



## Alexander Altmann A10567

*Suzy Zail*

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“Don’t let her know you’re scared,” Alexander’s father had said to him the first time Alexander had sat on Sari’s back.

Fourteen-year-old Alexander Altmann doesn’t need to look at the number tattooed on his arm. A10567; he knows it by heart. He also knows to survive Auschwitz, he must toughen up. Being soft will get him killed. Alexander will take any chance he’s given – and when that chance is caring for the German officers’ horses he grabs it. He just can’t let them know he’s scared.

## Alexander Altmann A10567 Details

Date : Published May 1st 2014 by Black Dog Books

ISBN :

Author : Suzy Zail

Format : Paperback 352 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Young Adult, Animals, War, World War II

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## From Reader Review Alexander Altmann A10567 for online ebook

### **Rochelle says**

I was reluctant to read this at first, not because it didn't sound good, but because I wasn't sure if I could stomach it. It was such a horrible time in history and it breaks my heart when I think about it. But Suzy Zail has handled it perfectly. She has placed a human face on a tragic event and given us an in depth look at an individual's experience. Alexander Altmann is based off of a real Auschwitz survivor, Fred, which I believe gave it a such a high level of authenticity.

Alexander Altmann is only 14, but has lied about his age to get into the men's camp. He is worked hard, hardly feed and worried for his family. Alexander grew up on a farm and has a love for horses, so when the chance comes to look after the soldiers horses, he takes it. The horses need him to survive, but he also needs them to survive as well. He is a horse lover and despite his best efforts, he forms a bond with the horses he has to take care of. This story was very much about the horses as it was Alexander, and I enjoyed reading about their uneasy friendship.

Alexander was very guarded and wouldn't let anyone in because they could be killed at any moment. He worked hard, just trying to survive, not evening daring to dream that there was a future for him beyond Auschwitz walls. He was forced to grow up very fast, but he was strong and resilient.

The brutality was there, it had to be for this to be authentic, and I hated reading it, but I could handle it. There were many heart breaking moments, but there was also hope. If you are as weary of reading such things as I am, I urge you to give this a try, you will be surprised

Just because the protagonist was 14 does not mean this should only be read by teens. I recommend this to everyone. This is a time in history that cannot be forgotten, and those looking to understand it more should read this book. Zail's writing was flawless, she quickly drew me in and held me captive until the very last page. It was a powerful story of hope and survival. Alexander has sunk into my heart and will stay with me for a long time.

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### **Kathryn says**

With its young protagonist, Alexander Altmann A10567 reminded me a little of John Boyne's *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, though Alexander, a 14-year-old Jewish inmate of Auschwitz-Birkenau, is older, tougher and much more aware than Bruno, the spoilt eight-year-old son of a Nazi extermination camp commandant, who has a very limited idea of what the 'farm' he can glimpse actually is and who its 'pyjama'-wearing occupants are. And where Boyne's book is subtitled 'a fable', Suzy Zail's novel was inspired by the story of Holocaust survivor Fred Steiner. According to Zail, 'Some of what happened to the fictional Alexander Altmann happened to Fred.'

Alexander grew up working with horses on his father's farm in Hungary. Starving in Birkenau, when he sees a chance to improve his lot by joining the camp's Horse Platoon (affording him slightly better 'bed' and rations, and allowing him to avoid the quarry gang and the week-long life expectancy of those assigned to it), he takes it. However, Alexander is not just struggling to survive physically; he is also struggling with the nature of trust, guilt and friendship. He has got this far in Birkenau by trusting no-one, shutting down his emotions and dreaming, cautiously, about seeing his mother again and returning to the farm and his beloved horse, Sari. He carries plenty of guilt for what he sees as his failure to protect his mother and sister after his

father was taken away, and he is desperate to remember his name in a place where he is referred to only as a number.

Though an experienced horseman, Alexander's position in the Horse Platoon is neither assured nor comfortable, with the constant threat of whippings, beatings and worse at the hands of the Nazi top brass he's now in contact with every day—and his job only came about because his predecessor was shot for 'allowing' his horse to eat poison brambles. But working with horses at Auschwitz offers him a chance not just to survive but also to learn a crucial lesson about hope and connection that could save his soul. This is a terrific book, echoing the detail and horror of other narratives of the concentration camps while showing Alexander's personal growth in a place hardly conducive to hope or beauty.

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### **Alana Llama says**

A tragic yet inspiring story that made me cry! I Absolutely loved the book and I would definitely recommend it.

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### **Loren Johnson says**

I'm honestly not in the least bit surprised that I loved this as much as I did. Suzy Zail has done it again! I enjoyed this novel tremendously. Maybe "The Wrong Boy" was a bit better (probably because it's from a female perspective and I could relate more to a music student than an equestrian) but this book was a marvel. It had me gripped from the get go and was filled with an array of thought provoking topics. I'm so glad I picked it up, proud that a fellow Aussie wrote this!

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### **Olivia says**

Great Book, didn't want it To end!

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### **Alexa says**

It is a great book that can make aware of the horrible things that happened during holocaust, but I wouldn't recommend this for younger readers or readers who have no background knowledge.

It was a touching story that was researched good, but unfortunately the german translations got lost sometimes so words didn't make a lot of sense.

Still a great book that raises awareness and opens eyes, so that such a cruel thing can never happen again!

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### **Emmeline says**

I appreciated the fact that this was based on a true story; and I enjoyed the book itself. However, it didn't blow me away - the description and characters didn't whack me in the face with the horror of Auschwitz. I

got a little confused at the end - it just seemed to sort of ... stop?? And not in an artsy, clever way, more in a Quick-I-Have-To-Finish way. Additionally, some things weren't fully resolved and the writing was rather difficult to keep up with at times.

There were some things I appreciated, and some things I didn't. However, overall, I think the author did a decent job of representing the story of the real Alexander.

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## Heidi says

This is a beautiful book, which deals with a very difficult topic with great sensitivity. There were times when I thought Suzy Zail concentrated on the horses a little too much, but the importance of the horses to the Nazis only served to highlight the inhumanity shown towards the Jewish prisoners. The ending was perhaps a little too neat, but this is a children's book, and anything other would be cruel. I especially like the notes at the end, talking about the man whose story inspired this book. I also loved the grey character of the kapo, who confused my moral sense for most of the book. Also Alexander's logical avoidance of friendship, as it would only end in pain. Thought provoking without being preachy.

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## C.G. Drews says

I love how Suzy Zail manages to write Holocaust books that make you cry AND THEN pick you up with a sweet ending. Honestly, if you can't handle Holocaust stories (and I honestly don't blame you), Suzy Zail is the author to try.

'Scuse me, I just need a tissue.

I absolutely adored Suzy Zail's first book, *The Wrong Boy*, which is about the Holocaust still...but it's about a pianist. I'm a pianist! I LOVE PIANOS. So obviously the book ticked all the awesome boxes for me. *Alexander Altmann A10567* was about horses. I'm...not so much into horses. So while all the love went to *The Wrong Boy*, I had reservations about *Alexander Altmann A10567*.

It does hinge quite heavily on our hairy four-legged friends. For me, who knows nothing about horses except the have hair and not fur (clever aren't I?) it wasn't confusing. It just didn't spark my interest.

I felt the writing was description heavy. I love writing that packs a punch and scars you for life...but this? I felt myself wading through details a lot of the time. This right here is the reason it's getting a 3-stars. Not because it was about horses, or because my soul withers at Holocaust books. I think I was comparing it to *The Wrong Boy* the entire time which probably wasn't very healthy, and it didn't live up to expectations.

It's narrated by Alexander (didn't see that coming, did you?) who makes me so sad to read about. He refuses to make friends and he's living with a guilty secret. And, I need more tissues. IT'S JUST NOT FAIR, OKAY?! They had to feed these horses all the food. Don't let the horses lose weight. Make sure they're in perfect condition. And if the prisoners even stole a single oat? They'd be beaten to death! Nobody should have to live like that, an Alexander was only 14-years-old.

While it broke my heart, it's not a violent or bloody Holocaust book. It's not going to give me nightmares like

The Boy in the Striped Pajamas and Code Name Verity did. Alexander Altmann doesn't cushion the facts...but it doesn't delve into all of them either. It'd be fine for a younger audience. You know, because everybody deserves to cry.

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## **Kia (Ikigai - di libri e altre passioni) says**

Recensione anche sul BLOG

Proprio così, ogni tanto esco dalla comfort zone dei romanzi rosa per staccare la testa e scelgo qualcosa di più forte, più vero. Più pregno di emozioni che con gli occhi a cuoricino e le lacrime di gioia hanno poco a che vedere. Succede spesso che la scelta ricada su qualcosa di relativo agli stermini che si sono verificati nella nostra storia. Sono dei momenti storici cruciali, di cui c'è sempre qualcosa da scoprire e che mi prendono un sacco. In realtà non so bene da dove derivi questo interesse, ma mi è sempre 'piaciuto', se così si può dire, scoprire nuovi aspetti e nuovi racconti di questi periodi bui.

Il bambino di Auschwitz non è una storia completamente vera. L'autrice ha preso una storia reale, che le è stata raccontata da un sopravvissuto, e l'ha rivisitata.

Non credo che in questi casi si possa parlare di bellezza della storia o di 'simpatia' dei personaggi. Sono racconti che di bello e 'simpatico' non hanno nulla. Il bambino di Auschwitz è una storia che prende, scritta con grande delicatezza, pur mantenendo la durezza della Storia.

La prima cosa a cui penso quando leggo questi libri è l'immensità della forza d'animo. Il suo essere fondamentale, la sua capacità di far sopravvivere una persona quando ha perso tutto, sia materiale che non. Di solito sono storie vere, o comunque rivisitazioni di racconti di vita, di sopravvissuti. Di persone cui è rimasta solo la speranza, e nemmeno troppa.

Alexander è un bambino che ha perso tutto, compresa la fiducia nel mondo e nell'umanità.

Ma gli è rimasta la fiducia nelle promesse della madre, la certezza che, quando tutto finirà, lei sarà ancora lì ad aspettarlo per dargli tutto il suo amore. E su quello fonda la sua vita al campo, in quello trova la forza di andare avanti, di ricordarsi chi è, di sopravvivere e tornare.

Un'altra cosa che emerge prepotente è l'umanità. Quel sentimento, quel modo di essere che in posti come Auschwitz e Birkenau sembra morta, polverizzata nei forni. E invece Alexander scopre che non è davvero così. La riscopre, pur rimanendo diffidente e solitario, nei piccoli gesti, nei tentativi dei prigionieri di socializzare, di aggrapparsi il più possibile alla vita vera, quella senza un numero tatuato su un braccio. Quella da persone e non da animali.

Ed è così che Alexander continua giorno dopo giorno, grazie alla forza d'animo, alle promesse della madre, a Isidor che nonostante il rifiuto di Alex ad essergli amico ci riprova ogni giorno. E grazie agli animali, ai cavalli, per essere precisi. Alex ha infatti la fortuna di entrare nel plotone equestre di Auschwitz. Un gruppo di uomini che si prendono cura ogni giorno dei cavalli degli ufficiali del campo. Conosce comunque la paura, la fame, le condizioni proibitive del campo. Ma una parte di lui riesce, grazie al suo grande amore per i cavalli, a mantenere la serenità che gli permette di arrivare giorno dopo giorno a sera.

È un libro toccante, forse più di altri nel suo genere, vista anche la giovanissima età di Alex che si spaccia sedicenne solo per non finire nelle docce del gas, quelle dove finiscono i bambini considerati inutili dal punto di vista lavorativo.

L'unica cosa che non ho apprezzato appieno è stato il finale. Un po' affrettato, un po' troppo 'sognante', al punto di non capire quanto ci sia di reale e quanto sia immaginazione del protagonista.

Nonostante questo, un libro che vi consiglio, sia se vi piace il genere, sia se volete uscire dai generi letti di solito e provare con qualcosa di nuovo.

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### **Maria Longley says**

I think this is the book I read... My copy is called "Saving Midnight" with a prominent horse face on the cover. (As a non-horsey person I think I would've been more likely to pick up the other copy as I did nearly put this book back on the shelf.) And yes this is a book about horses. But also so, so much more.

This book sheds light onto one aspect of the Auschwitz experience and the Jews who looked after the horses through the eyes of teenager Alexander who is given the task of looking after a pony and the commander's horse.

This book sprung from conversations with Fred Steiner, A10567, that the author had. Fred did look after horses in Auschwitz.

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### **Catherine Cavanagh says**

For an insight into concentration camp life during World War 2, it is a very good read. As I was reading it my memory went back to Solzhenitsyn's 'One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich'. Of course, that's an adult novel and 'Alexander Altmann A10567' is for teenagers and definitely not in the same literary league. The big question for me is whether this is a book I would give a teenager to read. Adults, as seen in the reviews, love it. I don't know whether teenagers would. I think you could only give this book to teenagers if you read it with them, either in a classroom or home-school setting, and had plenty of time to talk about all the moral issues as they arose and what they would choose if faced with similar situations in their lives. The other thing that bothers me is the ending. It didn't feel true to how life actually happens. I contacted the author to find out what actually happened in the life of Fred, the Auschwitz survivor she based the life of Alexander on, and she graciously told me. The true ending would have been more believable. I know lots of people prefer a really happy ending, but most war survivors faced just as difficult lives after the war as during the war. Maybe I would have been happier if the book ended when Alexander is told that the Russians have arrived and that he can make his way home.

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### **JJ says**

Fourteen year old Alexander Altmann has lost everything – his home, his horses, his family, his name... It is World War Two, and Alexander is a Jewish inmate at Auschwitz. In order to survive, he puts his hand up for a job in the stables, but when he is asked to break in the commander's horse – an seemingly impossible task – his life and that of the horse's are in danger if he doesn't succeed.

Suzy Zail has crafted a gripping tale of survival in the most of circumstances, and reveals that kindness can be found in the most unlikely of places. Alexander is a character that has shut himself off from everyone in order to survive. It has worked well for him so far, but he starts to learn that being alone isn't always the safest, and that trust and friendship can help you survive too...

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## Kelly (Diva Booknerd) says

Aussies, win a copy here <http://www.divabooknerd.com/2014/05/a...>

Alexander Altmann wasn't what I had expected. I assumed from the synopsis that the storyline was about being imprisoned by the Germans and concentrated on the appalling and cruel conditions. But I was pleasantly surprised. Alexander Altmann represents hope even in the darkest of conditions and the fight for life. Alexander's story was nothing short of heartbreaking, at only fourteen, he is taken into the adult male camp and kept in inhumane conditions. Men dying is a part of everyday life, and I use the term life loosely, as the prisoners are only barely existing. Alexander has been through more in his short life, than any of us would in a lifetime, he has no idea where his family is, but knows if he has any chance of surviving, he needs to remain hardened. He won't allow himself to make friends, with men dying all around him, he figures there's no point. I can't even begin to imagine being only fourteen and thrown into a terrifying world that no child or adult should experience. It was horrific.

Based on a true story, it is said that Suzy Zail was visiting the Holocaust Centre in Melbourne when Alexander Altmann begun to materialise. She was listening to a guest speaker in which an elderly man participated from the audience, uzy sought the man out after lecture and heard his story. Fred Steiner is Alexander Altmann with a fictional blend. He survived, migrated to Australia where he married and had children of his own, in a country that prides itself on freedom for all and continues to speak at the Holocaust Centre in Melbourne. Through the pen of Suzy Zail, I'm incredibly humbled and grateful to have read his story.

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## Hannah says

\*Blubbering mess on the floor\*

This isn't a cruel holocaust book where you love every character and they all die, I'm just not very good at handling emotions...

I loved the main character straight from the start because he's REAL! He goes into Auschwitz with a set mind to be completely cut off from his emotions ( if I was him I would do the same thing, but let's face it I would probably be dead in the first 2:00 minutes) but softens up just a smidge when he looks after the commanders horse, I loved this book because it has brutality to make it real but doesn't overuse it like sooooo many other holocaust books. It lost its star because for some reason even though heaps was happening everything just kinda felt a little flat. RECOMMEND READING

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