



Altar of Resistance

Samuel Marquis

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Grounded in historical fact but spiced up with thrilling imagination, Altar of Resistance moves this World War II trilogy forward.

Samuel Marquis picks up his World War II trilogy with *Altar of Resistance*, a well-researched and explosive ride through war-torn Rome with Nazis, booming battles, and intense cat-and-mouse chases.

Near the end of World War II, the Nazis are occupying Rome. Within the borders, four groups clash. A special ops team from America, the Germans and fascists, the Pope and his allies, and Roman citizens waging a guerilla war all circle each other as the world burns around them. All want Rome, and will fight tooth and nail to capture it.

At the center of this conflict is the Kruger family. John Bridger—formerly Gunter Kruger—flees to America and becomes a spec-ops commando. Meanwhile, Teresa Kruger stays behind and entangles herself in the guerilla war as an iconic resistance fighter. Brother and sister fight on opposite sides but toward the same goal—until they discover that their father, long believed to be dead, fights for Hitler's Germany.

When it comes to characters, the Krugers and Pope Pius XII are where the novel shines. Through the Krugers, Marquis highlights how an earth-shattering event affects everyone. The Krugers' points of view are used to examine how a warrior, a rebel, and a father each struggle to do what's right when everything around them is crumbling to dust.

The inclusion of Pope Pius XII is fascinating. Though in reality believed to be either a coward or a Nazi cohort, in the novel he drives himself to the point of collapse to arrange and monitor a network of spies with a single goal: removing Hitler from power. Between these main characters, *Altar of Resistance* weaves a thrilling war adventure with insight into the driving factors that push ordinary people take up arms, even though other character perspectives rely on lackluster clichés.

Strong prose builds up scenes and paints vital details well, describing thrilling battles or the Pope's inner monologues as he shudders under the weight of secrecy. Most of the impact is lessened by expository dialogue, though, that hammers home information and descriptions that have already been made clear.

Plot holes and strange plot contrivances are a distraction, as with Gunter and Teresa's parents shooting each other in the prologue, the many members of the Kruger clan adopting aliases that muddy pacing and development, and a muttered curse that is taken too seriously.

Grounded in historical fact but spiced up with thrilling imagination, *Altar of Resistance* thrusts Rome and a divided German family onto a pivot point with the fate of the world in balance, plowing the trilogy along.

JOHN M. MURRAY (January 9, 2017)

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