



# The Paris Architect

*Charles Belfoure*

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## **The Paris Architect** Charles Belfoure

A thrilling debut novel of World War II Paris, from an author who's been called "an up and coming Ken Follett." (Booklist)

In 1942 Paris, gifted architect Lucien Bernard accepts a commission that will bring him a great deal of money and maybe get him killed. But if he's clever enough, he'll avoid any trouble. All he has to do is design a secret hiding place for a wealthy Jewish man, a space so invisible that even the most determined German officer won't find it. He sorely needs the money, and outwitting the Nazis who have occupied his beloved city is a challenge he can't resist.

But when one of his hiding spaces fails horribly, and the problem of where to hide a Jew becomes terribly personal, Lucien can no longer ignore what's at stake. *The Paris Architect* asks us to consider what we owe each other, and just how far we'll go to make things right.

Written by an architect whose knowledge imbues every page, this story becomes more gripping with every soul hidden and every life saved.

## **The Paris Architect Details**

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Author : Charles Belfoure

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## From Reader Review The Paris Architect for online ebook

### Maria Espadinha says

O Vírus Benigno

Lucien é um arquiteto ambicioso que não sente particular empatia pelo sofrimento alheio.

Assim, quando convidado a participar num empreendimento que poderá salvar vidas humanas, apenas se sente motivado pelo lado material do projecto.

Porém, com o passar do tempo, a prática a que se entregou, será parteira de sentimentos mais nobres. Lucien modifica-se e vai-nos conquistando!

Dir-se-ia que a causa nobre a que se dedicou foi como um Vírus Benigno que lhe infectou a Alma!

Espraiando horizontes, creio que inadvertidamente, o autor desta estória terá encontrado uma boa terapia de reabilitação social.

Pelo Trabalho, o Homem não só transforma o Mundo, como a si mesmo!

"O Arquitecto de Paris" é uma estória super original, que nos cativa logo de início. É um 4+++ , com toda a convicção!!! ;)

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### Elizabeth of Silver's Reviews says

Can you trust the people you used to trust? Can your life be normal? That question was asked every single day of Lucien's life and every single day of any French citizen living in Paris during the Nazi occupation.

Life definitely was not the same as before. You had to watch everything you said and did. Lucien had to make a decision about doing something he knew was very dangerous. Lucien was an architect and was asked to design hiding places for Jewish friends of Auguste Manet, a well-known businessman in Paris.

Lucien feared for his life but couldn't pass up this offer. Lucien agreed only because he had no money, and because he would be paid a large sum.

You will feel Lucien's fear as he is doing something he loves, but also considering whether it is worth the cost of his life if he gets caught. You will grow to love Lucien as his truly caring side comes out in the uncaring society of this era.

You will become immersed in Paris's new way of life that had to be endured, and you will share the fear of the citizens as they waited for the dreaded knock on the door looking for Jewish residents or for a French citizen who was hiding a Jewish citizen.

The horrors of occupation will be with you as you read as well as become involved with the authentic characters and marvelous writing style. The characters were perfectly portrayed from the deviousness and cruelty of the Gestapo to the cowering citizens. The author has an easy style and draws you right into the

story.

THE PARIS ARCHITECT is another WWII tale but with a different twist and one where the tension builds and your fear for Lucien increases as you rapidly turn the pages.

This is an excellent historical fiction book with some graphic scenes that depict the atrocities of WWII, but will hold your interest until the last word because of the characters and their stories. 5/5

This book was given to me free of charge and without compensation by the publisher in return for an honest review.

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### **Amber says**

I really struggled with how to rate this book.

On the one hand, I've read a ton of WW2 fiction and I loved how this presented a different perspective. The story was engaging and suspenseful, and in some passages so realistic that I felt sick to my stomach.

On the other hand, I really struggled with the narrative voice. Something about it just kept popping me out of the story. I also felt like Lucien's changes of heart and growth were not well explained - not so much growth as just a sudden unexplained change of mind. And I will not spoil the ending, but I do not feel like it was well set up - I didn't see it coming not because it was so cleverly built up or disguised, but because there was nothing there to lead me in that direction, which made the whole thing feel unrealistic. The whole thing just suffered from a lack of emotion to me.

So read it, it is good. It is just not great.

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### **Skip says**

Undeservedly low ratings on Goodreads. In 1942 Paris, gifted architect Lucien Bernard is leading double lives: a dull, loveless marriage while having an affair with a famous designer and accepting commissions from a Christian to design hiding places for Jews and to design factories for the Nazis. Living in terror, Lucien is afraid of the Gestapo (for helping Jews) as well as the resistance (for helping the German war effort), even though Lucien rationalizes his work as benefiting a post-war France. Lucien eventually adopts a 12-year old orphan boy, finding an outlet for his love. Heart warming story, including his spiritual bond with the German architect in charge of building the factories.

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### **Suzanne Leopold says**

The Paris Architect \$4.99 ebook sale has expanded to include NOOK, iBooks, Kobo and Amazon Kindle platforms

<https://www.facebook.com/suzyapproved...#>

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## RoseMary Achey says

The concept of this book was excellent....an architect who retrofits spaces within homes to hide Jewish individuals during WWII. The writing left much to be desired. Filled with anachronisms, the narrative was so simplistic; it just did not fit the time period.

From The Paris Architect page 198:

*“He felt as if he was in one of those dumb-ass American movies he’d seen. A character would be in a quandary over what to do. A miniature angel wearing wings and halo appeared on one shoulder telling him to do what’s right, and a devil with a pitchfork was on the other shoulder advising him not to.”*

Really....in 1942?

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## Gemma says

It felt like the author wrote this at breakneck speed in about three weeks – the prose was crude, clunky and lacking in imagination and sophistication. The research stuck out like muddy footprints on a carpet. I couldn’t get beyond page 100.

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## Chrissie says

How do I put this one into words for my review?! It was goooooood. A goooood novel. Not high literature, but damn it all I enjoyed it a lot. Exciting. It starts with great historical details of life in Paris during WW2, then the excitement builds and builds and builds. Parts are gruesome, but the ending left a big smile on my face. Yeah, tons of fun.

But I have to tell you this: the narration of the audiobook was t-e-r-r-i-b-l-e....by Mark Bramhall. I mean his French and German dialects were laughable. And you are not supposed to be laughing. He cannot do women’s voices either. I mean bad. OK, when he is just relating straight events, not dialogs, you can relax. The thing is, the terrible narration did NOT affect my appreciation of the book. I make a huge effort to distinguish between the writing and the narration of a book. Good book, but lousy narration. As usual, I am rating the book, not the narration when I give those stars.

There is humor. There are historical details. The book captures the French and how they looked upon the Nazi occupation of Paris. Some French were no angels. Collaborators and those of the Résistance, they are both here. Very realistic. Some women were great and others despicable. Some French were great and some Germans too! :0) Yes, you get architecture too. Classical and Bauhaus and ....oh you have to read this fun, exciting, scary and amusing book. I loved, absolutely loved the ending. It is a novel! I do not want to tell you more than that. Otherwise I might spoil your reading experience.

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## Paige says

Dreadful.

I felt almost immediately that this book wasn't for me. I kept with it because it's so highly rated on Goodreads, and because I was listening to the audiobook at work, so I had time to kill. I was sure that the book would get better as it went on. I found the reverse to be true.

I'm so disappointed and upset about this book that I doubt my ability to form a coherent review. I have decided to do this in the form of bullet points, and hope I make sense. I also apologize if I butcher the spelling of some names. I listened to the audiobook, and did not see them in print.

- Lucien is immediately made out to be an anti-Semitic, heartless bastard. The author sold this point to me a little too well in the first half of the book, which caused me to find his dramatic change of heart roughly half way through the book to be forced and unbelievable.
- I didn't care for any of the characters. Belfoure created a cast of deeply unlikable characters, with the exception of Manet and Juliette, who I merely found inoffensive.
- Belfoure makes it seem that Nazi occupied France was entirely made up of self serving, materialistic, anti-Semitic, cowardly assholes. Even the resistance fighters were painted as selfish and cowardly, and occasionally bumbling.
- Adele was obnoxious, and I got incredibly sick of hearing about her fantastic body, the many things that aroused her, and her sexual preferences.
- The Nazis spoke MUCH too freely for me to find believable. Hertzog in particular. They all shared plans and opinions (often gently contradictory to Hitler's) with French civilians much too openly. I don't believe for a second that the SS would've allowed that to continue from Nazi officers.
- Schlagel was a caricature. Just ridiculous. He was more of a bad cartoon villain than a believable Nazi SS captain.
- Sexism abounds. Bette has a whole section devoted to pondering how wonderful it is that she's beautiful, and pitying her sister who is ugly. Lucien values his wife because of her beauty. Women were always spoken of in terms of their looks. In contrast, I had no idea what any of the men were supposed to look like. Plus, Lucien forces his way into Bette's apartment against her wishes, and I pulled a few quotes:  
"What the hell is your problem, woman?"  
"...he resisted the strong urge to punch her in the face."  
He then proceeds to order her around in her own home.
- Terribly written. Of particular annoyance, I noticed that everyone "roared with laughter" or "burst with laughter". No one chuckles or giggles. There is never minor amusement. Everyone "erupts with laughter" at the slightest joke (which I never found funny).

What rot.

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## Erika Robuck says

From the moment I saw the haunting cover of this novel, I knew I had to read it. The small Jewish girl hiding in plain sight says so much about the work of gifted architect, Lucien Bernard, the flawed protagonist of Charles Belfoure's THE PARIS ARCHITECT.

Lucian is fairly despicable at the start of the novel. He no longer loves his wife, he has a mistress, and he does not care about the Jews being plagued by the Nazis in occupied France. He only cares about surviving by making as much money as possible, and growing his reputation as an architect.

His base need for a salary involves him as an architect working for enemies in the war. On one hand, he creates ingenious hiding spaces in apartments for Jews; on the other, he designs modern factories for Germans. It is all the same to him, as long as he gets paid, until he makes a personal connection with a Jew that ends disastrously.

I asked myself many times in the reading of this novel how I could care about such a heartless protagonist, but the riveting story, my curiosity about his innovation, and my wish to see his growth compelled me forward. I'm so glad it did.

This is not an easy book to read. Belfoure is unflinching in his portrayal of the animal nature of man, and of traitors, spies, and Nazis. The darkness is balanced, however, with a growing sense of hope and redemption throughout the narrative.

Booklist compares Belfoure's writing to Ken Follett, and that is an excellent comparison in tension, intrigue, detail, and character. If you enjoy fast paced, graphic, and fascinating historical fiction, I recommend you read THE PARIS ARCHITECT.

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### **Carol Brill says**

A beautiful story balancing inhumanity and humanity set in Nazi-occupied France. Lucien Bernard is an ordinary man, driven to work for the Reich by his need to make a living and pride in his ability as an architect. His assignments present unexpected and dangerous opportunities to challenge his design imagination.

There are so many strengths in this novel, Lucien's character development as he takes risks he never suspected he is capable of, his surprising friendships with a German officer, Manet, and Bette. His affections for an orphan, Pierre.

Like so many books about the atrocities against Jews during the war, there were parts that were brutally hard to read. Charles Belfoure does a wonderful job balancing that horror with brave and caring characters who show humanity at its best.

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### **B the BookAddict says**

While the method of illuding the Nazis mentioned in this book is one which doubtless would have been used, this particular story itself is fictional. These events are not drawn from one particular case; rather, the author says he got the idea from the story of Nicholas Owen, a Jesuit lay brother who devoted the greater part of his life to constructing hiding places to protect the lives of persecuted priests during the reign of Elizabeth 1.

In 1942 Paris, all Jewish people are being rounded up by the Nazis; sadly for the Jews, most of the French are unsympathetic to their plight. Lucien Bernard is one of those French people; he doesn't hate Jewish people but he won't go out of his way for them either. He's an out of work architect too busy scrambling for a living. A prospective client, a very wealthy Auguste Manet, offers him a new commission but only if he will agree to a secret commission. Manet has been helping Jewish people evade and escape persecution and imminent death. Desperate for money, Lucien agrees but he's under no illusions about himself; he's doing it purely for the money. Life under the Boche regime is tough and he has a wife and a mistress to support. As the first job is successful, Manet talks Lucien into a second then a third and the work becomes almost like

private game Lucien is having with the Nazis; he loves the thrill of tricking them. But it all gets personal for Lucien when Manet convinces him to care for a Jewish boy for a couple of weeks; Lucien suddenly has the son he's always wanted...

The story has not many likeable characters excepting perhaps Manet and Bette. The Nazis are, of course, deplorable and the attitude of the French people toward the Jews leaves so much to be desired. Charles Belfoure is the author of a couple of books about architectural history -which I have not read. But I'm not convinced of his talent as a novelist. Basically the story is very plausible and quite readable but his narration is somewhat stilted. I did actually check to see whether the book had been translated from another language because for me, that is how it flows. It feels quite stilted and there is something amiss with the patterns/flow of sentences. Perhaps he just needs another editor; who knows... A story which maybe would have been a 4 star rating in the hands of a more practised novelist but with Charles Belfoure, it has to be only a 3★.

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### **Kelly says**

The only thing this book has going for it is a good premise. Seriously, I love historical fiction, character development in trying times, and moral quandaries. (Also, architecture! And plots set abroad!) I wasn't expecting anything high-brow, just a good, plot-driven escape. But. Let me count the ways that this book failed:

1. The writing is atrocious. No, really, it's clunky and the dialogue is about as stilted as you can get.
2. Most of the characters lack the motivation for the actions they carry out. People are treacherous or noble or somewhere in between without any prior reason given for their actions. I know people sometimes do things out of the blue, but check this (spoiler): (view spoiler) The main character shows development, but not in any sort of realistic way. All of the characters just feel like 2D cardboard cutouts, and I never developed an attachment to any of them. Towards the end, it looks like the main character might get killed for his actions, and I just couldn't bring myself to care one way or the other about it.

Less important, but still annoying:

3. Clunky gender stereotypes (seriously, one of the female characters takes in a couple Jewish orphans, and it's described as natural, because she's got that female compassion going on. Only the male characters who do similar acts get credit.)
4. The torture scenes are grotesque. I may be in the minority here, and I realize this is the Gestapo we're talking about, but still. Those bits were rough, even to skim through.

How does this book have such high ratings? I almost stopped reading it a quarter of the way in because of points #1 and #2, but the reviews kept me going, hoping it'd get better. Trust me, it doesn't. If you're struggling through this like I was, give it up and find something better to read.

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### **Aditi says**

*"We shape our buildings; thereafter they shape us."*

---Winston Churchill

Charles Belfoure, a national bestselling author, has penned a heart-touching as well as enlightening and nostalgic novel, *The Paris Architect*, that accounts the story of an architect based in Paris during the world war II when German have occupied the city and was ordering the Jews out of the city, when this normal

regular, law-abiding architect chances upon a golden opportunity to prove his worth by taking life-threatening risks to be a hero.

### **Synopsis:**

*Like most gentiles in Nazi-occupied Paris, architect Lucien Bernard has little empathy for the Jews. So when a wealthy industrialist offers him a large sum of money to devise secret hiding places for Jews, Lucien struggles with the choice of risking his life for a cause he doesn't really believe in. Ultimately he can't resist the challenge and begins designing expertly concealed hiding spaces—behind a painting, within a column, or inside a drainpipe—detecting possibilities invisible to the average eye. But when one of his clever hiding spaces fails horribly and the immense suffering of Jews becomes incredibly personal, he can no longer deny reality.*

Lucien, a law-abiding Parisian architect gets a job for the richest man in Paris, Monsieur Monet, who asks him to build a secret room for some of his Jewish friends. Now Lucien, being very careful during the Occupation and has forever agreed to what the Germans asked him to do, can help the Germans' enemy to prove himself more than just a regular man in these difficult times?

First of all, this book made me fall in love with its descriptions and vivid imagery. The author brings the 1942 Paris alive with his eloquent writing style. From the intricate details of every other building to every other streets from the odd ones to the busiest ones, from the food to the linguistic aspect to the culture, everything has been laid out strikingly. While reading it felt like, I'm swiftly being carried into that Parisian essence. Not only the backdrop is vividly portrayed with all its beauty and grace, but the author has captured the era of World War II so vividly. The effect of Nazis and the Gestapo arresting the Jews everywhere is brought alive wonderfully. In fact, the author has managed to instill that Nazi-fear through his story, like the sudden knock on the door, or a sudden car pulling up etc.

The writing style is quite elegant and polished and properly layered with enough distinct emotions to make the readers feel evocatively. The narrative style is free flowing and articulate as well as engaging. The prose is eloquent with a fast pace and the book has so much tension that it is bound to keep the readers hooked onto the story till the very last page.

The characters are drawn with enough realism and has a way to make the readers feel connected with their despair and hopes. The main character, Lucien, is like every other middle class man, his dreams to his infidel ways to his way of living his life style, everything is bound to strike a chord with the common man in today's world. The gradual change in his demeanor is very well projected by the author. The supporting characters are also very strongly developed. The Nazi-German soldiers and the chiefs are strikingly arrested in this book, that gives the readers a real feeling of what it feels like to be around a German soldier during those times.

The theme of the book is centered around about how one stands up or stands against the Germans to be a human being. Other than that, the architectural descriptions and how an architect's mind works while they are visualizing a building are carefully and saliently. In short, this is a very compelling as well as poignant novel which has lots of unspoken history as well as truth hidden behind the times when German was either sending the Jews into concentration camps or torturing them to death.

**Verdict:** *This book will appeal to the historical fiction lovers and if you want to taste the city of Paris during the World War II era, then do grab a copy of this book for sure.*

**Courtesy:** *Thanks to the author, Charles Belfoure, for providing me with a copy of his book, in return for an*

*honest review.*

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## **Amy | shoutame says**

An interesting perspective on WW2 and an enjoyable read.

We follow Lucien, an architect living in Nazi-occupied Paris. A wealthy acquaintance of Lucien's commissions him for a secret job that could be fatal to the both of them. Lucien shows little interest in hiding Jews but with so much money on offer how can he resist? As time moves on Lucien begins to take satisfaction from outwitting the Nazi's and plans on making more elaborate hiding places for the helpless Jews. But how far will he go? Is he willing to risk his life?

I didn't much like the character of Lucien but I loved the way he evolved as the novel went on, he was pretty detestable! I had yet to read a WW2 novel that conveys the terror of having to run and hide from the Nazi's as well as this one, you could cut the tension with a knife! Definitely one I would recommend, especially if you're a fan of historical fiction based in WW2.

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