

KIRKUS REVIEWS

TITLE INFORMATION

DANUTA

A novel based on the life of Danuta Buczak

Koenig, John

CreateSpace (354 pp.)

\$16.95 paperback, \$4.99 e-book

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BOOK REVIEW

In an inspiring novel of survival, a young Polish girl experiences marriage and motherhood in a time of war.

Based on the true story of Danuta Buczak, Koenig's debut novel is set in Soviet-occupied Poland in the 1940s. Seventeen-year-old Danuta, a fiery, spirited teenager, grows up before she is ready when she hastily marries her true love, Rudolph, before he goes to war as a lieutenant in the Polish army. Danuta acknowledges to herself, but to no one else, that her insistence on a quick, ill-attended wedding is primarily about placing a hold on Rudolph before he leaves. She believes that they'll have at least a few weeks together before Rudolph must depart, but she's dismayed when he's led to the train station on the very night they wed, leaving Danuta in a strange limbo. As the war escalates, Danuta and her parents are constantly at risk. Rudolph returns, injured, and he and Danuta begin their married life together, struggling as Rudolph tries to find steady work and as they get to know each other. Danuta is soon pregnant, and her life takes a terrible turn when Soviet state security arrests Rudolph for having served in the Polish army, and he's sentenced to death. Later Danuta is apprehended as well, along with her baby, and she gathers all of her strength to try to escape the labor camp and find freedom. When she encounters unthinkable tragedy, she takes control of her life as never before. Danuta emerges as a natural heroine from the first page, coming of age quickly in a time of war and loss. Her gumption and sassiness mark her as a strong character who stands up for herself even in the most threatening circumstances. Overall, Koenig delivers an unforgettable story that melds historical fact with superior fiction.

A fine World War II-era historical novel that breathes life into a long-gone era with its timeless characters and exciting conflicts.