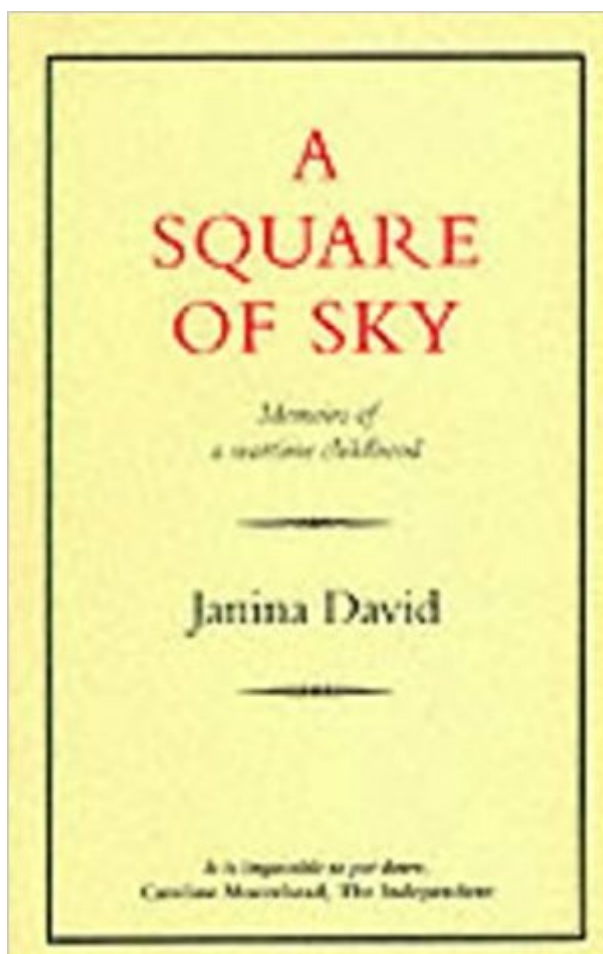


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# A Square Of Sky: Memoirs Of A Wartime Childhood



## Synopsis

The true, devastating story of a Jewish child's survival in wartime Poland, while the rest of her family were killed by the Nazis. Like *The Diary of Anne Frank*, but by a survivor who, instead of her own death, has to come to terms with the death of her parents and her own survival. Made into a massively successful film in Germany, where the author played a crucial role in excavating the legacy of the Holocaust by lecturing on her life

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"impossible to put down" Caroline Moorhead" --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

Janina David (1930-) was born in Poland in 1930, the only child of a middle-class Jewish family. She lost her parents during the war, spent two years in a children's home in France and emigrated to Australia in time for her 18th birthday. Eventually she was able to continue her education, graduating from Melbourne University in Social Studies. In 1958 she settled in England, and worked in various London hospitals as a social worker. In 1978 she left social work to become a full-time writer. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

My husband's parents were in Warsaw (non-Jews) during the same time. They were "rounded up" and Father was sent to Buchenwald (concentration and labor camp) and Mother was sent to a German work farm. They both survived. Very sad to hear the horror from a Jewish survivor. Not the same circumstances, but a very revealing and riveting "real life and death" family experience as

related by the young daughter. The picture of this time-frame in Poland became more clear for me. This is a must read. It should not be forgotten how one specific group of people (God's chosen people) were singled out by a mad man for extermination and how it was almost achieved.

Enjoyed the book very much - will share that is for sure! Hard to believe a young girl of just 9 was able to survive so much pain, separation, hunger etc.....most of the time alone.

This is a story of an only child growing up in a terrible time. It describes a life in the Warsaw ghetto when people still go about their daily functions under the most dreadful of conditions. Gradually, the situation worsens, and to save one member of the family, Janina is sent out to freedom of sorts. The family friend can't keep her, and makes arrangements for her to go to a boarding school run by nuns. There, she must be careful not to draw too much attention to herself as being different. She is one of the "private" boarders. The family friend makes infrequent visits to her. The book is descriptive and interesting. Friends are made and lost. It is a coming of age story while giving a history lesson you won't forget.

I like wartime childhood stories. Not only wartime but I like most true stories. True stories are the best. Fantastic!

Janina David was born in 1930 into a prosperous Jewish family living in Kalisz, close to what was then Poland's western border with Germany. (The border having moved, Kalisz is now in central Poland). Aware that an attack on Poland was imminent, and of the treatment of Jews by the Nazis, Janina's family moved in late summer 1939 to what was regarded at the time as the relative safety of Warsaw. But Poland was unable to resist the Wehrmacht for long and, following a terrifying bombardment, Warsaw fell and was occupied. The flight to Warsaw, the bombardment, and all associated experiences made a deep impression on nine and a half year old Janina and are well described in *A Square of Sky*, the book she published in 1964, by which time she was living and working in London. She also recalls life in Kalisz and two summer holidays before the war spent in the company of the family's interestingly unreliable servant girl, Stefa, in a holiday flat in a villa some short distance from a Polish village she calls Crossways. In 1946, at the end of *A Touch of Earth* - the second part of her memoir and also included in this volume - Janina returns to the villa and finds Christina, the now grown-up daughter of the former owner. Christina reports that at the villa the war had been very quiet; Germans came no closer than the main road and seemed not to find the lane

that led to the villa. "... if you had stayed here", said Christina, "no one would have known... Your parents and you and Stefa. You could have had the empty flat..."At that point Janina had to break-off the conversation and go for a walk alone. For during those years so undisturbed at the villa she had lost both her parents and virtually all her other pre-war acquaintances. All the family's property was gone too. She had lived with her parents in the Warsaw Ghetto, enduring all its horrors right up to the point of the uprising prompted by its final clearance to Treblinka in summer 1943. At the eleventh hour she was smuggled out and after briefly staying with a Roman Catholic family in Warsaw was placed in a convent boarding school. Some at least of the nuns drew their own conclusions about her race and very early one morning, when the nuns correctly judged that a visit from the Gestapo was imminent, Janina was rushed to another convent - back in Warsaw. There she joined children who had been evacuated from a school in eastern Poland, in a building that by chance bordered on the former ghetto. Again she endured many deeply disturbing and distressing experiences, and again she witnessed preparations for an uprising, this time the August 1944 attempt by Polish nationalists to themselves drive out the Germans. The nuns led another hasty retreat, this time to a country mansion in an area held by Germany almost to the end of the war. There malnutrition became a major problem, yet another serious threat to Janina's survival. All is movingly described and, so far as one can discern, very accurately too. I have scarcely touched on the horrors, but Janina does not shrink from them. Neither, though, does she sensationalize. The shocking fact that human beings can adjust to almost unimaginable degradation and suffering she leaves to speak for itself.

A powerfully moving story of one child's experience of truly living an endless nightmare. Like all holocaust novels, this one will remain in your memory for a long time after you have put down the book. In it you will feel the pain and anguish of the innocent, the determined and resolute will to survive, the sacrificial love between a parent and child, pictured boldly in sharp contrast to the unmerciful evil of the world, the cold hearted disrespect for basic human dignity, the animal nature found in our fellow human brothers and sisters. Unless others walk in a holocaust survivors shoes, they cannot possibly ever appreciate the trauma, the life changing permanent imprint, the pain that will never recede, so unjustly inflicted. Let it end forever.

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