



by Peter Münch

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Children's & Young Adults'

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The Scent of the Lime-Tree: A Diary from Sarajevo

Der Duft des Lindenbaums. Ein Tagebuch aus Sarajewo

review

For years a journalist in war-torn regions of the world, Peter Münch returned ten years after the end of hostilities to the Balkans and chanced upon a story and a diary that prompted him to try his hand at another genre, so acute was his need to tell the tale of Nina.

This striking work of 'fiction' with a strong authentic base acquaints the reader with an ordinary little girl called Nina whose home is Sarajevo, her family life, her love of dancing and animals, the first stirrings of love, all chronicled in a diary decorated with girly stickers – into these entries creeps an increasing presence of war. The girls don't like to be in the cellar as the bombs fall, explosions become part of the city's noise-scape. At the age of twelve, just weeks before the signing of the Dayton Agreement in 1995, Nina is hit by a piece of shrapnel and dies, apparently the last of the children to be killed in the war.

It is an unassuming plaque in her old neighbourhood that captured Münch's attention, as it does that of his protagonist, fictional school-friend Elvis. Determined to find out what happened to her, and armed with her old diary, he opens himself to an onslaught of childhood memories and lives the war again through her writing.

The power of this work lies in the simplicity and openness of Nina's real voice as her diary is printed in its entirety, and in the author's

Careful handling of it.

press quotes

'What touches one most about Nina's diary is the innocence – even if the keeper of this journal is very aware of what is at stake.' – *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*

about the author

Peter Münch was born in 1960 and has a doctorate in history. He lives with his two sons in Munich. He has been a reporter with the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* since 1990. In 2003 he received the Media Ethics Award for his reporting on Iraq.

Translated editions of this work include:

Rizzoli, Italy (*Il profumo del taglio. Diario di Nina, 12 anni, a Sarajevo*); Kult-B, Bosnia (forthcoming)

rights information

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