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Echoes



Synopsis

Against a vivid backdrop of history, Danielle Steel tells a compelling story of love and war, acts of faith and acts of betrayal—and of three generations of women as they journey through years of loss and survival, linked by an indomitable devotion that echoes across time. For the Wittgenstein family, the summer of 1915 was a time of both prosperity and unease, as the guns of war sound in the distance. But for eldest daughter Beata, it was also a summer of awakening. By the glimmering waters of Lake Geneva, the quiet Jewish beauty met a young French officer and fell in love. Knowing that her parents would never accept her marriage to a Catholic, Beata followed her heart anyway. And as the two built a new life together, Beata's past would stay with her in ways she could never have predicted. For as the years pass, and Europe is once again engulfed in war, Beata must watch in horror as Hitler's terror threatens her life and family—even her eighteen-year-old daughter Amadea, who has taken on the vows of a Carmelite nun. For Amadea, the convent is no refuge. As family and friends are swept away without a trace, Amadea is forced into hiding. Thus begins a harrowing journey of survival, as she escapes into the heart of the French Resistance. Here Amadea will find a renewed sense of purpose, taking on the most daring missions behind enemy lines. And it is here, in the darkest moments of fear, that Amadea will feel her mother's loving strength—and that of her mother's mother before her—as the voices of lost loved ones echo powerfully in her heart. And here, amid the fires of war, Amadea will meet an extraordinary man, British secret agent Rupert Montgomery. In Colonel Montgomery, Amadea finds a man who will help her discover her place in an unbreakable chain between generations—and between her lost family and her dreams for the future—a future she is only just beginning to imagine: a future of hope rooted in the rich soil of the past. With the grace of a master storyteller, Danielle Steel breathes life into history, creating a bold, sweeping tale filled with unforgettable characters and breathtaking images—from the elegant rituals of Europe's prewar aristocracy to the brutal desperation of Germany's death camps. Drawing us into a vanished world, *Echoes* weaves an intricate tapestry of a mother's love, a daughter's courage—and the unwavering faith that sustained them—even in history's darkest hour. From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

Danielle Steel is clearly not aware of Jewish life ... a fact more than obvious after reading Echoes, a story essentially hanging on the Jewish bloodline reverberating through generations. She is (supposedly) an ace at writing fictional romance. While I'm not a fan of Steel nor of romance novels, this one would not make me a convert ... to being a reader of romantic fluff, to Catholicism, to a nun's vocation, to Judaism, or really to anything. The book had very little sway, tho' it tried desperately to align readers with the author's affections. One does not sit shiva one day (or night). It's 7 days. One does not casually eat at a local cafe if they are Orthodox, nor do they immediately eat pork as their first foray into a non-kosher lifestyle. A dreidel in WWII England would have had Hebrew letters forming an acronym meaning "a great miracle happened there" ... not "here" as Steel's text indicated. Amadea, being born of a Jewish mother, would be fully Jewish ... not "half Jewish" as Steel's text continually mentioned. And consider, would a budding nun guiltlessly enter and continue a pre-marital affair without the pangs of overriding knowledge she was violating her vow of chastity? The only realistic religiosity I perceived was the incessant preachiness of how we should view the characters, their choices, their predicaments, and the changing focus of the author as to which character would be the dolly of her heart at any given point in the story (clearly, Steel had her "beautiful" favorites coupled with fickle loss of interest when she tired of them). In addition to the irksome tone of Steel's projected affections, she is repetitive. I constantly found myself wondering if I'd accidentally re-read a paragraph ... or entire page. No, Steel was just drilling home her tale ...

Danielle Steele, I have finally concluded, doesn't really "write" her novels, she dictates them. She hires someone to transcribe her free-flowing plot, and relies on that ill-qualified person to provide proper punctuation and sentence breaks, to reduce repetition and do general high-school level editing. Meanwhile, she is adept at cashing in on the wartime genre called "Holocaust" literature, but hey, no harm there. Everyone loves a good suspenseful novel, wherein the good (perhaps) may escape the bad. She herself was a family of German Jewish heritage, whose grandfather had acquired the Lowenbrau factory in Munich. It was confiscated in the 1930's as were all major Jewish businesses. The family fled to Paris, where the young Danielle absorbed French and German upperclass culture, refinement of dress and dining, habits of speech and thought. The story is a decent plotline, wherein the main protagonist, the daughter of a Jewish outcast who falls in love with a French nobleman, becomes a Carmelite nun. She is cloistered at age 18 before the war, and has a French passport with nominally Catholic parents, as her Jewish German mother converted. Therefore she escapes the roundup of Jews in Berlin, where the mother's family lives, and all perish in the camps save the lovely, tall, blonde, blue-eyed, educated, demure, did I say tall, Amadea, and oh yes, let us repeat, she has blonde hair and blue eyes. She is also a perfect bilingual speaker of French and German. Therefore she becomes perfect material as an Antifascist spy in France, risking her life to blow up train lines and to intercept radio signals and dropped materials by night.

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