



The Zookeeper's Wife

By Diane Ackerman

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Combining historical sources with the diary of Antonina Zabinski, Diane Ackerman recreates the story of the Polish family who defied the Nazi regime to shelter, refugees, resistance, and animals.

Jan and Antonina Zabinski were Polish Christian zookeepers horrified by Nazi racism, who managed to save over three hundred people. Yet their story has fallen between the seams of history.

Drawing on Antonina's diary and other historical sources, bestselling naturalist Diane Ackerman vividly re-creates Antonina's life as "the zookeeper's wife," responsible for her own family, the zoo animals, and their "guests": resistance activists and refugee Jews, many of whom Jan had smuggled from the Warsaw Ghetto.

Jan led a cell of saboteurs, and the Zabinski's young son risked his life carrying food to the guests, while also tending to an eccentric array of creatures in the house (pigs, hare, muskrat, foxes, and more). With hidden people having animal names, and pet animals having human names, it's a small wonder the zoo's code name became "The House under a Crazy Star." Yet there is more to this story than a colorful cast. With her exquisite sensitivity to the natural world, Ackerman explores the role of nature in both kindness and savagery, and she unravels the fascinating and disturbing obsession at the core of Nazism: both a worship of nature and its violation, as humans sought to control the genome of the entire planet.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Amazon Significant Seven, September 2007: On the heels of Alan Weisman's *The World Without Us* I picked up Diane Ackerman's *The Zookeeper's Wife*. Both books take you to Poland's forest primeval, the Bialowieza, and paint a richly textured portrait of a natural world that few of us would recognize. The similarities end there, however, as Ackerman explores how that sense of natural order imploded under the Nazi occupation of Poland. Jan and Antonina Zabiniski--keepers of the Warsaw Zoo who sheltered Jews from the Warsaw ghetto--serve as Ackerman's lens to this moment in time, and she weaves their experiences and reflections so seamlessly into the story that it would be easy to read the book as Antonina's own miraculous memoir. Jan and Antonina's passion for life in all its diversity illustrates ever more powerfully just how narrow the Nazi worldview was, and what tragedy it wreaked. *The Zookeeper's Wife* is a powerful testament to their courage and--like Irene Nemirovsky's *Suite Francaise*--brings this period of European history into intimate view. --Anne Bartholomew

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. Ackerman (*A Natural History of the Senses*) tells the remarkable WWII story of Jan Zabinski, the director of the Warsaw Zoo, and his wife, Antonina, who, with courage and coolheaded ingenuity, sheltered 300 Jews as well as Polish resisters in their villa and in animal cages and sheds. Using Antonina's diaries, other contemporary sources and her own research in Poland, Ackerman takes us into the Warsaw ghetto and the 1943 Jewish uprising and also describes the Poles' revolt against the Nazi occupiers in 1944. She introduces us to such varied figures as Lutz Heck, the duplicitous head of the Berlin zoo; Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira, spiritual head of the ghetto; and the leaders of Zegota, the Polish organization that rescued Jews. Ackerman reveals other rescuers, like Dr. Mada Walter, who helped many Jews pass, giving lessons on how to appear Aryan and not attract notice. Ackerman's writing is viscerally evocative, as in her description of the effects of the German bombing of the zoo area: ...the sky broke open and whistling fire hurtled down, cages exploded, moats rained upward, iron bars squealed as they wrenched apart. This suspenseful beautifully crafted story deserves a wide readership. 8 pages of illus. (Sept.)

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From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review Jan Zabinski, the innovative director of the Warsaw Zoo, and Antonina, his empathic wife, lived joyfully on the zoo grounds during the 1930s with their young son, Ryszard (Polish for lynx), and a menagerie of animals needing special attention. The zoo was badly damaged by the Nazi blitzkrieg, and their bit of paradise would have been utterly destroyed but for the director of the Berlin Zoo, Lutz Heck, who wanted Jan's help in resurrecting extinct "pure-blooded species" in pursuit of Aryan perfection in the animal kingdom. Resourceful and courageous, the Zabinskis turned the decimated zoo into a refuge and saved the lives of several hundred imperiled Jews. Ackerman has written many stellar works, including *A Natural History of the Senses* (1990) and *An Alchemy of Mind* (2004), but this is the book she was born to write. Sharing the Zabinskis' knowledge of and reverence for the natural world and drawing on her poet's gift for dazzling metaphor, she captures with breathtaking precision and discernment our kinship with animals, the barbarity of war, Antonina's unbounded kindness and keen delight in "life's sensory bazaar," Jan's daring work with the Polish Underground, and the audacity of the Zabinskis' mission of mercy. An exemplary work of scholarship and an "ecstasy of imagining," Ackerman's affecting telling of the heroic Zabinskis' dramatic story illuminates the profound connection between humankind and nature, and celebrates life's beauty, mystery, and tenacity. Seaman, Donna

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Carl Moss:

Information is provisions for anyone to get better life, information today can get by anyone in everywhere. The information can be a expertise or any news even a concern. What people must be consider while those information which is inside the former life are challenging be find than now is taking seriously which one works to believe or which one the resource are convinced. If you get the unstable resource then you get it as your main information you will see huge disadvantage for you. All those possibilities will not happen with you if you take The Zookeeper's Wife as your daily resource information.

Ira Atwood:

Reading a book tends to be new life style within this era globalization. With reading through you can get a lot of information that will give you benefit in your life. Having book everyone in this world can easily share their idea. Textbooks can also inspire a lot of people. Lots of author can inspire all their reader with their story or their experience. Not only the story that share in the ebooks. But also they write about the information about something that you need illustration. How to get the good score toefl, or how to teach children, there are many kinds of book that exist now. The authors these days always try to improve their skill in writing, they also doing some research before they write on their book. One of them is this The Zookeeper's Wife.

Jocelyn Lee:

The reason why? Because this The Zookeeper's Wife is an unordinary book that the inside of the book waiting for you to snap that but latter it will zap you with the secret that inside. Reading this book adjacent to it was fantastic author who else write the book in such incredible way makes the content inside of easier to understand, entertaining way but still convey the meaning thoroughly. So , it is good for you because of not hesitating having this ever again or you going to regret it. This phenomenal book will give you a lot of gains than the other book have got such as help improving your expertise and your critical thinking technique. So , still want to hold up having that book? If I had been you I will go to the reserve store hurriedly.

Kimberly Hogan:

This The Zookeeper's Wife is brand new way for you who has attention to look for some information given it relief your hunger associated with. Getting deeper you on it getting knowledge more you know or else you who still having bit of digest in reading this The Zookeeper's Wife can be the light food to suit your needs because the information inside this kind of book is easy to get by simply anyone. These books produce itself in the form which can be reachable by anyone, yep I mean in the e-book web form. People who think that in reserve form make them feel sleepy even dizzy this publication is the answer. So there is absolutely no in reading a e-book especially this one. You can find what you are looking for. It should be here for anyone. So , don't miss this! Just read this e-book style for your better life and also knowledge.

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