



My Sister's Mother: A Memoir of War, Exile, and Stalin's Siberia

Donna Solecka Urbikas

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Donna Solecka Urbikas grew up in the Midwest during the golden years of the American century. But her Polish-born mother and half sister had endured dehumanizing conditions during World War II, as slave laborers in Siberia. War and exile created a profound bond between mother and older daughter, one that Donna would struggle to find with either of them.

In 1940, Janina ?larzynska and her five-year-old daughter Mira were taken by Soviet secret police (NKVD) from their small family farm in eastern Poland and sent to Siberia with hundreds of thousands of others. So began their odyssey of hunger, disease, cunning survival, desperate escape across a continent, and new love amidst terrible circumstances.

But in the 1950s, baby boomer Donna yearns for a “normal” American family while Janina and Mira are haunted by the past. In this unforgettable memoir, Donna recounts her family history and her own survivor’s story, finally understanding the damaged mother who had saved her sister.



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