

Sarah Sundin's Novel Grapples with the Ethics of Living in a Divided World

“This ruminative, slow-burning romance is Sundin’s best yet.”

Publishers Weekly, starred review on *The Land Beneath Us*



Ada, Mich—Sarah Sundin’s name has become synonymous with her historically accurate World War II novels filled with engaging characters, heart-stopping action, and romance. Her bestselling series including *Sunrise at Normandy*, *Waves of Freedom*, *Wings of the Nightingale*, and *Wings of Glory* have received high praise from readers and reviewers alike. Now, Sundin offers an electric standalone novel, *When Twilight Breaks*, set in the days leading up to the second world war.

In 1938, two Americans meet in the heart of Nazi Germany under very different circumstances. Foreign correspondent Evelyn Brand is determined to prove her ability in a male-dominated profession. But, in order to expose the growing tyranny in Nazi Germany, she must proceed with extreme caution. If she offends the government, she could be expelled from the country—or worse. But, if she fails to truthfully report on the events occurring within Germany, her voice will fail to get the American people to act.

American graduate student Peter Lang is also residing in Munich, where he is working on his PhD in German. Disillusioned with the chaos in the world due to the Great Depression, Lang is duly impressed with the prosperity and order of German society. But his vision of Nazi Germany quickly changes when the brutality of the regime hits close to home. Lang discovers a far better way to use his contacts within the Nazi party—to feed information to the shrewd reporter he can’t get off his mind.

As tensions rise and war looms, Evelyn and Peter’s efforts to expose oppression attract unwanted attention, pulling them deeper into danger as the world marches toward war. Can Peter and Evelyn learn to trust each other before their world shatters?

Topics of Discussion:

- Taking action in a dangerous world
- Finding balance between personal freedom and societal order
- How we treat others who are different from us—or who have different opinions

When Twilight Breaks

by Sarah Sundin

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About the Author



Sarah Sundin's novels have received starred reviews from *Booklist*, *Library Journal*, and *Publishers Weekly*. Her bestselling *The Land Beneath Us* was a finalist for the Chrisy Award, *The Sky Above Us* received the Carol Award, *The Sea Before Us* received the FHL Reader's Choice Award, and both *Through Waters Deep* and *When Tides Turn* were named on *Booklist's* "101 Best Romance Novels of the Last 10 Years." Sarah lives in Northern California. Visit www.sarahsundin.com for more information.

Suggested Interview Questions *When Twilight Breaks* by Sarah Sundin

Can you please tell us about *When Twilight Breaks*?

In 1938, American foreign correspondent Evelyn Brand is determined to expose the oppression in Nazi Germany, but how can she with the softball assignments she receives—like interviewing American students at the University of Munich?

Peter Lang is working on his PhD in German, testing his innovative techniques for language instruction. Disillusioned with the chaos in the world due to the Depression, Peter is impressed with the prosperity in Germany. But when brutality hits close, Peter is shaken and begins infiltrating Nazi circles to pass information to Evelyn.

As tensions rise and war looms, Evelyn's stories and Peter's language skills draw unwanted attention from the Nazis and pull them deeper into danger.

What was the inspiration behind your new novel?

My grandfather John F. Ebelke was a professor of German, and he studied in Munich from 1935-36. When it sank in that he'd studied in *Nazi* Germany, this story idea took root. What was it like for Americans living in Germany and witnessing the growing oppression? Since my grandfather passed away before I was born, I used my imagination. Peter Lang is not—I repeat *not*—modeled after my grandfather, but many elements of his career are based on my grandfather's.

Your female protagonist, Evelyn Brand, is an American foreign correspondent. Why did you choose this profession for her?

The year of 1938 in Germany was one huge news story after another, so what better way to explore these events than to have a correspondent on the ground? I've always thought it would be fun to write a novel about a reporter, and of course, a female reporter in the 1930s had lots of challenges.

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Peter Lang, an American graduate student who is working on his PhD in Munich, Germany, has a very different view of Germany than Evelyn Brand. At first, he is impressed with the prosperity and orderliness of this country. Can you provide readers with a hint about what changed his view of Nazi Germany?

Looking back with our knowledge of the Holocaust, we can overlook how attractive Nazi Germany was in the 1930s. The world was in chaos with the Great Depression, but Germany had full employment and a veneer of safety and prosperity. Many British and American tourists were impressed, and Peter reflects this attitude. For Peter, friendship and firsthand observation of persecution show him the danger of sacrificing liberties for the sake of order.

Kristallnacht, the Night of Broken Glass, was a devastating event that took place in Nazi Germany. Can you please relay how this event comes in to play in *When Twilight Breaks*?

Kristallnacht was a horrific pogrom with widespread destruction of Jewish property. Ninety-one people were killed that night, and about twenty thousand Jewish men were sent to concentration camps. The brutality shocked the world and changed many minds about Hitler and the Nazis. This event plays a climactic role in *When Twilight Breaks*, endangering Peter and Evelyn and everything they hold dear.

How did you become interested in the World War II era?

Family stories drew me to the World War II era. One of my grandfathers served in the US Navy during the war, and he was a born storyteller. My grandfather Ebelke used his skills in the US Army Specialized Training Program to teach American soldiers the German language. Growing up hearing these stories—plus my father’s love for WWII movies!—gave me a love for the era.

Many of your World War II novels are part of a series. Why did you decide to write a standalone novel?

These three story ideas came to me as standalone ideas. Since a series presents a few writing and marketing challenges, I decided to keep the novels separate and not link them. I did find a minor connection between the three—I can’t help myself!—but each story is completely independent.

***When Twilight Breaks* touches upon ethics within a war setting. Can you expound upon this topic?**

The key word for 1938 would be “appeasement.” The world was trying to appease Hitler, not only with his demands for annexing Austria and the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia, but in the treatment of the Jews. At one point in the story, Evelyn asks Peter, “Where do you draw the line?” Where do we draw the line between peace and war? Between personal liberty and societal order? Between justice and mercy? Peter and Evelyn wrestle with these topics—which are so timely. While writing this story, I was struck by the similarities between the divisive 1930s and our own time. Very sobering.

What do you hope readers can learn from your novel?

I hope readers think through the roles of freedom and order in their own lives and in society, and I hope they learn along with Peter and Evelyn how to lean on the Lord and on the people he places in our lives.

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What are you working on next?

I'm very excited about my next novel, which follows two Americans in Nazi-occupied Paris in 1941, when the United States was still neutral. Bookstore owner Lucie Girard aids the resistance between the leaves of her favorite volumes, while businessman Paul Aubrey obtains military information from his German customers and hides escaping British airmen. Meeting in the bookstore, Paul and Lucie are drawn to each other, but to win her trust would mean betraying his duty. As the United States and Germany careen toward war, can Paul and Lucie work together for the higher good?

How can readers connect with you?

I love to hear from readers! Please visit my website at www.sarahsundin.com. There you can send me a message or sign up for my email newsletter. I'm also active on Facebook (SarahSundinAuthor), Twitter (@sarahsundin), Instagram (@sarahsundinauthor), and Pinterest (Sarah Sundin).

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