



Winter Men

Jesper Bugge Kold , K.E. Semmel (Translator)

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) ➔

Winter Men

Jesper Bugge Kold , K.E. Semmel (Translator)

Winter Men Jesper Bugge Kold , K.E. Semmel (Translator)

As the dark specter of the Nazis settles over Germany, two wealthy and educated brothers are suddenly thrust into the rising tide of war. Karl, a former soldier and successful businessman, dutifully answers the call to defend his country, while contemplative academic Gerhard is coerced into informing for the Gestapo. Soon the brothers are serving in the SS, and as Hitler's hateful agenda brings about unspeakable atrocities, they find themselves with innocent blood on their hands.

Following Germany's eventual defeat, Karl and Gerhard are haunted by their insurmountable guilt, and each seeks a way to escape from wounds that will never heal. They survived the war and its revelation of systematic horrors, but can they survive the unshakable knowledge of their own culpability?

Winter Men Details

Date : Published March 1st 2016 by AmazonCrossing (first published August 22nd 2014)

ISBN :

Author : Jesper Bugge Kold , K.E. Semmel (Translator)

Format : Kindle Edition 340 pages

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

 [Download Winter Men ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Winter Men ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Winter Men Jesper Bugge Kold , K.E. Semmel (Translator)

From Reader Review Winter Men for online ebook

David Reviews says

Brothers Karl and Gerhard are respectable Germans living in Hamburg as change sweeps through Germany before the start of WW2. The Nazi propaganda machine, headed by Adolf Hitler, is at its most effective and is spiralling Germany towards violence and war once more. We follow the brothers as they are torn by their own hearts, conscience and beliefs while finding themselves on the wrong side of history.

Winter Men is a superb novel highlighting the moral dilemmas of everyday Germans caught up events out of their control. Beautifully written and utterly absorbing author Jesper Bugge Kold's thought-provoking story takes us from Hamburg to battle fronts to concentration camps. He offers the reader a heart-stopping experience of the absolute horror of these places of conflict, whilst still providing a wonderfully sobering read that has moments of kindness and compassion too.

After the death of their father Karl is left reluctantly running the family textile business profitably making military uniforms. As a young soldier in WW1 he has signed up as a reservist and will be proud to fight for Germany again. Gerhard is a lecturer at the University in Hamburg and secretly questions what the Nazi's are doing. Though neither are true supporters of the Nazi's they both end up in the German SS and they live through some shocking experiences during WW2. It is desperately sad to see these men suffer so much, losing people they love and ending the war so filled with regrets and guilt. It asks the reader a difficult question of whether these men were possibly just pawns in a game they couldn't escape, or truly evil? The power of the Nazi war machine was incredibly irresistible and this novel catches the fears and emotions of two men caught in its grip. I thoroughly enjoyed reading this fascinating piece of historical fiction, it was hard to put down and I can happily recommend it.

Shelley says

I rated the book several days ago but waited to review it until I'd put some distance between myself and the material. I will often have an initial gut reaction that doesn't match with my attempt at an objective review, and given the topic, I wanted to wait. I waited. I still think it's three stars.

This book should be looked at two ways: substance and form.

As for substance: we are reading primarily about two brothers, adults in their forties, who lived (one fought, one didn't) through WWI and are now facing WWII. They are flawed, they are human, they are not very likable. They are German. The book is written by a Dane. Does that matter? I don't know.

I learned more than the average bear about World War II (and the atrocities committed) at a young age. My father did a master's thesis that involved a large residual household library about World War II...and correspondence with Albert Speer. When I was old enough to read German, I saw in one letter that Herr Speer thanked him for the Christmas card and the picture of his lovely daughter. That daughter would be me. Guy's been dead for decades and it still creeps me out. (What the hell was he thinking?)

Maybe as a result of that--and other assorted weirdness of my upbringing--I became interested in what makes people evil. This man who writes a thank you for a Christmas card was evil. That caused dissonance. I read memoirs and biographies of major Nazi figures and then Solzhenitsyn in my teens (disclaimer: my husband read all of the Gulag Archipelago, but I could only get through half of the first volume, but managed Cancer Ward and a couple of others). I digested all that and, after a little bit of life experience, decided true evil isn't committed by Hitlers or the Stalins.

That is: evil takes place every day, but we only see it when it's writ large, when Spain "conquers" South America, when Europe turns its back on Syrian refugees, when the US obliterates native populations, when Stalin and Hitler kill millions.

To me, evil is an average person, a "good citizen," turning away when he should look--and when a lot of "good citizens" do that, you get the Eastern Front and death camps, Gulags and Indian reservations. Evil is doing nothing when you should do something, when you *must* do something because it is the right thing to do. Evil is when you know there's a guy molesting kids in your church but you're too scared to report it. There would have been no Hitler without popular support. There would be no Ted Cruz without... Well, I suppose we have enough examples.

Back to the book.

Most of my reviews are of non-fiction, and most of those address, at some point, accessibility to non-scholarly audiences. Here, though, for this novel? If you don't know much about the Eastern Front, if you don't know much about the SS...well, I can't honestly endorse going and reading this novel to learn more. I can't honestly say I would want you to experience the gut-churning horror of what happened. Should you? Probably. History repeating itself and all that. Would I want you to? No. It's horrible. If you have a soul, you will want to be sick reading it. Instead, read non-fiction. You will learn the awful facts but you will not be inhabiting the heads of people who burn churches full of women and children or calculate how many Jews and Gypsies and Communists can fit in a livestock car.

If you're already familiar with the SS and/or Eastern Front, you will catch more of the book's historical nuances (and realize how toned down it is in many ways: it could have been so much more gut-churning and awful).

Putting aside history and getting to the novel itself: the problem is the main characters are not likable. The secondary characters are not likable. No one is worth your time sympathizing with. There are no heroes. There aren't even any tragic heroes. Just two men who were not heroic to begin with becoming worse. If either had been more sympathetic to begin with, it would have made a more compelling read. I think if the author had focused on one individual, it would have been a very strong novel. But that's not what we have.

There is a bit too much deus ex machina--not so much in the resolution, but in the setup. It's farcical, the way both brothers end up in the SS.

Usually in a book dealing with so many atrocities, there is at least a little humor to break the grimness of it all. Gallows humor. Not here. (Wait. I can think of one incident that is darkly funny, but it's not enough.)

Also, the pacing isn't quite right. It's in fits and starts. The early phases of the war receive too much attention, and the horrible parts--the parts that are important--receive too little. I don't know if it was an editing hatchet job or if it was poorly planned or if the author got to, say, Ukraine, and couldn't actually bring himself to write all of what happened.

All that and three stars? Yes. For all that, it's well-written, and you will want to finish it, even as you want to hurl it across the room and/or be sick.

Additionally, I pay closer attention to tone in translated novels. Here, the translator did, I felt, an amazing job in bringing the characters to life. (I didn't like them any better, but they were as vivid as they could be.)

Lennongirl says

This was quite a different book/view on Germans during Nazism and WWII. The two main characters are brothers who are neither the pure, evil baddies, nor the bright, shining heroes. They do think of themselves as being "good" people: They despise Hitler, the NSDAP and everything connected to them and their politics. Yet, for various reasons, they can't get away from it and, even more so, get involved. The book is very brutal, the descriptions of both wars (WWI and WWII) are violent and destructive, not to mention the inner struggle of all characters. Plus, the general atmosphere of those times - everybody is frightened, suspicious, a potential threat. That doesn't shine any positive shade on the bad decisions the characters make, but it offers a lot of food for thought.

The main message this book gave me is that thinking you're a good, decent human being isn't enough. You also have to act upon it, as soon as possible. As soon as you notice things are getting worse, you have to actively distance yourself from it and, in whatever way you can, fight against it. It's some kind of cautionary tale, which is (sadly) very relevant to what goes on in too many parts of the world these days.

It was - despite its rather depressing content and tone - an entertaining read overall that kept me thinking about it a lot.

Manchester Military History Society (MMHS) says

Powerful novel of moral dilemma in World War 2

Two brothers, neither of whom are true supporters of the Nazi's end up in the SS through coercion. Through promotion they both slip into a path that leads to them taking part in atrocities.

The book is thought provoking and raises questions within the reader as to how you would have dealt with the dilemmas presented.

The gradual slip into evil deeds is excruciating and sad as in other circumstances these are reasonable people. It's like watching a crash you know is going to happen.

Even though the book is translated from the Danish it reads well and keeps your attention throughout.

It's definitely not a feel good read, but does make you think and I can happily recommend it.

Laurie Notaro says

Maybe this is a realistic portrait of good people doing bad things in horrific circumstances. Maybe I won't understand those choices until I am faced with them. Maybe most of the Nazis were good people to begin with--how does a whole county become psychopaths? What I do know is that I wish I had read something else

Melki says

"Everyone seemed to just accept what was happening."

Teaching at the University of Hamburg in 1938 has become frustrating for Gerhard Strangl.

"Two thirds of the students are gone, either because they're Jews or because they've joined the army. All discussion between students and professors has become completely meaningless, since no one dares to state their opinion anymore. People hardly dare describe what they have in their lunch box."

His brother Karl owns a prosperous clothing factory that makes SS uniforms.

Both men end up getting sucked into the war and become reluctant soldiers.

"When this war is over, I hope that men like you and I can look ourselves in the eye and tell ourselves that we didn't abet the evil that goes hand in hand with the war."

Despite Karl's hopeful words, the brothers both see and participate in atrocities.

This book is a well written and absorbing account of how two ordinarily compassionate and intelligent men get caught up in a nightmare. Highly recommended!

"I am a good man. I'm not like them."

Sarah Smith says

First, I would like to sincerely thank my friend, Ryan Moore, for suggesting that I read this novel. Since I was 10, I have been fascinated by many of the events that occurred in and shaped American history. At the age of 10, I was blessed to have an amazing 5th grade history teacher who enthralled me with daily lectures about the events that formed this country into what it was at that point in time. And... While I was sickened by the fact that this country and its citizens had been ravaged by several significant wars, I had also been drawn to learning about all the details recorded about those wars. For example, I was immensely impressed - - even at such a young age -- by the realization that a catastrophic number of American soldiers had bravely fought AND sacrificed their time, effort, and lives in order to secure this country's freedom and independence. And... As a result of the incredible bravery AND ultimate sacrifice demonstrated by that catastrophic number of American soldiers, the generations who have lived following the American Revolution, the Civil War, World War I and World War II could truly experience that our forefathers had founded America on in 1776. Anyway... Needless to say, Ms. Sandra Belaire proved to be the kind of history

teacher who piqued my interest and had me sitting on the edge of my seat EACH and EVERY day that I sat in her class. I clung to EACH and EVERY word of her lectures throughout the course of the 5th grade, and I fell in love with history. Although I certainly do not consider myself to be a "history buff" by any means, my love for history has been fed and remained since I was 10. So... After I read the review of WINTER MEN that Ryan Moore posted, I asked him if anyone who truly had acquired an appreciation for history would enjoy reading this novel. When he strongly encouraged me to read WINTER MEN, I just knew that I would have to make time to read this novel for myself. Therefore, having said that... Second, I must say that I truly did enjoy reading WINTER MEN by Jesper Bugge Kold. It is a novel that most definitely did make a remarkable impression on me from the first word to the last.

Honestly, I did find the structure of WINTER MEN quite confusing at first. Because this novel only contained parts (ex.: PART 1, PART 2, and PART 3) rather than individual chapters, I must admit that it did take some time for me to become acquainted with the flow of the overall plot. But... Once I was able to navigate the structure of the plot without getting lost, I was able to sink into the details of the plot itself. Beyond a shadow of a doubt, I thought that Jesper Bugge Kold did a fantastic job writing this historic fiction novel. In addition, I found WINTER MEN to be a compelling saga that described the lives of two German brothers who lived throughout World War I and World War II. Throughout the course of WINTER MEN, Jesper Bugge Kold painted a heart-wrenching, terrifyingly inspirational picture of the happiness, sadness, and struggle that both Gerhard Strangl and Karl Strangl encountered throughout their lives. From the very beginning of this novel, I found myself enthralled in the individual lives that Gerhard and Karl led. However, I grew emotional and found my heart breaking more and more for both brothers as EACH was forced to enter World War II in Germany. Neither Gerhard nor Karl wanted to serve their homeland during World War II, and each brother had his own reasons for not wanting to fight. However... When neither Gerhard nor Karl could refuse to join World War II and serve Germany, each brother accepted the fate that he had been handed. By the time that Gerhard and Karl submitted to the higher powers commanding and overseeing their actions, each brother could only see one goal: his own survival. Then, by the time that World War II finally did end in 1945, both Gerhard and Karl had to accept the truth about the directions of their lives. Throughout the various twists and turns of WINTER MEN, Jesper Bugge Kold constantly intrigued me because I was always asking the following two questions. First, would it be possible for both Gerhard Strangl and Karl Strangl to survive their consciences and move on with their lives after World War II ended? Second, would one brother prove to be a survivor after World War II ended; while, the other brother gave up and succumbed to his conscience? Third, would neither brother prove to be strong enough to survive a war in which neither one wanted to become involved in the first place? Jesper Bugge Kold's FINAL outcomes for Gerhard Strangl and Karl Strangl both surprised and saddened me.

Rebecca (agirlirlblog, bekkilyn) says

I'd probably give this book 3.5 stars if it were possible. I really enjoyed seeing what happened in Germany during Hitler's regime through the eyes of Germans and members of the Gestapo/SS. The two brothers in this story were dragged into it reluctantly and were not fully supportive of the things they ended up doing, but often felt trapped. So much harm was done, even to those who were a part of Hitler's army, and it's so tragic all around as oppression doesn't just do harm to the oppressed, but also to the oppressors.

One thing diminished the tense effect of the book, and that was the prologue and a few small chapters scattered throughout the book that showed snippets of what was happening with one of the characters years after the main events. For me, the story would have been more effective without these as I wouldn't have already known what was going to happen to the two brothers and their families ahead of time.

I chose this book out of the February Kindle First selection and feel that I made a really good choice.

Tim Stretton says

Fiction about the lives of Germans in Nazi Germany normally falls into one of three categories: the Jewish experience; Germans implicitly or explicitly opposed to the regime (see Philip Kerr, Luke McCallin, Ben Pastor); or portraits of monsters (David Thomas's *Ostland*).

The *Winter Men* is closest to the third of these classes, taking us through the war experiences of two German brothers, both of whom are portrayed as reasonable men, and both of whom end up in the SS. The path each takes to end in committing unspeakable atrocities is set out with chilling plausibility. Both Karl and Gerhard end up, unquestionably, as monsters; but the strength of the novel is that they both remain recognisably human.

The *Winter Men* is a searing portrayal of evil, and how those who commit it were once like the rest of us.

Michael Stern says

Chilling and Instructive

Does the world need yet another work of historical fiction set during WWII and told from a German point of view? As it turns out, *Winter Men* proves that it does.

I didn't really appreciate what Hanna Arendt truly meant by the phrase "banality of evil" until I read this book. *Winter Men* serves as a powerful reminder that for every ideological fanatic shouting 'Heil!' and burning books, there were hundreds, maybe thousands, of respectable middle and upper-middle class businessmen, academics, and civil servants who just wanted to 'go along to get along', as the cliché goes. Of course, without the support and active cooperation of these 'pragmatic' masses, the full horrors of that period would not have been possible.

Winter Men is a literary autopsy of the lives of two such respectable brothers from Hamburg. They are neither villains nor victims, nor even truly Nazis in the conventional sense. Each in their own way, they make decisions aimed at keeping their hands clean as much as possible. Yet their incremental choices to 'go along' inevitably lead them to sink further and further into both the literal and metaphorical muck which eventually consumes them both.

Written in a rather naturalistic style, this bloody novel is not one that everyone will be able to stomach. But for those who do, the reward is a highly thought-provoking read, and a reminder to remain vigilant. Times may have changed, but people haven't.

Steve says

A solid and worthwhile (if, alas, unspectacular and not necessarily memorable) *Kindle First* selection, once again introducing to English reading audiences a talented author originally published abroad.

World War II isn't the most uplifting material, and the holocaust (and genocide, generally) is heavy stuff, but both continue to provide a rich source of content spun from any number of new and novel perspectives. Ultimately, I found Kold's work fundamentally depressing, but sufficiently realistic, compelling, and thought-provoking to justify the time and energy. This one won't generate the kind of loyal following, nor do I expect to see it on the Booker or Pulitzer short lists like the sublime *All the Light We Cannot See*, but it's a good, solid read. The book also reads as having been extremely well researched (and the after-materials seem to confirm this), which added value.

I expect many readers will either find Kold's protagonist(s) sympathetic (or pathetic) or resent the author's effort to humanize Nazis (or distinguish between evil Nazis and good Nazis or accidental Nazis). For me, it's just a novel, and - even if it's neither ground-breaking nor epic - one that was well constructed. I'm unwilling to analyze much more than that, but I'm glad I read it.

Sg says

Very good but extremely dark story about two brothers, Germans, compelled to join the SS in WW2. (Fiction). Not one for the easily depressed!

Abbey says

My rating is actually more of a 3.5. At times the story was amazing, and kept my attention, but there were other parts that really dragged.

Dianna says

Review to follow

Elijah Egnor says

"Work for us or die?"

What would you do if you had to respond to a statement like that? Even if you know you're working for an organization you hate and believe to be evil would you do it in the name of self-preservation or literally bite the bullet?

This is one of the questions raised in "Winter Men." Two brothers with of opposite personalities who both embark on a long journey into their own versions of hell on Earth. Both brothers through different means end up working for the SS and yes, it's probably very unrealistic how it happened or that it would happen it still makes for a compelling story.

Some people might hate them just because they were Germans during a horrible period of human history, however; I ended up hoping that they wouldn't bend to their fates and keep their good nature about them.

That just isn't the case. Some people might find it hard to believe that during that time there were actually people who were not all "gung-ho" about Nazism and the whole Socialist movement. People who despised the Führer. During their years they tried to tell themselves over and over that they are still good people and that they tried not to cave.

To me it comes down to the age old question "are we inherently good or evil?" Or do things around us and the influences of others makes us more evil? Can someone who believes they are a good person really convince himself otherwise knowing all the horrors he's seen and done just to stay alive? Are people evil or do we create monsters? Read and decide for yourself...
