



## The Winter Horses

By Philip Kerr

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### The Winter Horses By Philip Kerr

From Philip Kerr, the *New York Times* bestselling author of the Bernie Gunther novels, comes a breathtaking journey of survival in the dark days of WWII in Ukraine, a country that remains tumultuous today. This inspiring tale captures the power of the human spirit and is perfect for fans of *The Book Thief*, *Milkweed*, and *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*.

It will soon be another cold winter in the Ukraine. But it's 1941, and things are different this year. Max, the devoted caretaker of an animal preserve, must learn to live with the Nazis who have overtaken this precious land. He must also learn to keep secrets—for there is a girl, Kalinka, who is hiding in the park.

Kalinka has lost her home, her family, her belongings—everything but her life. Still, she has gained one small, precious gift: a relationship with the rare wild and wily Przewalski's horses that wander the preserve. Aside from Max, these endangered animals are her only friends—until a Nazi campaign of extermination nearly wipes them out for good.

Now Kalinka must set out on a treacherous journey across the frozen forest to save the only two surviving horses—and herself.

*From the Hardcover edition.*

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### Editorial Review

#### From School Library Journal

Gr 6–8—This story follows the harrowing journey of Kalinka, a Jewish orphan searching for safety, and the horses that provide her with comfort, power, and hope. Set in 1941 in war-torn Ukraine, Kerr's novel is also a tale of survival—not only Kalinka's, but of Przewalski's horses, a rare breed of wild horse that dates back tens of thousands of years. The story opens on the Askaniya-Nova animal sanctuary where Max, the longtime caretaker, has been ordered by the SS to kill all of the animals, including the nearly extinct Przewalski's horses. As Max struggles with the demands of a cruel Nazi officer who has turned the reserve into his headquarters, he meets Kalinka who is travelling alone after witnessing the deaths of her family. With Max's guidance and support, Kalinka and the last pair of the horses embark on a journey across the Ukrainian wilderness. As Kalinka faces frightening obstacles, her ability to communicate with the horses and other fantastical elements give her the courage to face serious threats and her own fears. Threads of "Little Red Riding Hood" and "Hansel and Gretel" contribute to the sense that this is an "old" story handed down through generations. Like the best stories told around a campfire, it is spellbinding, but it can also be terrifying. Ultimately, *The Winter Horses* ends on a note of hope and triumph—for both Kalinka and the horses. Kerr's novel will be enjoyed by readers who like a touch of fantasy in their historical fiction.—Shelley Sommer, Inly School, Scituate, MA

#### From [Booklist](#)

The year is 1941. The place, Ukraine. After her entire family is murdered by invading Nazis, Jewish teen Kalinka finds herself alone on the vast Ukrainian steppe until she encounters two Przewalski's horses. These prehistoric animals, depicted in ancient cave paintings, are the rarest horses in the world and have never been domesticated. But the preternaturally intelligent creatures quickly—and improbably—bond with Kalinka, and along with a Russian wolfhound named Taras, the three flee for their lives from the invading Nazis, who are determined to exterminate the horses, which they consider to be an inferior species. Their flight is a perilous one, as they are beset not only by the Germans but also by the forbidding winter weather, wolves, and even cannibals! Can they possibly survive these vicissitudes? Best-selling adult author Kerr presents his story as legend, not historical reality, which gives him the latitude necessary for his plot's improbabilities and anthropomorphized animals. Though sometimes didactic and slightly contrived, the story is nevertheless engaging and exciting and is sure to appeal to horse lovers and fans of survival fiction. **HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY:** It's big news that the best-selling author of the Bernie Gunther novels for adults has moved into children's literature, and the full-court marketing campaign for this title reflects that. Grades 7-12. -- Michael Cart

#### Review

"[F]or kids particularly interested in history and/or horses." ---Kirkus

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#### James Sinters:

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