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The Nightingale: A Novel



Synopsis

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

The Spotlight Pick for February 2015: Kristin Hannah is a popular thriller writer with legions of fans, but her latest novel, *The Nightingale*, soars to new heights (sorry) and will earn her even more ecstatic readers. Both a weeper and a thinker, the book tells the story of two French sisters – one in Paris, one in the countryside – during WWII; each is crippled by the death of their beloved mother and cavalier abandonment of their father; each plays a part in the French underground; each finds a way to love and forgive. If this sounds sudsy. . . well, it is, a little. . . but a melodrama that combines historical accuracy (Hannah has said her inspiration for Isabelle was the real life story of a woman who led downed Allied soldiers on foot over the Pyrenees) and social/political activism is a hard one to resist. Even better to keep you turning pages: the central conceit works – the book is narrated by one of the sisters in the present, though you really don't know until the very end which sister it is. Fast-paced, detailed, and full of romance (both the sexual/interpersonal kind and the larger, trickier romance of history and war), this novel is destined to land (sorry, again) on the top of best sellers lists and night tables everywhere. -- Sara Nelson --This text refers to the Preloaded Digital Audio Player edition.

"Polly Stone delivers an impeccable narration that brings the sisters and wartime France to life with a distinctive and memorable set of voices that will keep listeners coming back for more."

– Library Journal (Starred Review) "The audio version is outstandingly read by Polly Stone, whose versatility -- between men and women, Germans and French, adults and children -- leaves no doubt who is speaking throughout the book." – Fran Wood, NJ.com "I loved Kristin Hannah's *The Nightingale*. She has captured a particular slice of French life during World War II with wonderful details and drama. But what I loved most about the novel was the relationship between the two sisters and Hannah's exploration of what we do in moments of great challenge. Do we rise to the occasion or fail? Are we heroes or cowards? Are we loyal to the people we love most or do we betray them? Hannah explores these questions with probing finesse and great heart." – Lisa See, #1 New York Times bestseller author of *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan* "In this epic novel, set in France in World War II, two sisters who live in a small village find themselves estranged when they disagree about the imminent threat of occupation. Separated by principles and temperament, each must find her own way forward as she faces moral questions and life-or-death choices. Haunting, action-packed, and compelling."

– Christina Baker Kline, #1 New York Times bestselling author of *Orphan Train* "I read *The Nightingale* in one sitting, completely transported to wartime France, completely forgetting where I was. A historical novel-built on Kristin Hannah's proven skill with story, complex and

enduring family ties, and passion-one that will captivate readers.~•~ Marilyn Dahl, Shelf Awareness~“I found *The Nightingale* absolutely riveting! I started reading it one night after supper with every intention of reading just a few chapters for that evening and could not put it down. Not only is it an emotionally inspiring story with well-drawn characters whom you grow to care about deeply, but it is also historically informative....Read this book. It will keep you guessing throughout about the two sisters, Vianne and Isabelle, both brave young women who did what they thought was the right thing to do in the most of difficult circumstances. They had--in the words of Lawrence Langer the WW2 historian scholar too often to make 'choiceless choices.'~•~ Dr. Miriam Klein Kassenoff, Director of the University of Miami Holocaust Teacher Institute~“A beautifully written and richly evocative examination of life, love, and the ravages of war, and the different ways people react to unthinkable situations-not to mention the terrible and mounting toll of keeping secrets. This powerhouse of a story is equally packed with action and emotion, and is sure to be another major hit.~•~ Sara Gruen, #1 New York Times bestselling author of *Water for Elephants*

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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