

# Even in Darkness: A Tale of Survival and Hope

*After 15 years researching the stories and letters of her German-Jewish family from the Holocaust, author Barbara Stark-Nemon preserves their legacy in her debut novel*

## Even in Darkness by Barbara Stark-Nemon

As a child, Barbara Stark-Nemon grew up listening to her grandfather's unforgettable tales of their family's former life in Europe. Barbara's favorite story was the one of how her grandfather, an attorney, arranged to escape Germany with Barbara's mother and grandmother in 1938, only weeks before Kristallnacht. But there was one story that intrigued Barbara more than any other: How did her grandfather's sister, who did not escape during the Holocaust, manage to survive, and why had she remained in Germany living with a Catholic priest?

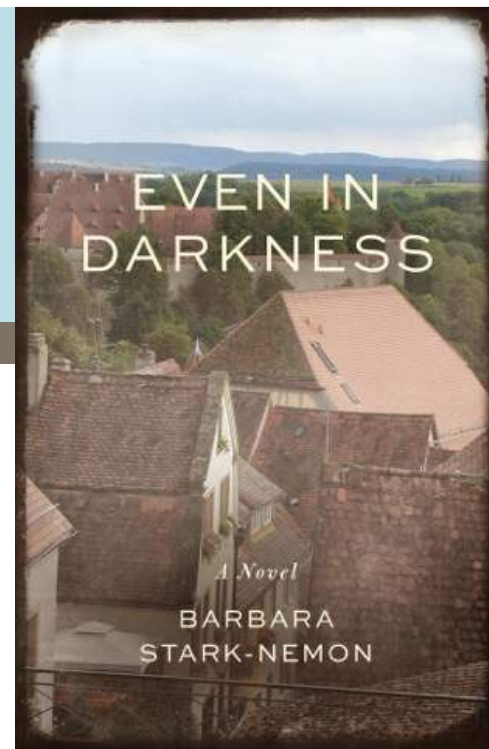
Written as a historical novel based on this true story, *Even in Darkness* is the harrowing saga of family, lovers, two world wars, and the Holocaust, revealing a vivid portrait of Germany during the twentieth century. Spanning a century and three continents, the book tells the story of Kläre Kohler, whose origins in a prosperous German-Jewish family hardly anticipate the second half of her long life in a loving relationship with Ansel Beckmann, a German priest half her age.

The story begins when Kläre's only concern is her marriage to Jakob Kohler. But, as Germany erupts into WWI, Kläre must learn to navigate the dangerous place her home has become and then protect her growing family. By 1939, the Nazis have assumed power, and Kläre is trapped in Germany by loyalty to her war-injured husband and aging mother. She arranges escape for her sons, but is then deported to the concentration camp Theresienstadt. Walking the razor edge of death daily, Kläre uses her position as a massage therapist to the commandant to survive and assist other internees. Meanwhile, her children meet danger and desperation in their new lives in Palestine and England.

Ansel's connection to Kläre comes after the loss of his mother and time in an orphanage, and continues through his university studies during the Nazi years, and a harrowing military experience on the Russian front.

In the most unlikely circumstances, Kläre and Ansel not only survive, but find renewed meaning in a life with each other. Their relationship transcends the boundaries of generation, religion, and societal expectation, bearing witness to the way in which love, as redemption for pain and suffering, enters our lives in unexpected ways.

*Even in Darkness* is based on 15 years of research, during which the author traveled to Israel, Germany, Belgium, the Czech Republic and England to conduct on-site investigation and interview the people who were the basis for the primary characters. Barbara also translated over 100 letters of personal correspondence, and conducted research at the Holocaust museums in Washington D.C., Jerusalem, and Detroit, The Leo Baeck Institute in New York, the Ghetto Fighters' House in Israel, and The Central Archive for Research on the History of Jews in Germany.



### BOOK DETAILS

by Barbara Stark-Nemon

[www.barbarastarknemon.com](http://www.barbarastarknemon.com)

April 7, 2015

She Writes Press

320 pages

Paperback, \$16.95

ISBN: 978-1-631529-56-6

Historical Fiction/Jewish

PRBYTHEBOOK

## Story angles / discussion points:

- Even in Darkness: An Unexpected Holocaust Narrative
- Barbara Stark-Nemon's 15 years of research to investigate her family history and the background for this book—her travels, interviews with family members, and translation of dozens of letters
- When to Keep Secrets and When to Tell Truths: The nuances of writing about your family and their history
- Crossing Religious and Cultural Boundaries: How a Catholic priest and a Jewish hausfrau formed a bond in twentieth century Germany, and how different times may call for different boundaries
- A Century of Challenges: The Holocaust's impact on 2nd and 3rd generation survivors
- The Magic of Words: Grandparents creating a family legacy through storytelling
- When the Past Meets the Present: Barbara's experience in helping families research and tell their stories

## About the Author:

Barbara Stark-Nemon ([www.barbarastarknemon.com](http://www.barbarastarknemon.com)) grew up in Michigan, listening to her family's stories of their former lives in Germany, which became the basis and inspiration for *Even in Darkness*, her first novel. Barbara holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in English and Art History and a Masters in Speech-language Pathology from the University of Michigan. After a 30-year teaching and clinical career working with deaf and language-disabled children, Barbara became a full-time writer. She lives and works in Ann Arbor and Northport, Michigan.

## Praise for the book:

"Barbara Stark-Nemon's *Even In Darkness* makes personal the German Jewish experience of the twentieth century. Stark-Nemon offers an important corrective to more standard Jewish narratives, painting a picture of complex German Jews who navigated their way through prejudice and privilege and struggled to find a place for themselves in the various Germanys of the last century. Crossing religious and geographic boundaries, this is a story about family, commitment, loss and love, sacrifice and survival. Ultimately, we learn how humanity triumphs *Even In Darkness*."

—David J Fine, Ph.D., author of *Jewish Integration in the German Army in the First World War*

"Even in darkness there can be renewal, trust, love. This is the message of Barbara Stark-Nemon's unforgettable book *Even in Darkness*. She brings the past century alive through recreating the story of her German-Jewish family, with all of its hopes and fears, losses and survivals—and, above all, the continuity of connections and of values, transcending religion, language, and country. The story is a remarkable and honest portrayal of unexpected paths, told with moving depth and literary skill."

—Dan Isaac Slobin, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus of Psychology and Linguistics, University of California, Berkeley

"You will be enriched and inspired by Barbara Stark-Nemon's *Even in Darkness*, a beautifully crafted, compelling novel, based on events in the life of the author's own family, in which love triumphs over unspeakable horror. The author paints a vivid picture of her upper-middle-class German-Jewish characters and weaves their inner thoughts and feelings into the shocking reality of the historical events of the day. I recommend this book to readers of history and to all those moved by the strength and courage of the human spirit."

—Margaret Fuchs Singer, author of *Legacy of a False Promise: A Daughter's Reckoning*

*Media Contact:* Elena Meredith, 512.481.7096, [elena@prbythebook.com](mailto:elena@prbythebook.com)



[www.barbarastarknemon.com](http://www.barbarastarknemon.com)

[facebook.com/starknemon](https://facebook.com/starknemon)

[pinterest.com/bannstark](https://pinterest.com/bannstark)

[@bstarknemon](https://twitter.com/bstarknemon)

[www.prbythebook.com](http://www.prbythebook.com)