



Born Survivors: Three Young Mothers and Their Extraordinary Story of Courage, Defiance, and Hope

By Wendy Holden

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The Nazis murdered their husbands but concentration camp prisoners Priska, Rachel, and Anka would not let evil take their unborn children too—a remarkable true story that will appeal to readers of *The Lost* and *The Nazi Officer's Wife*, *Born Survivors* celebrates three mothers who defied death to give their children life.

Eastern Europe, 1944: Three women believe they are pregnant, but are torn from their husbands before they can be certain. Rachel is sent to Auschwitz, unaware that her husband has been shot. Priska and her husband travel there together, but are immediately separated. Also at Auschwitz, Anka hopes in vain to be reunited with her husband. With the rest of their families gassed, these young wives are determined to hold on to all they have left—their lives, and those of their unborn babies. Having concealed their condition from infamous Nazi doctor Josef Mengele, they are forced to work and almost starved to death, living in daily fear of their pregnancies being detected by the SS.

In April 1945, as the Allies close in, Priska gives birth. She and her baby, along with Anka, Rachel, and the remaining inmates, are sent to Mauthausen concentration camp on a hellish seventeen-day train journey. Rachel gives birth on the train, and Anka at the camp gates. All believe they will die, but then a miracle occurs. The gas chamber runs out of Zyklon-B, and as the Allied troops near, the SS flee. Against all odds, the three mothers and their newborns survive their treacherous journey to freedom.

On the seventieth anniversary of Mauthausen's liberation from the Nazis by American soldiers, renowned biographer Wendy Holden recounts this extraordinary story of three children united by their mothers' unbelievable—yet ultimately successful—fight for survival.

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- Sales Rank: #336441 in Books
- Published on: 2015-05-05
- Released on: 2015-05-05
- Ingredients: Example Ingredients
- Format: Deckle Edge
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x 1.25" w x 6.00" l, .0 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 400 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

“It’s no surprise *Born Survivors* is gathering excellent reviews.” (*Chicago Tribune*)

“Packed with harrowing detail and impressively well-researched.... Intense, powerful, and moving, more than make up for this. *Born Survivors* is a worthy testament to these three women and the miraculous survival of their children.” (*Jewish Chronicle*)

“A work of quite extraordinary investigative dedication.... A moving testament of faith.” (Sir Harold Evans)

“*Born Survivors*, is exceptionally fresh history, a work of prodigious original research, written with zealous empathy.” (Women in the World, *New York Times* online)

“An astonishing and deeply moving work.... With remarkable detail gleaned from a wealth of research.” (*Booklist* (starred review))

“Even though it occurred more than 70 years ago, the story’s truth is so chillingly portrayed that it seems as if it could have happened recently.... An engrossing, intense, and highly descriptive narrative chronicling the ghastly conditions three pregnant women suffered through at the hands of the Nazis.” (*Kirkus Reviews*)

“Holden’s triple biography is packed with enough contextual information to qualify as a history lesson but makes its impression as a tale of undeniable courage and astonishing love in the face of incredible cruelty and evil.” (*Contra Costa Times*)

“Holden weaves...written, oral and recorded accounts, plus an array of historical records, into a spellbinding story of perseverance amid systematic abuse.” (*American Jewish World*)

From the Back Cover

Among the millions of Holocaust victims sent to Auschwitz II-Birkenau in 1944, Priska, Rachel, and Anka each pass through its infamous gates with a secret. Strangers to one another, they are newly pregnant, and facing an uncertain fate without their husbands. Alone, scared, and with so many loved ones already lost to the Nazis, these young women are privately determined to hold on to all they have left: their lives and those of their unborn babies.

That the gas chambers ran out of Zyklon B just after the babies were born, before they and their mothers could be exterminated, is just one of several miracles that allowed them all to survive and rebuild their lives after World War II. *Born Survivors* follows the mothers’ incredible journey—first to Auschwitz, where they each came under the murderous scrutiny of Dr. Josef Mengele; then to a German slave-labor camp, where, half-starved and almost worked to death, they struggled to conceal their condition; and, finally, as the Allies closed in, their hellish seventeen-day train journey with thousands of other prisoners to the Mauthausen death camp in Austria. Biographer Wendy Holden details the courage and kindness of strangers, including guards and civilians, which helped save these women and their children.

Sixty-five years later, the three “miracle babies” meet for the first time at Mauthausen for the anniversary of

the American liberation. United by their remarkable experiences of survival against all odds, they come to consider each other "siblings of the heart." In *Born Survivors*, Holden brings all three stories together for the first time, to mark their seventieth birthdays and the seventieth anniversary of the ending of the war.

A heart-stopping account of how three mothers and their newborns fought to survive the Holocaust, *Born Survivors* is also a life-affirming celebration of our capacity to care and love amid inconceivable cruelty.

About the Author

Wendy Holden was a journalist for eighteen years, including a decade at the *Daily Telegraph*. She is the author and coauthor of more than thirty books, among them several internationally acclaimed wartime biographies, plus the *New York Times* bestsellers *A Lotus Grows in the Mud* (with Goldie Hawn) and *Lady Blue Eyes* (with Frank Sinatra's widow, Barbara). She lives in Suffolk, England, with her husband and two dogs, and divides her time between the UK and the US.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Frank Huynh:

Typically the book *Born Survivors: Three Young Mothers and Their Extraordinary Story of Courage, Defiance, and Hope* will bring someone to the new experience of reading a new book. The author style to elucidate the idea is very unique. When you try to find new book to read, this book very ideal to you. The book *Born Survivors: Three Young Mothers and Their Extraordinary Story of Courage, Defiance, and Hope* is much recommended to you to read. You can also get the e-book in the official web site, so you can more easily to read the book.

Judith Bode:

The book *Born Survivors: Three Young Mothers and Their Extraordinary Story of Courage, Defiance, and Hope* has a lot details on it. So when you check out this book you can get a lot of profit. The book was compiled by the very famous author. This articles author makes some research just before write this book. This particular book very easy to read you can get the point easily after scanning this book.

Dawn Nelson:

The reason? Because this *Born Survivors: Three Young Mothers and Their Extraordinary Story of Courage, Defiance, and Hope* is an unordinary book that the inside of the book waiting for you to snap this but latter it will surprise you with the secret the idea inside. Reading this book close to it was fantastic author who write the book in such wonderful way makes the content inside of easier to understand, entertaining technique but still convey the meaning fully. So , it is good for you for not hesitating having this nowadays or you going to regret it. This unique book will give you a lot of positive aspects than the other book have such as help improving your expertise and your critical thinking means. So , still want to delay having that book? If I had been you I will go to the book store hurriedly.

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