



Scattered Ghosts: One Family's Survival through War, Holocaust and Revolution

Nick Barlay

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When two Hungarian Jewish refugees landed by accident in Britain in the winter of 1956, they had little idea what the future would hold. But they carried with them the traces of their turbulent past, just enough to provide the clues to their past. Scattered Ghosts combines memoir, investigation and travel to resurrect 200 years of wars and revolutions, from the Austro-Hungarian Empire via two totalitarianisms to contemporary Britain. It is the story of an all but disappeared world told through the eyes of a single family ruptured by great forces, and occasionally brought together by cherry strudel.

Through haphazard and fragmented possessions - a blunt-pencilled letter; a final photograph; a hastily typed certificate; a protecting document; a farewell postcard from a distant place; a recipe - Nick Barlay retraces the footsteps of the vanished. There is the death march of a grandfather, the military manoeuvres of a great uncle, the final weeks and moments of a great grandmother deported to Auschwitz, two boys' survival of an untold massacre, and codenamed spies operating in Cold War Britain. The ordinary mysteries and emotional legacies still resonate today in the parallel lives of far-flung family members. Diaspora, division and cultural identity form the backdrop to the story of ancestors who walked barefoot from Eastern Europe to experience Communism and Nazism, and to outlive them both.

Scattered Ghosts is a family history that explores the events, great and small, on which a family's existence hinges. How did one person survive and another die? How did a Soviet tank shell cause a revolution between sisters? How did two refugees escape an invading army? Where did successive generations end up? And, ultimately, where did the recipe for cherry strudel come from?

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