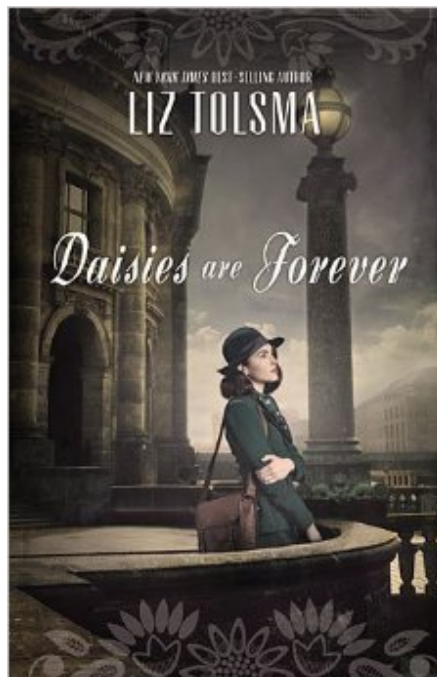




Daisies Are Forever

Liz Tolsma

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Daisies Are Forever Liz Tolsma

Gisela must hold on to hope and love despite all odds in the midst of a war-torn country.

Gisela Cramer is an American living in eastern Germany with her cousin Ella Reinhardt. When the Red Army invades, they must leave their home to escape to safety in Berlin.

However, Ella is a nurse and refuses to leave, sending her young daughters with Gisela. During their journey, Gisela meets Mitch Edwards, an escaped British POW. She pretends she is his wife in order to preserve his safety among other Germans, especially one wounded German soldier, Kurt, who has suspicions about Mitch's identity. Kurt also has feelings for Gisela and tries to uncover the truth about her "marriage."

Their journey to Gisela's mother in Berlin is riddled with tragedy and hardship, but they strive to keep Ella's daughters safe so they can reunite with their mother. During the journey Gisela and Mitch begin to develop feelings for one another beyond friendship. They reach Berlin, but their struggles are far from over. Gisela and Mitch must learn to live for the day and find hope in the darkest of circumstances.

In this moving, historically accurate portrayal of WWII Germany, the characters learn that, even with destruction all around them, some things last forever.

Daisies Are Forever Details

Date : Published May 6th 2014 by Thomas Nelson

ISBN :

Author : Liz Tolsma

Format : Kindle Edition 352 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Christian Fiction, Fiction, War, World War II, Christian, Romance

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From Reader Review Daisies Are Forever for online ebook

Kathleen E. says

Friday, May 23, 2014

Daisies are Forever by Liz Tolsma, © 2014

Women of Courage series, Book 2

The second book in the Women of Courage series, *Daisies Are Forever*, released May 6, 2014. Set in East Prussia and Berlin at the end of the war, American born Gisela Cramer must stay one step ahead of the Russian troops. Her task is complicated by an escaped British POW, two old women, two little girls, a wounded German soldier and a young woman with big dreams. When they reach Berlin, will they really be safe? And ... what about her heart?

Trusting their mutti and opa will follow, young Annelies and Renate Reinhardt join cousin Gisela Cramer "on an adventure" as they flee to safety. Would they see each other again? Two years earlier, in 1943, Gisela had left her parents to travel to East Prussia from Berlin. The war had caught up with her again.

Gisela: Opa has handed me a daisy pressed in his Bible from Oma's and tells me to put it in my Bible at Isaiah chapter 43. "A reminder of God's pureness and holiness when the road gets hard," he tells me. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee."

Taking her precious memories of her mother's parents with her, Gisela with cousin Ella's young kinder enter the cold air, in the bursts of light cast by the exploding bombs coming closer to them. By morning the Russians would be there. No escape. Cousin Ella staying with the Red Cross and many refugees, and Opa too ill to travel, they must trudge on ~ to whatever safety they could find far from them.

British soldiers, Mitch Edwards and Xavier McDonald, have escaped their German captors in the stalag a few days earlier, walking against the tide of refugees going the opposite direction. Are they walking in circles? Seeking shelter for the night, they bring lice with them. With hopes of blending in with the German refugees, they could make it to the Allies. Stopping at a farmyard for the night for encampment, Mitch, in his stolen German greatcoat, seeks something to go with Spam over their campfire. Finding two small frozen potatoes, they will have a meal. Approached by a woman inquiring why they are not fighting for the Fatherland, Xavier answers in response in German learned in their five-year captivity ~ with their British accents. Followed! Sprinting, they rush to cover amid the pines and oaks at the edge of the field as Wehrmacht officers are approached by the woman.

Exhausted, Gisela continued to pedal the bicycle as the girls slept on in the cart. Her thoughts staying to the little house in Heiligenbeil and Ella and her Opa. Waiting for neighbors, Herr Dietrich Holtzman and his elder, added, sisters to catch up, they stop at the side of the road. Not far off, is the farmhouse of Frau Becker and husband, Heinz, as she opens their door in recognition of their friend Dietrich. With many refugees already sheltered, they spend the night in rest, thankful rest.

Returning, Mitch and Xavier are rescued at dawn. They are saved from the same woman's wrath by Gisela who hears and approaches, claiming them as kin ~ her "husband," Mitch ~ now "Josep Cramer," and "brother-in-law," Xavier ~ now "Siegfried Munchen." With their bicycles stolen, these two men will be helpful pulling their carts.

Now begins the story of their companionship.

It's the real story of two very courageous women. I've taken the true accounts and fictionalized them, but much of what happens in the book did happen. I cannot imagine living during that time, either on the run for my life or hiding for my life. Wondering if each breath would be my last. Praying that the bombs would stop falling while praying at the same time that they would keep falling. I hope the story touches you the way it touched me.

--author Liz Tolsma

A story of bravery and survival, this ancestral story is written with truth and example of God covering us in our lives. Very well written and documented. Crossing the frozen Frische Haff, the lagoon to the narrow split of land, Frische Nehrung framing the Baltic Sea, brings more disaster and increase to their hope as they continue forward.

God provides trucks on the road to Danzig as they arrive at just the right time to advance to a westbound train. He will not leave them. There are added burdens as they mesh with others. This is a story of courage that happened. It also portrays who you listen to ~ a divisive rattling in your ear from another, or the Truth spoken in your heart of hearts. So important not to assume, but to ask the One to whom your heart beats.

Recreating memoirs of two women living through the atrocities of war, Daisies are Forever portrays the continued reliance and realization of the sheltering of God in their lives. Keeping on reassures dependence and trust, putting one foot in front of the other and doing the next thing. Beginning the next leg of their journey, nothing seemed the same with shifting landmarks.

The trek worrisome and uncertain, air-raid sirens blaring a warning to get to shelters as the bombings began again, keeping them cloistered in tight enclosed space until the all-clear signal sounded.

Book 1 in the Women of Courage series ~ also written modeling a true story ~ is Snow on the Tulips. I can just see this story as a movie! Excellent. I am looking forward to continued writings by this author. The third book in the series is set in the Philippines during the war and focuses on an American woman detained by the Japanese at the Santo Tomas Internment Camp.

Thank you to Litfuse Publicity Group for inviting me to be part of the blog tour for Liz Tolsma's novel ~ Daisies are Forever. This review was written in my own words. No other compensation was received.

Karen says

I even liked this book better than the first one. Beautifully written. It was so hard to read of the struggles of ordinary citizens on both sides of the war as it came to an end. The bombings, the brutality, the inhumanity, but it was good to read and realize the horrors of those that died and lived went through.

Mazzou B says

Captivating story. Perfect for young adults. Some of the content is not suitable for younger readers. Good Christian message, interesting story.

Very engaging- heart-touching- interesting- historically-accurate- good message- good romance

From the first chapter, I was captured by this book. I was instantly drawn into the world of the characters

within. This new Christian novel by award-winning author Liz Tolsma takes place in war-torn 1940 Germany. Unusually, this book comes from the perspective of innocent German citizens, terrified by the encroaching Russians.

Gisela is of German family but American-born. She is staying at her cousin's home in Germany when news of the Russians impending arrival comes. Gisela takes on the weight of shepherding Ella's two daughters to safety. Thus begins a long, harrowing journey, during which there are welcome- and some not so welcome- additions to their group as well as losses.

Quite the exciting read.

Annette says

Source: Free copy from Litfuse Publicity Group in exchange for a review.

Summary:

Early February 1945.

Gisela Cramer is a young woman, living with her cousin Ella and her daughters, and their grandfather in Heiligenbeil, East Prussia. Gisela is American born, but moved to Germany as a young girl with her German born parents. Gisela left her parents and relocated to Heiligenbeil, when the bombings began in Berlin. When the Russians close in on the town of Heiligenbeil, a difficult decision is made. Ella insists Gisela take her daughters and escape back to Berlin. Ella plans to stay with their grandfather because he is too weak to travel. Early in the journey, Gisela encounters a British soldier named Mitch, who is posing as a German soldier. His German accent creates suspicion. Gisela pretends to be his wife in order to help them both survive the bitter cold temperatures, the Russian advancement, and his certain death by Nazi Germany.

My Thoughts:

Gisela is the hero, she outshines her pseudo British army husband Mitch. She is the tough and resilient character. Mitch comes across as a played-down character. He is army trained, and has been a POW for five years. He is not what I'd expect considering his knowledge and experience. After five years as a POW, he would be haggard, possibly sick, weak; and with bitter animosity against the Nazi German war machine, which would make it impossible for him to hide his feelings. I believe in a real situation, his training would have led him to take-out a German soldier that posed a risk, and not allow a German woman (no matter how beautiful) to make decisions. Further, during a time of war, a soldier might have sex (with a golden opportunity) but there is no time for romance.

A combat soldier wants:

1. To always have his firearm with him.
2. Dry socks.
3. Eat (preferably warm food).
4. Sleep (hopefully under a dry roof).
5. Return home.

The strength of the story is the graphic Allied bombings in Prussia and Germany. The scenes are real, frightening; and as they continue, it is understandable how they wore at the people like a dog gnawing on a brittle bone. The story explains how the civilians survived, carnage and destruction, fear of death or rape, and worry over missing family.

The themes of Daisies are Forever is: escape from Russian soldiers, preventing Mitch from becoming a prisoner again or death, survival of all of them (including the two precious little girls), romance. The author succeeds at pulling together a entertaining romantic story, but not believable.

Brittany says

Daisies are Forever is a very powerful book. I felt thrust into a terrifyingly realistic war zone. The book follows Gisela Cramer, Mitch Edwards, and a handful of other important secondary characters as they attempt to escape from Prussia and into the heart of Berlin, Germany. It is a frantic race across dangerous territory in an attempt to escape Russian forces.

I found the storyline interesting and well-written. The light romance that develops between the main characters is threatened by jealousy from others in the group. The possibility that Mitch's true identity would be discovered and that he could be turned in to the authorities had me pretty nervous in some parts of the book.

I think the author did a good job of showing the effects that the trauma of war had on Gisela and Mitch, who both carried more than their fair share of guilt around. Getting these two to let go of their burdens and recognize that God was in control was no easy thing!

I really felt transported back into time with this story. The atrocities that these characters witnessed on their travels and once they reached Berlin were heartbreaking, yet this is ultimately an uplifting story that showed how God works even in the midst of terrible events.

I received a complimentary copy of this book from the publisher, through Litfuse Publicity, in exchange for an honest review, which I have given.

You can read my review (and through 5/31/14 you can enter Liz's contest for a Kindle HDX) on my blog at: <http://brittreadsfiction.wordpress.co...>

Iola says

It is early 1945, and Gisela Cramer is fleeing East Prussia with her young nieces, to join her mother in Berlin, away from the advancing Russian Army. Mitch Edwards is an escaped POW, trying to find his way back to the British Army. The two meet, and Gisela pretends to be Mitch's wife in order to save him from the Germans.

Gisela annoyed me right from the beginning, because it felt like I was supposed to know her background, why she kept collecting waifs and strays. She took responsibility for everything and everyone, and had a huge case of what we eventually found out was survivor guilt. Perhaps I would have felt some sympathy for her if this had been disclosed early on, but it wasn't, with the result that I was simply confused. Yes, I could see she was afraid of the invading Russian army (as were most people), but the source of that fear wasn't clear.

Mitch was a better character, but it was obvious he was written by an American who doesn't know British English, because every time I started to get into the story there was another language glitch to pull me out of it. The English don't have cookie jars. They don't wear sweaters. 'Pop' is a sound, not a parent. The biggest language glitch was his name. Mitchell didn't ring true as a first name for that time period (I checked, and Mitchell is even less common as a first name than Iola in that time period).

I found the Kurt and Audra subplot even more annoying. Kurt fancies himself in love with Gisela from their first meeting, and Audra is as misguided as their two senile travel companions. These two sisters were

annoying at first, but I soon found them providing welcome comic relief to Kurt's arrogance and Audra's starry-eyed plans. It didn't help that the writing was sometimes difficult to follow. I had to backtrack several times, to work out who was speaking, or who the viewpoint character was. This slowed what could have been an exciting story.

By the time I got to the end, I'd decided the main problem is simply a lack of plot and structure. Most novels use the traditional three-act formula: *Daisies are Forever* had two. In the three-act structure, the first half of the novel usually shows the protagonist reacting to events, then being proactive in the second half to change their situation. The characters in *Daisies are Forever* never made that transition from reactive to proactive. The book was a series of events, and that's not a plot. That's story.

Daisies are Forever is based on the real-life stories (see? Stories, not plot) of two separate women combined into one. This was both a strength and a weakness. The strength was the historical fact, the way the novel tells the story of the final days of World War II, the brutality of the invading Red Army, and the depredation the German women suffered. It does this well. But telling stories is the domain of biography or memoir, not fiction.

The weakness was the way the two stories didn't gel. What would have been a gripping biography became a puzzle. Gisela left her home in East Prussia to escape the invading Russians, yet stayed in Berlin and waited for her nightmares to become reality. Why? We find out in the end note from the author—the two halves of the story, the journey and Berlin, happened to different people. It's no wonder Gisela's motivation seemed confused. She was two people, with two sets of goals and motivations, and it came across as confused.

Daisies are Forever had potential, but as you've probably worked out, I didn't enjoy it. So now the big question is this: do I give the author another chance (and risk having to write another review like this one), or does she go on my 'don't bother' list?

Thanks to Litfuse Publicity for providing a free ebook for review.

Andrea Cox says

If it weren't for Kurt, this book would be added to my favorites list. His obsessive love disorder was frightening and it came to an unlikely end as well (people with obsessive disorders don't listen to reason as swiftly nor as easily as he did).

There was a major inconsistency that bothered me, and I'll try to avoid spoiling it as I explain a bit. Mitch and Gisela discovered a plot set against them, yet they both still fell for its trappings. If they knew about it, why would they not be on their guard about it? That didn't make any sense to me.

I loved Bettina and Katya! They reminded me of the elderly sisters on *The Waltons*, and they were truly delightful and quite good at bringing a bit of humor into the craziness that had become their reality. These ladies were written incredibly well, and I liked that I never knew what was going to pop out of their mouths next.

The physical journey in this story is one I haven't seen much in books yet, though I've only recently been on this WWII reading kick. It was a refreshing take on World War Two, but like most other stories set in this era, there were moments and trials that were disturbing and difficult to read. That doesn't make them any less meaningful, only less beautiful than other moments along the way. But then, war isn't a beautiful thing, is it?

This book was very good, mostly well written, and carried a lot of deep emotions that tugged me further into the characters' lives and fears. I would recommend it for folks 17 or older who want to see what the realities of war are like. Stories like this one can be perspective-altering.

A few notes on grammar (this did not affect my rating):

- * "askance" was used when "askew" was intended
- * one double-negative
- * missing commas on direct address

Content:

- * harsh realities of war, including murder, rape, suicide, etc.
- * alcohol and drunkenness

I was not compensated for my honest review.

Alicia says

Lack of character development and too many plot holes prevented me from really enjoying the story, but it was worth the read for the historical detail (i.e. the terrifying final days of war in Germany). 2.5 stars.

Wanda says

Wow! Another powerful read by Liz Tolsma - I couldn't put this one down. The characters are vibrantly drawn and brought to life in this achingly sad novel – a story of bravery and survival.

This is a totally different perspective of WWII and one that I'm not familiar. I've read much about the Holocaust and what the Nazis did to the Jewish people. But this is a story of German refugees, set on German soil, near the end of the war. It portrays how the German people also suffered under Hitler's wicked leadership. It looked like the war was lost. How many more innocent civilians would Hitler sacrifice to his pride?

The Russians were pouring in from the south and the Germans were not able to hold off the Soviets. It was becoming a dangerous area and many were fleeing before the Red Army arrived.

Gisela Cramer leaves East Prussia with her two young nieces, and three elderly neighbors, with a daisy tucked in her bible, to a safer place. Gisela needed to get to Berlin, and take care of her mutti, and from there they would travel to Munich. There was no guarantee they would survive and see liberation, and the courage it took to survive this dark period in history was just amazing.

And the story unfolds as they make this horrific journey in the middle of winter, into the frozen countryside, from Heiligenbeil to Berlin, Germany, trying to stay ahead of the Soviets.

Daisies Are Forever is an intense story written in vivid detail – a captivating and emotional read about a devastating time in our history. You don't want to miss this one. My rating is 5 stars.

I received a complimentary copy of this book from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. All opinions shared are my own.

Ibjoy1953 Hannabass says

Description of the book

Gisela must hold on to hope and love despite all odds in the midst of a war-torn country.

Gisela Cramer is an American living in eastern Germany with her cousin Ella Reinhardt. When the Red Army invades, they must leave their home to escape to safety in Berlin.

However, Ella is a nurse and refuses to leave, sending her young daughters with Gisela. During their journey, Gisela meets Mitch Edwards, an escaped British POW. She pretends she is his wife in order to preserve his safety among other Germans, especially one wounded German soldier, Kurt, who has suspicions about Mitch's identity. Kurt also has feelings for Gisela and tries to uncover the truth about her "marriage."

Their journey to Gisela's mother in Berlin is riddled with tragedy and hardship, but they strive to keep Ella's daughters safe so they can reunite with their mother. During the journey Gisela and Mitch begin to develop feelings for one another beyond friendship. They reach Berlin, but their struggles are far from over. Gisela and Mitch must learn to live for the day and find hope in the darkest of circumstances.

In this moving, historically accurate portrayal of WWII Germany, the characters learn that, even with destruction all around them, some things last forever.

My Review

If you enjoy WWII stories, you will love Daisies are Forever by Liz Tolsma. There is so much history throughout this story, and each scene is so vividly described by the author it will amaze you. I enjoyed getting to know the believable characters, and was shocked at some of the scenes throughout the book because they were so horrific. It was difficult at times reading, especially knowing that these situations are based on the real life of two ladies that lived during that time. But the story is during war time, and I appreciate the way the author shows how life was back then. I don't want to give a lot away with the storyline, because you need to read it to get the full affect of the story. Liz Tolsma is truly a expert in storytelling and detailing historical events. I look forward to more books from this author.

That said, I highly recommend this book, and especially to anyone who enjoys war stories or WWII historical stories. You will find yourself loving this one! I received this book from BookLook Bloggers to read and review. I was not required to write a positive review. The opinions I have expressed are my own. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 55.

Amy says

FULL REVIEW AT <http://www.amydrown.com/daisies-are-f...>

One reason my author tagline is "Deep-Rooted Fiction (TM)" is that I write stories rooted in real history—stories about real people, real places, real events. As such, I had very high hopes for this World War II story based on the true-life experiences of two of the author's relatives. And while this book certainly provided a window into an unusual time and place in world history, it failed to live up to all of my expectations.

Reet Champion says

Gisela Cramer has suffered through one of the most devastating experiences a person could go through. As the lone survivor of a "massacre" that resulted in the death of her aunt and two young cousins at the hands of Russian soldiers Gisela struggles with guilt. It kills her to have to leave yet another cousin and her elderly grandfather as Russian forces fast approach their home. But for the sake of her cousins two small children it must be done. And so she embarks on a journey that will dramatic consequences. Along the way she teams up with a British soldier and escaped POW, Mitch Edwards; in order to protect him Gisela poses as his wife. It's an unlikely pairing and a dangerous one but with determination they hope to come through the ordeal alive.

After a long string of bad book choices I was thrilled to pick up *Daisies are Forever* and find it an engrossing tale. Months ago I had enjoyed *Snow on the Tulips* immensely and had high hopes for Liz Tolsma's latest addition to the series. It was not a disappointment. I really felt that *Daisies are Forever* was even better than the first book. There was such depth to the story as Ms. Tolsma included the grim realities of war while focusing on individual experiences. This is a book for those with a love for human interest stories. Emotions run high , adventure lurks when you least expect it while love blooms in the most unlikely setting.

For those of us who detest viewing the development of stories from the eyes of secondary characters plus the main character don't be put off by that here. It is well done and serves to strengthen personalities. I wouldn't change one thing about this book. If you're bored right now and looking for something to pass the time - get this book. You won't regret it.

DISCLAIMER: In accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255: "Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising" we would like to note that we received a hardcopy of "Daises are Forever" provided by the publishers Thomas Nelson, through booklookbloggers.com in exchange for our honest review.

reetchampionbookreviews.wordpress.com

Beth Strand says

"Daisies are Forever" Grabs but Doesn't Hold the Reader

Gisela Cramer was sent to East Germany to keep her safe from the war but the Russians have brought the war to her doorstep, again, and she finds herself running for her life while charged with keeping her two

nieces safe. Mitch Edwards has survived most of the war in prison since his capture by the Germans in 1940. His recent escape puts him in danger from all sides. A chance meeting with Gisela forms an unlikely alliance that may blossom into more...if they can stay alive that long.

Unfortunately, while this book has a good, accurate historic ring to it (which it should be based on the life experiences of two real women), it lacks the emotional depth to really grab and hold the reader. The action is interesting but the characters are lacking that spark of "spirit" that would bring them to life on the page. The story is well-conceived and nicely paced but lacks a certain zing that truly great fiction needs. Instead of living the story, we "read about" Gisela and Mitch and, frankly, I had no problem leaving these characters behind at the end of the novel. I would give this one a three. Not bad fiction but not great fiction.

This book was provided to me by the publisher for this review. The opinions, however, are entirely my own.

Joleen says

Germany, WWII

Mitch Edwards, a British POW for 5 years, disguised as an SS officer just escaped from a German stalag. Trying to make his way back to Allied troops through Germany, he was confronted and nearly found out because of his British accent. However, Gisela came to his rescue claiming he was her husband.

For the next several months they try to escape encroaching Soviet troops and nearby bombings as they make their way from Prussia to Berlin, where Gisela's mother and father were when she left.

Lots of near misses, lots of trying to trust God to get them through it all. (Sorry, but it just didn't feel organic, more like these portions were added later to make it more "Christian Fiction".)

Kurt, a fellow traveler, decided Gisela was his muse and that he wants her. He and Audra (another fellow traveler) plot to get between them, to break up what looks like a budding romance. This whole storyline was odd, and not well done. Why Gisela didn't tell him to take a hike was beyond me. And the fact that she accepted comfort from him and found herself in his arms more than a few times was just silly.

Some of this book was interesting, but its execution, character inconsistencies and depth of explanations left much to be desired. Even the title was a bit hokey when you read what it referred to.

I don't believe I'll pick up anymore books from this author in this genre.

Staci says

This second WWII novel by Liz Tolsma tells the story of Gisela, a German and Mitch, an Englishman. The book sheds light on what it was like to be a German when the Russians moved into Germany. Clearly, Mitch was at risk before the Russians arrived. In their charge were two young girls.

I've not read any novels of the perspective of a non-Jew German and their experience in Germany. This particular novel was based on two different true stories.

Adding to the novel were two sisters with dementia that were completely clueless about where they were and

what was happening around them.

Although the writing was a bit stilted at times, I overall enjoyed this novel and recommend it for those that enjoy Historical Fiction.
