



'This book will enchant you with its mystery, excitement, adventure, and the extraordinary courage of its characters. It will be impossible to stop reading, and when you finish the book you'll find the insights and compassion stay with you always, as do those you have met within its pages. As Susanne weaves in stories from her family's secrets, she writes about the essence of humanity.'

*Jackie French AM Australian Laureate 2014-2015 Senior Australian of the Year*



"This is a personal story that has huge meaning to all of us, beginning in a beautiful safe world which turns suddenly to chaos and terror. A child discovers for herself that there is history that can't be hidden - it cries

out in the darkness of secrets. But it's also a story of light and love and exceptional courage. The pages seemed to turn by themselves. Please read it."

*Ursula Dubosarsky Australian Laureate 2020-2021*



What an absolute privilege to review Susanne's new historical fiction inspired by, and a tribute to her own family's history in Budapest during the last years of World War II.

12 year old Louie lives with her two younger brothers, Bert and Teddy, in a beautiful old-style hotel with her Hungarian grandparents, Zoltan and Verushka. The children's parents are world-renown musicians who are often away but the three children love living in the Hotel Majestic, an oasis of magnolias and tranquility in a busy city. There are always interesting guests, the busyness of helping their Pa and Grandma with the daily tasks and the fascinating building itself to explore continually.

When Louie glimpses a strange girl in the street and finds a stunning rose gold locket the secrets of the past begin to slowly reveal themselves. There are certain clues the children find in the hotel itself but the locket is the talisman that transports them to a dark and dreadful time in their grandparents' lives - Budapest 1944 and the cruel tyranny of the Nazis.

The mysterious girl, Naomi, is their guide into the dangerous world of the secret Jewish underground and the siblings become involved in a fraught mission to help rescue dozens of children as well as restoring the wondrous locket to its rightful owner. They are amazed to realise that they are watching their own grandparents, mere children themselves, heroically leading in this deadly encounter. As this hidden history unfolds, Louie understands so much more about her gracious grandparents and all they have overcome to reach the peaceful present.

There are moments of real terror and anguish but these are beautifully balanced with the hope and courage demonstrated by all the young people involved. For those of us who are fortunate enough to never have experienced such unspeakable horror there is inspiration that even in the darkest times there are those willing to stand up and resist.

A year ago at the World Holocaust Forum Prince Charles said *"The lessons of the Holocaust are searingly relevant to this day. Seventy-five years after the Liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, hatred and intolerance still lurk in the human heart, still tell new lies, adopt new disguises, and still seek new victims."*

We must continue to empower our young people to vigorously oppose the ongoing spread of hatred and bigotry that is still so prevalent. In my opinion, encouraging our readers to examine and reflect upon the past is one powerful way to do this.

This has my highest recommendation for young readers from upper primary onwards.

Shalom aleichem

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