



Defiance: Eight Dutch Students Outwit the Nazis to Save Their Friends

Titia Bozuwa

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Defiance is a detailed and enjoyable tale of Dutch survival during World War II.

During World War II, a close-knit group of Dutch university students find their lives disrupted by the German occupation in Titia Bozuwa's detailed and heart-wrenching historical novel *Defiance*.

The occupation of the Netherlands has not really touched privileged Anna Smits, who is unconventionally studying medicine in Utrecht. Then she meets a fellow student, Dirk, who opens her eyes to the creeping insidiousness of the Nazi regime.

After they witness the imprisonment of a young minister for preaching a sermon that offended a local Nazi sympathizer, Anna, Dirk, and their "Group of Eight" make a pact to resist in any way they can. Several refuse to report for the German war effort and must avoid the Gestapo; a half-Jewish friend, Daan, goes into hiding at Anna's family estate.

Covering a period from 1941 to 1945, the novel shows how the daily lives of the occupied population were affected, from inconveniences to shattered existences. While the story is mainly told by Anna, other chapters are voiced by Dirk, a member of the Underground, and the minister, Walter, who searches the pages of his Bible for compassionate answers.

Historical facts are routinely and deftly incorporated into the text as a matter of course, such as how the citizens surreptitiously used the color orange—which showed loyalty to the escaped royal family—in small acts of defiance, or how everyone was required to carry a *Kennkarte*, the identity card used during the era.

Depictions are honest and sometimes brutal, including random and retaliatory executions. The humanity and goodness of the main characters shine through as they attempt to do their part in saving Daan and his extended family. Included Dutch words are carefully and subtly defined.

Historical events are intertwined in Anna's affairs for added authenticity: Jewish children are hidden in the hospital as patients; a young distant cousin, later known as Audrey Hepburn, participates in a fundraising effort for the children.

A relationship between Anna's grandmother, a baroness, and a German army officer posted nearby serves to exemplify the prewar civility of the two nations; each expresses distaste over what is happening.

The book is lengthy, and its considerable number of secondary characters can be difficult to track throughout, if each does contribute to the story. A map of the Netherlands is a helpful addition, and a final chapter set five years past the war neatly summarizes what happened to the major characters.

Defiance is a detailed and enjoyable tale of Dutch tragedy and survival during World War II.

ROBIN FARRELL EDMUNDS (April 7, 2018)

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