



A Chance Kill

Paul Letters

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An old-fashioned love story weaves through an authentic wartime thriller. Can individuals shape destiny? Or is it all by chance?

Based upon real events, seventeen-year-old Polish catholic Dyta Zaj?c finds herself forced away from wartime Warsaw due to her family's shadowy connections. Dyta's time on the run sets her on a path towards confronting the ultimate Nazi.

Half a continent away, an RAF bomber crew embarks upon Britain's little-known first offensive of the war. In a story of fear versus hope, the unspoken limits of loyalty are exposed and the value of a compromised life is contested. Courtship edges Dyta's destiny closer to that of members of the RAF crew – and toward the Allies' most brazen covert operation to strike at the Nazi elite.

Even more dangerous than the enemy, however, is the assumption that your enemy's enemy is your friend...

A Chance Kill Details

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From Reader Review A Chance Kill for online ebook

Yolanda Davis says

I found this book really hard going. The writer had obviously done a lot of research into the second world war, but didn't take into consideration that his readers wouldn't have the same in-depth knowledge. The book tells the stories of Tom, an English fighter pilot, and Dyta, a Polish refugee in alternate chapters, but it was halfway through the book before it was clear how the two were connected. I found one of the chapters, quite near the start of the book, about Tom, almost impossible to understand; there were references to lots of different fighter planes and battle strategies but I had no idea what it all meant. I wanted to give up, but kept going hoping it would get better. Dyta's story got more interesting as she became one of the first women to be trained in espionage for England, and her first mission was to help kill one of Hitler's right hand men, but I couldn't keep track when new characters seemed to appear from nowhere, and the ending was a big anti-climax.

I wouldn't recommend this book at all.

Sarah says

This book had a ton of story to tell. Dramatic escapes, assassinations, mistaken identity, romance, and resistance against the Nazis play center stage. The reader is never left with scenes that dragged or overblown dialogue exchanges.

I also liked how much of WWII Europe the author explored. Poland right after the invasion, the mass exodus from France in '40, war torn London, life in the RAF, and resistance in Prague all make an appearance. The research the author put into this book definitely shows through.

I loved the details, especially about the Czech resistance, the assassination of Heydrich, and its aftermath. This period of the war isn't as explored as the resistance in France and Poland, probably because Heydrich was so successful in rooting it out so early in the war. The author gives us an intimate look at this very dangerous part of Europe for Resistance fighters.

I liked both leads, Dyta a bit more since we got far more of an exploration of her and her motives. I liked how we got to see war torn Europe through her and her actions. At times, she came across as too perfect: beautiful, competent, cunning, and brave. But I felt there were enough faults to leaven that too-perfect nature out when all is said and done.

I do have a bit of an issue with the ending. It seemed too open to be completely satisfying. I was longing to see the fallout from Tom's reaction to Dyta's final actions. I wanted to see how that would impact any further relationship. Also, the dramatic content and intensity of the story seemed to overshadow the intimate at times. I felt like the characters were subsumed by the war and got lost in the shuffle.

A pretty solid war thriller, this book tells an intense story of advancing armies, resistance, and survival against pretty high odds. I liked the characters overall and definitely appreciated the details and the depth of research. The ending left much to be desired and the intensity of the story had a downfall. Yet, I'd definitely recommend this one to lovers of WWII fiction. It's a great portrayal of that great event and the people involved.

Ryan Warriner says

I was extremely impressed with Paul Letters debut novel, A Chance Kill. It is the exact style of writing I enjoy reading; character driven with intertwining plot lines, telling us a historical story in a fast-paced, entertaining and romantic way. A Chance Kill helped educate me on many lesser known events from World War II which was a pleasant outcome. I am an avid reader of Ken Follett and I couldn't help but notice similarities in Paul's writing style. From the thorough but short and sharp chapters, to the way he used investigative research to add informative details to the settings and events; but at the same time empowering his characters to carry the story not the history. I have to say I am looking forward to his next book. I would love for more pages to turn but I don't expect A Follett-900 hundred pager so not to worry Paul!

Carlene Alexander says

I should start by saying historical fiction, let alone romance, is something I rarely choose to read so it was unlikely to get 4 or more stars. In fact I only read it out of curiosity as I (slightly) know the author. The book is incredibly well researched - to the point where it seems to be written by a pilot - though I don't think the author is! The descriptive prose is also very imaginatively done and really evoked a sense of being there. Looking forward to sequel which I shall read as it is set in Hong Kong and there is a paucity of WW2 Asian fiction.

Lauralee says

A Chance to Kill is an action historical novel set in World War II. Dyta, a Polish Catholic, seeks refuge across Europe. She agrees to spy on Hitler's regime to help end the war and defeat her enemies. On the way to England, she meets Tom, a member of Britain's Royal Air Force, and they fall in love. Both of them are amidst the danger of the war. In the fight against the war, Dyta is often confronted with the question, would she kill if she had the chance?

Dyta is a strong heroine. She is very spirited and feisty. She is not afraid to fight back. She is also very independent for she knows how to take care of herself. She is also very intelligent and makes smart choices. However, the course of the novel Dyta is often conflicted about killing her enemy if she had the chance. This question is brought to her by other characters in the novel. That is the last thing she wants to do because she wants to respect all life. Her only light in darkness is Tom. Their love is realistic and pure. It is Tom's image that helps her get through her suffering and her hardships.

Overall, this novel explores the dark reality of human nature in terms of war. The story is full of fast-paced action and an epic love story. At first, I found the novel to be confusing and hard to get into. This is because of the alternating points of view between Dyta and Tom. Tom was not mentioned in the synopsis, and when the second chapter switched to him, I did not really know what his role was. It did not make sense until almost a hundred pages later, he and Dyta meet. Also, the author's writing style took a lot of getting used to. It was a usual World War II novel that is filled with military action scenes. After finally adjusting myself to his writing style, I found myself immersed in the story. The writer had clearly done his research, and I found myself swept alongside Tom and Dyta. The tone of the book is dark and gritty. I recommend this story to fans of

World War II novels.

(Note: This book was given to me as part of a blog tour in exchange for an honest review.)

Timothy Tang says

A Chance Kill is a book that explores WWII history, it shows that your enemy's enemy is your friend. However there is dark humor and swear words in it too much for young kids.

Iain Lafferty says

Paul Letters' first novel is a thoroughly researched historical thriller, which criss-crosses the territories of Europe against the backdrop of the first half of the Second World War. It has the style of a classic British drama and its name checks some of the main cultural players of the time, Emile-Maurice Hermes and Pablo Picasso to name but two. The plot, however, centres on some of the less well-known aspects of the war. That of the plentiful but hopelessly obsolete Blenheim bomber, the Czech rather than the French resistance and the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich.

The action is gripping and the military detail lends it an authentic feel, while the author weaves the plot from occupied Eastern Europe to the tearooms of London and back. Throughout the book, historical fact and fiction overlap and the characters, both real (Churchill has a cameo) and imagined, interact around the major events of the period and the shadowy world of the newly formed SOE. Thus it is against the backdrop of the Nazi occupation of Bohemia and Moravia that much of the action takes place and the reader is left in no doubt as to the horrors awaiting any operative who is picked up by the SS. This is the brutal environment in which Heydrich helped to conceive the holocaust, and the massacre of the inhabitants of the Czech village of Lidice is recounted as a chilling hint of the genocide to come.

“A Chance Kill” is a novel set in the 1940’s with the feel of a 1940’s novel, and it lures the reader in with the aroma of the dusty shelves of a Charing Cross bookshop. Some of the characterisation is a little wooden, but this is a criticism I would also apply to say “Casablanca” and many enjoyable novels, including some by weathered craftsmen such as Graham Greene. I pictured the action in Pathé Newsreel black and white, while my imagination projected the likes of Trevor Howard and a young Deborah Kerr onto the protagonists. Whether this is intentional or not, the effect on the reader is to make one feel as if you’ve just spent a wonderfully indulgent Saturday afternoon on the couch, watching a well crafted example of British wartime cinema.

Erin says

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Paul Letters' A Chance Kill is an interesting piece. It captures the macro level politics of the period, but like Sofi Oksanen's Purge and Philip Schultz's The Wherewithal: A Novel in Verse, it also delves into less well-known chapters of WWII, affording readers both new insight and distinct intrigue.

This is ambitious storytelling that covers much of Europe. It is at times intense, but I personally thought Letters' tone appropriate for the material at hand. The writing is heavily detailed and while I sometimes felt the sheer volume of information detrimental to the novel's pacing, I can't deny being impressed by the research Letters put into his work.

I wasn't much for the love story, but that's just me. I liked how the soft emotions between Letters' lovers countered the tension and desperation of the resistance movement and their operations, but the romance itself didn't hold a candle to the darker drama at the heart of the novel.

A Chance Kill is a weighty fiction, but an enjoyable one that proved well-worth the time I put into it. I wouldn't recommend it as casual reading, but fans of war era thrillers should have no trouble getting lost between these pages.
