



In the Garden of Beasts: Love, Terror, and an American Family in Hitler's Berlin

By Erik Larson

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In the Garden of Beasts: Love, Terror, and an American Family in Hitler's Berlin By Erik Larson

Erik Larson, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Devil in the White City*, delivers a remarkable story set during Hitler's rise to power.

The time is 1933, the place, Berlin, when William E. Dodd becomes America's first ambassador to Hitler's Nazi Germany in a year that proved to be a turning point in history.

A mild-mannered professor from Chicago, Dodd brings along his wife, son, and flamboyant daughter, Martha. At first Martha is entranced by the parties and pomp, and the handsome young men of the Third Reich with their infectious enthusiasm for restoring Germany to a position of world prominence. Enamored of the "New Germany," she has one affair after another, including with the surprisingly honorable first chief of the Gestapo, Rudolf Diels. But as evidence of Jewish persecution mounts, confirmed by chilling first-person testimony, her father telegraphs his concerns to a largely indifferent State Department back home. Dodd watches with alarm as Jews are attacked, the press is censored, and drafts of frightening new laws begin to circulate. As that first year unfolds and the shadows deepen, the Dodds experience days full of excitement, intrigue, romance—and ultimately, horror, when a climactic spasm of violence and murder reveals Hitler's true character and ruthless ambition.

Suffused with the tense atmosphere of the period, and with unforgettable portraits of the bizarre Göring and the expectedly charming--yet wholly sinister--Goebbels, *In the Garden of Beasts* lends a stunning, eyewitness perspective on events as they unfold in real time, revealing an era of surprising nuance and complexity. The result is a dazzling, addictively readable work that speaks volumes about why the world did not recognize the grave threat posed by Hitler until Berlin, and Europe, were awash in blood and terror.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Amazon Best Books of the Month, May 2011: *In the Garden of Beasts* is a vivid portrait of Berlin during the first years of Hitler's reign, brought to life through the stories of two people: William E. Dodd, who in 1933 became America's first ambassador to Hitler's regime, and his scandalously carefree daughter, Martha. Ambassador Dodd, an unassuming and scholarly man, is an odd fit among the extravagance of the Nazi elite. His frugality annoys his fellow Americans in the State Department and Dodd's growing misgivings about Hitler's ambitions fall on deaf ears among his peers, who are content to "give Hitler everything he wants." Martha, on the other hand, is mesmerized by the glamorous parties and the high-minded conversation of Berlin's salon society—and flings herself headlong into numerous affairs with the city's elite, most notably the head of the Gestapo and a Soviet spy. Both become players in the exhilarating (and terrifying) story of Hitler's obsession for absolute power, which culminates in the events of one murderous night, later known as "the Night of Long Knives." The rise of Nazi Germany is a well-chronicled time in history, which makes *In the Garden of Beasts* all the more remarkable. Erik Larson has crafted a gripping, deeply-intimate narrative with a climax that reads like the best political thriller, where we are stunned with each turn of the page, even though we already know the outcome. --Shane Hansanuwat

Review

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

NEW YORK TIMES NOTABLE BOOK OF THE YEAR

WASHINGTON POST NOTABLE BOOK OF THE YEAR

NPR BEST BOOK OF THE YEAR

O, THE OPRAH MAGAZINE BEST BOOK OF THE YEAR

USA TODAY 10 BOOKS WE LOVED

PUBLISHERS WEEKLY BEST NONFICTION BOOK OF THE YEAR

KIRKUS REVIEWS BEST NONFICTION BOOK OF THE YEAR

NEW YORK TIMES, JANET MASLIN'S TOP 10 BOOKS OF THE YEAR

SEATTLE TIMES BEST BOOK OF THE YEAR

THE WEEK BEST NONFICTION BOOK OF THE YEAR

GLOBE AND MAIL VERY BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR

AMERICAN BOOKSELLERS ASSOCIATION INDIE BOOK OF THE YEAR

"By far his best and most enthralling work of novelistic history....Powerful, poignant...a transportingly true story." —*New York Times*

"Reads like an elegant thriller...utterly compelling... marvelous stuff. An excellent and entertaining book that deserves to be a bestseller, and probably will be."

—*Washington Post*

"The most important book of 2011." —*O, The Oprah Magazine*

"A dazzling amalgam of reportage....Reads like a suspense novel, replete with colorful characters, both familiar and those previously relegated to the shadows. Like Christopher Isherwood's *Berlin Stories* or Victor Klemperer's *Diaries*, *IN THE GARDEN OF BEASTS* is an on-the-ground documentary of a society going mad in slow motion." —*Chicago Sun-Times*

“Fascinating...A master at writing true tales as riveting as fiction.” —*People* (3 1/2 stars)

“Larson has meticulously researched the Dodds’ intimate witness to Hitler’s ascendancy and created an edifying narrative of this historical byway that has all the pleasures of a political thriller....a fresh picture of these terrible events.”

—*New York Times Book Review*

“Larson, a master of historical nonfiction, has written a fascinating book that, although carefully researched and documented, reads like a political thriller...highly recommended to anyone interested in the rise of the Third Reich and America’s role in that process.” —*Jewish Book World*

“Larson's strengths as a storyteller have never been stronger than they are here, and this story is far more important than either "The Devil in the White City" or "Thunderstruck." How the United States dithered as Hitler rose to power is a cautionary tale that bears repeating, and Larson has told it masterfully.”

—*Cleveland Plain Dealer*

“Larson has done it again, expertly weaving together a fresh new narrative from ominous days of the 20th century.” —*Associated Press*

“Mesmerizing...cinematic, improbable yet true.” —*Philadelphia Inquirer*

“Compelling...the kind of book that brings history alive.” —*USA TODAY*

“[G]ripping, a nightmare narrative of a terrible time. It raises again the question never fully answered about the Nazi era—what evil humans are capable of, and what means are necessary to cage the beast.” —*Seattle Times*

“A stunning work of history.” —*Newsweek*

“Tells a fascinating story brilliantly well.” —*Financial Times*

“A cautionary tale not to be missed.” —*Washington Times*

“Highly compelling...Larson brings Berlin roaring to life in all its glamour and horror...a welcome new chapter in the vast canon of World War II literature.”

—*Christian Science Monitor*

“Terrific storytelling.” —*Los Angeles Times*

“Vivid and immediate...a fascinating and gripping account.” —*Washington Independent Review of Books*

“Gripping...a story of stunning impact.” —*New York Daily News*

“Larson is superb at creating a you-are-there sense of time and place. *In the Garden of Beasts* is also a superb book...nothing less than masterful.” —*Toronto Globe and Mail*

“Harrowingly suspenseful.” —*Vogue.com*

“Larson has taken a brilliant idea and turned it into a gripping book.” —*Women's Wear Daily*

“A gripping, deeply-intimate narrative with a climax that reads like the best political thriller, where we are stunned with each turn of the page.” —*Louisville Courier Journal*

“Electrifying reading...fascinating.” —*Minneapolis Star-Tribune*

“Larson's books are tightly focused and meticulously researched, but they also are rich in anecdote and detail from the homey mundane to the tragic, the absurd and the downright funny. His prose has an austere, compassionate lyricism. His narratives have novelistic pull...his psychological perception and empathic imagination lend flesh to the documents, music to the ballrooms. He gives a throbbing pulse to the foolish and the wise, the malignant and the kind.” —*The Oregonian*

“A masterly work of salacious nonfiction that captures the decadent and deadly years of The Third Reich.” —*Men's Journal*

“Even though we know how it will end — the book's climax, the Night of the Long Knives, being just the beginning, this is a page-turner, full of flesh and blood people and monsters too, whose charms are particularly disturbing.” —*Portsmouth Herald*

“Larson's latest chronicle of history has as much excitement as a thriller novel, and it's all the more thrilling because it's all true.” —*Asbury Park Press*

“Larson succeeds brilliantly...offers a fascinating window into the year when the world began its slow slide into war.” —*Maclean's*

“Larson's scholarship is impressive, but it's his pacing and knack for suspense that elevates the book from the matter-of-fact to the sublime.” —*Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*

“[A] brilliant tour de force of nonfiction writing...Larson, as always, conjures magic with the details, and often injects a welcome dollop of dark humor...*In the Garden of Beasts* serves as both a serious, insightful look at history, and a stern warning against national complacency when you're being run by a dictator who is both vicious and undeniably off his rocker.” —*Dallas Morning News*

“Like slipping slowly into a nightmare, with logic perverted and morality upended...It all makes for a powerful, unsettling immediacy.” —*Vanity Fair*

“A master of nonfiction storytelling...Larson once again gathers an astounding amount of historical detail to re-create scene after vivid scene...a stunning, provocative immersion...a call to citizens in all nations to investigate the motives of power brokers and government officials, to stand our ground when we see others' moral compasses going awry.” —*Dallas/Fort Worth Star-Telegram*

“Excellent.” —*Salon.com*

“No other author...has the ability to actually live up to that old adage of making history come alive. What Larson is doing is creating a world that no longer exists on the page...[He] not only succeeds but is able to turn what one would expect to be tedium into page-turning brilliance.” —*Digital Americana*

“Narrative nonfiction at its finest, this story drops into 1933 Berlin as William E. Dodd becomes the first U.S. ambassador to Hitler's Germany—a tale of intrigue, romance, and foreboding.” —*Kansas City Star*

“One of the most popular history books this year...offers something for both serious students of the 1930s and for lovers of charming stories.” —*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*

“Erik Larson tackles this outstanding period of history as fully and compellingly as he portrayed the events in his bestseller, *The Devil in the White City*. With each page, more horrors are revealed, making it impossible to put down. *In the Garden of Beasts* reads like the true thriller it is.” —*BookReporter.com*

“In this mesmerizing portrait of the Nazi capital, Larson plumbs a far more diabolical urban cauldron than in his bestselling *The Devil in the White City*...a vivid, atmospheric panorama of the Third Reich and its leaders, including murderous Nazi factional infighting, through the accretion of small crimes and petty thuggery.” —*Publishers Weekly (Starred Review)*

“An excellent study, taking a tiny instant of modern history and giving it specific weight, depth and meaning.” —*Kirkus Reviews (Starred Review)*

“A brilliant and often infuriating account of the experiences and evolving attitudes of the Dodd family during Hitler’s critical first year in power. With the benefit of hindsight, of course, the Dodds seem almost criminally ignorant, but Larson treats them with a degree of compassion that elevates them to tragic status.” —*Booklist (Starred Review)*

“Larson writes history like a novelist...conveying quite wonderfully the electrically charged atmosphere of a whole society turning towards the stormy dark.” —*The Telegraph*

Praise for Erik Larson

THUNDERSTRUCK

“A ripping yarn of murder and invention.” —*Los Angeles Times*

“Larson’s gift for rendering an historical era with vibrant tactility and filling it with surprising personalities makes *Thunderstruck* an irresistible tale.” —*The Washington Post Book World*

“Gripping....An edge-of-the-seat read.” —*People*

DEVIL IN THE WHITE CITY

“[Larson] relentlessly fuses history and entertainment to give this nonfiction book the dramatic effect of a novel....a dynamic, enveloping book.”

—*The New York Times*

“A hugely engrossing chronicle of events public and private. Exceedingly well-documented, exhaustive without being excessive, and utterly fascinating.”

—*Chicago Tribune*

“An irresistible page-turner that reads like the most compelling, sleep-defying fiction.” —*Time Out New York*

ISAAC’S STORM

“A gripping account...fascinating to its core, and all the more compelling for being true.” —*New York Times Book Review*

“Superb...Larson has made the Great Hurricane live again.” —*The Wall Street Journal*

“Gripping....The Jaws of hurricane yarns.” —*Newsday*

About the Author

ERIK LARSON is the author of the national bestsellers *Thunderstruck*, *The Devil in the White City*, and *Isaac's Storm*. ErikLarsonBooks.com

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Luke Shaffer:

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Kaci Carter:

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