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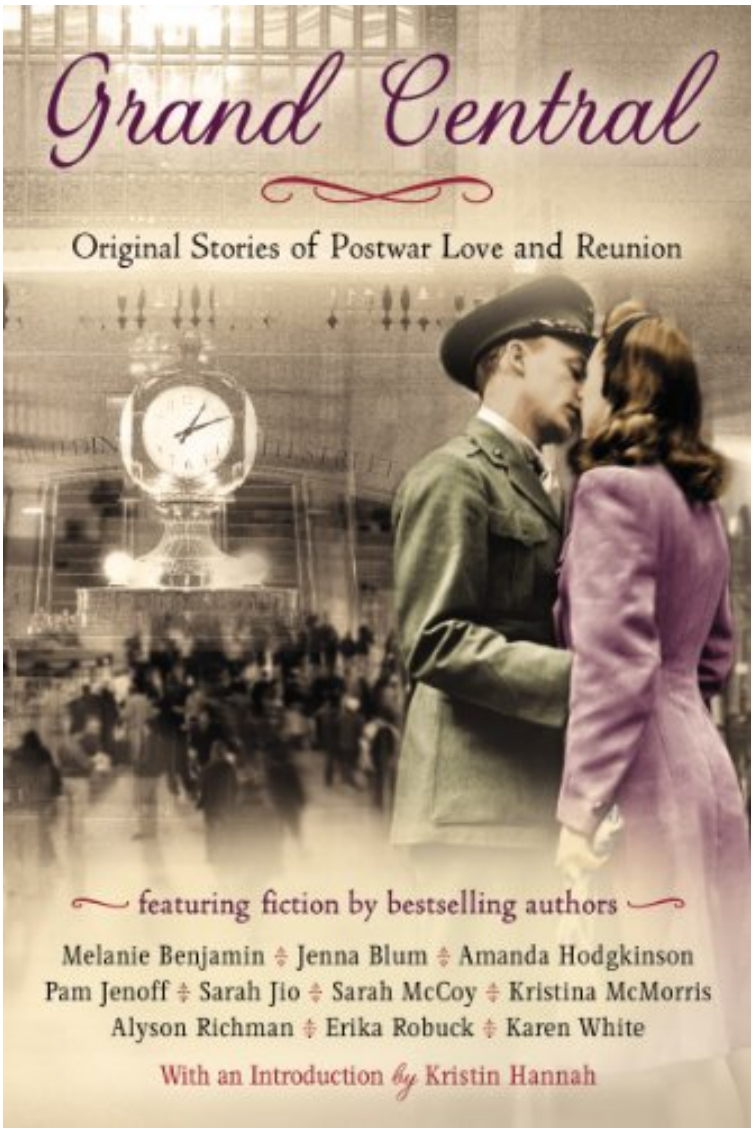

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Par Karen White, Jenna Blum, Sarah Jio, Melanie Benjamin, Sarah McCoy, Alyson Richman
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[DOWNLOAD] Grand Central: Original Stories of Postwar Love and Reunion

Par Karen White, Jenna Blum, Sarah Jio, Melanie Benjamin, Sarah McCoy, Alyson Richman : Grand Central: Original Stories of Postwar Love and Reunion before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Grand Central: Original Stories of Postwar Love and Reunion:

Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurTen bestselling authors inspired by New York City's iconic Grand Central Terminal have created their own stories, set on the same day, just after the end of World War II, in a time of hope, uncertainty, change, and renewal.A war bride awaits the arrival of her GI husband at the platformA Holocaust survivor works at the Oyster Bar, where a customer reminds him of his late motherA Hollywood hopeful anticipates her first screen test and a chance at stardom in the Kissing Room On any particular day, thousands upon thousands of people pass through Grand Central, through the whispering gallery, beneath the ceiling of stars, and past the information booth and its beckoning four-faced clock, to whatever destination is

calling them. It is a place where people come to say hello and good-bye. And each person has a story to tell.Featuring stories fromMelanie Benjamin, Jenna Blum, Amanda Hodgkinson, Pam Jenoff,Sarah Jio,Sarah McCoy,Kristina McMorris, Alyson Richman,Erika Robuck, andKaren White With an Introduction by#1 New York Times bestselling authorKristin HannahExtraitI was born in sunny Southern California, in a time when the world was a simpler, quieter place. I rode my bicycle to the store and bought bottles of soda and Pop Rocks. My friends and I built forts in our manicured backyards and spent Sundays at the beach with our moms, wading in the water, splashing each other. The sun was always shining in my little corner of the world. Dads worked during the day and were rarely seen; moms couldnt be ditched no matter how hard you tried. When the sun set, we all raced home on our bikes and gathered around a dinner table where there was almost always a hot casserole waiting.I was a preteen when the Vietnam War changed the landscape around me. Suddenly there were protests and sit-ins and marches on the weekends; the police wore riot gear against college students. The nightly news was about body counts and bombs falling in faraway places. Then came Watergate. Nothing seemed safe or certain anymore.I came of age reading about distant planets and unknown worlds. On my nightstand were novels by Tolkien and Heinlein and Bradbury and Herbert. I was a voracious reader, with my nose always buried in a book. I was constantly being admonished to quit reading and look up around meespecially on family vacations. In my high school years, it was Stephen King who held me in the palm of his hand and whispered to me that evil existed, but that it could be battled and beaten... if only one was strong enough, if only one truly believed. And I believed.It wasnt until later, when I grew up and got married and had a child of my own, that I began to see my life in context, to see how different the sixties and seventies and eighties were from the years that came before. I think thats when I fell in love with World War II fiction.World War II. Today, thats all it takes for me. Tell me its a novel set during the war and you have a better than even chance of snagging my attention. Add that its epic or a love story and you have me ordering the book in advance.Theres something inherently special about that war, at least as it is seen by the modern reader, which is to say, in retrospect. World War II was the last great war for Americans, the last time that good was good and evil was evil and there was no way to mistake the two. It was a time of national sacrifice and common goals. A time when we all agreed on what was important and what was worth fighting and dying for. Women wore white gloves and men wore hats. Through the prism of todays contentious times, it seems almost impossibly romantic and polite. In our modern, divided and conflicted world, many of us long to glimpse a forgotten time, where the right path seemed easier to identify and follow. The Greatest Generation. Thats what we see when we look back now. Its no wonder that stories about the men and women who lived and loved during that era seize our imagination and hold it so firmly.World War II, like most wars, has been primarily defined by men. We learn in school about the battles and the skirmishes, about the bombs and the missions. We see the photographs of men marching on beaches and advancing up hillsides. We study the atrocities that were committed and remember the livesindeed the generationthat was lost. But only recently have we begun to pay attention to the women.In the World War II novel that I am currently writing, a female character says to her son, We women were in the shadows of the war. There were no parades for us and few medals, and I think thats really true. In too much of our war fiction, women are forgotten, and yet the truth of their participation is fascinating and compelling and deserves to be at the forefront of the discussion about the aftermath of the war. Women were spies and pilots and code breakers. And of equal importance was their place on the home front. While the world was at war and the men were gone, it was the women who held life together, who gave the soldiers a safe place to return to. Many of the stories herein are focused on women and their lives on a single day in 1945, when the war was over but far from forgotten. Everyone had to readjust their lives after World War IIthe men coming home, the women trying to return to a life that had been changed beyond recognition, the children who remembered nothing of peacetime. These are the themes and issues that continue to resonate with readers today.I was enthralled by the short stories in this collection. This talented group of authors has taken an intriguing premise and coaxed from it a seamlessly integrated group of stories. In it, a single day in Grand Central Terminalentrance to the melting pot of Americabecomes the springboard for ten very different stories, which, when read together, weave a beautiful tapestry about men and women and their war years. In some, the characters are finding new lives after devastating losses; in others, the characters are battling the terrible effects of the war and trying to believe in a better future. In all of them, we see the changes wrought by World War II and the battles that often needed to be fought at home simply to survive and begin anew. And through all the stories is the melody of loss and renewal, the idea that something as simple as a song played on a violin in a train station can remind one of everything that was lost... and

everything one hopes to regain.Kristin HannahNew York Times bestselling author of Home Front and Winter GardenGoing HomeALYSON RICHMANHe wasnt sure whether it was the vaulted ceilings or the marble floors that created the buildings special acoustics. But on certain afternoons, when the pedestrian traffic was not too heavy, Gregori Yanovsky could close his eyes, place his chin on his violin, and convince himself that Grand Central Terminal was his very own Carnegie Hall.Months before, he had discovered his perfect little corner of the terminalthe one just before the entrance to the subway, on the way to the Lexington Avenue exit. It was far enough from the thunder of the train tracks, yet still busy enough for foot traffic to yield him a few spare coins every couple of minutes.Hed arrive early each morning from his apartment on Delancey Street and ascend the stairs of the subway with his shoulders back and his head held high. Something about carrying a violin case made him feel special amongst the throng of commuters. For concealed within his velvet-lined case was the possibility of magic, of music, of art, which no mere briefcase in the world could ever contain.And although his suit jacket, with its thin grey flannel, was a far cry from the more stylish ones from Paul Stuart or Brooks Brothers worn by the men who arrived daily on trains from Larchmont or Greenwich, Gregori felt he transcended the shabbiness of his shirtsleeves. His elegance came instead from the simplicity and precision of his movements. The way he positioned his instrument against his collarbone. The graceful manner in which he lifted his bow. These were not flourishes that were taught in a finishing school or at suburban family meals.He and his instrument needed each other, like partners in a waltz. Without the other, there could be no music.As a child in Poland, Gregori had watched his father, Josek, soak his hands in milk every night to soften his calluses after a day of splitting wood. Josek had learned the craft of barrel making from his own father but secretly had always dreamed of making musical instruments instead. The barrels made him money and so kept food on the table and a roof over his familys head, but music fed his soul.On Friday nights, Josek invited anyone with an instrument into their home to fill it with music for his wife and child. Gregori still remembered his father twirling him around the room, as a neighbor played the balalaika. Years later, he would recall his fathers laughter. He could have tuned his violin on the sound of it. It was a perfect A.During cart rides to the city of Krakow, with his fathers barrels loaded in the back and young Gregori sitting in the front, father and son would hum melodies together. Sometimes Josek would pull the cart over outside of a church, just to let his son listen to the organ music being played. Gregori seemed to come alive every time his father exposed him to melodies of any kind, whether it was the folk music of the village or the Mozart wafting out from one of the music schools in the city. Even more extraordinary was the boys remarkable ability to hum back any melody he heard, without missing a single note.One night, when the rain was coming down so hard it sounded to Gregori as though the roof might collapse, there was a knock at the familys door. When his mother opened the door, she found Joseks friend Lev standing there under the doorway, with a man she did not recognize.Weve been caught in the storm, Lev said. The wheel on my cart came off.He motioned to the man standing next to him, a hat pulled over his eyes. I was trying to get my wifes brother, Zelik, back to his home.Zelik raised one hand in greeting as he shuddered in the rain. In the other hand, Gregoris father noticed a small dark case, shaped like a silhouette. Instinctively, he knew there had to be a violin inside.Come in before you ruin your instrument, Josek said, waving the two men inside. His wife took their wet coats and hung them by the fire, while Josek and Gregori watched as Zelik placed his violin case on the table and unlatched it. Everyone gasped when they saw the glimmering instrument, which thankfully had not been damaged by the rain.Gregori would never forget the sight of Zelik taking his violin out from his case, withdrawing the instrument as though he were a sorcerer. He still remembered that impending sense of magic as Zelik placed his chin on the edge, lifted his bow, and began to play. Zelik captivated everyone with the music that soon came forth in swirls and arabesques; the notes filled the room and thundered over the storm outside.Zelik tapped his foot on the floor and bobbed his head from side to side. If joy had a sound, Gregori heard it that night from Zeliks bow gliding over the strings. When the young man eventually put the instrument into Gregoris hands, instructing him how to grasp the bow, all he could think about was learning to play it himself. The instrument had the capacity both to speak sorrow and to sing joy, all without a single word.The next morning, after the sun reemerged and the wet timber and muddy roads began to dry, Zelik gave Gregori one last lesson. Gregori cradled the instrument in cupped hands. He slid his palm across the violins long, slim neck and fingered the tuning knobs. He felt as though he was touching beauty for the first time.Zelik could see immediately how the boys hand naturally gripped the bow and could hear how he had a natural ear for melody. Zelik also sensed that, behind his closed eyes, Gregori didnt just feel the music; instead it came forth from him as though he were breathing each note. As he grasped Joseks hands, thanking him for giving him and Lev

shelter that night, Zelik whispered into the mans ear, Your son has a gift. Sell what you must, but get him a violin and find a way to get him lessons. And do it as quickly as you can.Josek was able to get his son a violin in exchange for twelve pickle barrels made from his very best timber. After he saved enough money to feed his family, Josek used whatever funds remained to have a music teacher from a nearby village come to give Gregori lessons. The boy learned quickly how to play his scales, and then went on to more complicated tudes and sonatas that normally took other children far longer to master. Every so often, Josek would also take him into Krakow for a lesson and the opportunity to play with a piano accompanist. By the time he was ten, he could play all of the Mozart concertos. And when he was fifteen, he took his first stabs at the Mendelssohn.But as much as he loved the music of the classical composers, after the weekly Shabbat dinners, Gregori always played the music of his shtetl. His fiddle work made his mother smile and his father pour the neighbors another glass of wine.As he became older and his skills advanced, he started to dream of one day playing in Krakows prestigious Academy of Music and in candlelit recitals throughout Europe. But these dreams ended one night with the sound of breaking glass and his mothers screams.Before, the essence of his youth was a bowl of soup, a slice of bread, and his parents smiling to the sound of his violin. But that night, it was the sounds of terror and hate. Even fifteen years later, as he played in the safety and grandeur of Grand Central Terminal, the dark memories of his final days in his village often returned to him. The sight of his father being pulled from the house by an angry mob. The smell of burning barrels. The cries of his mother in the dark as the villagers torched their house, as his father lay bleeding and motionless on the ground. The word Jew slicing through the air like a scythe, uttered like a curse.Gregori stood there watching, a voyeur to his own familys destruction. All he wanted to do was rush over and kneel by his father, and remove the splinters of glass from his head, which looked like a broken gourd. He yearned to cradle his father in his arms and bring back the warmth that was flowing out of him, causing him to turn blue before Gregoris eyes. But the boys limbs would simply not move. It was only when the familys house was set ablaze that he felt his legs moving beneath him. They moved not by reason, but by instinct, his body lurching into the fire to save his violin.Less than a year afterward, seventeen-year-old Gregori walked through Ellis Island. He had been sponsored by an older uncle whom his mother had not seen in years. In one hand, he carried a small leather suitcase, and in the other, he carried his violin. And beneath the material of his trousers were angry red patches of burn marks that wrapped around one leg. The scar looked like fire itself, a permanent red torch set in high relief against his skin. An eternal reminder of that horrible night.His uncle had sponsored Gregori not purely out of compassion but also because he believed the boys music might draw customers to his restaurant on the Lower East Side. The first night, Gregori pulled out his violin in that crowded apartment on Delancey Street and serenaded his new family. The women let the dishes pile in the sink unwashed, their bodies instead anchored to their chairs as he played. As Gregoris uncle scanned the room and saw the women transfixed, he was confident hed have every table at his restaurant full by weeks end.Nearly every night for three years, Gregori played countless mazurkas and tarantellas to diners enjoying their bowls of borscht and plates of stuffed cabbage. In some way, he enjoyed the warmth of the restaurant. The customers and their families reminded him of his Shabbat performances back in the shtetl. But it was hardly the type of playing Gregori had dreamed of when he was younger. As a new immigrant to a country that seemed so wealthy and full of prospects compared to Europe, Gregori wanted to find a way to harvest every opportunity. He didnt just want to serenade men and women over his uncles pierogies and cabbage his entire life. He still carried the dream of playing on a stage alongside an orchestra, something that he had not yet had the chance to do.So when he noticed an advertisement in one of the trade papers that a customer had left behind one night, indicating that the New Amsterdam Theater was holding auditions for musicians interested in their pit orchestra, Gregori took it as a sign. An opportunity waiting to be seized. He mustered up enough courage to go to the theater. There werent as many men there as he had expected, as such a great number of them were off serving in the war, a fate he had escaped because of the severe scarring on his legs. Still, there were so many talented musicians who came out to audition that when Gregori was offered a place as one of the second violins, it felt like a dream come true.Even with his new job, Gregori still had his mornings and most early afternoons free. He chose to rehearse in the one place in New York he discovered he loved the most. Right in front of the entrance to Vanderbilt Hall, across from Murrays pastry cart and Jacks shoeshine booth. Grand Central Terminal, his own favorite stage.The extra money he received from busking was nice, of course. Some days it barely covered the cost of his subway fare and lunch, but Gregori loved playing in Grand Central for many more reasons than the few dollars it added to his daily income: the acoustics, the vaulted ceiling with its turquoise plaster and gilded

constellations, and the kinetic energy of the commuters. He found it thrilling that he was surrounded by so much motion, that he was in the epicenter of a thousand merging worlds. He could sense the rumble of the subway beneath his feet, and the wind from the train tunnels that blew in and out from the brass doors. Here, waitresses mingled with soldiers returning from the war, and bankers in chalk-striped suits sprinted next to the men who worked the elevators in their skyscraper offices lining Fifth Avenue.There were also those few minutes each morning, when he leaned down to sprinkle the first few coins into the velvet of his case to encourage others to do the same, that he could hear the pattern of the foot traffic. It was a symphony to his ears. He could hear the gallop of a childs patent leather shoes against the marble, the soft shuffle of a bankers oxfords, or the drag of a wounded soldiers crutch as it thumped against the floor. But one day he heard a patter of footsteps so unlike all the others he had heard over the years pounding against the marble that he felt a small twinge in his heart. The steps were light, almost airy, as if the heel of the shoe were barely touching the ground. Without even looking up, he could hear the spry, leaping sounds of a dancer.He lifted his gaze and noticed a beautiful woman walking in his direction. She had just come up from the subway, her green silk dress fluttering like the ruffled edge of tulip leaves. Her face appeared to him in a flash: the pale skin, the dark hair, and foxlike eyes that looked almost like they belonged to another place. Not a typical American, in the way he thought of Americans, though he knew every person here could claim ancestry from abroad. But in Gregoris mind, the American face belonged to those of English or Irish descent, with their small-carved features and peaches-and-cream skin. This girl instead had the high cheekbones and coloring that reminded him of the girls back in his village. But really she could have been from any country in Central or Eastern Europe, he thought. Hungarian or Lithuanian. Polish or Russian, maybe. Or even Czech.Her footsteps had slowed, and now she stood only a few feet from him. She had stopped in front of the pastry cart that sold glazed doughnuts for a nickel and apple strudel for a dime. Around her pooled a dozen other commuters eager for something sweet before their mornings work consumed them.Her long legs and shapely back were evident through the silk of her dress. She wore her black hair in soft curls around her face, just like the starlets in the movies. But her movements were somehow old-fashioned and slightly tentative, the way a person who wasnt born in America might search for the right coins in her purse, or how someone new to Manhattan might pull slightly away when someones sleeve brushed against their own. He noticed a difference in the way she moved when there was no one around, compared to the way she moved when she was thrust into a group. The ease was replaced with caution. As if beneath the carefree veneer there was something more complex, something she kept hidden behind a radiant facade. This did not deter Gregori. On the contrary, it increased his fascination. The contrast was like music itself. On the surface, an untrained ear would hear only beauty when he played something like Albinonis Adagio in G Minor. Only a few would also hear the sadness that floated from the strings. Two contradictory emotions, braided like rope, the true essence of a human soul.Gregori quickly pondered the best way to gain her attention. He had yet to begin his playing that morning, and as he stood holding his violin in his hands, his mind now raced as to what music to select. He desperately wanted to find a way to reach her, to make her stopif only for a momentand take notice of the music intended just for her.It quickly occurred to him that if he could find something that reminded her of her homeland, it might be enough to make her pause and linger just a bit.But time was ticking away as he watched her pay for what looked like a small piece of strudel now safely tucked inside a wax paper bag.His heart was racing. He knew that Mozart had never failed him with the crowds, so he began playing Eine kleine Nachtmusik. It was popular enough that even if she werent from Austria, she still might recognize the melody and walk over to him. Then, once he had finished, he could ask her where she was from and their conversation would come naturally, just like a dance.He played with half-closed eyelids, not wanting to remove his gaze from her for even a moment. As his bow moved across the strings, his body bouncing to the music, he saw her dip her fingers into the wax paper bag and pull out her pastry. But even though the melody got livelier, she barely seemed to take notice of him.Gregori watched, crestfallen, as she headed toward the Lexington Avenue exit, her hips moving beneath her dress as she pushed through the heavy, brass-edged doors.As Liesel crossed over Lexington, past the Bowery Savings Bank branch and the newspaper stand, she kept her stride brisk and glided by any older pedestrians who would have slowed her down. One thing she prided herself on was her punctuality. She didnt like to keep Mr. Stein waiting. If he requested she arrive by one thirty P.M., shed be at his building a few minutes before. Just enough time to fluff out her hair and smooth down her dress.Nor did she want to arrive at his office with bits of apple strudel on her lips. So she quickly finished her pastry and, on the corner of 46th Street and Lexington Avenue, took out a napkin and blotted her lips to make sure there were no

crumbs. She took a compact out of her purse and swept a dusting of powder over her face. Then, as she had watched the other dancers do a thousand times, she reapplied her lipstick before taking one final look in the compact mirror and snapping it shut.Liesel was happy that Leo Steins office was on Lexington Avenue, not on Broadway like most of the other theatrical agents. This meant that she had to take the 42nd Street shuttle from her sewing job near the theater district to get to him. But it was a route she loved because it enabled her to pass the only pastry kiosk in all of New York that had apple strudel exactly like her mother used to make. If she had an extra few minutes, shed walk toward the central concourse and enjoy the pastry under the gilded images of the zodiac, those finely painted constellations resplendent in a sea of blue.Liesel loved the very vastness of the rotunda, with its cathedral-like opulence, and the way the light streamed through the east entrances arched windows and illuminated the commuters in a sepia-soft glow. It was a place where she could feel both alone and safe amongst the crowd. And even more poignantly, it was where she could imagine a chance meeting or a potential reunion with the family she still refused to accept as lost.It was hard to believe it had been over five years since she had seen her family and that there had been no contact with them since the last letter arrived.The time will go quickly, her mother had promised her as she packed for America.What her mother had told her was true. Time had gone by quicker than shed imagined, but it wasnt without a lot of work on her part. Liesel had done everything she could to keep herself as busy as possible. She didnt want to have time to think, because during those pauses, it was hard not to imagine what terror had befallen her family.What she also loved about Grand Central Terminal was that everyone there was off to another place and they all had a sense of urgency to their journey. This was compounded by the fact that there were clocks everywhere: brass-rimmed clocks fastened onto the marble walls, the famed one in the center of the concourse, and downstairs by the tracks, there were clocks suspended from the ceiling. Some had art nouveau embellishments, and others looked like larger versions of watch faces. But no matter the style, the clocks all gave a sense that one had to keep moving, and Liesel liked this. It enabled her to focus on her responsibilities. When she wasnt dancing, she was sewing. And when she wasnt sewing, she was dancing, either at her ballet studies or performing at the supper clubs that helped pay her bills.She had never imagined that shed be able to make enough money dancing to support herself, but Leo Stein had changed all that for her. She would always be grateful he had taken her on as one of his girls. His agency was on the third floor of a slim grey brownstone that had been converted into small offices. Upon arriving, she buzzed the doorbell and climbed up the narrow stairs. She could smell his cigar smoke from the first landing.Leo Stein, Talent Agent was carved on the dark wooden door. She entered without knocking.Hello, my sheyna meydel, he called out to her. What a sight for sore eyes.She sat down across from his desk, folding her hands in the green silk folds of the dress that she had made herself the week before.So, today through Friday afternoon its rehearsal on this side of town, at Rosenthals studio. Not over on Broadway for a change...She nodded. She appreciated how he treated her with kindness, never overtaxed her, but would instead take her other obligations into account when assigning her work. So he arranged for her to work in the supper clubs on Friday through Sunday, meaning that aside from the rehearsals to learn that weekends choreography, she was still free to do everything else: the sewing for her boss, Gerta, and the ballet training she refused to give up, even though it provided her with no income yet. It just meant she was busy all the time, which was exactly what Liesel wanted.Leo handed her a rehearsal schedule. Check back with me later this week on your way to Rosenthals. I think I might have something at the Crown Club for next week, but its not confirmed yet.She smiled. Well, you know Ill be ready when you need me, Mr. Stein.Leo reached into the desk drawer. You never stop, do you? One of the hardest-working girls I know. To think, if you wanted to do this full-time, how much of a commission I could make off of you!I dont want to break my promise to Gerta. She smiled and fluttered her eyelids, not to be coy, but because she enjoyed being especially sweet to him. And I cant disappoint my teacher, Psota, either.Leo nodded. He knew very well that her teacher, Ivan Psota, was the one who had gotten her out of Czechoslovakia in time.Yes, yes. I know how much you owe him. Thats why I dont push you like I do the other girls.Im very grateful, Mr. Stein.Just be thankful that you look like my daughter. He shook his head, placed his cigar on the ashtray, and reached for his desk drawer.Ive taken out my commission, but the rest is for you, sweetheart.She glanced quickly at the hand-drawn numbers and Leos rolling signature on the bottom. Twenty-five dollars. Enough to pay her room and board, as well as some to put away in case the Red Cross was ever able to locate her family and she could bring them over.Leo glanced at his watch. So, Rosenthals studio. Its on 38th and Lex. Better get going. You need to be there by two.Liesel had twenty minutes.Thank you, Mr. Stein. She said the words carefully and respectfully, ensuring, once again, that he could hear the gratitude in her voice.Liesel knew she had many

things in her life to be grateful for. And one of the main ones was her dance teacher, Ivan Psota.When she started grade school, her mothers clients began commenting with increasing frequency that Liesel was born with the physique of a dancer. It wasnt just that she was slim, for that was the case for most young girls her age. It was the length and proportion of her limbs that gave her a natural gracefulness that set her apart from her peers.Her mother had sewn costumes for the prestigious dance academy in the city for over a decade, and Liesel had spent most of her childhood seeing her fit the girls for their corsets and tutus. Her mother used a special closet in the back of the apartment to store her baskets of beads and yards of tulle. And although Liesels mother began to teach her to sew from the time she could hold a needle and thread, she imagined her daughter receiving the applause, perhaps even traveling with the troupe, rather than behind the scenes making the costumes for the stage.Her mother brought her in to audition for the conservatory the minute she was old enough to try out. The sight of the schools famous ballet master, Ivan Psota, was hard to forget. He had the dark hair and broad smile that befitted Hollywood. And his well-tailored suits were anchored by two perfectly arched feet, which were encased in black slippers and moved with great elegance across the wooden floor.The other girls, who were a few years older than Liesel, all flushed in his company. They knew that this man was already regarded as one of the best dancers in their country, and had also recently begun to hone his skills as a choreographer. Yet he saw something unique in young Liesel, thus ensuring she was accepted to the dance conservatory for the following year.Liesels mother, concerned that the rigorous program at the dance school would deplete her daughters energy, always made sure she had a kitchen full of Liesels favorite food. Each day, before she left for the conservatory, Liesel would find a freshly baked apple strudel and a glass of milk waiting on the table for her.Make sure you eat before you dance, her mother would remind her.But Liesel never needed reminding. From the moment she saw her mothers baking, she found herself sitting down with napkin in hand.For the next five years, Liesel would study dance under Master Psota. He had brought an element of glamour and prestige to the conservatory when he began there ten years earlier, at the age of twenty. Liesel was indebted to him not only because he trained her as a dancer, but for something far more important, and for which she knew she could never repay him.Psota had helped save her.From the very beginning of her training, Psota had taken a special interest in Liesel. He noticed her perfectly arched feet, the natural lightness to her step, and, even more unusual for her young age, her sharp mind, which remembered his choreography. He believed that if she continued to work hard, someday she might make it to the ballet corps.But in the spring of 1939, when Liesel was seventeen years old and at the height of her training, Hitler marched into Czechoslovakia.I can no longer keep you at the conservatory, Psota told Liesel after calling her into his office. You know Id do anything to keep you here... He stumbled to catch his breath, and his normally bright and lively eyes looked as grey and lifeless as plaster. But its the law now. He fingered a memo on his desk. Ive been ordered to dismiss all my Jewish students.Liesel sat in Psotas office, a photograph of him surrounded by one of his dancing troupes resting on his desk. The girls were in black leotards, their bodies strong, athletic, invincible. She dug a nail into her palm, thinking the jab of pain would prevent her from crying in front of him.Liesel, I wish I had the power to change this... but I dont.I know, Master Psota... she could barely whisper.But Im not going to let Hitler win. Youre still going to dance, Liesel. I mean that. He straightened in his chair. Ive asked someone I met in Monte Carlo last summer to help you, a man with a lot of wealth and power. He has many contacts in the United States government, and Ive written to him to see about getting you a visa.I dont understand. Why would he help me or my family?His name is Carl Laemmle, and hes a German-born Jew... He founded a film company called Universal Pictures, in California.The names didnt mean anything to Liesel, but from the sound of Psotas voice, she knew it was something impressive.Hes already helped a lot of Jewish families in his hometown in Germany and other places in Europe. Many of them are on their way to America as we speak. Ive written him personally to ask him to also sponsor you. Ive told him not only that you dance, but that youre also a great seamstress and learned how to make costumes from your talented mother. He has many contacts in California and New York, so there will be work for you when you arrive.Liesel felt a lump in her throat. She couldnt believe that her teacher would go to such lengths to get her out of a country that now so clearly no longer wanted her or her family.So many of their neighbors had stopped talking with them. Once her fathers shop was shuttered closed by the new anti-Jewish laws, most people shunned them.But a sudden fear gripped her, as Psota had only mentioned there being work for her in America. And my parents? she questioned, her voice barely above a whisper. Will he sponsor them as well?He turned his gaze away from her, looking past the long French doors of his office. On Psotas desk she noticed another photograph, this one of him as a boy with his parents, when he was close to the same age as she was

now.No, he said softly. He can only sponsor you... Im very sorry.Before she could get the words that were forming on her lips, he anticipated what she was going to say.Liesel, Ive already spoken to your parents. I actually discussed it with them before I even wrote to Mr. Laemmle. He stopped speaking for a moment, and his eyes once again left her and settled on the ground. They realize whats going on here. They want you to take this opportunity. They want you to go. To America.By June, Liesel had her affidavit and visa. As per Mr. Laemmles instructions, she would leave for Antwerp, and from there she would take a boat to New York. That afternoon, as she said good-bye to her parents at the train station in Brno, her mother reached into the basket she was carrying and pulled out a package.What is it? Liesel asked, her voice struggling to keep back her tears. For the first time in her life, Liesels feet felt heavy, as if someone had poured cement into her soles. She wanted to anchor herself to the street and tell her parents it was impossible for her to leave them.I made your favorite, her mother said, tears forming in her eyes. Apple strudel...Liesel took the package, and in her hands she could feel a little bit of the warm fruit seeping through the cloth.Now I can pretend that youre just going off somewhere to dance, her mother said, forcing a smile.Liesel sensed how fragile the long loaf of strudel felt in her hands.Im afraid it might break before I eat it.It doesnt matter if it splits apart, my darling. Even if it separates into crumbs, all the ingredients are still there.Her mothers hands reached over and clasped Liesels.Its just like Papas and my love for you.Liesel arrived in New York not knowing a single word of English. She did know some German, though, which would serve her well, as Mr. Laemmle had arranged a sewing job for her with a German Jew who owned a costume atelier in the theater district. As for her ballet classes, Psota made sure she could study in the evenings with a former Kirov dancer, a Madame Polyakov, on the Upper West Side. But each night, no matter how tired Liesel was from her sewing work or her ballet, she lay awake worrying about her family back in Czechoslovakia.She had written countless, increasingly desperate letters to her parents back in Brno but had only received one back since her arrival in New York. That letter, sacred to her now, she kept folded carefully in a small box in her dresser drawer.Our dearest Liesel,As I write this to you, I imagine you with your bright eyes, your joyful smile, and your leotard and dance shoes close by. This is what a mother does to warm her heart. We have seen Master Psota, and he tells us that Mr. Laemmle has made good on his promises to you. That you are working and still studying your ballet. Papa and I cant tell you how happy it makes us to know that your life in America is moving forward.We have received your first letter and do not want you to worry so much about us. Psota has made sure I stay busy sewing. He has the dancers visit me before curfew, and only one or two of them come each week so as not to raise suspicions that he is helping supplement our income. Franny and Tomas Kohn have chosen to go to a place outside Prague called Terezn. They say if we go there, it will be safer than staying in the city. Papa hasnt yet decided if we will go, too. How much longer we have to choose before they choose for us, I do not know. But please do not worry about us, milcku. Knowing that you are smiling across the ocean gives us sustenance. I pray we will see you soon.All our love,Mama and PapaShe had read the letter so many times that the paper was now in danger of tearing at the folds. Because she had only been able to bring a small suitcase with her, Liesel now had so few tangible things that connected her with her family life back in Brno. She had two dresses that her mother had sewn for her, a small leather photograph album that captured scattered memories of their family vacations in the Moravian countryside, and a recording that Psota had brought to her the night before she left, which she had carefully wrapped within the layers of clothing in her suitcase.That last night, when her mother had tried her best to make something from what little they had left in rations, Psota came to their apartment to say good-bye.When Liesel opened the door, he was standing there in his elegant suit. In one hand he held a bunch of flowers for her mother, and in the other, a record that he gave to her.Its a going-away gift, he told her. Dvorks New World Symphony.She knew it well. It was a favorite of the music students at the conservatory who shared part of the building with the dancers, and Liesel had heard it several times floating through the walls of the practice halls. The composer was a Czech who had written it while living in New York and conducting the Philharmonic. The symphony was filled with melodies that were inspired by Native American music and by African American spirituals that Dvork had heard in America. The second movement was especially beautiful; one of the boys at the conservatory tried to impress her after rehearsal one day by telling her that it had inspired another American composer to create a song called Going Home.An appropriate gift, she said, smiling and kissing him on the cheek. Thank you so much. Ill treasure it.That night, after they ate the simple potato dumplings that her mother had prepared, her father took the record Psota had given Liesel and put it on the Victrola.The music had a layering to it that befitted the evening. In it she heard the longing for ones homeland, infused with a ray of hope.Dvork wrote it when he

was in America, Liesel.I know, she said quietly.Ive thought about choreographing a ballet to it... His voice drifted. She saw him close his eyes, as if imagining the choreography. All of them later hummed along with the theme from the second movement.That night everyone seemed to welcome the comfort the music offered. It filled the space where words failed them. And later in New York when Liesel could not find the peace to sleep when haunted by fears of what had befallen her family, she would think of the beautiful strings and the English horn in the second movement and consider it an invisible thread that connected her heart to her family back home.Liesel shared her small apartment with another girl whom Mr. Laemmle had also helped bring over from Europe. It was sparsely furnished, with just two beds and a kitchen table and chairs. But after a year of working for Gerta Kleinfelds costume atelier, Liesel had enough money to buy a secondhand Victrola from a consignment shop, without feeling guilty that it would draw too much from the money she was saving to one day bring her family to America.On the nights the pain of being separated from her family was unshakable, she would put on the Dvork recording from her teacher back home and imagine all of them in the living room again, her parents soft hands within reach.Once the day began, though, she was too busy to allow herself to feel melancholy. She spent hours stitching hems, taking in bustiers, and adding embellishments to the costumes of women who performed at supper clubs. This was the bread and butter of Gertas business. And after she finished at Gertas around one P.M. each day, she would try to take an afternoon class at Madame Polyakovs dance studio to practice her ballet, using a portion of her wages to pay for her lessons.Liesel was grateful she had learned a skill from her mother that could pay the bills. Within Gertas sewing studio, chorus girls, with their elaborate hair and makeup, white smiles, and perfect curls, stood in front of the mirror as Liesel pinned their fittings so their costumes enhanced their figures. At the conservatory back home, she had danced in nothing more than a leotard and tights, with her hair swept back into a bun.But in the crowded and noisy confines of the sewing room, Liesel learned the art of transformation. Her mother had taught her about ballet corsetry and whaleboning, but here in New York she learned about waist nippers and other items that could transform even the slightest girl into a goddess.Over the next several months, she began to develop a close relationship with the dancers who were sent over to Gertas for fittings. The girls liked Liesels light touch with her needle and thread, and the way she understood, from her own years of training as a classical dancer, how their bodies moved while they performed. She knew how important it was that their costumes not only flattered their bodies but also held up while they danced.Raise your arms up, she would say to them in her broken English. Arch your back... She gave them cues to enable her to alter the costume so it would not shift or gap while they stretched their bodies and moved across the stage. She understood that nothing was more distracting for a dancer than to feel that her costume might come undone.About a year after she arrived, one of the girls, who was named Victoria, struck up a conversation with her.You always move so elegantly, she told Liesel. You move just like a dancer...Liesel smiled. I do dance. But only ballet. She took a pin from her cushion and slipped it into the hem of Victorias skirt.I knew it! Victoria laughed. I could see it, just how you moved across the room. Shoulders back, neck long...Liesel laughed.Plus you have great legs. Her eyes ran over Liesel from top to bottom. Why, heck, you should be dancing with us, not holed up in here!Liesel bent over to find some more fitting pins and to take in Victorias costume. She was standing near the full-length mirror and was trying to adjust the corsetry to fit Victorias tiny rib cage.I have no stage background, Liesel said. Just my time at my school back in Europe and the classes I take here after work. Im lucky to have this work sewing...Dont be silly, Victoria answered. I can see with a little makeup and some work, youd be fantastic on the stage. Your posture is perfect, and the dances are really easy. Were just background beauty for whoever is singing that night. Its not hard at all, especially compared to ballet...But my English...You dont even need to talk! Just to understand the directions... Victoria was beginning to move her arms about.Careful, Liesel said, slightly amused by the suggestion she could be a dancer in New York City. I dont want you to scratch up your arms with all these pins.That afternoon, after Liesel had made sure her costume looked like a second skin, Victoria handed her Leo Steins business card. Give him a visit, she insisted. Youre as much of a dancer as I was when I got started.Shouldnt lock a body like that up in a sewing studio all day. Tell him Victoria Creegan sent you. Its only three blocks from here. Go pay him a visit during your lunch break.It was now nearly three years since she had begun dancing at the supper clubs. The money she had saved from her paycheck and from her sewing, which she hoped to use one day to bring her parents over, remained untouched. But terrible reports were now coming out of Europe. Rumors of concentration camps and of Jewish families being rounded up and sent to places in Poland.She spent so much of her day with a silk-screened smile imprinted on her face and her body propelling itself to embrace the laughter and music

around her. But when the makeup was wiped off and her sequined dance costume put away, the black-and-white photographs in the newspapers were a haunting she couldnt shake.In those moments when she was alone, her body propped up in bed and a borrowed book she was using to study English on her lap, she saw her mother saying good-bye for the last time through a forced smile, and her father still holding on to her bag for a few more moments. She didnt want to look at those horrible photos in the paper and believe her parents could be amongst the piles of bodies or reduced to dark ash. She wanted instead to look at the family photograph that sat on her nightstand and believe that they were still just as she had left them. Father in his dark brown overcoat and stylish fedora, and Mother always with something warm and sweet in her hands.For two days, Gregori searched the crowds for the girl in the tulip green dress. He scanned the parade of dark suits and white shirts, and the women in their autumn costumes of felt hats and kidskin gloves. He listened to every footstep and took breaks between his playing in order to study the faces that stood in line for Murrays pastries.In the course of a day, Gregori saw several hundred commuters walk past him and his violin. Some stopped briefly to listen to him play, and a number of them dropped some change into his velvet-lined case as a token of their appreciation. But he still couldnt shake the image of the girl with the light, dancerlike footsteps and the face of an old-world beauty.Then, that following Tuesday afternoon, a little after one P.M., he saw her again. It was definitely her. Her unmistakable face. Her legs. That smile. The footsteps light as air.This time, he knew he had to be quicker with his bow and start playing immediately. She had not responded to Mozart, so Austria was quickly erased from his mental list of possibilities for her homeland. Germany was the next obvious choice. It gave Gregori the option of one of the three Bs: Bach, Brahms, or Beethoven. Both Brahmss and Beethovens violin concertos would allow him to impress the girl with his talent, but he could also play the Ode to Joy theme from Beethovens Ninth Symphony and ignite the crowd. Perhaps the attention around him would be a way to draw her near?He saw a slight twirl as he began to play. Her heel had pivoted gracefully as she turned from Murrays with her wax paper bag in her hand, like the miniature ballerina in a music box he once saw in an antiques store near his apartment. A twirling girl made of porcelain no bigger than his thumb with a postage stampsized skirt made of tulle.He saw she had looked in his direction, but she did not stop as he hoped she would. He was sure that she had reacted to something in his playing, though. He had seen her twirl, a movement of pleasure and a visceral response to the music that had come from his bow. It was an improvement from the last time, he told himself, trying not to be deterred. This time, as she walked toward the door, she turned her head and gazed back at him briefly. Her smile pierced his heart, a bounty more rewarding than all of the coins in the world.As Liesel headed toward Mr. Steins office, she felt a buoyancy in her step that had nothing to do with the sunshine hitting her face or the fact that she knew shed soon be getting her next paycheck. Something in the music she had just heard coming from the violinist in Grand Central had made her feel happy and alive.She hadnt heard the Ode to Joy in ages, and its inspiring melody lifted her. What had he played the last time? she now wondered. Was it Eine kleine Nachtmusik? She remembered hearing that music countless times wafting from the cafs late at night in Brno. This violinists playing was enchanting. Shed heard lots of the buskers in the subway stations since she arrived in New York, but most of them chose works by contemporary composers such as Gershwin or Duke Ellington, probably because they thought those were the pieces that would inspire people to reach into their pockets. But this man seemed to prefer the music that reminded her of Europe.As she walked, Beethovens notes lingered in her mind. She thought of her former life back in Brno, and those days at the dance conservatory where the music students often tried to gain the attention of the most beautiful dancers by playing their instruments with as much passion as possible.Those years were the sweetest in Liesels memory. A time when she not only began cultivating her love of dance and music, but also when she thought it would all go on like that forever. A life of culture and art, and of friends and family.During her last year with Master Psota, she witnessed him at the height of his creativity as he choreographed Dvorks Slavonic Dances. He spent hours with her and five other girls from his master class calling out the intricate footwork. But even with the door to his studio closed, the beautiful music played by the chamber orchestra filled the entire school.She was surprised at how much she was now looking forward to the rehearsals at Rosenthals dance studio. They provided a few consecutive days where she could grab one of Murrays pastries and again be serenaded by the handsome violinist who seemed to be playing just for her.Prsentation de l'diteurTen bestselling authors inspired by New York City's iconic Grand Central Terminal have created their own stories, set on the same day, just after the end of World War II, in a time of hope, uncertainty, change, and renewal.A war bride awaits the arrival of her GI husband at the platformA Holocaust survivor works at the Oyster Bar, where a customer reminds him of his late motherA Hollywood hopeful anticipates

her first screen test and a chance at stardom in the Kissing Room On any particular day, thousands upon thousands of people pass through Grand Central, through the whispering gallery, beneath the ceiling of stars, and past the information booth and its beckoning four-faced clock, to whatever destination is calling them. It is a place where people come to say hello and good-bye. And each person has a story to tell.Featuring stories fromMelanie Benjamin, Jenna Blum, Amanda Hodgkinson, Pam Jenoff,Sarah Jio,Sarah McCoy,Kristina McMorris, Alyson Richman,Erika Robuck, andKaren White With an Introduction by#1 New York Times bestselling authorKristin Hannah