



The Jewish Dog

Asher Kravitz

Michal Kessler, Translator

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Kravitz's canine narrator describes the events around him without understanding their full impact, offering a new perspective on the Holocaust.

With *The Jewish Dog*, Asher Kravitz succeeds in the difficult task of finding a new approach to a Holocaust story by telling the tale through the first-person perspective of a family pet. Kravitz treats the material with the appropriate respect while using the dog's changes in ownership as a clever way to flesh out history and provide an additional perspective.

The story opens with the dog, Caleb, introducing himself and explaining his circumstances, as one of several puppies born in the household of a Jewish family in 1935 Germany. Kravitz drops in hints about what's on the horizon, whether through Hitler's voice on the radio or another dog owner bragging about his pet's pure breeding,

Because of the real-life Nazi decree that banned Jews from owning dogs, the family has to give up Caleb, handing him over to a German with a fondness for the animal. Caleb eventually passes through several owners, who range from kind to cruel, including some involved in the worst crimes of the Nazi era. At various points in his journey, the dog is on the run with a pack of strays, being molded into a prison guard by Nazi trainers, or taking part in a prisoner uprising. At times, Caleb, whose name changes throughout his ordeal, even takes part in atrocities, following the orders of new masters. In doing so, he offers a window into the soldiers or citizens who committed similar crimes, without excusing their behavior. He is haunted by an incident when he was a puppy, when he stood by while a fellow dog hunted and killed a harmless kitten, and thinks about that experience whenever he fails to do right.

Kravitz has some fun with the dog's food-driven motivation, and the humor does not undermine the story's tragedy. Because Caleb's circumstances change so often, the story maintains its suspense, as it's never obvious which parts of history the dog will experience directly.

JEFF FLEISCHER (Fall 2015)

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