

*the*  
**FORGOTTEN  
NAMES**

*a novel*

**MARIO ESCOBAR**

USA TODAY AND INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLING AUTHOR

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HARPER MUSE

*The Forgotten Names*

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*Las Vidas Perdidas*

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*To Elisabeth, Andrea, and Alejandra, who  
traveled to Lyon with me on this journey of  
memory, history, and passion for freedom.*

*To the 108 children—and countless others—who  
managed to escape the clutches of Nazism and who,  
with their very lives, pulled off the greatest possible act  
of rebellion against tyranny: being happy.*

Sometimes it is only a single light door that keeps  
children out of the world that we call the real world,  
and a chance puff of wind may blow it open.

Stefan Zweig, *The Burning Secret*



MOST OF THE CHARACTERS in this novel are real historical people. Some details, including the order of some of the events, have been altered for the sake of the story's development and to protect the privacy of the survivors and their families.



## PROLOGUE

*Alba-la-Romaine*

APRIL 10, 1942

THE VIOLIN WAS SLUNG over Rachel's back. The case was worn, and the black leather had begun to crack like her grandmother's hands. The cracked hands were all that Rachel could recall of the grandmother she had not seen since she was three. The violin had traveled with Rachel's father, Zelman, from Poland through Germany and to Belgium and later to Paris. By that time he had bequeathed it to his Belgian-born daughter. Their home in Charleroi seemed as far away to Rachel as the morning when the Belgian official rapped softly at the door and whispered to her father that they had best leave everything behind and get moving before the Jews were rounded up and deported to Germany. That very day Zelman, his ex-wife—Chaja, his new wife—Fani, and Rachel fled. They left almost everything behind, but Rachel clung to the violin and her raincoat as they huddled together on the last truck leaving for the French border. After a long and tortuous journey, their new home became Paris, a city whose hostile beauty assured newcomers of their insignificance.

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Zelman rented an attic room and the odd family of four survived on his work as a barber until France surrendered to Germany. They joined the hundreds of thousands of Parisians escaping along the crowded streets that led south. Most of those refugees were headed to Bordeaux, but Rachel's family veered toward Valence and from there to the small, provincial Alba-la-Romaine. Bearing evidence of the Roman roots of the village were the stone bridge and the ancient theater, one of the best preserved in France. Rachel loved the solitude of the Roman ruins on the outskirts of the city, especially the theater, which had been witness to so much joy and sadness over the centuries.

That morning the girl was particularly sad. Gendarmes had come at dawn for her father. Things had been taking a turn for the worse in recent months. First, the authorities forbade Zelman from serving non-Jewish clients. Zelman took to going door-to-door, offering his barber services. Then he was forbidden from leaving their neighborhood. The winter was nearly unbearable for the disparate family. With no money for firewood or coal, blankets were their only defense against the cold. Finally, that morning Zelman was taken from them and made to work for the Nazi war machine.

Her father's face had been etched with desolation as he was led away: eyes sunken in fear, face covered with a black beard that, strand by strand, had been softening into gray, and wrinkles that now overextended his forehead and seemed to shrink his dark, expressive eyes. His last words resounded in Rachel's ear. "Don't lose the violin. Keep playing. Every time you play, you'll know I'm close."

Yet Rachel felt so alone. Her classmates had stopped talking to



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her, including Ana, her once soulmate who had shared Rachel's dreams of becoming a famous concert violinist.

Rachel drew out the instrument. It was still a bit big for her, despite her eight years. She nestled it under her chin and took her place on the steps where, hundreds of years before, the sound of peaceful harps and booming drums had marked the pace of comedies and dramas. Rachel closed her eyes and let the music transport her to someplace far away, where no one could hurt her. The wind-tossed notes became a prayer, a plea for her father, for all the fathers who had to leave their families. It was a wish for them to come home soon.

The music stole the magic from the surrounding birdsong, and Rachel's closed eyelids were an insufficient barrier for her tears. Her mother once said that those who sowed the world with tears would someday reap with joy and return with jubilant shouts, and that there was a grief that led to joy, that made people stronger and allowed them to put themselves in the place of those who suffered. But someday was a long way away, and Rachel felt only infinite sadness and fear.

PART I

*A Small Inferno*

Chapter 1

THESIS

*Lyon*

SEPTEMBER 20, 1992

FIVE YEARS HAD PASSED since the highly publicized trial of Klaus Barbie, known by many as “the Butcher of Lyon,” and France wanted to forget it. The world was changing quickly. The iron curtain had come down three years prior, and the aged prison where the Nazi official had lived out his sentence was now free of its nuisance. With Barbie’s death the year before, many former collaborators breathed freely. The past could go back to where it belonged—oblivion.

Valérie headed for Jean Moulin Lyon 3 University. The monumental façade was darkened by soot. Despite bearing the name of a World War II French Resistance hero, everyone knew that the School of Law was a bastion of the extreme right and anti-Semitism. Valérie planned to direct her research toward the deportation of Jews from Lyon. She vividly recalled the televised sessions of Barbie’s trial and itched to do something to recover the history of Jews expelled from Lyon to Germany.

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She had an appointment with Jean-Dominique Durand, professor of contemporary history and a dedicated defender of preserving the historical memory of French Jews.

Valérie greeted the professor and took a seat at a table in the school's cafeteria.

"Thank you so much for meeting me, professor. I'm very interested in studying French Jews, but I can't find anyone to advise me for my thesis."

Jean-Dominique glanced around to see who might be listening. The extreme right was on the rise, and the law school had become a hive for Fascists. "I'll help you in any way I can," he said.

"So, where should I start?" Valérie asked with a shrug and a smile. She had a beautiful face and dark, energetic eyes. Her slender frame was engulfed in baggy clothes.

"It's a broad subject. You've got to narrow it down a bit."

Valérie's gaze wondered off as she thought. At first she had wanted to study Klaus Barbie and his role in the deportation of Jews from Lyon, but now, after several weeks of reading about the subject, she was more drawn to researching the suffering of Jewish children due to the deportations.

"The children . . ." she mused.

Durand's forehead creased, trying to follow her train of thought. "Which children?"

"The Jewish children. They're what really interests me. I cannot understand how a regime decides to exterminate innocent children."

It was the professor's turn to shrug. "Barbarism is the most primitive state of human beings. Hegel and other philosophers believed that humanity was headed for an era of goodwill and that progress was unstoppable. Marx and Darwin got on board

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with that positive view of progress, but after two world wars and several pandemics and economic crises, we can no longer say today that humanity is decisively marching toward progress. The narrative that spread through the Enlightenment isn't sustainable, and Nazism and Soviet Communism are the best proof of that."

Valérie nodded and said, "What do you think about studying what happened with the children of Lyon?"

"I'd recommend you start with Le Centre de Documentation sur la Déportation des Enfants juifs de Lyon. It's an archive of documentation all about Jewish children and youth deported from Lyon. It was begun in 1987 during Barbie's trial, to collect all existing data pertaining to child deportees from 1942 through 1944."

Valérie jotted down the details. It was not much to start with, but she would surely find more to go on at the center. She sensed that the road ahead would not be easy. Too many people wanted to forget this most ignominious era of French history, but she was determined to make serious sacrifices to keep the memory of those children from dying out.

Chapter 2

A PERFECT MORNING

*Vichy*

JULY 2, 1942

LOUIS DARQUIER DE PELLEPOIX slammed his fist down on the table. His broad forehead creased with wrinkles, and his cold eyes flashed. At forty-four, the frenzied anti-Semite had been named director of the Office of Jewish Affairs. He was impatient to get all the Jews out of France. Pierre Laval, who had just regained his title in government, now as prime minister, was less convinced of the wisdom of handing French Jews over to the Germans.

“We need the support of the church. Several bishops have expressed opposition to deporting the Jews, as have some of the Protestant leaders. Marshal Pétain is reticent to go against Cardinal Gerlier. They have long been friends,” Laval said.

Darquier swore and let loose a buckshot of saliva droplets over the orders on top of his desk. His colleagues on the cabinet eyed him and his fury fearfully.

“Well then, first expel the Jews that aren’t French nationals.

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Foreign Jewish dross have been basking in refugee status within our borders since 1933. If French Jews, with their libertine men of letters and decadent painters, have destroyed the ancient culture of our beloved nation, the degenerate foreign Jews have done nothing but speed up the process of social decay.”

Laval’s response was level. “We also need the support of the police. Some of the gendarmes might claim conscientious objection.”

Laval, whose complexion was more Algerian or Sicilian than Aryan, fidgeted with his mustache while his cabinet members debated the merits of various ways of dealing with France’s Jewish population. He knew he had to tread cautiously. He had already lost Pétain’s trust once, and only pressure from the Nazis had allowed him to regain his position. In those two years of erratic, prudish policies, the clergy’s critical voice against the government had grown louder. While publicly Catholic, Laval held on to the anticlerical, atheistic notions from his days in l’Internationale ouvrière, the French Section of the Workers’ International. Naturally, he kept these opinions to himself. The pious marshal believed that Christianizing the country would solve all of France’s problems.

“We’ve got to get moving on this. We’re to send the first shipment of Jews to Germany by the end of the month. For now, let’s leave the French nationals alone. We’ve got to be smart about this. If the Germans suspect that we’re not in control of the unoccupied zone, they’ll take over the rest of the country in a heartbeat.”

Laval’s statement indicated that the discussion was over. The ministers left one by one except for Darquier, who clenched his fists as he approached Laval.

“The Nazis are going to be angry. They want to finish the Jew-



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ish problem as soon as possible.”

“Not to worry, Darquier. All in good time. If we chase the rats into hiding, we make the exterminator’s job harder. All in good time . . .”



The prime minister walked among the well-tended gardens of the city of Vichy. The morning heat was already intense, but it was cool and pleasant among the fountains under the ancient trees. Laval mopped his brow with a white handkerchief and loosened his collar. His residence in Châteldon was not far. There his father had horses and a modest coffee plantation and vineyard. There Laval felt something like a feudal lord. At times he wondered if destiny had confused the era in which he was born. At home, his beloved wife, Jeanne, would be waiting for him so they could enjoy their daily coffee. Laval left the machinations of politics and the weight of his position behind in the shadows of the gigantic trees. He drove away from the city and toward one more sweet day of enjoying life and looking forward to what lay ahead. Saving France was, doubtless, a challenge, but he was willing to sacrifice himself for his country.





Chapter 3

THE SHADOW OF DEATH

*Alba-la-Romaine*

AUGUST 26, 1942

THE DAY BEFORE HAD been happy, which was not a common occurrence. Rachel was able to see and talk with her father for a brief time in the labor camp where he was being held. She missed him terribly. He had been locked up for months and forced to work, though his only crime was being a foreign Jew. Rachel's mother, Chaja, who had managed to avoid being registered as a Jew, had returned to Belgium a few weeks after Zelman was taken. So for months Rachel had lived alone with Fani. Daily survival was increasingly difficult. Fani took every job she could get, but they were only eating one meager meal a day.

Before Fani and Rachel returned home yesterday, Zelman had warned, "Don't go back into town. There's going to be a raid, and this time it won't be just for the men." But Fani found it hard to believe that the French gendarmes would round up women and children. What good would they be to the war effort?

Just after five o'clock in the morning, Fani and Rachel were

abruptly woken by loud, insistent knocking at the door. Fani looked toward Rachel and could see the child's eyes shining in the darkness. They had shared a bed since Chaja left.

"Don't worry, it's probably just a mistake," Fani said to calm Rachel. She wrapped herself in her robe and approached the door barefoot.

"Who is it?" she called in a voice still raspy with sleep.

"Police! Open immediately!"

Fani woke fully at the sound of that deep, booming voice.

"Just a moment, please."

"Open up now, or we'll break the door down!"

Fani's heart was racing. She froze for a moment but then opened the door. Two gendarmes stared at her from the landing. One held a nightstick and the other a document that he waved in her face.

"You and all the members of this household must come with us right now."

"But we haven't done anything," Fani protested.

The older of the gendarmes glanced down the dark, empty hallway of the apartment building and, in a moment of compassion, said, "Gather your things; we'll wait for you, then explain what's going on. It's purely a bureaucratic matter."

Those words calmed Fani enough for her to get her body moving again. She turned back to the bedroom where Rachel was sitting up in bed and rubbing her eyes in confusion.

"Rachel, we have to go with the gendarmes."

"Where?"

"I'm not sure, but they'll explain things when we get there."

Rachel was trembling with fright, but Fani wrapped her in a strong embrace that calmed her momentarily. Then they packed

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a few belongings: some clothes, some food, and Rachel's violin. They got to the door of their apartment looking disheveled, the buttons of their jackets misaligned and dark circles of worry under their eyes.

Down on the empty, dimly lit street, the morning felt cool to them despite it being the end of August. The gendarmes led them to a bus manned by a frowning driver.

"Sit wherever you'd like," the older gendarme said as the policemen settled into a seat at the front.

There were already a few other occupants on the bus. As Fani and Rachel walked down the aisle, the others ducked their heads, ashamed to be part of the macabre convoy. Fani placed their suitcase in one of the last rows.

"I'm scared," Rachel whispered as she took a seat.

"It'll be all right," Fani said automatically but unconvincingly. She feared being locked up in a labor camp like Zelman or being sent to Germany.

Rachel curled up in Fani's lap and tried to rest. It still felt like nighttime. The only light to be seen came from the streetlamps.

The bus drove away from their town. The rumble of the motor managed to relax the occupants into deep sleep, but everyone woke when the bus stopped at the next town and the gendarmes got off.

A boy sitting close to the driver yanked the lever to open the door and shot out running. The gendarmes, only a few yards away from the bus, turned and immediately chased him. In anguish, Rachel watched the boy sprinting toward the forest, but the younger gendarme easily outpaced him. The policeman smacked the boy's face the whole way back to the bus. The driver opened the door, and the gendarme pushed the boy in, growling, "Keep

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control of that door or you'll end up in the same camp as the Jews!"

His words had their desired effect. The driver stood and guarded the door with his towering frame.

The boy limped back to his seat and tumbled into it. Rachel caught his eyes fleetingly. His face was reddened, and blood trickled down one eyebrow.

The gendarmes returned with five more people to add to the bus. The operation was repeated from town to town until the bus was full, yet there was still quite a ways to go until it reached Lyon.

Chapter 4

ALEXANDRE GLASBERG

*Lyon*

AUGUST 26, 1942

**T**WENTY DAYS BEFORE, GILBERT Lesage had visited Father Alexandre Glasberg to warn him of what the Vichy government was about to agree to. Gilbert was the head of the Vichy's Service Social des Étranger, the social service agency for foreigners. He was also a well-known Protestant. After studying architecture in school, he had switched directions to dedicate his life to the disadvantaged. A committed pacifist, he was horrified about what was occurring throughout Europe and determined not to stand idly by. His anti-Nazi spirit had surfaced several years before the Germans invaded France. In the 1930s he traveled to Germany with a Quaker mission to help Jewish children suffering under the weight of the infamous Nuremberg Laws.

Gilbert had gone to the vicarage to solicit Father Glasberg's help. Glasberg himself was of Jewish background, a Ukrainian emigrant who had suffered persecution at the hands of Soviets in

his country.

Glasberg and Gilbert had sounded the alert among a distinguished group of people in Lyon who were opposed to the German occupation, to Vichy collaboration, and especially to the return of Prime Minister Laval to power.



That morning, aware that within hours thousands of Jews would be taken into custody throughout the entire department, Alexandre Glasberg held an urgent meeting with Gilbert and others concerned about the situation. The two men were well aware that the prefect of Lyon, Alexandre Angeli, was eager to oblige René Bousquet, the secretary general of police, regardless of the fact that this meant the illegal detention of thousands of innocent people.

Gilbert knocked at number 17 rue de Marseille, then went up the stairs to Glasberg's office. The priest was waiting with no pretense of calm.

Gilbert spoke before he had crossed the threshold. "The raids have started." He had seen the orders with his own eyes.

"You're the first to arrive, but when everyone's here we'll see what's to be done," Glasberg replied.

"I don't want to be a pessimist, but back in July when thousands of Jews were forced into work crews, no one batted an eye."

Father Glasberg knew all about it. He had begged several bishops to speak out against the policy, but none had done so publicly. The poor devils were foreigners and Jews—people of no real interest to the Catholic Church, which, at that time, was preoccupied above all else with regaining its privileges now that Marshal

Pétain was back in power.

“But women, children, and older Jews. They can’t look the other way,” Glasberg replied, though he was fully aware that human logic did not always follow a logical course, especially when doing so implied opposition to an invader and could lead to detention or death.

The door opened and Pierre Chaillet appeared. The Jesuit was a committed advocate for vulnerable children. He had joined other men of orders like Father Lubac and Father Bockel to oppose the Nazi invaders. His position as a theology professor at the Jesuit school in Fourvière allowed him to maintain contact with a wide network of students and professors. He founded an underground journal of resistance to Nazism and was part of founding *Amitié Chrétienne*, a rescue organization known as Christian Friendship, in 1941. *Amitié Chrétienne* was an ecumenical network of Protestants, Catholics, and Jews dedicated to helping the underserved, particularly Jewish refugee children.

“Forgive me for being late, but there are many checkpoints all along the streets. You can smell in the air what the gendarmes are up to.”

“Not a problem,” Glasberg replied.

“The mayor and Pastor Boegner can’t make it, but they’re also with us in this.”

“Cardinal Gerlier as well, and everyone knows he’s quite chummy with Marshal Pétain.”

Next to arrive were Marcelle Trillat and Denise Grunewald, workers in the Lyon branch of the *Service Social des Étranger*. They were soon followed by the final member of the meeting, Georges Garel of the OSE, *l’Œuvre de secours aux enfants*, the Organization to Save the Children.

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“We’re all here,” Glasberg began. His direct manner contrasted with the bureaucratic approach of some members of the emergency committee. “This is our third meeting, and we can’t put it off any longer. We know that today a large number of foreign Jews will arrive at the Vénissieux camp.”

Marcelle chimed in, “We’ve confirmed that there is a list of legally recognized exemptions. They’re not authorized to deport Jews who are old, disabled, pregnant, or unaccompanied minors; nor can they deport war heroes who have fought in the French army. We’ll have to gather as much documentation as possible in record time. I don’t think the Nazis will linger in the task of deporting the Jews.”

“First,” Father Chaillet offered, “some of us need to go to Vénissieux to get a complete list of the prisoners. Then we’ll coordinate and divide up the work of searching through the archives and being in touch with the various embassies. We’ve got to save as many people as we can.”

“That won’t be easy. The prefect and chief of police will do as much and more to fulfill the quotas of deported refugees. I get the sense they have no souls,” Denise said.

Father Glasberg stood. “Then we’d best get to it. Each to his post. Every minute counts. Godspeed!”



Chapter 5

ARRIVAL

*Vénissieux Camp*

AUGUST 26, 1942

THE HOURS DRAGGED ON interminably, and thirst ravaged the refugees in the bus, now full to bursting. The asphyxiating heat dehydrated the youngest ones, and several older men and women had fainted. Women tried in vain to revive the weak by fanning them. Children wriggled their heads out of the windows, gasping for breath like fish out of the fishbowl. Rachel's body was drenched with sweat. The melted chocolate that Fani had given her coated her parched throat.

"We'll be there soon," Fani said with false cheer. But Rachel, strangled by heat and exhaustion, could not spare the energy to respond.

The older gendarme, whom they had learned was named Antoine, shuffled down the aisle, trying to calm everyone's nerves. He served water to the weakest of the older refugees. When he passed by Rachel, he stopped and studied her for a moment.

"Don't worry, little one. I've got a daughter your age. They're

taking you to a work camp, but you'll be treated well. The French gendarmerie won't allow anything bad to happen to you."

Fani nodded at him, grateful for the gesture. The man was only following orders after all, though Fani wondered how anyone could go along with such inhumane treatment. She had grown up in Belgium, and it was hard for her to accept that the world had gone completely mad. All the hatred she now witnessed—had it been secretly growing for years, just waiting for the moment to strike? She had seen how Jews were treated in Paris. Then, when Fani and the rest of Zelman's family arrived in Alba-la-Romaine, they had been forcibly crammed together with all the other refugees in an abandoned warehouse with no drinking water or heat.

The policeman was continuing his round toward the front of the bus when a woman dressed in a leather coat, despite the suffocating heat, stopped him. Her sons, twin boys, were balanced one on each hip. Ridiculously, they were dressed as little sailors.

"Gendarme, sir, please, if you'll allow me to leave, I can offer you a great deal of money. My husband owned a famous jewelry store in Valence. We have a lot of money hidden away. Please . . ."

The gendarme frowned and shimmied away from her. He did not make it far before another woman stopped him.

"Sir, if you let me and my family go, I'll do whatever you ask," she whispered.

"Good God, woman!" He huffed off and rejoined his companion at the front.

The bus stopped at a railroad crossing. Rachel and Fani's bus was the first in a convoy of half a dozen vehicles. One mother took advantage of the stop. She held her five-year-old son out of the window and let him down as gently as she could. The child was stunned when he hit the pavement but within seconds was

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up, gripping his pained right arm and running toward a cornfield. The doors of several buses in the convoy opened and two gendarmes raced after the boy. The rest of the police waited to see if anyone else would attempt a similar stunt.

The boy ran like the devil was after him. He scurried into the cornfields and disappeared. Cheers erupted from the crowded buses. From behind Fani, an older man named Jacob said, "We should all do the same. Some of us would make it."

"But where would we flee to?" Fani asked. Since July the authorities had been hunting Jews like rabbits. All they could do was hope for mercy from the French government or hope for the war to end soon.

Jacob sighed and shook his head. "My family tried to get to Australia, but do you know what the Australian ambassador at the Evian Conference said? He said that his country didn't have race problems and he wasn't going to bring half a million Jews in to create one. No one wants us. We escaped from Vienna when it fell to the Nazis. They made me scrub the city streets on my knees and dry the stones with my beard as they kicked me over and over. You know who did it? It was my very own students. I was a high school teacher. I taught philosophy, and the year before my students adored me. But when Hitler took over Austria, the world turned upside down. Vienna had been the most tolerant city for Jews in the entire Austro-Hungarian Empire."

The two policemen returned to the buses without the child. The boy's mother was smiling with relief. She held a baby in her arms and knew that anywhere would be better for her older son than falling into the hands of Nazi collaborators.

A woman across the aisle shook her head and tsked. "Have you lost your mind?" she demanded to the mother. "It's dangerous for

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your boy to be out in that field alone. He could fall in a ditch or get bitten by a snake or a scorpion.”

“That’s better than being forced into a slaughterhouse.”

“They’re taking us to work,” Jacob interrupted. “The Nazis need our manual labor in order to win the war.”

“That’s what the Armenians thought in 1915, too, when the Turks killed millions of them or let them starve to death,” the runaway’s mother said.

A collective sigh arose as soon as the buses were on the move again, a mixture of relief and renewed fear. At least now there was a bit of airflow from the windows.

Within an hour they had arrived at the gates of the Vénissieux camp. The passengers were greeted with the sight of the French flag snapping above long brick barracks.

*Chapter 6*

## JUSTUS

*Grenoble*

AUGUST 26, 1942

JUSTUS ROSENBERG STRUGGLED TO accurately recall the faces of his family members in Danzig. He had managed to escape the city just before the Nazis took it over in 1939. His father was a famous watchmaker who served an elite clientele throughout Europe. Before the Nazis arrived, he had prepared an escape route for his wife, Sara, and their daughter, Ruth, but in the end everything unraveled. He got Justus on a ship to Calais the day before the Germans arrived; the rest of the family would sail a week later when all their papers were in order, but by that time it was too late. The Nazis forced all the Jews into ghettos, and Justus heard no more from them.

Justus had spent his time in Paris studying at the Janson de Sailly School, but when the Nazis occupied Paris, he went to Toulouse, where refugees were being housed in the former Pax cinema. There he met two young women, one of them from the United States. The American took him with her to Marseille

where a rescue committee was being organized. The committee was tasked with getting French intellectuals and those of other nationalities out of the country. The US government had sent the journalist Varian Fry to oversee the operation, and Justus soon began working for Fry. When the Vichy government expelled Fry from the country in August 1941, Fry was not able to take Justus with him. The young man then tried to escape over the border to Spain, but he was arrested. The judge over his case was merciful and only fined him a small fee.

After all of that, he settled in Grenoble and rented a room for a modest sum. Yet his money began to run out, and he grew desperate. His father had told him that, if things ever got bad enough in France, he should try to get to Spain, and Justus was ready to try again. He had one uncle in Germany and had seen him before escaping to Paris, but another uncle lived in the Spanish protectorate of Morocco.

But that morning the gendarmes surprised him at the home where he was boarding.

“You can’t take the boy! He’s done nothing wrong!” Madame Damour, his landlady, protested, though she knew all about Justus’s work with the students in the Resistance movement at the University of Grenoble.

“Ma’am, your lodger is a Jew. He’s got to be taken to an internment camp.”

The gray-haired woman clung to her boarder in defiance. “Since when is it a crime in France to be a Jew?”

“We’re just following orders.” The gendarme yanked Justus away. Madame Damour lost her balance and fell to the floor.

“Madame Damour!” Justus called.

“Don’t worry about me, son. Take care of yourself. You’ll be in

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my prayers.”

The gendarmes carried him suspended above the ground between them and shoved him into a truck with other prisoners. Justus picked himself up off the floor of the truck and looked around. Some twenty men were seated in two rows. A teenage boy nearby made room for him.

“You can sit here. Where ten men fit, eleven will too. I’m Lazarus.”

The rest of the prisoners on the bench scooted reluctantly.

“Thank you,” Justus said.

“We’ve got to lend each other a hand.”

“I’m Justus Rosenberg.”

“Are you Polish?” the young man asked.

“Yes; are you?”

The boy shook his head. “Nope, Czech. This truck is a miniature Babel. Juan is Lithuanian, and Abraham is Russian.” Lazarus nodded at two boys who raised their eyebrows to return the greeting.

“Do you know where they’re taking us?” Justus asked.

“Somewhere near Lyon, and from there to Germany, or to your country, Poland.”

Justus shivered.

“What is it?” Lazarus asked.

“I saw my uncle in Berlin just before the war started. He was a professor, but he wasn’t allowed to teach anymore. The Jews were treated terribly there, like animals.”

Lazarus glanced at his other two companions. “Well, we’ve been thinking up a way to escape. Don’t you think that’s our only option?”

Justus did agree. He would rather die shot in the back than

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fall into the hands of the Nazis. He leaned forward. The canvas cover blocked their view, but from the potholes he could tell they were not on a main road. He wondered for the millionth time what had become of his family. The worst feeling of his life was the sensation of being an orphan and knowing that not one soul cared what happened to him. If he disappeared from the face of the earth, he would be utterly and entirely forgotten. He closed his eyes and tried to remember the prayers he had been taught at the synagogue when he was younger, but his mind was blank. It seemed that his entire life in Poland had been erased. His brain expertly blocked whatever had once been happy to protect him from the melancholy that would otherwise become unbearable.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

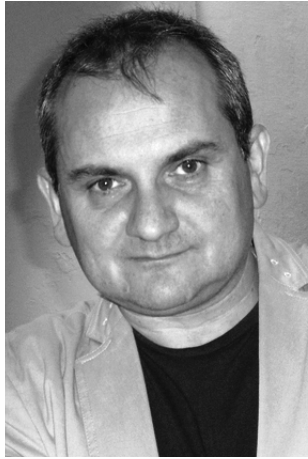


Photo by Elisabeth Monje

MARIO ESCOBAR, a *USA TODAY* and international best-selling author, has a master's degree in modern history and has written numerous books and articles that delve into the depths of church history, the struggle of sectarian groups, and the discovery and colonization of the Americas. Escobar, who makes his home in Madrid, Spain, is passionate about history and its mysteries.

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## ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR



Photo by Sally Chambers

GRETCHEN ABERNATHY worked full-time in the Spanish Christian publishing world for several years until her first child was born. Since then, she has worked as a freelance editor and translator. Her focus includes translating and editing for the *Journal of Latin American Theology* and supporting the production of materials related to the Nueva Versión Internacional and New International Reader's Version of the Bible. Chilean poetry, the occasional thriller novel, and a book on Latin American protest music spice up her work routines. She and her husband make their home in Nashville, Tennessee, with their two sons.