



# I Will Plant You a Lilac Tree: A Memoir of a Schindler's List Survivor

*Laura Hillman*

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## **I Will Plant You a Lilac Tree: A Memoir of a Schindler's List Survivor** Laura Hillman **"HANNELORE, YOUR PAPA IS DEAD."**

In the spring of 1942 Hannelore received a letter from Mama at her school in Berlin, Germany--Papa had been arrested and taken to a concentration camp. Six weeks later he was sent home; ashes in an urn.

Soon another letter arrived. "The Gestapo has notified your brothers and me that we are to be deported to the East--whatever that means." Hannelore knew: labor camps, starvation, beatings...How could Mama and her two younger brothers bear that? She made a decision: She would go home and be deported with her family. Despite the horrors she faced in eight labor and concentration camps, Hannelore met and fell in love with a Polish POW named Dick Hillman.

Oskar Schindler was their one hope to survive. Schindler had a plan to take eleven hundred Jews to the safety of his new factory in Czechoslovakia. Incredibly both she and Dick were added to his list. But survival was not that simple. Weeks later Hannelore found herself, alone, outside the gates of Auschwitz, pushed toward the smoking crematoria.

*I Will Plant You a Lilac Tree* is the remarkable true story of one young woman's nightmarish coming-of-age. But it is also a story about the surprising possibilities for hope and love in one of history's most brutal times.

## **I Will Plant You a Lilac Tree: A Memoir of a Schindler's List Survivor Details**

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Author : Laura Hillman

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# From Reader Review I Will Plant You a Lilac Tree: A Memoir of a Schindler's List Survivor for online ebook

## Em says

Laura Hillman's I Will Plant You a Lilac Tree: A Memoir of a Schindler's List Survivor is one of those unforgettable first-hand account of the Second World War.

The memoir begins with the period when the writer was still in boarding school in Berlin. She writes, Since Hitler had come to power, it was dangerous for Jews to walk on public streets.

Few days later, she received the news of her father's death, to be followed by her family's deportation to the concentration camps. In spite of the danger in the camps, Laura "Hannelore" Wolff writes to the Nazis and expressed her intent to be deported with her family. Together, they had to endure the persecution by the Nazis.

In this memoir, Laura vividly told of her personal experiences of the holocaust and all the terrors that she and her family had to go through. It was emotional and heartbreak. Apart from being a story of suffering and persecution, I Will Plant You a Lilac Tree is also a tale of hope and triumph. Amidst their darkest days, she found love in Polish POW Dick Hillman. Their love endured when Oskar Schindler began saving eleven hundred Jews who were to be taken to safety in his new factory in Czechoslovakia.

But survival was never easy. In the end, Laura found herself alone outside the gates of Auschwitz.

The lilacs became the symbol that will always remind her of the love she found in one of history's most brutal times. It holds the promise that love, like lilacs in bloom, shall triumph in the end.

<http://flipthrough.wordpress.com/2010...>

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## Joyce says

I remember seeing the movie Schindler's List with my father many years ago. This was the first book/memoir I read that spoke of Oskar Schindler. I was brought to tears of what this young girl went through yet in all the horrific events, able to find love, hope for surviving. I would recommend the read.

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## Meghan says

I really wish I could give this book 3.5 stars. I thought it was very good. The book itself I liked, the story and Hannelore herself. The pictures of her family that she saved through her time in the camps were also nice to see because it was mentioned so many times how she saved these pictures under a bench, in her shoes, and even hiding them in her hands during a shower. I could sit down and probably read this whole book in one sitting just because it flows easily and while reading it you hardly realize how many pages you have turned. I just wish it would have gone into a bit more detail about what life was like for her in the camps. Also, because the fact that she was a Schindler's List survivor was mentioned in the title, I thought it would feature

a more important role in the book, but it wasn't mentioned until the last third of the book. I did enjoy this book, though, and it would be a great book for someone younger and new to learning about the Holocaust.

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### **Deena says**

First, a disclaimer of sorts: I always hesitate to critique Holocaust memoirs. Who am I to judge or assess the manner of writing such a thing? That the author was brave and strong enough to write it at all says so much - why quibble over details of style or method?

That being said, as a reader I am also entitled to an opinion. And I didn't include the above as a prelude for a hack job on this book. My used copy indicates that a library somewhere classified it as YA, with which I disagree - although perhaps that is due to the very young age at which I read the things in my school library which were classified by those letters. This is not a book for young children.

I felt that Mrs. Hillman did much more telling us than making us feel, but there is no doubt in my mind that that is due in no small part to the nature of her experience.

This is not a book for someone looking for new details about being a Schindler list survivor. Mrs. Hillman and her husband were late additions to the list and at least within this book she never fully understands why they were added. She spent little time under Schindler's protection, but was one of the 300 women he managed to get out of Auschwitz and brought to the relative safety of his Brinnlitz factory camp. That being said, she does not seem to have ever felt safe at Brinnlitz (of course given what she had already been through that isn't surprising at all, but part of it must also be attributed to her lack of previous experience with Schindler.)

A quick read, and a worthwhile one for anyone who reads Holocaust memoirs.

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### **Tracey says**

Stories of the horrors of Nazi concentration camps never fail to rip my heart open. This true memoir of Hannelore Wolff, a Schindler's list survivor had a profound impact on me. I began the book this morning and read straight through. The absolute uncertainty of every single moment for the imprisoned and tortured Jews is plainly laid out in a rather matter of fact language. It felt all the more unsettling and truthful, I found myself able to imagine sitting with the author as she told her story. I know we can never have enough reminders of this inhuman time in our world's history. I thank all the survivors who bravely remember and share their experiences.

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### **Heather says**

Short and simply told but doesn't lose any of its power in that. I do love my historical fiction centring around World War Two but there's something about reading a memoir, reading the bare facts laid down - no frivolous words are used, there is no excess, no artistic license that really makes the horrors alive again.

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### **Lily J says**

This book was unlike any other Holocaust book I had read before. Hannelore, a Holocaust survivor, describes her horrifying yet beautiful journey to freedom. Despite the harsh conditions surrounding her she is able to remain optimistic and find love. An experience that would normally be difficult to relate to is made easier with the perspective of this young woman. If you enjoy romance and learning about the holocaust (and can handle the horrors of it) then I would recommend reading this book.

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### **Vartika says**

The unimaginable happened during the world war and sadly continues to happen around the world.

Hannelore's account of her experiences, trials, insults, physical abuses, luck in finding the right jobs, her chance encounters with people who will become her saviors, her experience of falling in love at the camp, marrying that prisoner of war, big force of life amidst the lowest humanity can stoop, sheer will to live, and existence of saints that walked around in Oskar Schindler... Must have been a herculean task to recount and remember, unimaginable to withstand and emerge from!

My heart remains forever broken by the stories of those who were lost, those who lived and still lost a lot. Prayers.

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### **Sonya Puri says**

Short book which captures the hardships of the holocaust. Shocking & sad incidents, but how through it all she survives. The author even meets her future husband in one of the concentration camps & they plan to plant a lilac tree some day together.

The book leaves a deep impact.

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### **Lynne says**

People who believe in a magical, invisible Cloud Being will find something of miracle or destiny in Hannelore and Bernard's ending up in Oskar Schindler's factory only a few months before the Russian liberation of Czechoslovakia. I see it as a) luck and b) Laura's own chutzpah to sneak out of line. Hannelore (Laura) was on her way to the "shower" when she got in a different line, screwed up the headcount at the barracks she went to instead of the shower, was reprimanded by the barrack supervisor but not reported; and a few days later, was called out of the barrack as being on Schindler's list. Schindler himself was on his last legs because, well, one cannot put out defective ammunition for too many months before the bosses begin to catch on. The Russians showed up just in time. More "deus ex machina" than "deus" here. But incredibly, no author manipulation was necessary to bring about the relatively happy ending for the Hillmans. Every lucky turn of events was the result of excellent timing or cleverness on Dick's or Laura's part. And I prefer stories, even true ones, where people had some sort of hand in their happy endings.

If this book were fiction, I would find it completely pat and improbable. At Schindler's factory, Hannelore is reunited with Bernard (Dick) Hillman, whom she'd fallen love with at a previous camp. They are married a few months after the German surrender and move to the U. S. two years later. Sadly, with the exception of two Hillman sisters, no family members were there to celebrate their wedding, nor to make a new home together after the war.

A lovely book about love and courage.

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### **Sara says**

This book is about a young jewish girl named Hannelore who is deported to several Nazi concentration camps during WW2. When HANNELORE'S brothers and mother are deported to a concentration camp and not Hannelore, she decides to turn herself in to the gestapo. She begins her horrifying journey from concentration camp to concentration camp; eight in total. She meets various people who will stay in her life forever.

This book was interesting from the beginning. Usually books only get interesting towards the middle, but this book was amazing from the first page on. I was so connected to the character and cried whenever she was going through terrible times. The book was informative as well as interesting and suspenseful. This book taught me to be strong to whatever happens and it made me realize that whatever bad has happened to me is not even comparable to what any holocaust survivor or holocaust victim went through. It made me realize, being a jewish girl, that I'm very lucky to have been born in this era. It made me realize that I should be more thankful for things and that I should be more considerate of a lot of things.

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### **Jasmine Gedeon says**

I was just assigned this book for a project in my history class. I read it in two days, and I really enjoyed it (well, however much you can 'enjoy' a book about a Holocaust survivor). It was very well written, and it was a good book. It really gave me insight on this time period, but I had two issues of the book that I just can't let go. And I see on other reviews I'm not the only one who had these issues with the book.

My first issue was about how the title of the novel states that it is a memoir of a Schindler's list survivor. Hold on, let me explain. I've been curious about the whole Schindler's list thing from what I already knew about the Holocaust before I read this book, and I was really looking forward to learning about it from this book. Yes, she did write about the list, but since it was mentioned in the title, I figured it would be much more... Significant in the book, but it isn't really mentioned until the end of the book.

My other issue with this novel was that it wasn't very descriptive. I really wish it would have had more detail about what happened in the camps, so the readers would realize just how terrible it was. For example, talking about a man being beaten to death is terrible, yes, but for the horror of it to really hit home in the reader it needs to be descriptive. It needs to be told how it really was, and then maybe the readers will have the response, "Wow, how terrible!" but with this book, it just... For a person who hasn't studied and/or never learned about the Holocaust maybe have that reaction with bare minimum detail, but from discussions in class I heard much worse about the Holocaust, and it's all because of the amazing detail my teacher gives us. I get that Laura Hillman wouldn't exactly want to relive the horrors that she went through, but because of the

lack of detail I had to remove a star.

Other than that, this book was very good. I would recommend it to teenagers so they could see how life was in the concentration camps, but I would advise any readers to also have a little background information on the Holocaust as well.

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### **Kayse says**

The book I read was *I Will Plant You a Lilac Tree* by Laura Hillman. The title of the book is very fitting, because those words are one of the best parts of the whole book. The book takes place during the Holocaust. The protagonist is Hannelore Wolff, sister of Selly and Wolfgang. Hannelore puts her life into God's hands asking to be deported so she can stay with her mother and brothers. She goes to many different camps never knowing where any of her family is or if she will live to see them ever again. Throughout the whole book she is passed to several different camps praying to see her family again. Her only hope in life is that Oscar Schindler's list exists. After hearing that her name and her one true love Dick Hillman's name have made the list she pushes on not ever knowing what is going to happen next, or if she'll live to see the next day.

I thought the best part of the book was towards the beginning of the book after Hannelore writes a letter to the Nazis to be deported when Hannelore, her mom, and her two brothers are all together for one of the first times, and what could be the last time. Though they are sharing the small house they are in with another family, they make the absolute best of it they share a meal, and old memories, but also fear, and sadness. Though this part was not the happiest time of the book, it was still one of the best moments.

One of my least favorite parts of the story is also towards the very beginning of the book; Hannelore is walking home, and is beaten because she is Jewish. This is one of my least favorite parts of this book because of how rude the Germans are. This book made me realize how terrible the Holocaust was and how horrible people can really be. Just because she is Jewish, she is nearly beaten to death.

This book is full of happiness, sadness, and times that leave you sitting on the edge of your seat dying to know what is going to happen next. It was eye opening, showing me what really happened during the Holocaust, and really how scary and terrible it was. This book was amazing and not really all that long. I would recommend this book for anyone who enjoys historic fiction, or anything about the Holocaust.

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### **Odyessey says**

*I will plant you a lilac tree* is a memoir about one of the women saved by Oskar Schindler. Hannelore Wolff. In the first-person narrative Hannelore, who spent the last few months of WWII in Oskar Schindler's camp, recounts her harrowing experiences. While attending boarding school outside of Berlin, she receives a letter from her mother bearing bad news saying what the Nazi soldiers have done. Soon after, she makes the first of many courageous moves by making a decision to write a letter to the Nazi's requesting that she be deported along with the rest of the family and is granted her wish. She starts the journey along with her family and goes through a traumatic phase shifting between concentration camps and losing most or all of her family but managing to find love and friendship at the same time. Hannelore stands out as an extremely bold and inspirational woman and makes us thank survivors like her who could give us a glimpse of the cruel world they lived in.

The book is filled with an equal share of happiness, sadness, friendship, love, loss and hope. But what makes “i will plant you a lilac tree” stand out from the rest of the holocaust memoir books that I have previously read , is that it eventually is a story of triumph and love. As expected, the events are sad and in-human but Laura’s subdued style of writing had details that I wouldn’t even imagine, ultimately made the story more astonishing. Laura has written a memoir of astonishing power, told in plain, clear prose, even more powerful for its matter-of-fact tone. The facts speak for themselves in this work that should be honored and respected for the challenges that were overcame. There is not anything to not like about this story. It has really gave me an insight on life and how bad others from different backgrounds spent their lives. I love the many details providing and the victory at the end of the story.

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### **Tanja says**

This is the thought-provoking, shocking, horrifying, and deeply touching account of a young woman’s three-year nightmare in Nazi deportation and work camps during Word War II. Hannelore Wolff (now Laura Hillman) has written down her personal story and how she managed to survive the horrors of starvation, maltreatment, brutality, rape, and the loss of family and friends as one of the women on Schindler’s list. I admire the author’s courage and determination, not just in surviving the camps but also in writing this book. In order to write it, she must have gone through this horrifying experience a second time so that generations to come would remember her story, that none of the victims would ever be forgotten. No matter how many books you have read or movies seen on the topic, this book is worth reading (if you are a mature middle schooler or older – please do not read this book if you are younger). (P.S. The only thing I didn’t like was the quality of the Kindle edition I read – too many missing punctuations.)

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