

The Choice by Edith Eger

5 stars

Even in hell, hope can flower

Edith is a Hungarian Jew and is just sixteen when she is sent to Auschwitz with her parents and older sister Magda. During the 'selection' on arrival, her parents are sent to other lines which lead to the gas chambers. Edith and Magda, being young and healthy are stripped, made to stand naked for hours, before having their heads shaved, being subjected to a dehumanising 'medical'; they are then sent to a dormitory where they sleep six to a shelf with other 'lucky' women and girls. The sign over Auschwitz translates as 'Work sets you free' – a terrible irony.

Edith's talent as a ballet dancer brings her to the attention of the infamous Mengele who forces her to dance for him, and in the dance, she can distance herself from the freezing barracks and the lascivious gaze of Mengele. Her reward is a loaf of bread which she shares, thereby gaining the friendship of others; that gesture brings her unexpected help over the months to come.

Over their years of detention, Edith and Magda somehow manage to survive the constant selections, the cold, the cruel work, and even the death march from Mauthausen to Gunskirchen when only 100 out of 2,000 survived. Miraculously they survive until the Liberation.

One might imagine this would be a depressing read. In fact, it is anything but. Edith has amazing strength and above all, hope. She chose to survive Auschwitz and the many other difficulties in her life, and this is the message she spreads to those she helps through her psychotherapy practice.

Now, at ninety she is still working, still giving and still inspiring everyone she meets. Hers is a remarkable story, told with great sensitivity and a total lack of self-pity. She lost so much but she hasn't let that define how she lives her life. Her focus is steadfastly outwards.

This is a book which **MUST** be read; a book to inspire and to give hope to everyone who struggles with adversity.

Pashtpaws

Breakaway Reviewers received a copy of the book to review