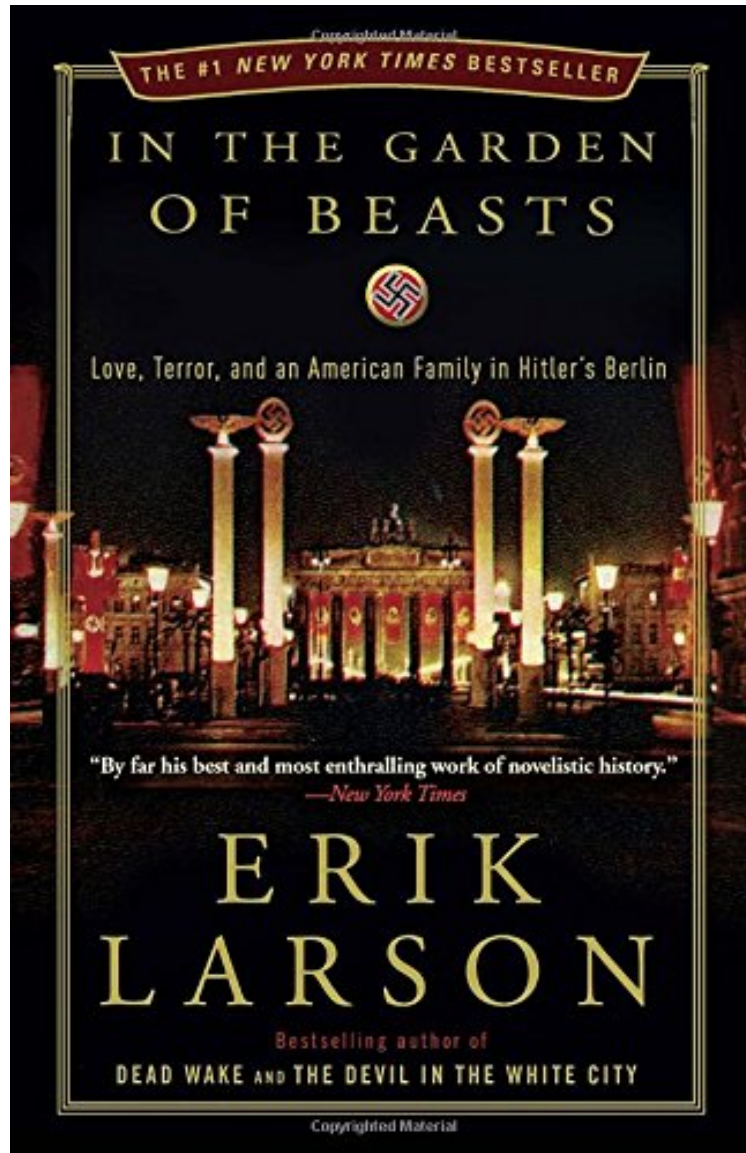


(Mobile book) In the Garden of Beasts: Love, Terror, and an American Family in Hitler's Berlin

# In the Garden of Beasts: Love, Terror, and an American Family in Hitler's Berlin

Erik Larson

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**Erik Larson : In the Garden of Beasts: Love, Terror, and an American Family in Hitler's Berlin** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised In the Garden of Beasts: Love, Terror, and an American Family in Hitler's Berlin:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Factual AND irresistibly fascinating account of Germany in the last dark days before WWII and the Holocaust! By The Dude In these Trumpian times, I have found reading about the history of Nazism strangely informative. This book is based on a whole host of historical documents and actual personal correspondence of many of the chief characters. Therefore, it's a docudrama in the most honest sense. This is what the gathering storm of Nazism looked like to an American ambassador. This is how different elements of German society actually responded to the growing allure of the imminent "Deutschland Uber Alles". As the famous philosopher Santayana said, "The one who cannot remember is bound to live through it again." Coincidentally, that quote is also on a plaque at the Auschwitz Concentration Camp. Didn't know that before checking for the accurate quote before writing it in this review.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Why was this book written? By Allen Smalling Not my favorite Erik Larson book. An American diplomatic family is sent to Berlin in the early days of the Third Reich and the father/Ambassador -- chosen against type by FDR for his liberal, academic views in contrast to the conservative "striped-pants" brigade out to thwart him -- fights a losing battle against the anti-Semitism and loss of liberty he sees going on all around him. Detailed, almost unnecessarily so, but by the time the American family heads home in 1936 you wonder why this book was written.

9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Too little, too late (3.5\*s) By J. Grattan This book is an interesting, though somewhat limited, perspective on the growing power of the Nazi's during the year 1933-34 after Hitler was appointed chancellor, as seen through the eyes of the newly appointed American ambassador to Germany William Dodd and his twenty-something daughter Martha. In a way, they are the perfect metaphor for the blindness of the German's to the transformation of their society; each of them had their private concerns upon arriving in Berlin in July, 1933, and remained largely unaware for quite some time of the summary arrests and brutal treatment that were frequently occurring. The author relies on their dairies and writings of their associates to show that they finally realized that they were in the midst of a nightmare. William Dodd, a history professor at the University of Chicago, working on a multi-volume history of the Old South, was about as far from the typical ambassador as one could get. His last moment, desperate appointment by FDR combined with his lack of wealth, frugal ways, and failure to take a leading role in German social political circles almost immediately drew the ire of veterans in the US Foreign Service - a good old boys' club. Martha, a sprightly, good-looking girl, seemed to be best at easily attracting boyfriends, including the head of the Gestapo Rudolph Diels and a Russian diplomat with ties to the KGB. Much of the book consists of the social activities of Martha and the strained relationship of William with not only the US State Dept, but with various German officials. This was a time when Jews were being legally banned from being doctors and lawyers or writing for publications. It is doubtful that the Dodd's appreciated that their faint anti-Semitism was but a forerunner to the grisly policies of the Nazi's. When the Dodd's first arrived in Germany, Hitler's power was not yet complete, the major obstacles being President Hindenburg and the army. In addition, there were rivalries and overlap among the SA (Storm Troopers under Ernst Rohm), the SS (security forces), and the Gestapo (the secret police). Any delusions of the world community that Hitler would follow rules of law and be confined to his duties as chancellor came to an abrupt end on the night of June 30, 1934, when he rounded up several hundred officials and others who he deemed to be a threat, including Rohm, and had them summarily executed. Even then, Hitler was able to convince the vast majority of Germans that his actions were in their best interests. Amazingly enough, Dodd remained in his post until Dec, 1937, when his adversaries in the State Dept finally convinced Roosevelt to replace him. It is acknowledged that he was one of the few voices that saw what was occurring in Germany, but his efforts and those of others were far too little and too late to prevent Hitler's fanaticism from devastating Europe. The author obviously makes the assumption that at least the rudiments of Hitler's rise to power are known to readers. However, the book begs for a good introduction that tells of that rise and more importantly some reflection on the willingness of the German people to follow the dictates of a monster. The book is not without some historical detail, but is more concerned with personalities. Yet, despite that focus, they remain rather vague, in particular Martha. The book, indirectly, is best at showing the difficulties of perceiving and being susceptible to an inimical culture. It is the extremely rare person who can see the truth of a culture and then actually convey that to an uninterested or hostile public. Dodd was at most only a fringe player in that regard. The author does not indicate any Germans who sounded the alarm in a substantial way, although, certainly after June 30, that would have been a death sentence.

Erik Larson, New York Times bestselling author of *Devil in the White City*, delivers a remarkable story set during Hitler's rise to power. The time is 1933, the place, Berlin, when William E. Dodd becomes America's first ambassador to Hitler's Nazi Germany in a year that proved to be a turning point in history. A mild-mannered professor from Chicago, Dodd brings along his wife, son, and flamboyant daughter, Martha. At first Martha is entranced by the parties and pomp, and the handsome young men of the Third Reich with their infectious enthusiasm for restoring Germany to a position of world prominence. Enamored of the New Germany, she has one affair after another, including with the surprisingly honorable first chief of the Gestapo, Rudolf Diels. But as evidence of Jewish persecution mounts, confirmed by chilling first-person testimony, her father telegraphs his concerns to a largely indifferent State Department back home. Dodd watches with alarm as Jews are attacked, the press is censored, and

drafts of frightening new laws begin to circulate. As that first year unfolds and the shadows deepen, the Dodds experience days full of excitement, intrigue, romance and ultimately, horror, when a climactic spasm of violence and murder reveals Hitler's true character and ruthless ambition. Suffused with the tense atmosphere of the period, and with unforgettable portraits of the bizarre Gring and the expectedly charming--yet wholly sinister--Goebbels, *In the Garden of Beasts* lends a stunning, eyewitness perspective on events as they unfold in real time, revealing an era of surprising nuance and complexity. The result is a dazzling, addictively readable work that speaks volumes about why the world did not recognize the grave threat posed by Hitler until Berlin, and Europe, were awash in blood and terror.

.com Best Books of the Month, May 2011: *In the Garden of Beasts* is a vivid portrait of Berlin during the first years of Hitler's reign, brought to life through the stories of two people: William E. Dodd, who in 1933 became America's first ambassador to Hitler's regime, and his scandalously carefree daughter, Martha. Ambassador Dodd, an unassuming and scholarly man, is an odd fit among the extravagance of the Nazi elite. His frugality annoys his fellow Americans in the State Department and Dodd's growing misgivings about Hitler's ambitions fall on deaf ears among his peers, who are content to give Hitler everything he wants. Martha, on the other hand, is mesmerized by the glamorous parties and the high-minded conversation of Berlin's salon society and flings herself headlong into numerous affairs with the city's elite, most notably the head of the Gestapo and a Soviet spy. Both become players in the exhilarating (and terrifying) story of Hitler's obsession for absolute power, which culminates in the events of one murderous night, later known as the Night of Long Knives. The rise of Nazi Germany is a well-chronicled time in history, which makes *In the Garden of Beasts* all the more remarkable. Erik Larson has crafted a gripping, deeply-intimate narrative with a climax that reads like the best political thriller, where we are stunned with each turn of the page, even though we already know the outcome. --Shane Hansanuwat #1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER NEW YORK TIMES NOTABLE BOOK OF THE YEAR WASHINGTON POST NOTABLE BOOK OF THE YEAR NPR BEST BOOK OF THE YEAR O, THE OPRAH MAGAZINE BEST BOOK OF THE YEAR USA TODAY 10 BOOKS WE LOVED PUBLISHERS WEEKLY BEST NONFICTION BOOK OF THE YEAR KIRKUS REVIEWS BEST NONFICTION BOOK OF THE YEAR NEW YORK TIMES, JANET MASLIN'S TOP 10 BOOKS OF THE YEAR SEATTLE TIMES BEST BOOK OF THE YEAR THE WEEK BEST NONFICTION BOOK OF THE YEAR GLOBE AND MAIL VERY BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR AMERICAN BOOKSELLERS ASSOCIATION INDIE BOOK OF THE YEAR By far his best and most enthralling work of novelistic history. Powerful, poignant and transportingly true story. New York Times Reads like an elegant thriller utterly compelling marvelous stuff. An excellent and entertaining book that deserves to be a bestseller, and probably will be. Washington Post The most important book of 2011. O, The Oprah Magazine A dazzling amalgam of reportage. Reads like a suspense novel, replete with colorful characters, both familiar and those previously relegated to the shadows. Like Christopher Isherwood's *Berlin Stories* or Victor Klemperer's *Diaries*, *IN THE GARDEN OF BEASTS* is an on-the-ground documentary of a society going mad in slow motion. Chicago Sun-Times Fascinating... A master at writing true tales as riveting as fiction. People (3 1/2 stars) Larson has meticulously researched the Dodds intimate witness to Hitler's ascendancy and created an edifying narrative of this historical byway that has all the pleasures of a political thriller. a fresh picture of these terrible events. New York Times Book Larson, a master of historical nonfiction, has written a fascinating book that, although carefully researched and documented, reads like a political thriller... highly recommended to anyone interested in the rise of the Third Reich and America's role in that process. Jewish Book World Larson's strengths as a storyteller have never been stronger than they are here, and this story is far more important than either "The Devil in the White City" or "Thunderstruck." How the United States dithered as Hitler rose to power is a cautionary tale that bears repeating, and Larson has told it masterfully. Cleveland Plain Dealer Larson has done it again, expertly weaving together a fresh new narrative from ominous days of the 20th century. Associated Press Mesmerizing... cinematic, improbable yet true. Philadelphia Inquirer Compelling... the kind of book that brings history alive. USA TODAY [G]ripping, a nightmare narrative of a terrible time. It raises again the question never fully answered about the Nazi era: what evil humans are capable of, and what means are necessary to cage the beast. Seattle Times A stunning work of history. Newsweek Tells a fascinating story brilliantly well. Financial Times A cautionary tale not to be missed. Washington Times Highly compelling... Larson brings Berlin roaring to life in all its glamour and horror... a welcome new chapter in the vast canon of World War II literature. Christian Science Monitor Terrific storytelling. Los Angeles Times Vivid and immediate... a fascinating and gripping account. Washington Independent of Books Gripping... a story of stunning impact. New York Daily News Larson is superb at creating a you-are-there sense of time and place. *In the Garden of Beasts* is also a superb book... nothing less than masterful. Toronto Globe and Mail Harrowing suspenseful. Vogue.com Larson has taken a brilliant idea and turned it into a gripping book. Women's Wear Daily A gripping, deeply-intimate narrative with a climax that reads like the best political thriller, where we are stunned with each turn of the page. Louisville Courier Journal Electrifying reading... fascinating. Minneapolis Star-Tribune Larson's books are tightly focused and meticulously researched, but they also are rich in anecdote and detail from the homey mundane to the tragic, the absurd and the downright funny. His prose has an austere, compassionate lyricism. His narratives have novelistic pull... his psychological perception and empathic imagination lend flesh to the documents, music to the

ballrooms. He gives a throbbing pulse to the foolish and the wise, the malignant and the kind. *The Oregonian* A masterly work of salacious nonfiction that captures the decadent and deadly years of The Third Reich. *Men's Journal* Even though we know how it will end the book's climax, the Night of the Long Knives, being just the beginning, this is a page-turner, full of flesh and blood people and monsters too, whose charms are particularly disturbing. *Portsmouth Herald* Larson's latest chronicle of history has as much excitement as a thriller novel, and it's all the more thrilling because it's all true. *Asbury Park Press* Larson succeeds brilliantly offers a fascinating window into the year when the world began its slow slide into war. *Maclean's* Larson's scholarship is impressive, but it's his pacing and knack for suspense that elevates the book from the matter-of-fact to the sublime. *Pittsburgh Tribune-* [A] brilliant tour de force of nonfiction writing...Larson, as always, conjures magic with the details, and often injects a welcome dollop of dark humor...In *The Garden of Beasts* serves as both a serious, insightful look at history, and a stern warning against national complacency when you're being run by a dictator who is both vicious and undeniably off his rocker. *Dallas Morning News* Like slipping slowly into a nightmare, with logic perverted and morality upended. It all makes for a powerful, unsettling immediacy. *Vanity Fair* A master of nonfiction storytelling...Larson once again gathers an astounding amount of historical detail to re-create scene after vivid scene...a stunning, provocative immersion...a call to citizens in all nations to investigate the motives of power brokers and government officials, to stand our ground when we see others' moral compasses going awry. *Dallas/Fort Worth Star-Telegram* Excellent. *Salon.com* No other author...has the ability to actually live up to that old adage of making history come alive. What Larson is doing is creating a world that no longer exists on the page...[He] not only succeeds but is able to turn what one would expect to be tedium into page-turning brilliance. *Digital Americana* Narrative nonfiction at its finest, this story drops into 1933 Berlin as William E. Dodd becomes the first U.S. ambassador to Hitler's Germany a tale of intrigue, romance, and foreboding. *Kansas City Star* One of the most popular history books this year...offers something for both serious students of the 1930s and for lovers of charming stories. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* Erik Larson tackles this outstanding period of history as fully and compellingly as he portrayed the events in his bestseller, *The Devil in the White City*. With each page, more horrors are revealed, making it impossible to put down. In *The Garden of Beasts* reads like the true thriller it is. *BookReporter.com* In this mesmerizing portrait of the Nazi capital, Larson plumbs a far more diabolical urban cauldron than in his bestselling *The Devil in the White City*...a vivid, atmospheric panorama of the Third Reich and its leaders, including murderous Nazi factional infighting, through the accretion of small crimes and petty thuggery. *Publishers Weekly* (Starred ) An excellent study, taking a tiny instant of modern history and giving it specific weight, depth and meaning. *Kirkus* (Starred ) A brilliant and often infuriating account of the experiences and evolving attitudes of the Dodd family during Hitler's critical first year in power. With the benefit of hindsight, of course, the Dodds seem almost criminally ignorant, but Larson treats them with a degree of compassion that elevates them to tragic status. *Booklist* (Starred ) Larson writes history like a novelist...conveying quite wonderfully the electrically charged atmosphere of a whole society turning towards the stormy dark. *The Telegraph* Praise for Erik Larson **THUNDERSTRUCK** A ripping yarn of murder and invention. *Los Angeles Times* Larson's gift for rendering an historical era with vibrant tactility and filling it with surprising personalities makes *Thunderstruck* an irresistible tale. *The Washington Post Book World* Gripping. An edge-of-the-seat read. *People* **DEVIL IN THE WHITE CITY** [Larson] relentlessly fuses history and entertainment to give this nonfiction book the dramatic effect of a novel. a dynamic, enveloping book. *The New York Times* A hugely engrossing chronicle of events public and private. Exceedingly well-documented, exhaustive without being excessive, and utterly fascinating. *Chicago Tribune* An irresistible page-turner that reads like the most compelling, sleep-defying fiction. *Time Out New York* **ISAACS STORM** A gripping account fascinating to its core, and all the more compelling for being true. *New York Times Book Superb...* Larson has made the Great Hurricane live again. *The Wall Street Journal* Gripping. The Jaws of hurricane yarns. *Newsday* About the Author **ERIK LARSON** is the author of the national bestsellers *Thunderstruck*, *The Devil in the White City*, and *Isaac's Storm*. [ErikLarsonBooks.com](http://ErikLarsonBooks.com)