



The Hours After: Letters of Love and Longing in War's Aftermath

By Gerda Weissmann Klein, Kurt Klein

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The love letters of Gerda and Kurt Klein, revealing one of the greatest love stories ever told.

Over fifty years ago, Gerda Weissmann was barely alive at the end of a 350-mile death march that took her from a slave labor camp in Germany to the Czech border. On May 7, 1945, the American military stormed the area, and the first soldier to approach Gerda was Kurt Klein. She guided him to her fellow prisoners who lay sick and dying on the ground, and quoted Goethe: "Noble be man, merciful and good." Perhaps it was her irony, her composure, her evident compassion in the face of tragedy, that struck Kurt Klein. A great love had begun. Forced to separate just weeks after liberation and hours after their engagement, Gerda and Kurt began a correspondence that lasted until their reunion and wedding in Paris a year later. Their poignant letters reflect upon the horrors of war and genocide, but above all, upon the rapture and salvation of true love.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

"I pray that we will have children who will inherit the best that is in us: the legacy of our lost parents." This haunting plea was written by Gerda Weissmann Klein (*All but My Life: A Memoir*) in her engrossing correspondence with her then fianc?, Kurt, over the course of the year before they were able to marry in June 1946. Kurt, a German Jew, fled Nazi Germany and came to the U.S. in 1937. He became an officer in the American army and, in this capacity, met Gerda in a Czech hospital right after the war ended. Gerda, a Polish Jew, was in very frail health, having endured a 350-mile death march by the Nazis and slave labor. The two, who had both lost their parents and many other family members and friends during the Holocaust, began spending time together during her recuperation and fell deeply in love. The letters they exchanged after Kurt returned to the U.S. and Gerda tried to find a way through the postwar bureaucracy to join him are suffused with romantic yearnings and touching plans for their future. Meanwhile, Gerda witnessed the serious problems that beset displaced persons after the war, which she articulated to Kurt in moving detail. For a period of several months, she worked in Munich at the Bavarian Aid Society, where she describes her clients as "a virtual chronicle of agony." In addition, many of the women with whom she had been liberated became critically ill or mired in resignation, pain and loss. After appealing to U.S., Polish, Swiss and French governmental agencies, she was eventually able to wed Kurt and immigrate to the U.S. Married for more than 50 years, they now live in Arizona. Author tour. (Feb.)

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From Library Journal

This amazing testament to steadfast love is a sunlit spot against the horrific gray years of the Holocaust. In the waning days of World War II, German-born Klein came as an American liberator of 120 women who were locked up in a vacant factory building, emaciated and dying. These skeletal Jewish slave laborers, originally numbering 2000, were survivors of Nazi atrocities who had been forced to march 350 miles throughout the bitter winter months of 1945. One of these survivors, Gerda Weissmann, so impressed young Klein with her indomitable spirit and faith in the goodness of man that he was drawn to her. Their prolific correspondence throughout the next year until their marriage in 1946 is the basis for this book. These wonderful letters reflect two very compassionate, schooled, and cultured students of life who turn their daily activities into prose for one another. A common love of literature and decency binds Gerda and Kurt, who reveal their wonderful love story in this spellbinding series of missives. Gerda and Kurt Klein live in Arizona, having been married over 50 years, lecturing and writing about the Holocaust. The fluency of their letters lends this work to many audiences. Recommended for public, academic, and special libraries.

-Kay Dushek, Anamosa, IA

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From Booklist

On May 7, 1945, American troops entered the Czech village of Volary, where Kurt Klein, a soldier with the Third Army, met Gerda Weissmann. Klein was born and raised in Germany and immigrated to the U.S. in 1937. Weissmann was 15 when the Germans entered her hometown of Bielsko, Poland. She was one of 4,000 young Jewish women who had been forced to march 350 miles during the bitter winter months of 1945 from a slave labor camp in Germany to the Czech border, and she was one of the few survivors. Klein's parents died in the Holocaust, and none of Weissmann's family survived. Klein and Weissmann were forced to separate soon after liberation (he returned to the U.S. and was discharged from the army), and their correspondence lasted a year--until they were married in Paris on June 18, 1946. Additional passages

between their letters relate events in World War II, the plight of the Jews, the fate of relatives, and how Klein and Weissmann coped with the pain of their losses. *George Cohen*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Ann Birdsell:

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Nichelle Shive:

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Jerry Deal:

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Kristin Sayler:

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