



Little Anton: Part 1

John W. Warner IV

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Self-interest and economic distress fan the flames of conflict in Little Anton: Part 1: The First Earl of Pluckden.

John W. Warner IV's newly released boxed set of the book series *Little Anton* includes Parts One, Two, and Three, and *Little Anton: Part I: The First Earl of Pluckden* sets the stage for this historical trilogy amid political tensions of pre-World War II Europe.

With an emphasis on historical background and atmosphere, this volume includes glimpses into a world where high society intersects with thrill seekers and industrial espionage. In it, Europe moves inevitably toward war, and series characters are introduced in alternating vignettes. The text reveals the evolution of Ferdinand Porsche's genius; the formative years of daring Lady Bea Sunderland, who yearns to race airplanes and cars; and the humble origins of naïve NSKK motorcycle corpsman turned race car driver Lutz Becker. Historical figures, including Adolf Hitler and Winston Churchill, also play into the story.

The narrative spans decades, with insight into the early years of people's family lives and the economic forces that brewed into military conflict. Auto racing is a point of focus in the plot, wherein the brilliant work of engineering-obsessed Austrian pacifist Ferdinand Porsche attracts the attention of Germany's leaders, fueling an uneasy alliance.

Though portions of it are exciting, the story is slow to begin. It is preceded by a lengthy author's note that's filled with background on the rise of Nazi Germany's military might, showing how others around the globe contributed to and profited from its rise. In the novel proper, the story is first buried among a plethora of interesting historical details; there are too many characters, and who is most important is often difficult to discern. As an added point of complication, the characters are alternately referred to by their first names, last names, and nicknames.

The narrative excels at highlighting parts of history that are otherwise often overlooked, especially thanks to its evocative observations and insights. But it also ricochets between its riveting, high-octane action scenes—of aerial maneuvers, car races, war battles, and even hunting—and some are delivered without sufficient context. An excess of emphasis is placed on driver shenanigans off of the race track.

In this volume, important developments are often conveyed through dialogue; some must be inferred. At the close of this entry, Bea Sunderland has not yet met Herr Porsche or Lutz Becker, though their fates are on a convergent path; developments in engine and mechanical design, and the ways in which metal alloys were channeled into making war machinery, are better understood.

Before World War II, self-interest helped to fan the flames of the conflict, and the epic novel *Little Anton: Part 1: The First Earl of Pluckden* is compelling in detailing this history.

WENDY HINMAN (October 16, 2020)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book and paid a small fee to

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