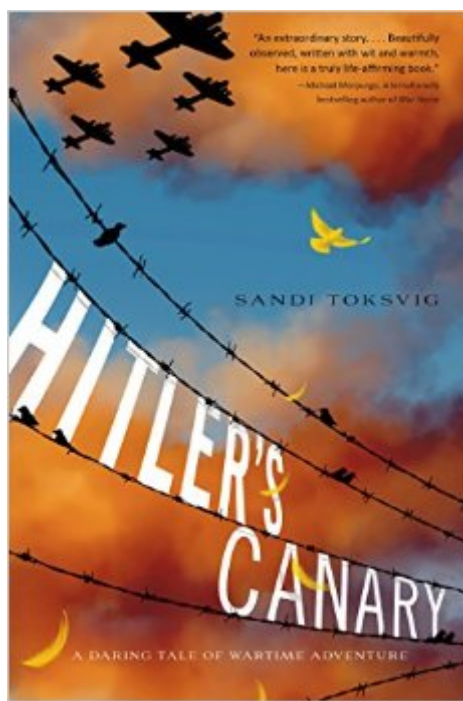


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Hitler's Canary



Synopsis

My brother stood up so quickly he almost knocked Mama over. "Why aren't you doing something? Do you know what the British are calling us? Hitler's canary! I've heard it on the radio, on the BBC. They say he has us in a cage and we just sit and sing any tune he wants." I knew I should be afraid, but I didn't know yet what of: the Germans? The British? The French? We were theater people. We didn't get involved in these things. It had nothing to do with us. Bamse is used to drama—his mother is a famous actress and his best friend, Anton, is one of the most daring boys in all of Denmark. Should he follow his father's advice and not stir up trouble—or follow his daring brother into the Resistance and take part in the most demanding role of his life? [Note: The character's name means "Teddy" in Danish and is pronounced "Bum Sir."]

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The not so well known story of how the Danes managed to save most of Denmark's Jews from deportation to death camps is told through the eyes of a 12 year-old. Bamse the son of a dramatic actress and a timid artist is not Jewish but, his best friend Anton is. Denmark was not only outgunned but also grossly outnumbered by the German invaders. Other than sabotage there was no way they could defend their nation. Bamse's older brother Orlando works for the resistance but, his uncle Johann works for the Nazis. His parents try hard to avoid becoming "involved." Orlando is outraged that his parents along with many of his compatriots are trying to pretend that life in Denmark is normal. Bamse and Anton follow Orlando's lead and join the resistance. The occupation becomes more brutal and it leaks out that the Nazis are planning to round up all the Jews on Rosh

ha-Shanah, the Jewish New Year, and deport them to death camps. Ordinary people are then forced to take a stand. What sets Denmark apart from the other European nations of WWII is that, even though there were some traitors, it appears the majority of the Danes stood together. Even several of the Nazi occupiers in Denmark resisted orders to deport the Jews. There were ordinary heroes in other European nations but, not nearly enough. This book is fast-paced, packed with suspense, and can be read in one sitting. Even though it deals with a very serious subject the violence is minimal, there's no sex, and it's spiked with subtle bits of humor. I also highly recommend the film *A Day in October*. It's very similar to *Hitler's Canary*.

Hitler's Canary is the story of the invasion of Denmark by the Nazis in World War II. Bamse's family is a quiet, peaceable family, but when the Nazis arrive, everything changes. His brother Orlando starts doing dangerous work for the resistance while his father believes they should sit the war out. But Bamse's friend Anton is a Jew, and soon working against the Nazis is no longer an option but a necessity. This book was a fresh and interesting look at the traditional Nazi/Jew story. My favorite parts were the ones that talked about Bamse's mother's eccentric thespian ways, and their life surrounding the theater. I could definitely relate to this quote: "We lived in a make-believe world and it was hard for me to imagine doing anything else with my life." The writing was perhaps a little lacking, but the book is still worth reading. If a somewhat simple story, *Hitler's Canary* was still quite interesting and the characters' heroism inspiring.

I discovered Sandi Toksvig via the BBC Friday Night Comedy podcast, and decided to check out some of her other work. This was listed as a young adult book, but I bought it based on other reviewers' recommendations, and am glad I did. This is one of my favorite books I've ever read. It is by turns funny, tense, loving, and tender, and sometimes all in the same paragraph. I am reluctant to call a book about a family's private fight with Nazi rule "delightful", but there's just really no other word. Have your thoughts provoked, but do be delighted at the same time. Thoroughly recommended.

Family connections are important in this "coming of age" story set during WWII. A mom lives her entire life as if on stage. Her husband is patient with his wife's "best friend." The family's daughter tries to hide her trysts with a young German soldier. Humor is threaded with anguish, heroism and love.

Based on accounts of her own grandparents' work in the Danish resistance, Toksvig tells a compelling story of the many Danes who helped smuggle Danish Jews out of the country to Sweden before they were taken to Hitler's Concentration camps. The story revolves around ten-year-old Bamse and his family--a group of "theater people" as he calls them (the story is broken into scenes and acts instead of chapters). The story begins with the German occupation of Denmark in 1940 (when the BBC began to call Denmark "Hitler's Canary" because it was so accomodating) and finishes in 1943, shortly after the resistance foiled Hitler's attempt to seize all the Jews during their Rosh Hashanah dinners. Toksvig does an excellent job of making these events approachable to a younger audience (the idea of the story came when she was telling her ten-year-old son about her grandparents). The text is clear and concise while maintaining a surprisingly high level of emotional involvement. Several times during the story I found myself tearing up. The characters are vivid without becoming cartoonish and the story is, at its core, a very uplifting one. This book is sure to join other classic children's historical fiction books like *Alan and Naomi* and *Number the Stars* which also look at the events of the Holocaust through the eyes of young people. Also, be sure to read the material after the end of the story to hear about the real Danish resistance and Toksvig's inspiration.

Am a massive fan of Toksvig in *Friday Night Comedy News Quiz* and this book did not disappoint. Didn't know much about the Danish resistance movement despite being quite familiar with world war 2 history. Unlike *Life Is Beautiful* (no offence) there's no cloyingly uplifting tone, nor is it too bleak. The people are very real (as it is based on real people, after all) and it's one of the best books I've read about this war and holocaust. Comparable to Art Spiegelman's great *Maus*...

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