

The Last Train: A Holocaust Story

Rona Arato

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The Last Train is the harrowing true story about young brothers Paul and Oscar Arato and their mother, Lenke, surviving the Nazi occupation during the final years of World War II.

Living in the town of Karcag, Hungary, the Aratos feel insulated from the war — even as it rages all around them. Hungary is allied with Germany to protect its citizens from invasion, but in 1944 Hitler breaks his promise to keep the Nazis out of Hungary.

The Nazi occupation forces the family into situations of growing panic and fear: first into a ghetto in their hometown; then a labor camp in Austria; and, finally, to the deadly Bergen Belsen camp deep in the heart of Germany. Separated from their father, 6-year-old Paul and 11-year-old Oscar must care for their increasingly sick mother, all while trying to maintain some semblance of normalcy amid the horrors of the camp.

In the spring of 1945, the boys see British planes flying over the camp, and a spark of hope that the war will soon end ignites. And then, they are forced onto a dark, stinking boxcar by the Nazi guards. After four days on the train, the boys are convinced they will be killed, but through a twist of fate, the train is discovered and liberated by a battalion of American soldiers marching through Germany.

The book concludes when Paul, now a grown man living in Canada, stumbles upon photographs on the internet of his train being liberated. After writing to the man who posted the pictures, Paul is presented with an opportunity to meet his rescuers at a reunion in New York — but first he must decide if he is prepared to reopen the wounds of his past.



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