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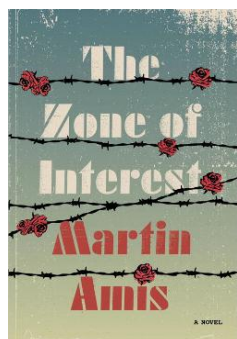
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Preview

# The zone of interest (#0525AS8)

by Amis, Martin

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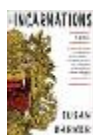
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## Overview

From Follett

"Provides a searing portrait of life-and, shockingly, love-in a concentration camp. Once upon a time there was a king, and the king commissioned his favorite wizard to create a magic mirror. This mirror didn't show you your reflection. It showed you your soul-it showed you who you really were. The wizard couldn't look at it without turning away. The king couldn't look at it. The courtiers couldn't look at it. A chestful of treasure was offered to anyone who could look at it for sixty seconds without turning away. And no one could. "The Zone of Interest" is a love story with a violently unromantic setting. Can love survive the mirror? Can we even meet each other's eye, after we have seen who we really are?"—Provided by publisher.

#### *From the Publisher*

Once upon a time there was a king, and the king commissioned his favorite wizard to create a magic mirror. This mirror didn't show you your reflection. It showed you your soul—it showed you who you really were.

The wizard couldn't look at it without turning away. The king couldn't look at it. The courtiers couldn't look at it. A chestful of treasure was offered to anyone who could look at it for sixty seconds without turning away. And no one could.

The Zone of Interest is a love story with a violently unromantic setting. Can love survive the mirror? Can we even meet each other's eye, after we have seen who we really are?

Powered by both wit and compassion, and in characteristically vivid prose, Martin Amis's unforgettable new novel excavates the depths and contradictions of the human soul.

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## Product Details

**Publisher:** Alfred A. Knopf

**Interest Level:** AD

**Publication Date:** September 30, 2014

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## Reviews & Awards

**Booklist starred,** 08/01/14

**Library Journal starred,** 08/01/14

**Kirkus Reviews starred,** 08/15/14

**Publishers Weekly starred,** 07/21/14

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## Full-Text Reviews

*Booklist* starred (August 2014 (Vol. 110, No. 22))

How to write fiction about the Holocaust that reveals in new and significant ways its systematic horror and impossible legacy? Amis accomplished this feat in *Time's Arrow* (1991), and now this brainy, intrepid, worldly, and virtuosic writer does it again in his fourteenth novel by ushering us into the poisoned minds of characters trapped in the death-spiral of the Final Solution. Well-connected Thomsen looks like a quintessential Aryan, yet seduction, not terror, is his calling. But surely it's too risky, even for him, to woo Hannah, the statuesque wife of the repugnant concentration camp commandant with the ridiculous last name of Doll. Doll is slowly and inexorably going to pieces trying to manage the logistical nightmare of disposing of thousands of corpses. Szmul, a Jew, has been kept alive to work on this gruesome assembly line, a hell he endures by "bearing witness" and, occasionally, saving lives. These three men take turns narrating Amis' slyly sinister comedy of manners and romantic intrigue, a wily collision of content and form that neatly exposes the malignant madness at loose in the Third Reich. By focusing on the inner lives of reluctant perpetrators, Amis broaches the perpetual mystery of why people colluded in the monstrous efforts required for industrialized genocide. An audaciously satiric and brilliantly realized tale about personal angst and mass psychosis, and the immolation of self and soul. HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: Each of Amis' novels is a crowd-luring high-wire act, and following the success of *Lionel Asbo* (2012), this book will be much sought-after and dissected.

*Kirkus Reviews* starred (August 15, 2014)

Can love survive against that most hellish of backdrops, the Nazi concentration camp? It's a question that Amis (*Lionel Asbo*, 2012, etc.) probes in his latest novel, an indelible and unsentimental exploration of the depths of the human soul. Opening in August 1942, the book's events are narrated from the viewpoints of three distinct characters. Arctic-eyed Golo Thomsen, a German officer, looks every bit the Aryan ideal, ensuring him a lusty welcome in beds across the Reich. He also happens to be the nephew of Martin Bormann, Hitler's private secretary, though his personal views regarding the Fuhrer's campaign are a good deal more opaque. Paul Doll is the queasily named camp commandant, a doltish yet wily drunkard whose cool wife, Hannah, has caught Thomsen's eye. As for Szmul, back in Poland he was a tender husband and father. In the camp, he is a member of the Sonderkommando, forced to herd fellow inmates into the gas chambers and dispose of their bodies. It's Szmul who recalls a fable about a king who commissioned a magic mirror that reflected one's soul. Nobody in the kingdom could look at it for 60 seconds without turning away. The camp, he says, is that mirror. Only you can't turn away. As Thomsen contrives to woo Hannah, word reaches the Officers' Club that German forces are surrounded at Stalingrad. Doll becomes increasingly paranoid and Szmul, a bearer of perilous Nazi secrets, strives to find a way to reclaim his life. With malice rampant, absurdity lurks in the shadows, drawn out by twisted details like bureaucratic euphemisms or the fact that Jews are made to pay for their own tickets aboard the trains bringing them to the camp. Brawny and urgent, it's unmistakably Amis, though without the gimmickry of *Time's Arrow* (1991).

*Library Journal* (August 1, 2014)

Starred Review. As he did so inventively in *Time's Arrow*, Amis examines the horrors of the Holocaust from inside the hearts and minds of its perpetrators and their enablers. Taking place in the most notorious concentration camp, the book introduces a cast of characters that includes the officious Commandant, Paul Doll, an alcoholic tyrant thriving on petty vindictiveness; Golo

Thomsen, the well-placed nephew of Martin Bormann, tasked with building a rubber production plant inside the camp; and the Jewish Szmul, a former teacher, victimized into collaborating with his tormentors. For these people, daily life consists of endless trains to unload, "welcome" addresses to deliver, and selections to be made. Life is also full of small annoyances (the ubiquitous smell from the crematoria) and major difficulties (the unimaginable scale of the task). Improbably, this is also a love story between Golo Thomsen and Hannah Doll, wife of the commandant. VERDICT A haunting indictment of the people who willingly bought the party line of racial purity and ethnic cleansing, this novel is as audacious as it is chilling. Essential reading. Barbara Love, formerly with Kingston Frontenac P.L., Ont. (c) Copyright 2014. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

*Publishers Weekly (July 21, 2014)*

An absolute soul-crusher of a book, the brilliant latest from Amis (Lionel Asbo: State of England) is an astoundingly bleak love story, as it were, set in a German concentration camp, which Thomsen, one of the book's three narrators, refers to as Kat Zet. Thomsen, the nephew of Hitler's private secretary, Martin Bormann, has a vague role as a liaison at Buna Werke, where the Germans are attempting to synthesize oil for the war effort using slave labor. He sets his sights on Hannah Doll, wife of camp commandant Paul, who is the second of three narrators as well as a drunk whose position is under threat. As Thomsen gets closer with Hannah, both of them, horrified at what's going on, conspire to undermine Paul-Hannah at home and Thomsen around the camp. Paul, meanwhile, follows up his suspicions about his wife and Thomsen by involving Szmul, the book's third narrator and a Jew who disposes of the corpses in the gas chamber, in a revenge plot. Amis took on the Holocaust obliquely in Time's Arrow. Here he goes at it straight, and the result is devastating. (Sept.) (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved.

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