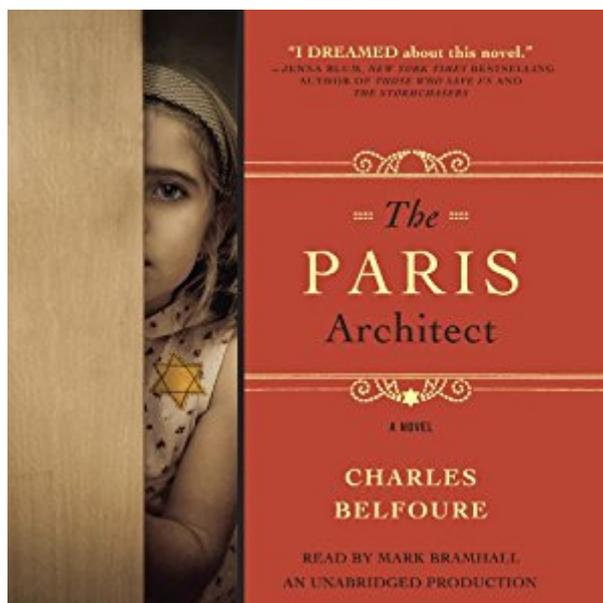


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The Paris Architect



Synopsis

Like most gentiles in Nazi-occupied Paris, architect Lucien Bernard has little empathy for the Jews. So when a wealthy industrialist offers him a large sum of money to devise secret hiding places for Jews, Lucien struggles with the choice of risking his life for a cause he doesn't really believe in. Ultimately he can't resist the challenge and begins designing expertly concealed hiding spaces - behind a painting, within a column, or inside a drainpipe - detecting possibilities invisible to the average eye. But when one of his clever hiding spaces fails horribly and the immense suffering of Jews becomes incredibly personal, he can no longer deny reality. Written by an expert whose knowledge imbues every word, this story becomes more gripping with every life the architect tries to save.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

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Whispersync for Voice: Ready

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#67 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Genre Fiction > Religious & Inspirational > Jewish
#115 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Genre Fiction > Historical > Military

Customer Reviews

This is a "must read" for historical context and the events during WWII from the perspectives of individuals in France directly and peripherally involved, both Germans and French. The book takes the reader through the characters' decisions based on their personal, professional and patriotic motivations, prompting one to search his or her own conscience if faced with similar circumstances. It is at many times a study of egos of men and women who interact in settings defined by the War in ways that they might not otherwise, given their backgrounds and personalities. The only drawback as a literary work is the predictability of the ending that proves simplistic, in contrast to the intense complexities presented from the beginning up to that point.

There seems to be an increase in popularity in historical fiction about France under the Nazis. I bought this as an ebook and added the audio edition, which is how I ultimately read it. The narrator did a good job of employing different accents for all the French and German characters. The author did an excellent job on developing the character of Lucien Bernard from a totally self-absorbed individual only interested in showing his brilliance as an architect to someone who developed compassion and courage as he used his craft to save Jews in hiding from the Nazis. Parts of it were horrifying in the description of antisemitism and torture, but the message was ultimately hopeful. I did think the ending was a little abrupt, but all in all, an absorbing read.

An interesting story set in France when occupied by the Germans in WWII. The main story-line that follows the architect on Paris through his designs and the interactions between the fine of line of satisfying the Germans but rescuing the Jews that are hunted. It was a bit slow in the middle but intriguing to the end. There are also several other story-lines that intersect with the architect, like the ones he saved with his unique hidden designs, but was disappointed in not knowing how their story-lines ended...did they escape or were they prosecuted. you don't ever know.

Paris, 1942. The Nazis have occupied the city and put everyone at risk, particularly its Jewish population. Parisian architect Lucien Bernard is unable to find work, forced to live off his wife's meager inheritance. Improbably, he is approached by a wealthy French builder with a proposition. If he will design a hiding place for a rich Jew, he will earn a large commission. Moreover, completing the job will earn him a job building a factory for the builder, a factory for the war production of the Nazis. It is the perfect moral dilemma. Can you justify doing wrong as part doing good? The stakes are huge. His collaboration with the Nazis marks him as a potential target for the French Resistance. And discovery of his work for the Jews will certainly bring the Gestapo to his door. Each project brings Lucien further toward tragedy, but also toward redemption, as he understands what is really important in life. This is a somewhat unusual twist on a common tale, one with a character who is much more sympathetic than at first sight.

It's too bad the storytelling here is so unfocused because the general premise could have inspired a good suspense novel about a conflicted French architect who gets into a cat and mouse game with the Gestapo. Instead, the tale is extremely repetitive in structure and content. Often it reads like a basic tutorial about what life was like under NAZI occupation. Topped off with revisionist history

about the allegedly courageous nature of the French people under the Germans and the budding suspense novel here is extinguished before it can ever come together,

I love Paris so the book had a head start with me. I guess I wouldn't have started the Amsterdam architect or the Poughkeepsie architect. World War II has a continuing fascination though except for shortages, roundups, reprisals and war work by the architect, you don't see it so much. I did like the perspective provided by an architect who has the main character doing the work of an architect. This is mostly about saving Jews and collaborating with Germans to keep working. The story flows and certainly kept my attention but most characters were cliches. Many were not fully developed. Ultimately I am left thinking there is a lot of improbability to accept in reading the book. All of that being said, I liked the book. I am glad I spent the time reading it. I plan to see what else the author has written.

I really enjoy this book. Lucien is not your typical "nice guy" so it was fun reading about the things that happen and how he finds himself. I surprisingly fell in love with his character. The only negative about this book is it didn't really tie up the other characters in the end. I have so many questions...

Obviously WWII fiction is plentiful right now, and I'd really enjoyed both *The Nightingale* and *All the Light We Cannot See: A Novel* so was looking forward to this novel to get yet another perspective on the French War Experience. I can't say I regret reading the book - Lucien is a very believable character, and it does make one think... BUT there were so many elements that I didn't care for. The author uses very strong, crude language in several places. I understand that he's trying to convey just how difficult the situations were, but it didn't flow with the rest of the book. And well, frankly it's obvious it was written by a man based on some of the descriptions/phrasing. My other complaint is that the character development wasn't handled well (there were random snippets about various people, but then they were in just one more scene), and the pacing was very uneven. My biggest complaint, though, was the ending. After all the high drama, the final resolution is very fast and way too easy. Seriously, if you're trying to craft an excellent novel, PLEASE include the ending in that effort!

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