

Little Anton: Part 2

John W. Warner IV

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Little Anton: Part II: The Gift of the Lamp is a riveting novel that drives interest in the next book of this World War II espionage series.

John W. Warner IV's newly released boxed set, *Little Anton*, contains Parts One, Two, and Three of the historical novel. In *Little Anton: Part II: The Gift of the Lamp*, the lives of a British daredevil and a German race car driver intertwine.

At the novel's start, political tensions are on the rise. Britain's ruling class ponders how to address Germany's suspected rearmament, which is cloaked under the guise of car racing and the manufacture of consumer goods. Bored socialite Lady Bea Sunderland interrupts these discussions with aerial acrobatics in her airplane above where the leaders are meeting.

Bea is tapped to act as a secret agent, tasked with infiltrating the car racing circuit. After rigorous training, she befriends Germany's premier race car drivers and designers. She becomes intimate with earnest young driver Lutz Becker and wriggles into the inner circle of acclaimed designer Ferdinand Porsche. But Bea's perilous efforts to ingratiate herself and hunt for information deliver her into the clutches of the German SS.

This second trilogy title takes the story to thrilling heights. Bea makes bold choices again and again—in her love life, and with airplane racing, car racing, and espionage. But challenges test her resolve and fill her with doubts. Lutz Becker's naïve certainty also falters after he witnesses pogroms, Kristallnacht, and SS excesses. Meanwhile, Herr Porsche is frustrated by Third Reich's conflicting demands, which come to infiltrate and tarnish every aspect of his industry. Such struggles make the characters compelling, and all interact in a natural way.

The book's action scenes are exciting, clear in their details, and propulsive, and their stakes are high. The pace is even and measured, with focus lingering on characters and situations until the implications of each scene's developments are felt. The story's focus is maintained even as the action shifts to encompass locations in North Africa, America, and Argentina. The breadth of these settings drives home the idea that much of the world was affected by the conflict.

A lengthy description of the briefing material that Bea reads to prepare for her mission—which covers ancient history, philosophy, and the occult—at first appears extraneous; the purpose for this information becomes clear in the series' third entry, when it proves essential to her survival. At the end of this volume, Bea manages a narrow escape from the SS; her fear is perceptible, and descriptions of her precarious situation and conflicting emotions are evocative.

Little Anton: Part II: The Gift of the Lamp is a riveting novel that ends with a cliffhanger, driving interest in the next book in this World War II espionage series.

WENDY HINMAN (October 16, 2020)

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