



The Paris Children: A Novel of WWII

Gloria Goldreich

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Inspired by the social work and remarkable courage of Madeleine Lévy, the granddaughter of Captain Alfred Dreyfus, Gloria Goldreich's haunting historical novel *The Paris Children* is centered in the French resistance.

The Dreyfus family, though they leave Paris under the threat of German occupation, French fascism, and the Vichy government, resolves to fight back. For Madeleine and a fellow resistance fighter, Claude, *Liberté, égalité, fraternité* is in their blood. The uncertain future prevents them from making promises to each other, though loyalty buoys them as they rescue children through the Jewish Scouts.

Goldreich draws a clandestine world of document forgeries, checkpoint evasions, sabotage, and handoffs, imbuing events with peril and thrill. Hearing loss adds to Madeleine's challenges. Her heroism while working undercover as a Vichy employee is urgent, though she's not immune to self-doubt, and her talented duplicity is recounted more than it's enacted.

Claude's extended absences highlight the pain of wartime romances. It's a tender side story amid the Dreyfus household's concerns. He's capable, restrained, and a calming influence on Madeleine. Wider atrocities, which characters learn about through banned radio broadcasts, set the war's grim timeline, while the main plot unfolds mission by mission. These reimagined resistance exploits highlight ordinary people's powerful convictions, while the mistrust in towns where anyone might be a collaborator or informant is palpable.

Incongruous poetic language, including descriptions of candles that drip "waxen tears" and sentimental reflections on hope, heightens the already unthinkable situation. The fictional Madeleine's thoughts come across as more fragile than her actions suggest; her characterization is spare.

Unrelenting danger features into this empathetic, admiring tribute to a wartime heroine. *The Paris Children* searches for hidden acts of grace amid World War II.

KAREN RIGBY (September / October 2020)

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