talking about what was historical and what wasn't. But don't worry I've googled it all for you :) The Nightingale is inspired by a real person, Andree de Jongh. Don't go read her biography before reading this book unless you want to be spoiled. Andree de Jongh and her corresponding character in the book were themselves inspired by a real nurse named Edith Cavell who served during World War I. You should read about her too :) I love pictures and the author has some beautiful pictures of places that inspired the locations in her book. I'm a geek for any reference to art or culture, so when I saw a reference to "drab-eyed, dark-clothed people who looked like they belonged in an Edvard Munch painting." (pg 239) I had to look it up. He's most famous for doing The Scream. You'll love the writing in this book. It's beautiful. I highlighted so many good quotes that I can't share them all. This might be my favorite one: "Lately, though, I find myself thinking about the war and my past, about the people I lost. Lost. it makes it sound as if I misplaced my loved ones." - pg 1 The Nightingale deserves all the hype and awards it's gotten. You should read it.

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