



Love in the Tempest of History: A French Resistance Story

Aude Yung-de Prevaux

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In 1966, a young student doing research in the National Library of France was confronted by an elderly gentleman who had overheard her name. Despite her polite denials, he insisted that she must be the daughter of the Resistance heroes Jacques and Lotka de Prevaux. Curious about the strange episode, Aude Yung-de Prevaux recounted the story to her mother. To Aude's amazement, her mother confirmed the old man's account and, shockingly, admitted she was actually Aude's aunt. Thus began an odyssey of discovery that uncovered not only Aude Yung-de Prevaux's own hidden history, but also that of her tragic parents and their doomed love -- one of the most haunting stories of the Second World War. Using the tattered letters and military records she found in the trunks containing her father's belongings -- now reclaimed from a godfather living in Morocco -- as well as personal interviews, Yung-de Prevaux has reconstructed the lives of the parents she never knew. From the shadows of the chaotic war years emerges her real father, brother to the one she had known. Jacques Trolley de Prevaux was a brilliant and handsome vice admiral with a gift for diplomacy -- and a penchant for literature, bohemian company, and opium. A slave to his appetites, as well as to his high ideals, he suffered all his life from contradictory impulses -- loyalty to the navy, now controlled by Vichy, and loyalty to an independent France; respect for tradition and scorn for society's suffocating rules; dedication to family and a thirst for adventure; duty to his wife and passion for his soul mate. From the murkiness of a Polish shtetl and the seething throngs of turn-of-the-century New York, with all the prejudices of the Old World and the sufferings of the New, emerged the true image of Aude's mother, Charlotte Leitner, known to everyone as Lotka. A beautiful American-born Polish Jew who worked as a fashion model in Paris, this headstrong and fiery woman refused to stay any course not of her own choosing. Across class, social, and religious lines she pursued her love, and she stole his heart with no regard for the cost. To the horror of his staunchly Catholic haute-bourgeois family and her insecure and modest Jewish parents, these lovers sloughed off their former selves, married, and forged a new life. With boundless faith that their love would overcome all obstacles, they set out to create their own world -- until the horrors of war shattered their reality. And yet chaos would bring out their most heroic selves -- and cause their ultimate destruction. They pledged themselves to the service of their country in its darkest hour, and the bravery they demonstrated as a couple made them two of the most significant Resistance fighters in the south of France. But for all their bravery, nothing would redeem them to Jacques' indignant family, not even the tragic climax when, betrayed days before the Allies liberated their prison, they were executed on the orders of Klaus Barbie in August 1944 -- making an orphan of the author, their little girl. This extraordinary story, revealed as a result of one woman's quest to discover her past, recaptures a lost chapter in the history of a nation at war and returns to the pantheon two of its most romantic heroes.

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