1944 Diary, by Hans Keilson, provides a glimpse into the secret and private life of a Jewish man. Keilson, born in 1909 in an eastern German town, fled Germany in 1936 for the Netherlands to avoid further Nazi persecution. His diary, from the summer of 1944, provides an unfiltered account of a Jewish man’s life behind Nazi-occupied Netherlands. Like soldiers' accounts of war, Keilson's diary tells of the tension of war, his identity crisis in the midst of chaos, and the excitement of the unknown. 1944 Diary is a collection of diary entries and poems, detailing the core experiences of Keilson's personal struggles during World War II.

As Keilson describes throughout his diary, the war was the driving factor in his life. The ascension of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party in Germany in the 1930s uprooted his life, causing him to flee his home in eastern Germany for the Netherlands. As the Allies moved North from France in the summer of 1944, Keilson and his family and friends felt excited as they heard of the Allied advance. On September 23, 1944, Keilson wrote, “heavy fighting in the Netherlands! Nijmegen, Arnhem!” (p. 67). Amid the turmoil and confusion in his life, Keilson recognized his own frailty and weakness as the war progressed into the Netherlands.

As a clinical psychologist, Keilson operated well within the psyche of his clients and himself. With his personal and professional life in a state of flux, he turned to writing to find solace. In describing his identity crisis in the summer and fall of 1944, Keilson wrote, “what I know for sure is that I dived down to the very core of my existence in these poems” (p. 89). During this period, Keilson, while married with a child, was having an affair with another woman. Throughout his diary, he revealed his internal battle of determining who he truly was. Keilson used his diary and poems as an outlet to find his true character and meaning in life.

Keilson, as he wrote, was living a life based on lies. He fled Germany for the Netherlands and assumed a different identity as a psychologist in a new country. Keilson’s relationships were also in turmoil. His words describe a man overcome by the emotions of the war and someone trying to find his identity and peace in his life. Keilson wrote, “the times I write in this diary are my true moments of contemplation. It is a wellspring, my only chance to escape the lies” (p. 22). As his diary shows, his life was in chaos. His professional and personal life were emblematic of what was happening in his heart and mind. The tension of hiding his Jewish identity and feelings for someone other than his wife drove him into an identity crisis. As a coping mechanism, Keilson used his diary and poems to resolve the conflict within his heart and mind.
Through passionate writing that bears his soul to the reader, Keilson’s *1944 Diary* tells of life within a world at war. With the sights and sounds of war occurring all around him, Keilson battled his own war within himself. While recognizing the irony that a psychologist was struggling with a crisis of identity, the diary offers a viewpoint of World War II that is rarely displayed in World War II-genre writing. While highlighting aspects of war within Nazi-occupied Netherlands, his diary provides an unfiltered glimpse into his personal war within himself. Historians of the human dimension of war will find this work meaningful and fulfilling.

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