



My Little Bird

Theresa H. Kulla-Klink

Dorrance Publishing

(702pp)

978-1-63661-483-0

My Little Bird is a loving memoir about a romance that beat the odds.

Theresa H. Kulla-Klink's memoir *My Little Bird* is about the bond she formed with an American soldier during and after WWII.

By the time Kulla-Klink met Michael, a dashing American soldier who was helping to secure a quadrant of Berlin after the war, she'd lost her home, her doll, and her father. Charismatic Michael endeared himself to her and her family, and she won him over through her honesty and quiet dedication. She writes that she defied his expectations: she was no "German fraeulein," and was not available for a fling. Instead, she was forthright about her feelings.

The couple's early courtship is marked by exciting firsts, as of Kulla-Klink meeting important military people and trying new things. They planned to marry after he settled back in California, but Michael's womanizing offended her integrity too much. Instead, Kulla-Klink married a coworker, Karl, and moved to Canada, then Hawaii. Travel and work adventures consumed her, but she continued a correspondence with Michael. Elsewhere, he took over his family's real estate business and married twice. The two met again in Berlin after the Berlin Wall fell, when they were both single.

Michael and Kulla-Klink's exchanges of letters influence the tenor of the book. She reports personal developments to Michael in the context of current events, like Hawaii becoming a state and the building of the Berlin Wall; her tone is intimate and immediate. But the book is paced to complement the world events it covers, and its beginning is slow as a result, showing Germany struggling to rebuild after the war. The desperation of food and job shortages, uncertain political outlooks, and a mass exodus from Germany are reflected in repeated worries about the present and hope for the future, though these are often wrapped up with the dismissive "nothing much happened."

Conversely, Kulla-Klink's opportunities with Karl outside of Europe are covered in fast paragraphs that sometimes cover months, suggesting that their daily life was too full to detail. A string of jobs and building projects, a growing family and changes in Germany, are all reflected in this manner, while holiday celebrations are a consistent presence, despite switches in location and circumstance. The last third of the book is more contemplative: Kulla-Klink's business faltered, and health difficulties arose in both her family and Michael's. By the time the couple met again, he seemed a reformed man.

Undergirded by warmth and liveliness, *My Little Bird* is a loving memoir about a romance that beat the odds.

MARI CARLSON (November 2, 2021)

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