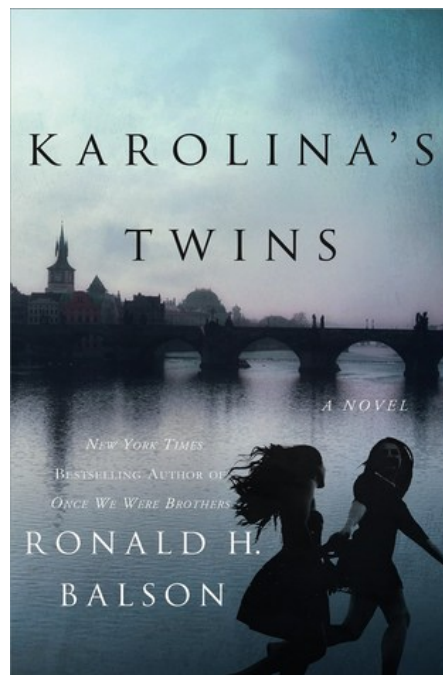




Karolina's Twins: A Novel

Ronald H. Balson

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From the author of *Once We Were Brothers* comes a saga inspired by true events of a Holocaust survivor's quest to fulfill a promise, return to Poland and find two sisters lost during World War II.

Lena Woodward, an elderly woman, enlists the help of both lawyer Catherine Lockhart and private investigator Liam Taggart to appraise the story of her harrowing past in Nazi occupied Poland. At the same time, Lena's son Arthur presents her with a hefty lawsuit under the pretense of garnering her estate—and independence—for his own purposes. Where these stories intersect is through Lena's dubious account of her life in war-torn Poland, and her sisterhood with a childhood friend named Karolina. Lena and Karolina struggled to live through the atrocity of the Holocaust, and at the same time harbored a courageous, yet mysterious secret of maternity that has troubled Lena throughout her adult life. In telling her story to Catherine and Liam, Lena not only exposes the realities of overcoming the horrors of the Holocaust, she also comes to terms with her own connection to her dark past.

Karolina's Twins is a tale of survival, love, and resilience in more ways than one. As Lena recounts her story, Catherine herself also recognizes the unwavering importance of family as she prepares herself for the arrival of her unborn child. Through this association and many more, both Lena and Catherine begin to cherish the dogged ties that bind not only families and children, but the entirety of mankind.

Karolina's Twins: A Novel Details

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From Reader Review Karolina's Twins: A Novel for online ebook

Diane S ? says

3.5 Lena's story is an important one, one based on actual events and it is in the telling of this survivor's story that Balsn's writing is the strongest. The modern day story, though I do like the husband and wife team as characters is not as strongly written. In truth, the dialogue is at times clunky, the trial, overdone and I often found myself skimming over these parts to get to the stronger parts of the past. A story of love and sacrifice, bonds between women, mothers and children, all worthy messages, all conveyed within. f I could rate just this, it would be an unequivocal four stars but I just can't dismiss the parts I found lacking. So definitely read this for the story, it deserves to be known and you might be able to put out of your mind the parts I couldn't.

ARC from Netgalley.

Judy Collins says

Ronald H. Balson delivers his third book in his riveting series, **KAROLINA'S TWINS** (Liam and Catherine #3) after the riveting Saving Sophie (2015) --catching up with Liam Taggart and his attorney wife, Catherine—for another complex and emotional case.

As the book opens, Chicago private eye, Liam Taggart and Catherine Lockhart-Taggart are contacted by Lena Woodward, a wealthy widow in her late eighties. Lena wants to find the twin daughters of her friend Karolina, who perished during the Holocaust. *She had made a promise to a very special person and she intended to keep it.*

She was born Lena Scheinman in the town of Chrzanow, Poland in 1924. She had come from a referral from Ben, which they were able to help. The children are Karolina's twins. Her dearest friend. The woman who saved her life, *but in the end, she could not save hers.*

It was during World War II in Poland some seventy years ago. *A burden she has carried.* She had lost her friend, and cancer had taken her husband. Her two dearest friends. After their death, Lena had one purpose in life. She wants to use her money to fulfill her promise. *Her promise to Karolina. She has to find the girls.*

While Lena is sharing her story with Catherine, we learn about Lena's life story which details surviving Nazi occupied Poland before, during and after WWII. *There were a lot of ifs and a lot of unknowns.*

She did not want to meet up with the Germans who had burst into her house and was worried about her family. She had been worried about Karolina. She had not seen or heard from her since the Germans came for her family. Her house was her safe harbor. Her father was missing, and her mother as good as missing. Karolina's mental state was fragile and she was worried.

She begins to recount a tale, going back to her harrowing past in Nazi-occupied Poland, of the bond she shared with her childhood friend Karolina. Is there a hidden story?

In the present, Catherine and Liam receive a phone call from Arthur, Lena's son and warns them to stay away from his mother. He says she is nuts and there are no children. He says she is a senile, delusional old woman, wasting her money.

Catherine and Liam come to her defense stating she is not mentally impaired, and her narrative is well structured, organized, and details. Arthur seems to be more concerned with his mom's money than her mental condition. *And his sizable inheritance.*

Had they found one another at last in 1941, to be separated again? The Nazis' principle killing machine was attrition. Death by starvation, malnutrition, parasites, disease, and lack of medical care took dozens and in the winter they froze to death. From unsanitary living conditions, the areas were surrounded by disease and pestilence. A constant battle. So many people were forced to live in small areas, not just Jews from Chranow, but refugees from other towns.

From black markets and food becoming scarcer. The Nazis would shoot anyone found engaging in black market commerce. They confiscated their valuables. There were beatings. A horrible life in 1941. They did not know what was in store for them.

Karolina was pretty, and she knew how to flirt. She was a great listener and conversationalist. She had a protector. Giving food to Jews was strictly prohibited. Germans were forbidden from having relations with the Jews. Throughout Poland, young women were seized off the streets and forced to be prostitutes or sex slaves.

The winters were brutal. Karolina sacrificed for her. Her goodness and selflessness warmed her soul and because of her she survived. She had to repay her. *The Nazis cruelty was beyond comprehension.*

From Lena's story -past to present, and Arthur's allegation his mom is delusional. They need proof of the children to develop a factual defense. Arthur has a petition. This is where the story turns to a strong legal/historical fiction, *a place where the author has proved he can handle both sides like a pro!*

With surprises, twists and turns a compelling tale which grabs you from the first page to the last- a journey of survival and a connection to a dark past and the secrets of two twin girls. *A moving tale of the strong bonds of friendship and motherhood.*

KAROLINA'S TWINS is a well-written work of fiction; however, as the author notes, it was a story inspired by a woman of extraordinary courage, determination, and wisdom.

With a mix of courtroom drama (well-drawn), an infusion of fact and fiction, well-researched historical events, and emotional accounts of courageous survivors. As I have mentioned previously, attorneys make great authors (my favorites).

I enjoyed catching up with Catherine and Liam and their personal news. Highly recommend all the books in the series! Fans of Kristin Hannah's *The Nightingale*, Martha Hall Kelly's *The Lilac Girls*, and Peter Golden's *Wherever There is Light*, will delight.

A special thank you to St. Martin's Press and NetGalley for an ARC in exchange for an honest review.

JDCMustReadBooks

Elizabeth of Silver's Reviews says

Re-telling your nightmare of living in occupied Poland during WWII would stir up emotions that I would

want to forget, but Lena Scheinman Woodward wanted it told.

Lena Woodward lived in Poland during the holocaust, lost her entire family, but did find her best friend, Karolina, in the factory where they were required to work and make coats for the Germans.

We are there as Lena tells of her experiences to an attorney and private investigator in hopes of getting the help she needs to fulfill the promise she made to her friend Karolina to find her twins.

Lena Woodward made a promise to her friend 70 years ago, and now at the age of 89 decided to tell her story and to try to find Karolina's children that sadly had to be abandoned because of the situation they were in.

When Lena's son finds out she is telling her story, he causes problems because he is worried about his inheritance being taken by the attorney and the investigator even though he indicates his concern is only with his mother's welfare.

As Lena's story unfolded for her attorney, Catherine, we re-lived with her the terror and atrocities committed by the Nazis, and we learned that there was a secret Lena had been keeping for 70 years.

Lena and Catherine were two characters I loved. They were strong, determined women. Liam was fun. Arthur, Lena's son, was not pleasant. I truly enjoyed the interaction of the characters both present day and past as Lena told her story.

KAROLINA'S TWINS flowed very nicely, and was another well-researched book by Mr. Balson. Mr. Balson has a marvelous writing style and a knack for keeping readers interested by combining facts with human interest.

Mr. Balson indicated that his book is fiction, but it is similar to the life of Fay Scharf Waldman whom he met after writing his first book.

World War II buffs will add yet another layer to their interest and desire to learn the truth. 5/5

This book was given to me free of charge and without compensation by the publisher in return for an honest review.

Angela M says

Lena Woodward, 89 year old holocaust survivor wants to keep a 70 year old promise to her best friend. Her selfish son, Arthur wants to declare her unfit and delusional about the existence of her friend Karolina's twins and take over her fortune and control her life. Husband and wife team, Liam and Catherine, a private investigator and attorney respectively are solicited by Lena to help her. Her mission is to keep her promise and find the twin daughters of her best friend Karolina. She also has a secret that isn't revealed until the end, but for me it was obvious throughout. Lena tells her story to them and when she tells it, you feel as though you're reading a memoir. Perhaps that's because Lena's character is based in a real person who told the author her story . This makes its all the more moving .

As a young girl in Chrzanow, Poland, Lena lived a comfortable life in a loving family until the Nazis came. I was so drawn to this strong, amazing woman who survived the holocaust, enduring so much - loss of her family , life in the Polish ghetto living in abominable conditions, working under awful conditions sewing

coats for the Nazis, and then the work camp. Yet having the courage to work for the resistance.

The writing was a little flat, a little matter of fact, for lack of a better way to describe it. It definitely wasn't the language that pulled me in, but the story did. This is of course about the unbelievable strength and courage of people under horrific conditions, as their lives are destroyed, about the vile sins of the Nazis against humanity, but also about the depth of friendship and love. Once again reading a holocaust story gives me pause, to reflect once again on the importance of never forgetting that this happened.

Thanks to St. Martin's Press and NetGalley.

abby says

In 1943 in the Chrzanow, Poland ghetto, Karolina, a young jewish woman, gives birth to twins with help of her best friend, Lena. Before being transferred to a slave labor camp, Karolina makes one, desperate last ditch attempt to save her babies. Seventy years later, Lena is a Holocaust survivor and living in Chicago. She decides it's time to keep her promise to Karolina to find the twins and enlists a lawyer/PI team to help her.

The structure of this book was maddening. It can best be summed up as: "hey, did I ever tell you my life's story?" As such, the book is almost entirely in dialogue. But the dialogue isn't very good. At times, it feels more like characters reciting pages out of a history textbook than genuine conversation. The writing in this book is flat, uninspiring, and at times reminded me of a cable tv cop show.

"Well, Arthur, I don't know too much about head-spinning, but I think you're going to find out that Ms. Lockhart's really good at ass-kickin'."

I do think there has to be a certain amount of leeway given to historical fiction in terms of accuracy and I get the sense that this author did his research. But some parts of this book are so preposterous. The story of what happens to the twins? No, nope, sorry, no way. A judge throwing a pregnant woman into jail for refusing to break privilege? Please. The parts of the story that resonated with me did so because of the history. By contrast, the parts that were the author's creation left me cold. Basically, I find WW2 interesting enough to give this book 3-stars.

Thank you to both the publisher and netgalley for granting me access to this book

Suzanne Leopold says

This is the third book in a series by the author. If you have not read the author's first two novels, it will not affect reading this book as a stand alone. In the story, the author brings back the lawyer/ private detective team, Catherine Lockhart and Liam Taggart, that we met in the author's previous two books.

There are two stories in this engaging book. An 89 year old widowed woman, Lena Woodward, walks into offices of a private investigator/ lawyer team, Liam Taggart and Catherine Lockhart. She needs to fulfil a promise she made. Lena promised to help find her best friend Karolina's twins that were born during the Holocaust. While Lena is sharing her story with Catherine, we learn about Lena's life story which entails surviving Nazi occupied Poland before, during and after WWII. She shares stories about her family and childhood friends along with life in the Jewish ghetto and her time in a concentration camp.

The other story is about Lena's grown son Arthur. Arthur, also her only child, wants the investigation of the twins stopped. He believes his mother is obsessed with imaginary twins, and will waste all her money searching for them. Arthur begins a legal battle against his mother questioning her mental status and control of her estate.

The story gripped me from the first few pages. It is written in such a sad yet beautiful way that I didn't want to put the book down. The narration of Lena's story flowed well and I definitely felt an emotional connection. Although the book is a work of fiction, the story is inspired by the life of a Holocaust survivor, Fay Scharf Waldman.

I am looking forward to more novels from this author.

2 book giveaway on my blog until 2/26 <https://www.facebook.com/suzyapproved...>

Karen says

"Through the years, I never told a soul what really happened. Not even my husband. No one knew the details. Once the war was over, I closed the door. And locked it. Now, as painful as it is, I must open it."
Lena Scheinman

Attorney Catherine Taggart and her husband Liam are drawn into a World War II mystery when Lena Scheinman, a woman in her late 80's and a Jewish Polish survivor of the Holocaust shows up on their doorstep asking for help in finding the twins of Lena's deceased best friend, Karolina. She had made this promise to Karolina in 1943 and insists in fulfilling it.

Lena sits down over multiple sessions with Catherine to tell her story of how it came to pass that these two newborn baby girls were thrown out of a moving Nazi transport train in 1943 by desperate women headed to a concentration camp. So many questions but the glaring one - why now after 70 years?

In the meantime, Lena's son has petitioned the court to declare her incompetent. She only recently began talking about Karolina and the twins and he alleges they are imaginary and that Lena is delusional. If he wins his case, he gains financial control of her money. The search is on for Catherine and her private investigator husband Liam to find someone from Lena's past who will corroborate her story.

I've read numerous novels revolving around the Holocaust and wasn't sure if I could read another one. But a friend recommended it so I read. Lena's survivor story is stunning. The author paints her as extraordinarily courageous and willful. What took this novel a few notches above others for me, is that it isn't just a great fictional story; it was inspired by a real Auschwitz survivor, Fay Scharf Waldman, who passed away last year at the age of 89 and who shared her story with the author.

This is a deeply moving novel from author/practicing attorney Ronald H. Balson. The story is getting a lot of well-deserved buzz. Is it the best WWII novel I've ever read? No, but it is near the top of my list. For those who have become weary reading this kind of story, make an exception and read this one.

Esil says

I liked reading Karolina's Twins. I found it moving and hard to put down. I gather it's the third in a series featuring husband and wife team Liam and Catherine, who are respectively a private investigator and a lawyer. You absolutely don't need to read the previous books in the series to get into this one. The story has two time lines. In present day, 89 year old Lena -- a Holocaust survivor -- hires Catherine and Liam to help her find "Karolina's twins". In order to do so she must tell them the story of her early life in Poland and survival of the Holocaust. In parallel, in contemporary Chicago, Lena's son brings a court challenge to prevent his mother from pursuing unresolved issues from the past. Most of the book is taken up with Lena's story, and I found it to be by far the most engaging part of the book. Her story is not unfamiliar -- to the extent that the horrific inhumanity of the Holocaust can ever become familiar. But it is a very moving and rich story about acts of strength and courage in the face of horrible circumstances and choices. In contrast, the contemporary courtroom drama often had the air of a bad farce. I'm still willing to go with a 4 star rating, because Lena's story is really the focus of the book and had me all stirred up. Interestingly, in the Acknowledgment section at the end, the author mentions that Lena's story is based on a true story, while the contemporary story is entirely fictitious. This is not surprising and Lena's story is definitely worth reading. Thank you to Netgalley and the publisher for an opportunity to read an advance copy.

Carole says

I enjoyed this World War 2 novel. The story alternates between present day and war torn Poland after the Nazi occupation. I loved the friendship of Lena and Karolina. If you enjoyed The Nightengale, you'll probably like this as well.

Lori says

I was a goodreads giveaway winner of "Karolina's Twins. I have an advanced readers edition. This is a very well written book. I found myself reluctant to put it down. Karolina's Twins. Starts with the Holocaust survivor Lena Woodward in present day. She is in her late 80s. She hires a lawyer and a private investigator to help find her friend Karolina's twins that were born during the Holocaust . They had to make a quick decision to save the babies during this horrible time. Now Lena wants he lawyer and investigator to see if girls are still alive. They would be 70 by now. First Lena has to spend time telling Catherine the lawyer and Liam the investigator the story of her life during those years of the Holocaust. Meanwhile Lena's grown son Arthur is trying to stop the investigation. He is insisting his mother is senile and making stuff up. This is a very interesting book. I liked that Lena tells her story of the years during the Holocaust and what she went through to survive. Lena has lived in Chicago with her husband since a couple years after the Holocaust so going back in time to recall those terrible years is very painful for her. Lena' s husband has died two years earlier and she can no longer wait to see what happened to her friend Karolina's twins. A very good read. So glad I got the chance to read this well done book.

Karen says

This review was done by **KissinBlueKaren**

KAROLINA'S TWINS is the third book in a series. It can be read as a stand alone, but the character's investigating the story are featured in two other books. This story is mostly about Lena, and 89 year old widow. She comes into Liam's private detective office, but she demands that his wife, Catherine, be present

to hear the story. Catherine is a lawyer and she sometimes helps her husband with investigations. Lena wants Catherine and Liam to help her find a friend's twin children who were lost in Nazi occupied Poland during WWII. In the telling of this story, Catherine is very pregnant. Lena's son, Author, questions his mother's sanity and ability to make decisions for herself. Catherine must get to the information needed for Liam to find the children and/or prove they actually existed.

The main story is Lena telling her survival story. Her story was inspired by a real person the author met and interviewed, Fay Scharf Waldman. She is a survivor from war torn Poland. The story uses actual places and people who were there to give it an absolutely authentic feel. Lena's story is gripping and heartbreaking. Every time I hear a story about survivors from WWII I am reminded that the hatred started off slowly. It was a systematic eradication of a people group that began with little prejudices.

Lena's story starts before the war and takes us into hiding, and then the ghetto, and lands us in the Auschwitz death march. I wasn't sure how much of Lena's story was based on fact, but all of it was emotional. Some of it felt far fetched, but the fact that anyone could survive any of the events described is pretty inspiring. I found myself reading furiously to get back to Lena's story when the author tried to tell us what Catherine and Liam were doing between visits from Lena. The insertion of Author, Lena's son, gives this memoir an impatience as we have to get to the part with the identity and possible location of Karolina's twins. By the end of the story, I was pretty well invested in all the characters both historical and present day.

This story will appeal to certain type of reader who enjoys both mystery and historical writing. Lucky for me I fit both the criteria. Although parts of this are horrifying, this book is about hope and survival. I found myself deeply moved in the reading of this and read it all in one day. I had to follow this story through to the end and I feel completely happy with ending.

Tammy says

While the actual WW II story line of Karolina's Twins is interesting, I found the writing style to be off putting. It reads like a YA novel. And, it contains far too many worn out cliches and coincidences. The characters aren't fully developed and lacked depth. In other words, this is a plot driven novel. Karolina's Twins will work for those who prefer heavy subject matter dealt with rather lightly.

Heather says

No matter how many books I read about this period of history, I'm always amazed at how each author can put their own take on history and write an unforgettable novel. This is the first book I have read by Ronald Balson but after having thoroughly enjoyed this one I will definitely go back and read his other novels. Especially since I see that they again feature Catherine and Liam in the present day storyline as well as a story centered on WWII. His vivid descriptions of the atrocities of war were interwoven with a story that immediately drew me in.

Even though I figured out what the plot twist was before it was resolved, I must say that the plot was one that I found myself discussing with others every time I paused in my reading. I just couldn't help talking about this one. And I suppose that is the highest compliment you can give to an author, to let them know that their book was not only a great read but also one that provoked discussions. It is a perfect book club selection. Fans of Kristin Hannah's *The Nightingale*, Jenna Blum's *Those Who Save Us* will enjoy this book!

ARC provided in exchange for an honest review.

Bonnye Reed says

GNAB I received a free electronic ARC of this novel from Netgalley, Ronald H. Balson, and St. Martin's Press in exchange for an honest review. Thank you all, for sharing your work with me.

Lena Woodward is an elderly, widowed Polish holocaust survivor. She involves Chicago private investigator Liam Taggart and his lawyer wife, Catherine Lockhard, in her search for twin babies lost from the train when she and her friends Karolina and Muriel were being shipped from the Chrzanow ghetto, where she, husband David and Karolina were forced labor in a Natzi coat and clothing factory, to the Gross-Rosen work camp. Karolina was shot soon after the transfer in Poland, attempting to escape. Lena and David were re-united after the war in the US and settled in Chicago, where they were successful in business, owning men's clothing stores and small neighborhood groceries.

Lena asks Liam and Catherine to help her fulfill a promise made to Karolina to find out what happened to those twins. Her son Arthur is disbelieving, not hearing of the twins at all, nor the promise Lena had made to Karolina to find the babies after the war until just 4 years before, shortly before the death of his father David. Thinking his mother is simply obsessing on the war experiences she never spoke of and is facing dementia, Arthur introduces a competency hearing and sues for guardianship of her estate.

I found this novel to be exceptional. Ronald Balson has portrayed this family history in a forthright, empathetic manner, including all the facts involved in the escape from the Natzi's terroristic reign.

Publishing date Sept 6, 2016

Dale Harcombe says

89 year old Lena Woodward is insistent about engaging the services of husband and wife team, Catherine Lockhart, a lawyer, and her private investigator husband, Liam Taggart. Exactly why she needs to see both of them is unclear initially to them. When Catherine and Liam meet her and Lena begins to tell her story, they are drawn into uncovering the story behind the promise to her friend, Karolina which has haunted Lena for the last seventy years. There are questions that need to be asked, answers that need to be uncovered and a secret that needs to be revealed. Meanwhile, Lena's son Arthur is incensed at the quest his mother is on. He has filed charges that she is unfit and delusional. He insists Karolina and her twins are nothing more than a figment of his mother's imagination.

Lena recounts her experiences growing up in Poland with a comfortable existence and a loving family until the Nazis invaded. Then her life changed tragically. Lena's story reads very much like a memoir as she tells it. There is good reason for that as the story, though fictional, is based on the real life experiences of a Holocaust survivor. Like many books about the Holocaust it is at times hard to read, as the horrors of those times are recounted. What I liked was when it started to get to the point where this reader might want to put the book aside for a while, the narrative often flipped back to Catherine and Liam or to the ongoing conflict with Arthur Woodward.

It is a story of suffering and the brutality of the time but also of friendship, love, loss, sacrifice and of

standing up for one's convictions. But ultimately it is a story of survival. I was thoroughly involved throughout, although I did think some aspects of the ending were a bit too neatly brushed over. But still an excellent read. My first by this author, I would be interested to read more of his books. If historical fiction and stories set during World War 2 are your thing, you should appreciate this one. I found it an extremely interesting read.
