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Harald Lutz Bruckner

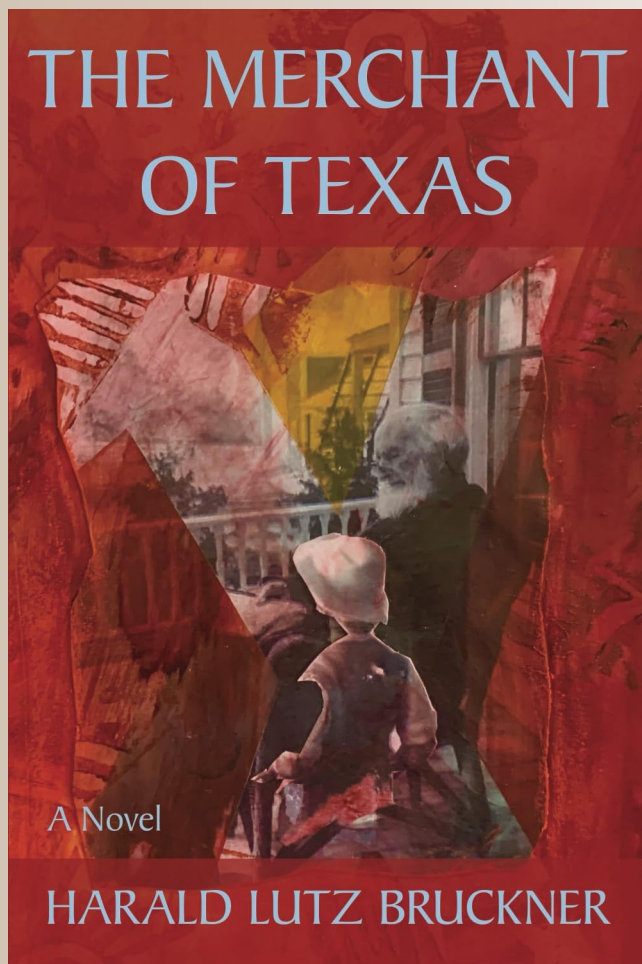


I've led a dog's life, and I want to tell you about it. Though people think I can only express myself with "Woof, Woof," I have a lot more to say. Born with good breeding in wintry Wisconsin, my first name was Baron Maximilian von Ox IV. Of course, that was far too fancy a handle for a cute pup like me. After being caged and buried in the guts of a giant plane, I made the acquaintance of my parents in Florida.

Since I arrived on Valentine's Day, Mom wanted to name me Valentino. Dad didn't accept calling me such a sissy name. I became Chico. This is the tale of my adventurous life during the next twelve years. Sadly, I didn't live to be quite an octogenarian. I wished people would learn to appreciate my codes of communication. C'est la vie. But, this is my story, and I'm sticking to it!

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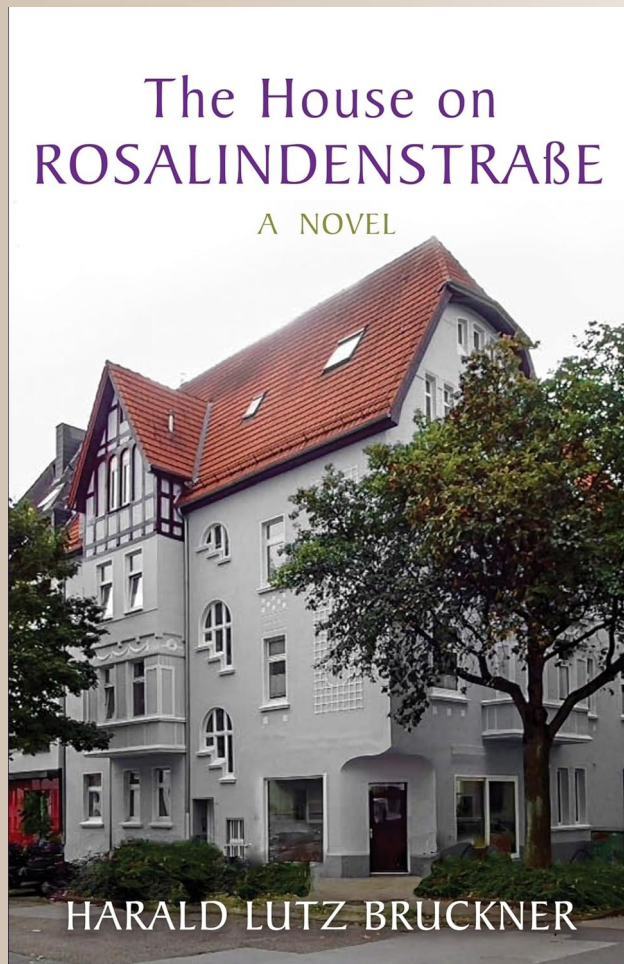
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Abramof, aged 106, relates the story of his turbulent life to his great-grandson, Daniel, an aspiring writer. Events shared with the reader commence on the morning of the second anniversary of the start of the Ukraine war. A tale of intrigue takes the reader through the fall and rise of a family in two worlds, the exciting account playing out in Austin, Texas, and Jerusalem, Israel. The author, Harald Lutz Bruckner, once again weaves a tapestry of life in *The Merchant of Texas*, its unlikely protagonists the old man and his precocious great-great-grandson, Zoltán Abramof III, lovingly named Little Z.

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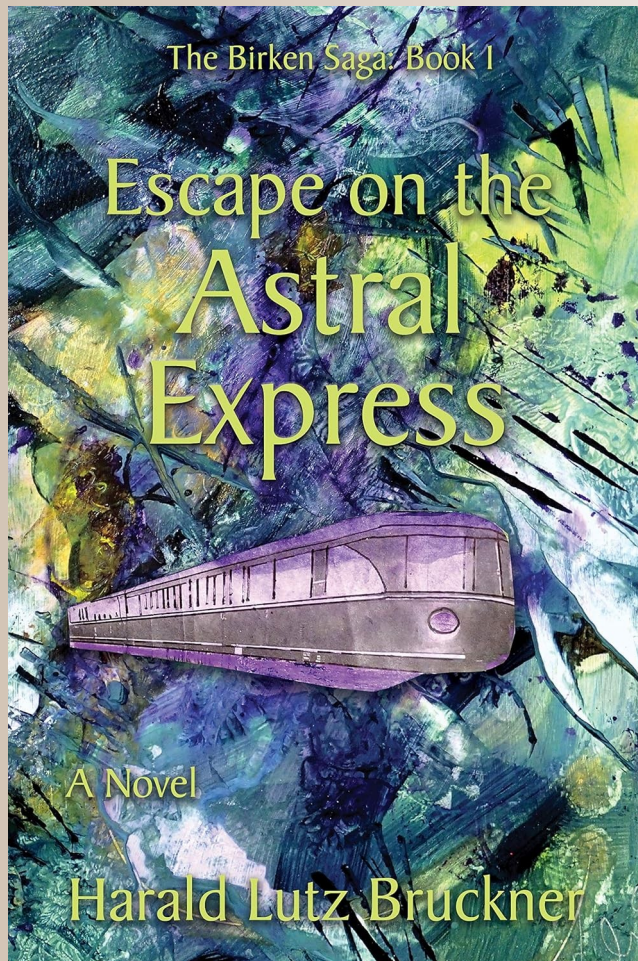


Rosalindenstraße 36 was built at the turn of the last century and withstood the vagaries of time and two world wars. Its occupants suffered through inflation of unheard proportions, times of depression, hunger, deprivation, and the highs and lows of their lives. Were it capable of speaking, the dwelling would share the tales of the rise and fall of a dynasty. An eerie dream takes the reader from floor to floor through the entire structure and opens the window to an event that takes place in 1996.

Detectives Apfelbaum and Sattler are dealing with a possible murder and encounter the charms of the elderly storyteller Amalia Dorothea von Eichendorff-Dingdong. It is Amalia's sharing of information that leads to amazing conclusions relevant to the corpse of Walter Hahnenkamm resting in the morgue at police station #41 in Rüttenscheid, Essen, Germany. During the course of the investigation, Apfelbaum travels back in time and falls in love with the vision of a much younger Amalia as he is haunted by the musical score to the movie *Somewhere in Time*.

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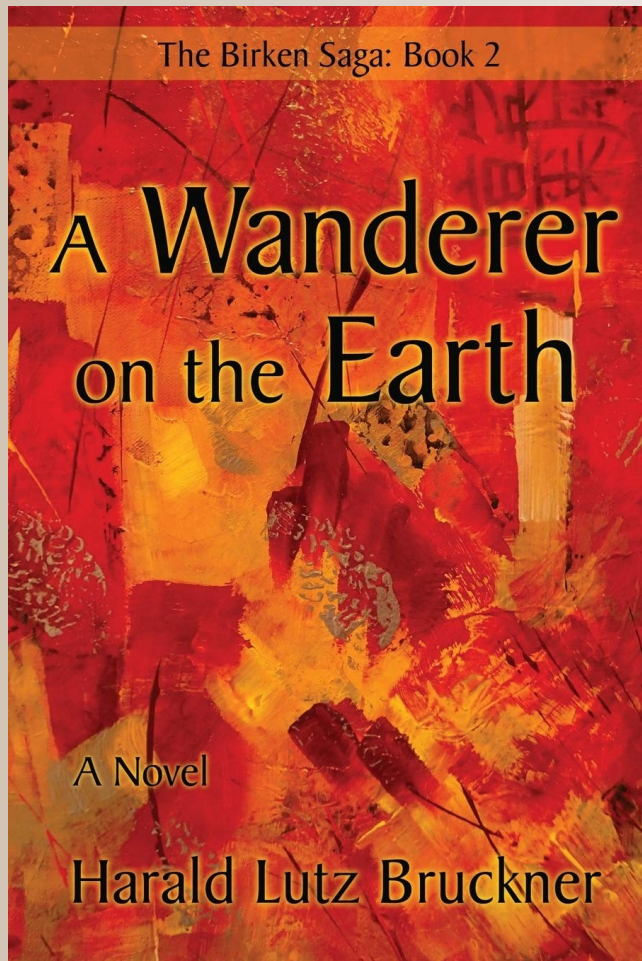
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In the early 1930s, Helena and Alex Birken are forced into marriage by her father to salvage the family hotel in Düsseldorf, Germany. A year after the rise of Nazi leadership, their second son, Hektor, is born. Totally unprepared to run a business, the Birkens fail to save the property from bankruptcy during the overwhelming depression that is engulfing the country.

Defeated but not conquered, Helena returns to her hometown of Essen in 1938 to open a meat market and grocery store. Even after Alex is conscripted into the military in 1939, she is determined to succeed. After a major bomb attack in March 1943, her sons Albert and Hektor are rushed off to safety on the Astral Express toward southern Germany. While they live with strangers in the tranquil village of Köndringen, Helena remains in the industrial city of Essen. Can Helena and her unborn child survive the relentless Allied aerial bombardments that leave her hometown in ashes? Will she escape imprisonment for defying the Brownshirts and Nazis and live to see their defeat? Will Alex return from the Russian front? Will Helena Birken reunite with Albert and Hektor as the Allied forces advance?

Escape on the Astral Express is the first in a trilogy of novels revealing the tumultuous life of Hektor amid Nazism and its aftermath countered by the life-long inspiration he draws from his mother's persistence and strength.

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When Hektor's educational dreams are thwarted by familial attitudes in the aftermath of World War II, he pursues a career in retailing and merchandising. Purely by chance, he meets Werner von Unselm, a long-forgotten friend of his mother who immigrated to the United States in the 1920s. A year later, Hektor crosses the Atlantic, leaving his first love, Doretta, and his family behind in Germany. While not expecting the streets of America to be paved with gold, he is dreaming of making adventurous discoveries in the New World while trying to forget traumatic events experienced during the post-war era. But when Hektor meets Georgia, a distant cousin who hotly pursues him, all his dreams of reunification with Doretta and Germany fade away. Frustrated and utterly alone, he marries Georgia against his own good conscience and is taken on an emotional and devastating rollercoaster ride that leads to divorce.

Always driven, Hektor moves west seeking a new life in Connecticut and Ohio. When he is transferred to Detroit he meets Laura on a blind date and falls in love. Will Laura bring love, peace, and contentment to Hektor Birken's turbulent life? Will his mother ever accept her prodigal son's move away from Germany? Will Hektor ever realize his professional dreams, or is this the end of a long road paved with countless disappointments? *A Wanderer on the Earth* is an epic novel that follows the emigrant Hektor Birken through heights and valleys of astounding discoveries, shattering disappointments, and ultimate triumph and success.

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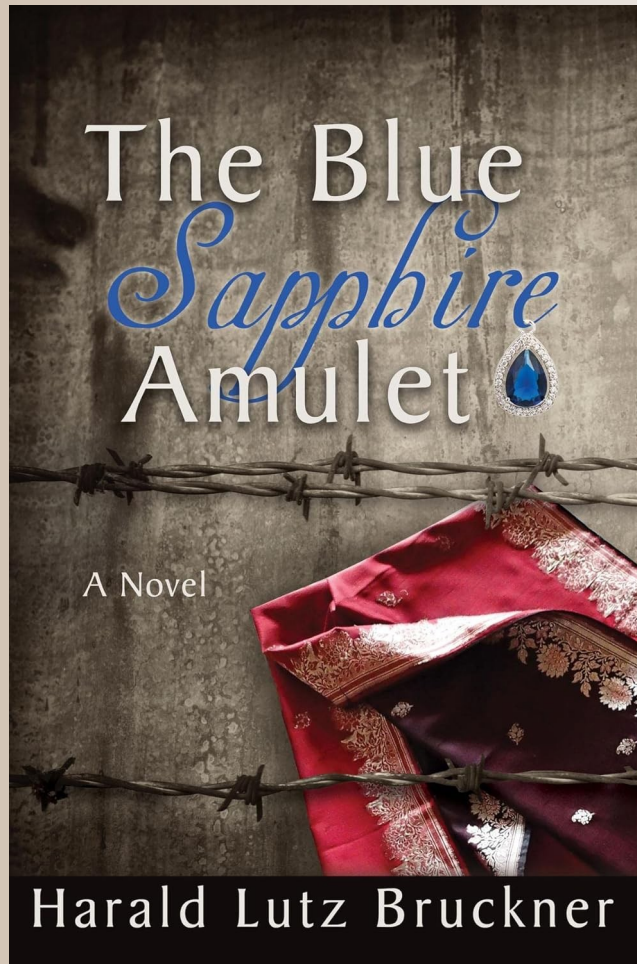


In *The Born-Again Phoenix*, book three of the Birken Saga, Hektor's wife Laura encourages him to pursue his educational dream of earning his PhD -- an adventure he has longed for since early adulthood. So Hektor, now thirty-one, cuts ties with his secure position in retailing/merchandising and embarks on an academic career that will change their lives forever. Over the course of nine years, he and Laura maneuver through numerous challenging road blocks and financial sacrifices until Hektor finally receives his PhD at age forty.

At last, his life is fulfilled. Or is it? After being settled into his first academic position, Hektor faces himself in the mirror one morning and doesn't like what he sees. Is this all there is for him? He wonders. On that auspicious morning, he opens a Pandora's Box that brings his relationship with Laura into an abyss of emotional trauma. The obstacles separating them from the happiness they once knew seem insurmountable. Will their love for one another be enough to bridge the chasm?

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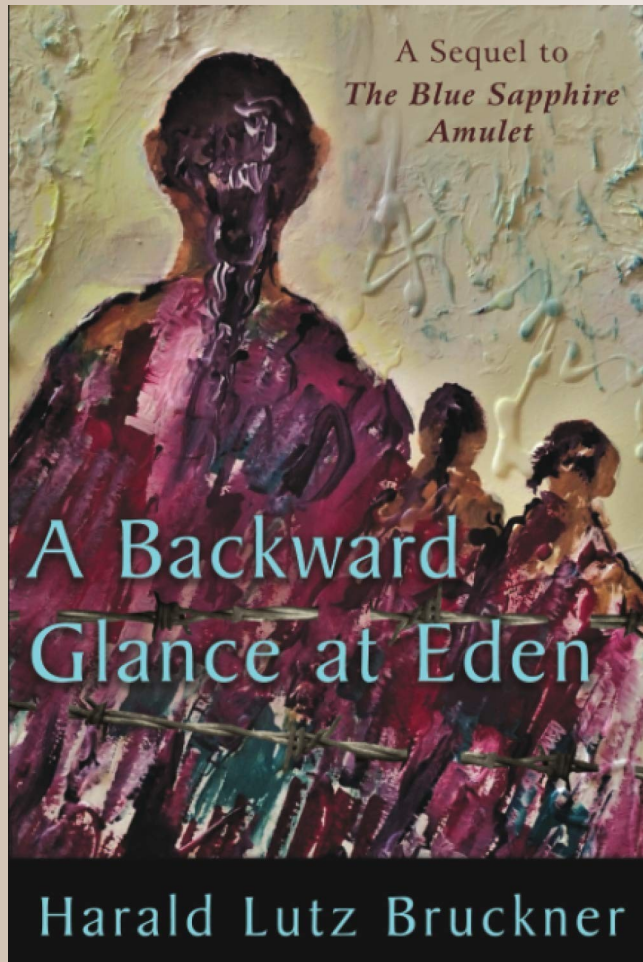
Rachel Adina Salm, a Jewish-German dentistry student living in Munich, undergoes two monumental life changes over the course of two days in 1937. She is called home to Essen to say goodbye to her dying grandmother the night before Rosh Hashanah. In her last words, her grandmother bestows upon her a blue sapphire amulet. The following day Rachel delivers a daughter out of wedlock. She and the Protestant father, Otto, place the child in a cloister to shield her from the Nazis who have taken control of Germany.

Rachel and Otto settle into a normal life, but eventually the war catches up to them. He is drafted into service, and she is sent to a concentration camp. There she meets an SS officer who falls in love with her.

Will Rachel learn the fate of her husband? Will she, a Jewish woman, stay with an SS officer post-war? Will she ever reconnect with her daughter?

The Blue Sapphire Amulet depicts the story of three generations of women whose past, present, and future are linked by their connection to a singular piece of jewelry. More importantly, it is the story of a woman who falls in love with three unlikely suitors, illustrating how love can exist in the most unlikely places.

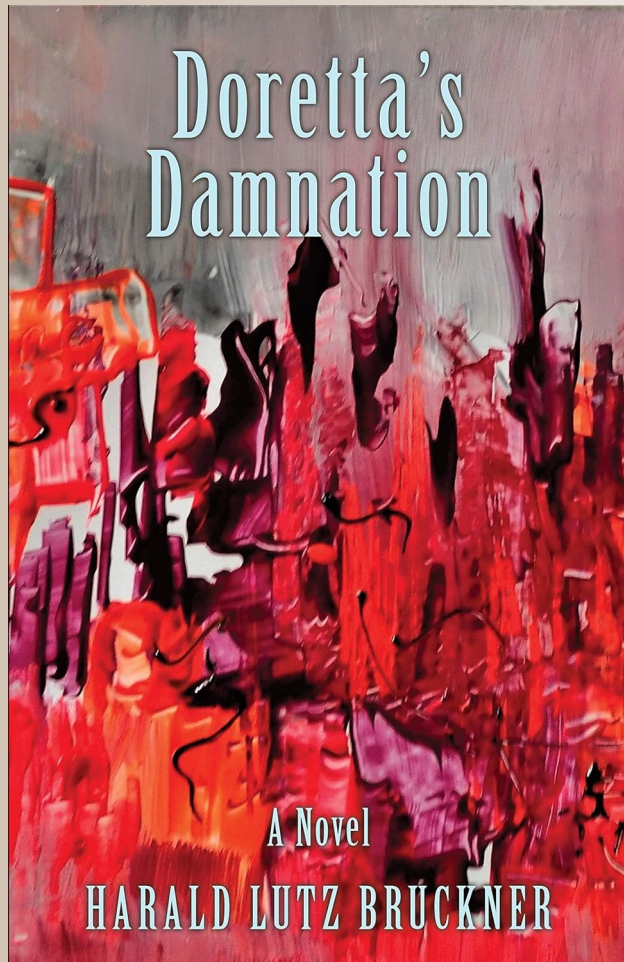
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Friar Jochanaan's tenure at the Maria Laach Monastery ends abruptly when his lover for more than twelve years, Father Frederick Emanuel, causes a catastrophic fire in an apparent attempt to take Jochanaan's life. After recovering from severe burns, Jochanaan chooses to take the name of his father, Johann von Rondstett, and ends his monastic life to pursue his passion for photography in the secular world. His first major exhibit, *Quartet of Strength*, at the Museum Folkwang in Essen, Germany, is only the beginning of Johann's national and international success. During the event, he meets Mata Hassler, a reporter, and Erich Jakob Horowitz, a photographer tenured at Ludwig Maximilian University in München [Munich], the city Johann eventually calls home. Johann and Erich become lovers and partners. Johann, wishing to have a child of his own, achieves his goal through the artificial insemination of a surrogate. Fraternal twins, Joe and Becca, are the surprise result of the arrangement. Mata Hassler, carrying a torch for Johann von Rondstett from the moment she met him fourteen years earlier, enters Johann and Erich's lives in München, creating a triangle that ultimately leads to tragedy and triumph in their relationships.

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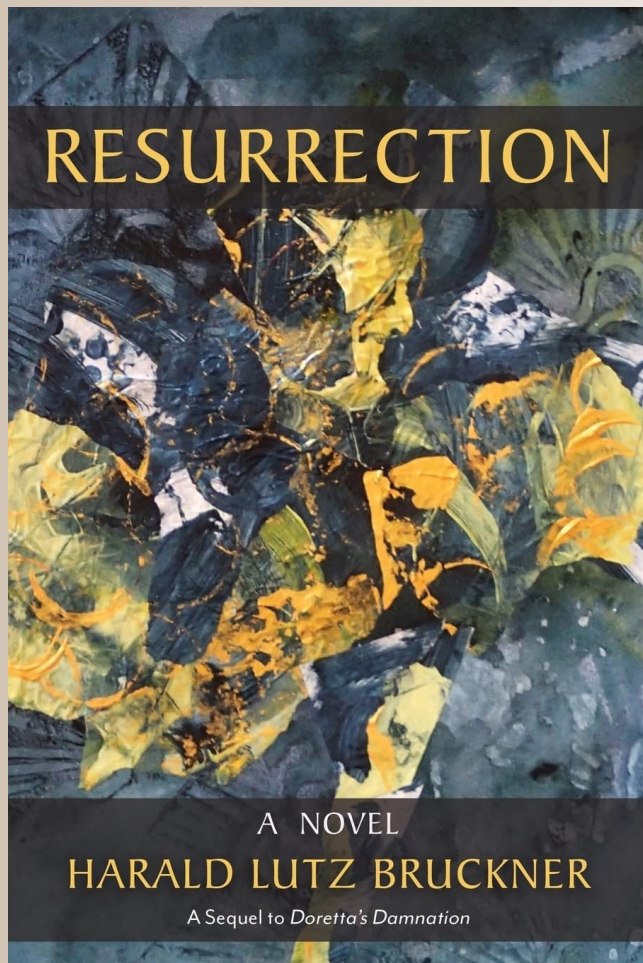


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Jilted by her lover, Doretta Osrarn flees Germany and finds a position with a publishing house in Zürich, Switzerland. She meets Fernando Lopez serendipitously while doing research at the Zentralbibliothek Zürich (Zurich Central Library). Finding happiness at last in the arms of her handsome Chilean lover, she marries Fernando on Valentine's Day of 1963 and gives birth to their first child, Mario, on the Ides of March a month later. However, when Fernando moves his family back to his ancestral home in the Maipo Valley, the wine country near Santiago, Chile, everything changes.

Here, Doretta encounters hate and classism by the person she most wants to accept her -- Fernando's mother. Well known in Santiago society for her fame and fortune, Señora Esmeralda rejects her only son's choice for a wife because Doretta was born to a Protestant mother and a Jewish father and has nothing to bring to the union except herself -- an unacceptable arrangement that must be rectified. Señora Esmeralda puts all her energy into making her daughter-in-law's life a living hell, while Doretta seeks comfort in isolation and sleep, only to be plagued by nightmares of her father's arrest by the Nazis in 1943. Consumed in their own battles of bigotry, hate, terror, and insecurity, neither woman can predict how the tides are about to change, transforming their lives and their relationships forever.

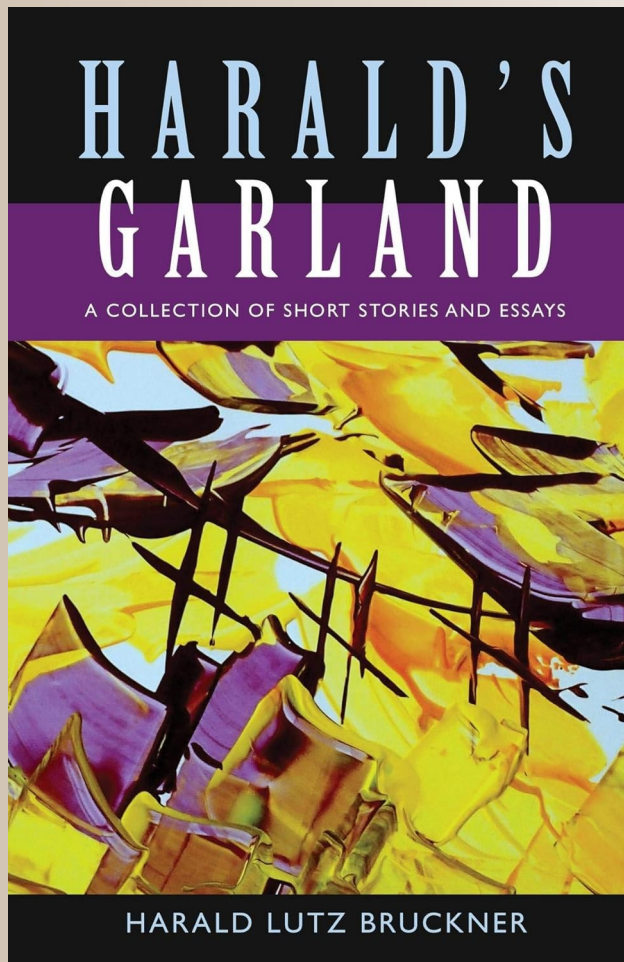
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Lenny Osrarn encounters two gentlemen with unusual accents in a pub in Old-Town Düsseldorf. He is taken by their uncanny resemblance to him and his twin brother, Lutz. The Osrarn brothers are in their late 80s, the younger strangers somewhere in their 50s. Serendipity leads the four gentlemen into a game of unlocking the mystery of their connection. Neither Lenny nor Lutz can fathom the possibility that the younger men might be two nephews who were abducted near Santiago, Chile, in 1971. *Resurrection* unfolds against the background of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. It's a tale of mystery and intrigue that invites the reader on a journey of discovery.

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Rise and Fall of the Hahnenkamms: "I'll be damned! A bigamist to boot!" was all Apfelbaum could say as he struck his desk with his right fist. Sattler suffered momentary Maulsperre [lockjaw]. Recovering from the initial shock, he smiled at Amalia Dorothea and got out of his chair. He extended his right hand . . .

The Betrayal: Yes, she had been betrayed and robbed, but the thieves had not broken into her home. She, herself, had admitted the thieves into her home . . .

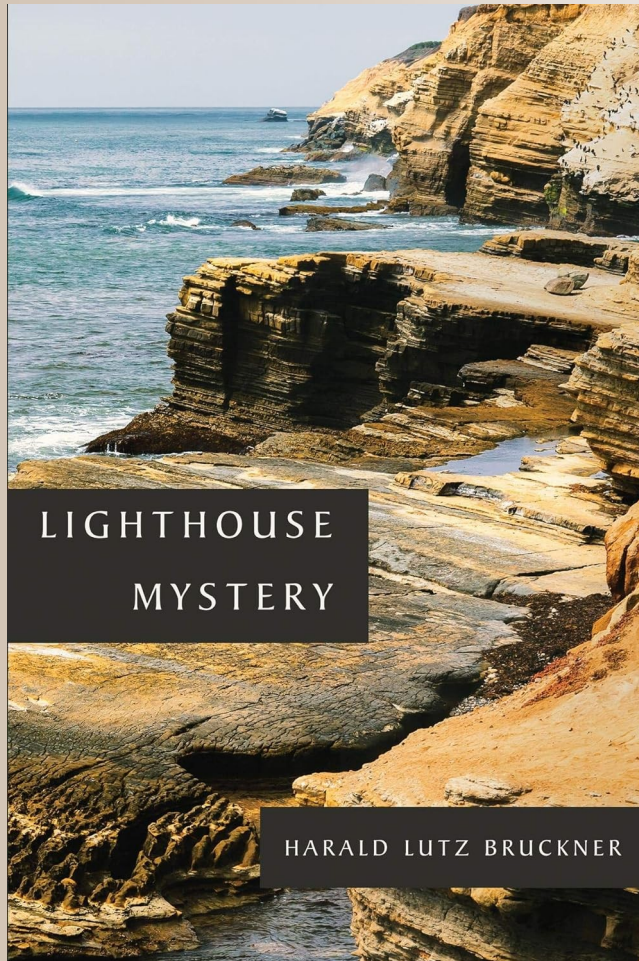
Mission Hills Misery: "You go look. It's giving me the willies," she summoned Harry. He pushed the door open and gasped. "Holy shit! Come and see!" Harry couldn't figure out how it had happened, but Diefenblicher's massive body was lying on the floor, wedged between the bathtub and the vanity . . .

A Question of Balance: Of course, I should have remembered the old inertia trick. A body in motion stays in motion. As soon as I tried stopping my bike by putting my feet on the ground, I took a flying leap over the handlebars and landed on my knees in a puddle of mud. I was so embarrassed I felt neither pain nor the blood trickling from my scraped knees. Like a good fifty-three-year-old kid, I got back on the bike as soon as the snickering group had passed by . . .

Second Chance: She gently rubbed her nose against his and he reciprocated. As the young male moved further away from Karola's vantage point, little Miss Cottontail followed him only too willingly. Karola's eyes brimmed with tears. She lifted her glass in the direction of the two lovers. "Here's to your second chance."

And more ...

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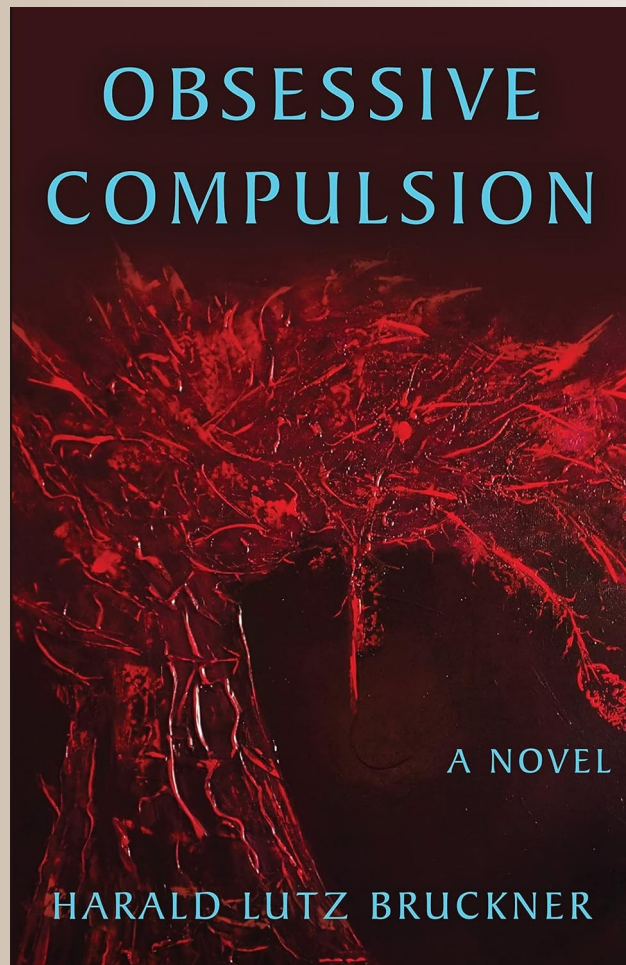


A late-September storm wreaks havoc along the Pacific coast of California. Homer Elias Annapolis, a retired lighthouse keeper who now works as a tour guide at the old lighthouse at Loma Point in San Diego, discovers a scuttled scow washed ashore. To his horror, a dead body lies in the hull. After extricating the corpse and running post mortem tests, San Diego Police Commander Shepherd identifies the body as Juliana A. D. Knecht, a thirty-four-year-old woman who is well into her second trimester of pregnancy. The coroner's report stipulates that Juliana died from a dose of cyanide. An empty vial firmly clutched in her right fist shows residue of the poison. Is it suicide? Perhaps, but a mysterious note found inside a pouch attached to Juliana's waist leads Shepherd to believe otherwise.

But who has a motive? Perhaps it is the boyfriend who taught her to sail. Or maybe it is his father, Horatio Alvis III, a known philanderer and ladies' man in the community. Juliana's mother, Arabella Davos Knecht, will not rest until she exacts revenge—even if that means doing so on all known suspects, whether innocent or guilty.

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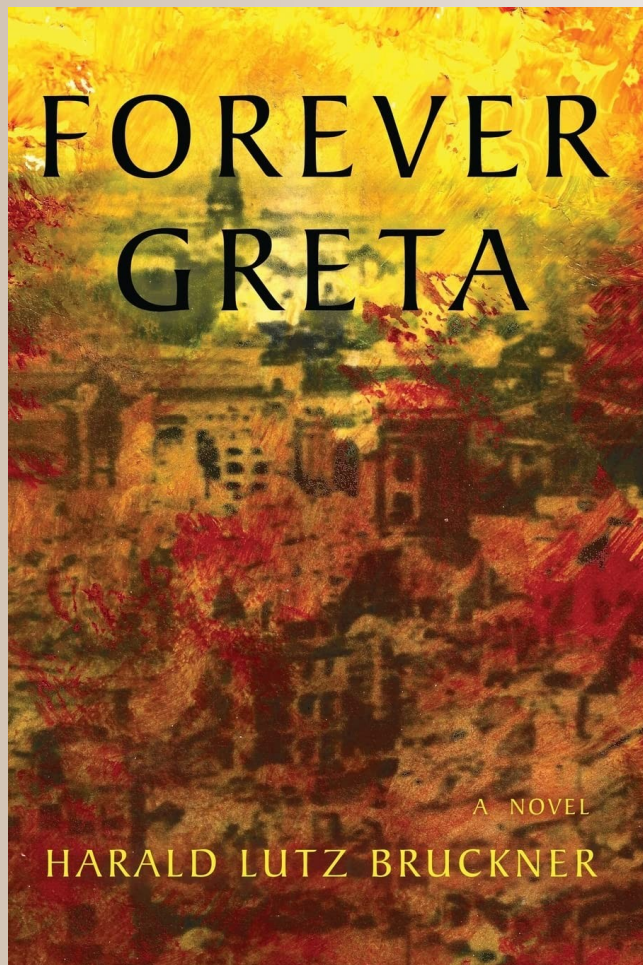
Favored with a brilliant mind, Plácido falls victim to an uncontrollable inner voice.

Obsessive Compulsion opens days before Plácido's birth, his parents having escaped from a Tijuana prison. It becomes evident at a very young age that the boy is exceptionally gifted but unfortunate to be born into a dysfunctional family. When he is three and a half, Miss Amanda Brown, with Child Protective Services of California, enters into Plácido's life and ultimately assumes the role of friend and mentor. It is she and his paternal grandfather, Dr. Fernando Barrera, who become his guide and compass along a treacherous road.

Graduating valedictorian from high school at age thirteen puts Plácido on a roller coaster ride in educational adventures that ultimately leads to a bridge to nowhere. Plácido's arduous journey takes him from San Diego to New York City and back to California via Lackland Air Force Base. Plácido and his encounters will make you both laugh and cry as he confronts a world often shattered by the impact of an obsessive compulsion.

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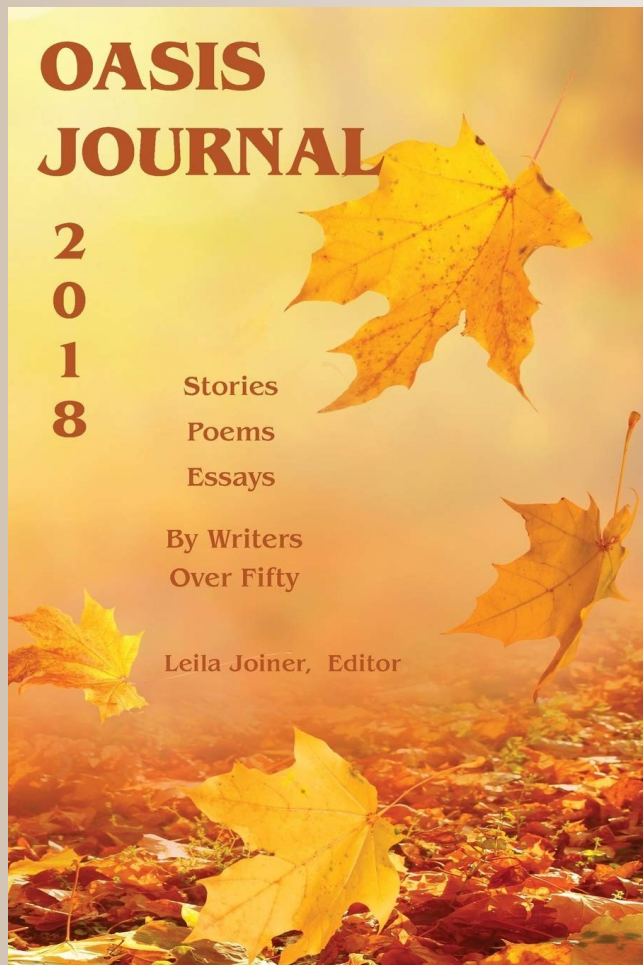


Greta and her young son, Nick, narrowly escape death during the bombing of Dresden in February 1945. Undertaking a daring drive through war-torn Germany, they flee to be reunited with her family in Essen. While Greta's husband, Kurt, is imprisoned by advancing Russian troops, she is caught off guard by André, a French POW who falls in love with her. Will Kurt find his family the way he left it when he escapes from prison?

In *Forever Greta*, author Harald Lutz Bruckner takes us on an exciting journey that touches on the bitter and the sweet. It is a story of faith, hope, and love rising above the ruins of a defeated country.

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OASIS Journal 2018 is the seventeenth consecutive annual anthology of short fiction, short non-fiction, and poetry by writers over fifty. OASIS Journal showcases the work of older writers nationwide, who have so much to contribute to our literary legacy but are often overlooked because of their age. The authors included here come from widely varied backgrounds, their ages range from early 50's to late 90's, and their tales are both entertaining and compelling in their passion, humor, and diversity.

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