



The Last Daughter of Prussia

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Toward the end of World War II, as Germany's hold on East Prussia grows increasingly tenuous, a childhood friendship between Manya Von Falken, the daughter of an aristocratic family, and Joshi Karas, a Romani doctor, blossoms into unlikely love. But the young lovers are torn apart.

Captured by the Nazis and sent to a concentration camp, Joshi fights for survival, while Manya and her family flee and embark on "The Great Trek" out of East Prussia. Based on true stories passed down to author Marina Gottlieb Sarles from her grandparents, survivors of the trek, *The Last Daughter of Prussia* also tells the story of the brave Trakehner horses who led their owners across a dangerous frozen lagoon, the only open escape route.

Will Joshi and Manya find one another? Gottlieb Sarles creates a tapestry of characters from every corner of East Prussia, shedding light on an untold tragic moment in history.

The Last Daughter of Prussia Details

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Author : Marina Gottlieb Sarles

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From Reader Review The Last Daughter of Prussia for online ebook

Anne Conway says

I had the pleasure and privilege to meet Marina on her first American book tour. The Last Daughter... is a riveting book about the persecution and bravery of the East Prussians, the Romani people and the Trakehner horses during the end of World War II. It was fascinating to hear the heartfelt accounts of Marina's research through the concentration camps and her grandparents' diaries.

Julie Ferguson says

The Last Daughter of Prussia tells the story of Eastern Prussia as the Russians swept through in the last days of WWII. The novel is based on a true story written by a descendant of a family that fled on "The Great Trek" while the raping, looting, and killing forces chased them relentlessly. It is also the story of the famous Trakehner horses that led them to safety. An unlikely love story between an aristocratic girl and a Romani doctor weaves through the drama.

As an avid reader of history, I had not known the story of this escape. I was fascinated and found it a page-turner of a novel. However, the author's fidelity to the truth means readers need to be prepared for a slight fizzle at the end, at least IMHO.

But most of the read moved me and that's what a good story does.

Recommended for those that love real history written in a compelling novel.

Romina says

Originally published in: Kuartiañe'ê

Source: Net Galley in exchange for an honest review.

I've been reading books on the Holocaust and the Jews since I was in 4th grade, it has always been a topic of extreme interest and horror, but always from the Jewish or Gypsy point of view, never from the German.

Marina Goettlieb Sarles reminds us that although the German government committed atrocities during that point of time, they didn't necessarily have the backup of all their citizens, however they still dearly paid with their lives and that of their loved ones during the Russian invasion.

Synopsis: Manya von Falken is an East Prussian aristocrat, a twenty-year-old young woman whose family breeds the famous Trakehner horses. They live in an idyllic setting in the middle of the Prussian forests, even though it is 1944 and the Russians are on the verge of destroying their home.

Manya is in love with Joshi Karas (and he with her), a Romani whose family has lived most their lives near Manya's home, maintaining a friendly, almost family-like relationship with them. Joshi, despite his family's beliefs, decided to become a doctor and embracing the 'gadje' (non-Romani) life. He returns to Guja (their town) to lead his clan to safety. Unfortunately, it doesn't result according to plan and he and his sisters

become imprisoned in a concentration camp. Meanwhile, Manya is trying to convince her parents to leave, but being set in their ways, they decide to wait as they believe the Russians will not reach them. However, Manya witnesses accidentally horrific rapes of the wife and daughter of the family's blacksmith by the Russians, and Manya is more than ever determined to save her family, her beloved horses, and herself. She finally convinces her parents and 'The Great Trek' begins.

Review:

Not so positive aspects:

First of all the cover: horrible. Aztec (the horse) was supposed to be black; why do they always get these details so wrong? Not to mention that there's a 'Seabiscuit' vibe going on.

(**Edit:** It has been brought to my attention by the editor, Joy Stocke, that it was not Aztec on the cover, but Shambhala, a mare who was also on the Great Trek with Manya and Aztec. Thanks a lot for correcting me!)

Also, it was the middle of winter when they had to leave on their trek, so why is there a sunny, blue sky in the cover? Where are the blizzards they faced? The ice crossing? This looks like a nice run on the beach.

Finally, what's up with the woman? I get she's supposed to be Manya, but couldn't the designers see how horrible it looks? This is not a Hallmark movie, it's a novel about death, rape, hunger, massacre, and survival!

-It has stilted, late 20th century writing in a WWII setting. "Oh man, what a lump." For some reason I can't picture the Russians speaking with this American terminology.

-Undramatic, lukewarm expressions of supposed horrific scenes.

-Bland descriptions, the reader is never convinced how the protagonists are suffering. "They may not be here today, but we've seen tracks. The massacres occur after dark. Has Joshi told you that we are leaving?" All in the same breath. As if massacres are normal. No emotions: dread, fear, helplessness... nothing.

-The protagonist's father had just been taken by the Gestapo. They might all be killed at any moment. The servant is hysterical. The protagonist's answer: "make some tea." We get it that the author is trying to depict Manya as being strong and practical during a crisis, but I think it just came off as if she didn't care much. I mean it is her father. And he was just imprisoned by the Gestapo, right? I would be pretty desperate and screaming and crying, but maybe that's just me.

Positive aspects:

About halfway through the novel, it seemed as if the author really picked it up and managed to salvage it. Although the feeling of standoff-ness on behalf of the main characters never went completely away, it did get better, we had some tears or two. :)

The concentration camp scenes could have been a bit more heart wrenching, but maybe that wasn't the intent? But if one takes the time to include those scenes at all, what else could be the purpose?

To be honest, I still don't understand why Joshi was so upset with the things he had to do whilst there, I mean, it wasn't the greatest situation, but at least he survived, he wasn't raped nor tortured (at least not more than the others). Again, this was a weakness on behalf of the author who couldn't make the readers relate to what was happening.

Nonetheless, I did get caught up in their stories, but what was really the high point of the novel was the historical accuracy, the research the author obviously went through to write this. I had no idea the Germans also escaped with the help of civilian boats, just like the allies did in Dunkirk. The parallelism can be viewed as ironic, if it weren't clothed in tragedy. The fact that many ran away from their homeland because they no longer felt identified with it is also a misfortune, one that many Germans had to deal with at the end of the

War.

The historic nature of this book is its forte, the writing style, its Achilles' heel.

3/5 stars

Kathleen says

This book was excellent!!! Well written, poignant, historical. I could not put it down. I was kind of afraid it was going to be graphic, considering the subject matter, which was Germany during the war and what happened in the concentration camps. But it was a somewhat softened version. There were points that brought me to tears...the suffering, the emotion. i may get this book as a keeper. I just got it out of the library

Elizabeth Higginbotham says

I had met the author and was eager to read the book, which is a historical novel that looks at the plight of Prussians at the end of World War II as the Russian army is attacking from the west. These soliders are intent on extracting revenge from all Germans, so the family has to flee, but not everyone can do so. We also learn about the plight of Romani, gypsies, who also face death from Russians and Germans, as they are placed in concentration camps. The trek across the ice to "safety" is well documented.

The story has much to say about the nature of oppression and responses to oppression and war and holding on to your humanity in these settings.

Patty McCormick says

I received this book free from the people at Goodreads in a giveaway. This book is a great historical fiction book. What makes this different from many of the holocaust books is that it is told from the German citizen's point of view. It is based on the lives of the author's maternal grandparents during World War II in Prussia.

This is a powerful and moving story of a young woman called Manya and her family. Manya is 20 years old at the start of the book, but she is very mature for her years. She is very independent and wise. This book reminded me a little of I Kiss Your Hands Many Times. The Prussian citizens, like the Austrian-Hungarians, thought that the Russians were going to be their saviors. When the Russians invaded they raped the women and children and ran off with all the food and valuables that they could carry. Beware there are some horrible events in the book when the Russians invade Prussia and some disturbing events occur in the concentration camp that Joshi, Manya's friend is sent to. Some of the descriptions of these events are on the raw side. The language used reflects an ugliness of the atrocities against humanity. I have a couple of graphic images from this book that are still with me a week later.

Joshi is a Gypsy. His mother is friends with Manya's mother. He is sent to a concentration camp, Stutthof. He is condemned for his Romani ways that he is constantly battling against as an educated doctor. Lillian is a Jewish woman who finds her way to Manya's horse farm and joins Manya and her family's trek out of Prussia with the infamous Trakehner horses. These aren't just any horses. they are the pride and joy of

Prussia. This journey was “The Great Trek”. It was a mass evacuation of East Prussia in which almost a half million people were lost. Joshi and Manya’s tale is one of heartbreaking events. It is incredible that they survive to tell about it. I felt that I knew the characters by the end of the book. Manya was one strong woman, physically and emotionally. It is amazing that they were able to find people willing to risk their lives along the way to help them.

I give this book 4/5 stars. It was easy to read and understand. Not too many politics, only what was necessary. There was a subtle love story that was rocky, but enduring in the end. I read this book in three days. The book included a map, yeah! I am terrible at geography. I liked the short chapters and the story moved quickly along. This is a great book for anyone that likes strong female characters or World War II history.

Also go to Marina's Website. Lots of interesting background here.

<http://www.marinagottliebseries.com/2...>

Nicole says

I received a free copy of The Last Daughter of Prussia via a Goodreads Giveaway. This is an amazing book! The story is so heart wrenching but so heart warming at the same time. And I love how personal this book is to the author. Thank-you Goodreads and thank-you Marina Gottlieb Series.

Kristin R says

This is a beautifully written book about devastation in East Prussia at the end of World War II. The author wrote this about her grandparents fleeing their home when the Russians invaded Germany. Ultimately it is a love story and made reading about the atrocities committed more tolerable. A major part of the story is the Trakehner horses that helped lead the group from their homeland to safety.

Raquel says

I truly enjoyed this fast-paced novel. I knew nothing about East Prussia during World War II so I learned a great deal. Manya, an aristocrat's daughter living in East Prussia, finds herself having to flee the impending Russian invasion in the winter of 1944-45. She is in love with Joshi, a Romany man whose clan has always lived on her family's land. The war separates them, and the two find themselves desperately searching for the other on their respective long treks away from the Russians. Also figuring prominently in this book are Trakehner horses, an elite breed of horse that Manya's family breeds.

The language was lovely and I found myself swept into the emotional story, wondering if everyone would be reunited, survive, and escape. For anyone who enjoys historical literature or stories set during World War II, this novel brings to life a population that isn't often widely covered in novels about the time period.

Joy Stocke says

In the interest of transparency, I had the privilege of working with Marina during the writing process of "Last Daughter". The story is based on her family's history and I am humbled at the way she took raw material and turned it into a beautiful, historically accurate story of love and survival in East Prussia, an area that many of us know little about.

So, read "Last Daughter" and let us know what you think. You may stay up all night turning the pages as many of the early readers have.

Cimbra Murphy says

good read regarding a part of the holocaust.

Patricia Douglas says

I loved this book. I found it enthralling and I could not let it rest. I missed it when I couldn't read it. It moved along at the perfect clip for my taste and I was fascinated by the history. I recommend this book highly.
