

Introduction

Sea of Theresienstadt

By Morten Brask

Daniel Faigel remembers the light Danish summer days when he as a little boy grew up in the upper-class villa by the sea. He remembers the sound of the waves, the cries of the gulls and the sun in the sky.

But Daniel also recalls other things. He recalls what he saw one morning in the house which he must keep inside as a terrible secret for the rest of his life.

One day in 1943 he is lying on his back in a stinking cattle waggon. He is now 26 years old, an almost fully trained doctor and the war is at its height. The goods train is rocking with its load of Danish Jews through a Germany bombed to pieces.

The destination is Theresienstadt, the bizarre town to which the Nazis sent all the famous and rich Jews of Europe. Like a second Dante Daniel finds himself trapped in an inferno. During the day he works as a doctor in the camp's greatest hospital where he struggles to save just a few of the far too many patients from death or the dreaded transports headed eastwards.

At night he is taken to Prague where he attends to the prostitutes from the SS brothel. But it is also in Theresienstadt Daniel meets the Jewish woman Ludmilla Zippora and the unlikely love ensuing between the two prisoners gives them both strength in the middle of the grotesque setting. If only he could forget what he saw that morning in the house by the sea.

Sea of Theresienstadt is Morten Brask's first novel. It was inspired by an interview he made with the former Jewish prisoner in the concentration camp Theresienstadt, Ralph Oppenheim.

The novel was nominated in France for *Prix du roman Fnac 2011* and shortlisted for the *Prix Chapitre européen 2011*.

