



The Last Plane

Robert Hirzer

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The discovery of a cache of old letters prompts a journey of discovery that leads a physician to an entirely new view of his parents' lives and also sets off a re-examination of his own. The story follows an impoverished family of five children growing up in post-World-War-I Austria and continues through the upheaval of World War II and beyond. Spanning three generations and two continents, this compelling saga interweaves historical romance, adventure yarn, memoir and mystery. Whether on the brutal battlefields of Russia, in a quaint Irish fishing village or by a small collection of German graves in southern Ontario, a common theme emerges: history, the narrator learns, is never what it seems, and the search for a better future is often hindered by the haunting grip of the past.

The Last Plane Details

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Author : Robert Hirzer

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From Reader Review The Last Plane for online ebook

Beth Sammons says

History is interesting - Family history is x 100. I read the other review and hopefully you don't think I just copied but I felt the same way. The beginning of the book was a little slow and confusing but I have this thing about respect for the author, I have always finished every book I have ever started. So I pressed on... Not everything in the book was a surprise (although most of it was!) continually through the book I kept expecting a) to happen and on the next page it was revealed b) instead, and toward the middle to the end of the book I'm glad it was a slow week and I could just sit on the swing and read and read for hours. It was genius to write this book the way he did. I loved how the characters were revealed slowly. I loved that everyone's perspective was told. Every loose end was tied up in the final 50 pages - talk about suspense! I have read many WWII but none from the nazi point of view, knowing my history I knew it was going to be tough to read when they ended up in the cauldron. I wish I could give a standing ovation and would love to see this book as a tv mini series! BRAVO!!!

Carl says

A remarkable story, part memoir, part history, part fiction.

Hirzer inherited some documents about his family's life in Austria, prior to and during WWII. He based this novel on what he learned about his relatives' lives at the Russian front.

Hirzer, a first-time novelist, shows a sure touch with the period. Remarkably, he is able to make battlefield scenes gripping and effective without graphic descriptions of gore. His dispassionate tone carries more conviction in these scenes than the overwrought prose of some others.

He occasionally shifts from the past into the present, and although these scenes are a pleasant respite from the battlefield, they are difficult to adjust to after the intensity of the battlefield scenes.

Overall, well worth reading.

Serge says

This was a pleasant surprise, and not just because my copy was free from Goodreads & the author. Hirzer covers some familiar territory (to me), the WWII experience, but using some fictional Austrian families to tell his multi-generational story, which goes from before WWII to the present, in Canada. All in all, a worthwhile read that I would recommend to anyone, not just Canadian.

Denise says

I really liked this book. It told a soldier's story without all the politics. It wasn't about all the weapons or

statistics. It told the stories of average people caught up in a great war. Their personal sufferings and feelings, but told from the distance of the past. There are so many things we could learn and never know about our parents and their lives before us. Maybe if we took the time to learn some of these things, we would realize how much they are like us and really do understand us.

Chester Manfield says

I discovered this novel by Robert Hirzer upon a recommendation from a friend, as we were discussing the Russian front amongst other WWII topics. Initially expecting a historical fiction dealing primarily with military life, The Last Plane offered much more and overall a very touching story spanning the generations of a family. The novel balances the excitement and insight of a WWII narrative with the a more personal account of the impact made by sacrifices of one generation for the next. Hirzer's writing style is both image-evoking and lined with witty humor, an impressive debut publication indeed.

Ginger Pollard says

I won a copy of this book from Goodreads. Thank you, Goodreads! This is a wonderful book about a son looking back at his parent's days during WWII through letters. It goes back and forth easily between the past and the present. It's a very detailed look at WWII. I enjoyed it and it will be interesting for men and women.

Mickey says

Give this book a chance. Historical fiction is often a bit on the incredible side. This one's credible, and it's not one of those too involved (code for "sweeping") stories that loses the reader in the middle. The middle is where you are taken in and sent along. A memorable read.

Dorothy Presnell says

The story takes you from modern day Canada with a doctor and his family and to the war with Germany and Russia as a man traces back his heritage. There were parts that held my interest but soon found it to become tedious and I put it aside. Was ok but just could not grasp my attention for long periods at a time.

Mary Hosmar says

The story told from a different perspective always makes interesting reading. Robert Hirzer tells us the story of a family torn apart by circumstances and forced, each in his own way, to live through horrors of war and separation. It is a story which spans more than half a century and takes us from an idyllic village in rural Austria to the death camps of Russia and the freedom of Canada. It is the story of one man's survival in the face of horrendous difficulties and of another man's loss. It is the story of love and hate and everything in between.

The story begins and ends in today's Kitchener, Ontario but takes us on travels we can only imagine. The narrator, a doctor and wine connoisseur, deftly intersperses his family story with his search for fine wine leaving the connection between the two, to the reader.

Hirzer had done a masterful job of making this era come alive. He has produced a well-researched and well-written story leaving this reader wanting more.

I received this book in a Goodreads give-away with no expectation of review or recommendation.

Rupert Psmith says

Moving and gripping CanLit novel. Hirzer's debut is ambitious in scope, and the execution is addicting. One of the better modern novels I've read in a while. For those into historical fiction (specifically World War II) and memoir, it's a great read. Really shines in the descriptions of battles on the Eastern Front... especially Stalingrad. It will stay with you for a long time.

Connie Murphy says

I really had no idea what to expect when I started this book. It was a very engaging read. A great book on so many levels. I highly recommend this book. I received this book in a giveaway and was under no obligation to offer up a review of either positive or negative value. This review comes from the heart.

Leah says

I received this as part of a goodreads giveaway.

The Last Plane is a multi-generational story about family, war, and survival. Although the characters in this story are Austrian, and on the "other side" during WWII, this story could reflect any family. The story is told through two timelines that intertwine and reveal the family saga. Upon the death of his father, a son finds a cache of letters his father wrote to his mother during WWII. Through his father's letters, the son uncovers the suffering of the war that was never talked about.

As the story unfolds through the letters, the son (and the reader) discover how his father came to join the army at the beginning of WWII, the suffering being felt at home, how they ended up on the Eastern front, and finally how the family emigrated to Canada. Never at any point did I feel like I was reading about "the enemy". Soldiers are soldiers. Governments set policy and generals make decisions, soldiers follow orders. In the end, they all just want to get back to their families and a normal life. Survival. Although only touched on a little bit was the family's troubles as immigrants after the war.

I don't feel like I'm really doing this book justice, but it hooked me from the very first page. Having German heritage, I was able to see my Mom's hometown in the story-German families, German language, German names, German food, but also very American (or a Canadian in this story's case). This story shows us that no matter where we are born, we all just want to live a good and happy life. I will admit that in the middle of the book seemed to drag a bit, but this was when they were fighting on the Eastern front, which itself dragged on, so maybe that was the author's intent.

Highly recommend this book to anyone who is interested in WWII. Definitely not a romanticized account of the war at all. Wonderful debut novel, thank you for the privilege of reading it.

Michael Kim says

The Last Plane is a very engaging read. Two stories and timeframes, one current and one centred around World War II, come together in a way that is easy to follow. Due to the clear organization of the book, each narrative informs and supports the other. Some chapters could easily stand alone as short stories but their impact is intensified in the overall context of the book. Very real human stories are set in backgrounds ranging from the safe and secure to the brutal and horrific. As a reader, I came to know and respect these characters as they made their life choices in the context of turbulent times. This is a book with heft and humanity, introducing the reader to people and conditions that challenge you to think about your own family and direction. I hope Dr. Hirzer continues to write.

Jk says

I received a free copy of this book via the Goodreads First Reads program and would like to thank everyone who made that possible!

This book has a bit of a slow start but press on and you will be rewarded in a big way! More than anything this is the story of one family's history, beginning between the world wars in Germany and following them through World War II all the way to present day Canada.

The horrors and hopelessness of war are vividly depicted and deeply moving. I also loved the sense of mystery throughout the book and how the identities of the main characters are slowly revealed (I will admit that this was a slight frustration for me at the beginning of the novel but I quickly got lost in the story and it made the revelations that came later have that much more impact!)

Well researched and very well edited - a great pleasure to read!

Stephen says

A great historical feast of one family's journey through a world war to the present day told from two different time frames. This first book by Robert Hirzer was written with the style of an accomplished author and makes for a gripping historical read. The unusual part about this narrative is that the story line while being partially fictional is also completely historical. The tale that unwinds captures the authors' real life family through the horrors of World War II and the 50 year struggle to freedom.

I read this book with a very open mind as I actually grew up being related to the main character. With great joy I can admit that my uncle taught me many of the skills I now possess while always being remarkably positive in his outlook. It was at times an unpleasant read from my part knowing the horrific stories he could have told from the past. I don't lightly recommend things in life but can truly say that this story will be a memorable read for generations to come. So much so that I have gifted a great many copies of this book and have only received accolades in return.

