



The Road at St. Liseau: A Novel of Espionage in World War II

Thomas W. Becker

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Heartbreaking and graphic, this romantic thriller brings the horrors of World War II vividly to life.

Set in Nazi-occupied France during World War II, this romantic spy thriller plumbs the depths of despair and scales the heights of joy in a riveting depiction of sacrifice and love. Thomas W. Becker's *The Road at St. Liseau* presents a familiar scenario—a young nurse instills the will to live in a critically injured American army captain.

Robert Marsden crashes a B-17 into the countryside and lands in the arms of Lisa Jardin, a beautiful woman with the touch of a guardian angel. His undercover work as part of the French Resistance puts him in grave danger throughout this novel, and even after recovering from extensive injuries, Marsden risks his life for a higher good. Dedicated and courageous, this loyal hero inspires admiration. The heroine is the epitome of educated gentleness and nurturing kindness—a good, though somewhat trite, portrayal of a 1940s nursing student.

Researched down to the finer details and straightforwardly realistic, time and place are vivid, while descriptions come across with knowledge that could be obtained only from history books and memoirs. The book contains numerous black-and-white photographs and maps, presumably to enhance the text, but this superfluous addition seems more suited to a work of nonfiction. The use of these pictures—some unrelated to the specific scenes into which they are inserted—tends to distract from the overall quality of this excellent plot.

Heartbreaking and graphic, the atrocities of warfare make an ugly appearance, informing the twenty-first century of a brutal past that cannot be forgotten. Evil events that triggered one of the vilest worldwide conflicts in history manifest themselves in countless ways, and tragically, some of the worst happened off the battlefield.

In this horrific torture scene, Marsden is rescued from the clutches of his captors:

The Marine medic began pushing on Robert's arms and chest until it was obvious the bones were broken throughout his whole body. Designs were made on his flesh by burning him with cigarettes; here and there all over his body were open knife slashes surrounded with dried blood. Robert had been hanging naked and unconscious, completely oblivious to his surroundings with scarcely a trace of life stirring in him.

Gritty accounts of rape and degradation make a prominent statement, allowing an insider's look at the grim reality of enemy infiltration in a once peaceful nation. At the heart of Becker's novel is a message of hope and resilience, as well as a lesson for future generations: abiding love overrides all.

JULIA ANN CHARPENTIER (August 10, 2015)

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