



# Thief of Glory

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## **Thief of Glory** Sigmund Brouwer

In the tradition of Brock and Bodie Thoene's *Zion Chronicles* and history-meets-contemporary mysteries like those of bestseller Kate Morton, this WWII drama is both exciting in its revelations and heart-rending in its truth about human nature and forgiveness.

In the early 1940s, Jeremiah Prins was a 12-year-old living a content life as the son of a school headmaster in the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia). When Holland declared war on the Japanese in 1941, the situation changed swiftly. The Japanese army invaded, and Jeremiah and his family were placed in a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp—a camp Jeremiah finally escapes and returns to Holland. Yet wartime complications force him to abandon a marriage engagement with Laura Jensen. The young man flees to California, where he struggles with the lingering anger and war stress he faced as a child.

Determined to find some kind of redemption, a now-elderly Jeremiah tries to make sense of his life by journaling of all that he does not want to reveal to his children about his past, intending to leave his writings as an apology after he is gone.

An online encounter puts Jeremiah in touch with his true love from the war years, Laura, and when they meet again, it triggers the time bomb of long-buried secrets. Even seventy years later, if uncovered, these secrets can harm everyone who matters to Jeremiah.

## **Thief of Glory Details**

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Author : Sigmund Brouwer

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# From Reader Review *Thief of Glory* for online ebook

## Beverly says

Of the books I've read from Sigmund Brouwer's pen, *Thief of Glory* is my favorite. In his signature storytelling style, this work of historical fiction is reminiscent of a memoir, shared like a series of journal entries written in the first person from the perspective of a 10-year-old boy; it is a completely fictional account of one family's nightmarish experience of interment in a Japanese concentration camp during World War II. Yet the details are hauntingly real.

Jeremiah lived with his parents and siblings on the island of Java. His father was the schoolmaster of the Dutch colonists. His income allowed them to live prosperously in their little village, with servants from the community. Jeremiah's blended family had two sets of siblings. There were three older half-brothers and his birth siblings--twin sisters and a little brother. Jeremiah was the eldest of his birth family. His lovely mother suffered from a mental illness where she frequently went into a dark phase of isolation. Often she was emotionally inaccessible. Jeremiah and his father were used to taking care of his family during these times. He took special care of his younger brother, Pietje (sounds like PJ). The little guy followed him around like a puppy.

The tragic portion of the story began when the Japanese arrived on the island. They removed the older boys and men, taking them to labor camps, some to work on the infamous Burma railroad. Jeremiah's father and brothers never returned. Before he left, he gave charge of his young family to Jeremiah's care. At this point, we are aware that the boy is a scrapper, a tough young man, and smart. He believes he is up for the challenge. It wasn't long after the men were taken when the Japanese came for the women and children. They were placed in "Jappencamps", where each family lived in a single room of a house. The bulk of this amazing story occurs in this place of captivity.

One element meaningful to me was the author's use of a few powerful metaphors. The banyan tree represents moments in time that leave an indelible impression for life. It also is used to represent the consequences of moments which pervades our lives to the end. The second metaphor was the impression left by reading Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* a number of times on Jeremiah. Jeremiah saw himself as *Ivanhoe* and *Laura Jansen* as *Lady Rowena* from the moment he laid eyes on her at the village's marble game. Consequently, when another boy named *Georgie Smith* vied for her attention, Jeremiah was ready to fight for her, even in the *Jappencamp*.

The second thing that struck me as an amazing factor in this story were the details of life in the camp. While these details are secondary to the plot, they lend an atmosphere of authenticity to the events that took place. In the preface, it's mentioned that these details came from the author's parents, especially his father who spent years in a similar situation as Jeremiah. Yet he survived and returned home to his loved ones, and in particular the author's mother. I think it's the stark realism of this tale which plucked at my heartstrings so much. Toward the end, I even forgot the story was supposed to be fiction.

The thing that surprised me most about this book was that reading this from a pre-teen's viewpoint meant that, like *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain, there were the inevitable light moments and chuckles. Even in the midst of the horrendous circumstances he was in with his family, Jeremiah's antics and escapades were often funny, in a dark sort of "stick-to-you" type of way. Call it comic relief. I don't want to sound insensitive to the victims of such horrors, but the author managed to include many enjoyable instances as a sort of foil to the seriousness of the situation.

All of this meant I could hardly put the book down because of the suspense. It was all about surviving the war with his sanity and sense of self intact. Like me, you may be surprised how the book ends. I didn't see it coming at all. If you enjoy a fresh perspective of a historical fiction and/or love what Sigmund Brouwer writes, I can heartily recommend this book to you. For the rest of you, try something new; I think this book is worth it.

Disclosure of Material Connection: I received a complimentary review copy of this book from Waterbrook Press and the website, Blogging for Books. I was not required to write a positive review. The opinions I have expressed are my own. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255: "Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising."

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### **Kathleen (Kat) Smith says**

There comes some novels that are so rare and deep that when you finish them, you are left as though you have no breath left in your body. As if you are reliving something so horrible, you wish it were all simply a bad dream. But this is not the case with a different type of christian historical novel from Sigmund Brouwer, *Thief of Glory* and it is definitely a story of unspeakable horrors that occurred for one boy and his family that lived during the Japanese Imperialist invasion of the Dutch East Indies during WWII. For me, it was a story I had never heard nor could never imagine, but know that stories like these have happened and have never been told except to close family members.

I caution the reader, it is not for the faint of heart and the horrors described as a young boy, Jeremiah Prins and his younger brother and sisters, along with his mother are moved to a concentration camp when the Japanese invaded the Dutch East Indies islands, which is present day Indonesia. When Jeremiah's father and older brothers are taken, his father firmly reminds him that it is his responsibility now to take care of what remains of the family. Jeremiah has grown up a bit unique in never learning to fear anything, never to cry and to always let the first fight be initiated by someone else. They will always need to hit first. But Jeremiah is also smart beyond his years when he is able to converse like someone much older and wiser and that often takes his opponents by surprise, not knowing if he is serious or simply stalling for time.

Jeremiah's passion is marbles, one he takes great pride in adding to his growing collection through his many games with the children in the neighborhood and subsequently in the camp when he is detained there. It is his only connection to a normal life while living someplace that most would simply refer to as hell. Outside the fenced enclosure, life continues on as normal while all the Dutch people are rounded up by the Japanese. The leaders of the camp, known as Jappenkamp, know that in order to maintain a sense of control, certain restrictions are necessary, from keeping people in overcrowded conditions, keeping food rations at the point of keeping the people from starving at first, and convincing them all that anything less than respect for the leaders will result in punishment of their mothers, no matter if the disrespect came from the adult or child.

It is a chilling reminder of the horrors some had to endure just to survive a war in which they were not involved with directly but simply based on their race.

I received *Thief of Glory* by Sigmund Brouwer compliments of Christian Fiction Blog Alliance and Waterbrook Multnomah Publishers for my honest review. I did not receive any monetary compensation for a favorable review and the opinions here are strictly my own. I can't imagine how far someone would have to be pushed in order to survive and what you would have had to do, just to make it through the next day. By the time you get to the final page of the novel you gain a full understanding that things you witness are not

always as they appear and that those who endured spending time in concentration camps are our true survivors and heroes! This is not for younger readers, due to the content of what the novel deals with in very realistic terms, about how one boy and his family had to survive in some of the worst circumstances. If this were a movie, I believe it would be rated R due to the subject matter much like Schindler's List. However with that being said, we can't hide that these things happened simply by refusing to read about them or hear about them and I believe this one deserves a 4.5 out of 5 stars. You can help but feel as though you, yourself, were locked behind the fences right alongside Jeremiah and that to me, is an earmark of an exceptional writer.

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## **Reet Champion says**

One boy to protect a frail family in the middle of a Japanese concentration camp. It seems to be impossible but Jeremiah Prins has determined he will stand in his father's stead to care for his mentally frail mother and host of siblings. It's a task a grown man would find taxing; for Jeremiah the life of oppression eats away at his childhood setting into motion a series of events that will change the lives of so many people.

Sigmund Brouwer. An author I've heard so much about but whose works I never really considered venturing into. And for good reason: His works seemed dark. Gosh. Was I wrong. Brouwer is an amazing writer. He can take history and spin a tale of endurance, heartache and hope. I have never read a book quite like *Thief of Glory*. I sat down one night decided I'd read a few chapters before doing some writing of my own...yeah. it didn't happen. I was so engrossed in *Thief of Glory* I couldn't put it down until early morning hours had arrived. Did I mention I had to be at work early the next morning?! His story has a dumfounding quality to it, in both prose and plot. I didn't get the happy ending I wanted. I got something that could have passed for a real life story (and yes it is based on a true story). One of the best books published in the decade.

*DISCLAIMER: In accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255: "Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising" we would like to note that we received a hardcopy of "Thief of Glory" from Blogging for Books in exchange for our honest review.*

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## **Staci says**

It's rare to find a WWII novel set in the eastern theater. Thief of Glory is set in the Dutch East Indies and told through the eyes of a "Jappencamp" survivor. Much of the story is told through ten year old Jeremiah's eyes. He is an easy character to love. He is kind, strong, stubborn and endures many struggles during his three year internment. Laura, Sophie and Adi were also great characters.

While I respected the way the story was told from present day with a look back in time, I found myself completely engaged in the story from yesteryear and not as much in the present day.

Overall, it was a compelling read. I recommend this novel for fans of historical fiction.

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## **Jamie says**

I have to say, this isn't like any World War II novel I've read. Not only because it deals with a different

theater of war (I normally read those of the home front or European theater), it shows such a different side of war, through the eyes of a 10 year old boy and is based on the author's own family history. It's a beautiful and poignant tale.

This isn't an easy read. It's honest, it paints a picture of what life was like (in some ways reminded me of Unbroken), from the evil humanity is capable of to the sacrifices people do for those they love. Gripping.

Even as I'm writing this review, I'm still processing the book. It's that kind of book. It's hard to imagine the type of stuff that went on, but it did happen. That's war. People did what they had to do to stay alive. I can't imagine the choices many, especially mothers, had to make (whether right or wrong, I can't pretend to understand the desperation).

Brouwer also showed how war doesn't end with the surrender of the axis powers. The effects often lasted generations. Yet, there is always hope to redeem and renew. Yep, these are characters who will stick with me.

"Our bodies are carriers of our souls. Too often we get lost in the physical world when our souls should focus elsewhere."

What's a recent book that's stuck with you?

(Thank you to Blogging for Books for a copy of the book in exchange for my honest review)

Originally posted at: <http://booksandbeverages.org/2014/11/...>

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### **Paula says**

I would give this book 10 stars if I could. It is one of those books that are just that special. I have been to Indonesia five times, yet I found that I really knew nothing about the war in that part of the world. And my Dad served in New Guinea. But I never really talked with him much about that time.

The book was well written. There was a lot of action, some surprises and a bit of romance. You could really feel the cruelty of the Japanese. And it all makes you wonder how anyone could have survived all that happened in the camps. This book makes me want to read more about the war in the Pacific.

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### **Joanne Bischof says**

What a book! An incredibly written story and I was thankful for the opportunity to sit down and chat with Sigmund Brouwer after finishing: <http://www.joannebischof.com/video-ch...>

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### **Heather Manning says**

I have to admit that I was not completely in love with this book, while the general idea of it was interesting. I

didn't like that I was made to believe that this was a romance, when it really was not. I hate to write a negative review, and I don't think the problem was with the book, but more so with the marketing involved with it.

I felt that the main character, Jeremiah, was able to do way more things than a ten year old should have been able to do. Since he was 10 for 2/3 of the novel, I had difficulty taking this book seriously.

However, the historical aspect of this novel was great. I never knew Dutch POW camps existed in Indonesia. I liked reading about the history here. All in all, this novel was very rich in historical ideas, but I didn't love the actual story.

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## **Alisha L. says**

**\*\*Note: I do not recommend this book for anyone who is not an adult due to some gruesome and graphic scenes/descriptions and mature themes.\*\***

First off I would like say that I chose this book because I love reading books about World War II (both fiction and non-fiction) and I was excited to see a new realistic Christian historical novel based on that time in history being published. When I chose this book to read I was expecting a realistic look at what happened in the Dutch East Indies during World War II which is what this book was. I didn't chose this book because I wanted to read a Christian romance novel and I wasn't expecting it to be a feel good book with a happy ending. I've read enough books about World War II to know about a lot of the gruesome, brutal, and horrific things that happened from all different sides of the war. That being said, even though I was expecting this to be a realistic WWII fiction book, I unfortunately didn't enjoy this book.

For the most part the book was a well written book. After reading it I can tell that Sigmund Brouwer is a talented writer that is knowledgeable about or has done his research about the subjects he has written about. I had only read a couple of Sigmund Brouwer's juvenile fiction books before, and although I did enjoy them, the writing was more of a simplistic style since the books were written for kids. That's not the case in this book. The author has done a good job at making me feel like I'm living the events of the story just like the characters. Sometimes it wasn't always a good thing for this book to be so descriptive though, and one part, although short, actually made me squeamish and that part wasn't even war related.

This book didn't really feel like a Christian book to me either. Yes, there were a few references to the Bible and to Christianity, but the book still felt like more of a mainstream novel than a Christian one due to some of the descriptions in this book and because of the way most of the characters acted. Half the time Jeremiah was angry at God and thought the Bible wasn't true. The other references included the children reading Bible stories, a couple short parts where the characters had discussions related to the Bible, and there was a faith related part toward the end of the book, but it was very subtle and not detailed, unlike the other detailed parts in the book that I could have done without.

Also, while I didn't choose this book because I wanted to read a Christian romance novel, because of the summary this book has I'm sure a lot of people will think that this book is mainly a romance novel. It's not. While it does have some romance in it, for those looking for their next Christian romance novel to read, I am suggesting that you look for a different book.

I didn't know anything about the Dutch East Indies during World War II, so I did enjoy the historical aspect of this book and would rate that part of it highly. There were also a few characters I liked in the story. But overall this book was depressing and heart wrenching and I didn't care for some of the crude or overly

detailed gruesome descriptions or details that were in it, some of which weren't even war related that I felt the book could have done without. I was also hoping for more of a Christian theme to it or more Christian related content. Unfortunately, even with my love for reading books about World War II history, I just didn't enjoy this book.

I am putting the negative parts and sexual references in this book in a spoiler as some of these things could be spoilers to the story.

(view spoiler)

\*I received this book from the Blogging for Books program in exchange for my honest review.

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### **Randy says**

Jeremy's life as a prisoner in a Japanese internment camp during WW2 comes as a result of his being in a police station holding cell. He looks back on his life from his position as a retired architect in his 80s. We see the terrible struggles he had to endure in order to fulfill his father's last wish, to protect the family. We see how the things he experienced during those years in the camp have haunted him for his entire life.

I picked this book up because I am a fan of historical fiction. Also, being set in Indonesia was appealing because I have connections to that country. I hoped this would give me some further insight into the country and its history.

I finished the book because the story telling was so compelling. Yes, I was able to learn more about Indonesia's history, particularly during the Japanese occupation, but Jeremy's character will stay with me for a long time. His suffering at the hands of the Japanese military was able to leap off the page and make me feel. His perseverance in the face of such conditions that no child should ever have to deal with is extraordinary. That the author drew upon his own family's history to get this story across adds a level of authenticity.

I would recommend this to Tyler. I think he would like the story, but also appreciate the social commentary that the story raises.

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### **Josh Olds says**

QUICK HIT - With immaculate detail and a gripping plotline, Brouwer's coming-of-age tale is one of his best yet.

What would you do if your perfectly comfortable world fell apart? Jeremiah Prins was ten years old when the Japanese invaded his home in the Dutch East Indies. He'd always been a tough kid, always one to take on



a challenge, always one to relish a fight. But this is beyond him. This is when he learns that his mother is a bit mentally unbalanced. This is when he learns that, with his older brothers and father in the work camps, he has to be the man of the house. But then there's no house. Jeremiah grows up full of spite, rage, and deep sorrow...and perhaps just a hint of love.

Sigmund Brouwer's historical tale is as bleak and depressing as it is hopeful and invigorating. Based upon his own family history—his grandfather spent time in a Japanese prison camp in the East Indies—Brouwer weaves a marvelous coming of age tale that is absolutely brilliant in its stark portrayal of life in a prison camp.

So much is written about the Nazi concentration camps that it was interesting from a historical perspective simply to see WWII on a different front, one that seems overlooked by history.

The novel's strength comes from the complexity and depth of its players. Jeremiah is resourceful, cunning, strong, and proud. But glimpses of the ten year old show through in his playfulness, impetuosity, and naïveté. The supporting cast is just as strong, from the vague nature of his mother's mental illness to the overbearing and smug bully. Everyone is longing for survival, and not all will find it. Brouwer draws you deep into the story, forcing you into the characters' shoes, demanding that you turn the pages until the story meets its end.

That said, the novel does suffer at its transition point. While the majority of *Thief of Glory* plays out in the WWII camp, the concluding chapters shift forward to the present to bring the narrative to a close. Such a transition is difficult for any story, and Brouwer's story was not immune to those difficulties. Quite simply, it is a jarring jump in terms of both story and character, with sixty years of plot fit into a few pages of exposition. I think the novel would have been improved by developing parallel storylines and introducing the beginning of the present-day conclusion earlier in the novel.

Despite that, *Thief of Glory* shines as one of Brouwer's best novels to date. It's a tour-de-force of historical fiction that'll keep you reading long into the night. It's a beautiful story that deserves to be read.

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## **Loraine says**

**SUMMARY:** A boy coming of age in a time of war...  
the love that inspires him to survive.

For ten year-old Jeremiah Prins, the life of privilege as the son of a school headmaster in the Dutch East Indies comes crashing to a halt in 1942 after the Japanese Imperialist invasion of the Southeast Pacific. Jeremiah takes on the responsibility of caring for his younger siblings when his father and older stepbrothers are separated from the rest of the family, and he is surprised by what life in the camp reveals about a woman he barely knows—his frail, troubled mother.

Amidst starvation, brutality, sacrifice and generosity, Jeremiah draws on all of his courage and cunning to fill in the gap for his mother. Life in the camps is made more tolerable as Jeremiah's boyhood infatuation with his close friend Laura deepens into a friendship from which they both draw strength.

When the darkest sides of humanity threaten to overwhelm Jeremiah and Laura, they reach for God's light and grace, shining through his people. Time and war will test their fortitude and the only thing that will bring

them safely to the other side is the most enduring bond of all.

REVIEW: Having just finished *The Sentinels of Andersonville*, it was very interesting to follow it with *Thief of Glory* which also portrayed life in a prison camp. This time in a Jappankamp during World War II. I was unaware that there were camps in Dutch East India where the Japanese interned the Dutch. Both books were similar in that they depicted people who became stronger and were overcomers in spite of the depravities and horrors they faced and others who lost hope and strength and gave in to despair. This haunting story tells the coming of age of young Jeremiah and the 3 years of his life in captivity. The choices he made, decisions he pursued, and the horrors he witnessed and endured formed him into the man he would become for most of the rest of his life. Seeing the history through the eyes of a young pre-teen/teen was quite different and reminded me in some respects of *The Diary of Anne Frank*. This story is fascinating with a well-developed and maintained plot and characters who pull you right in to the heart of the story. This story could have been very depressing but interspersed were hopeful moments from those who would stand up and fight for those who were weaker and those who were survivors and wished to help others survive. This book was definitely deserving of an 2015 award.

FAVORITE QUOTES: "When you assume you deserve the evil that someone else inflicts upon you, then you are choosing to be a victim."

"It is sometimes difficult, with evil around, to believe in what is good."

"Our bodies are the carriers of our souls. To often we get lost in the physical world when our souls should focus elsewhere."

"To tell our story makes us human, and to be human is to tell our story."

"It would be wonderful if we could always see that what we have in common as humans outweighs our differences."

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### **writer... says**

Unusual view of war as Japan takes over the Dutch East Indies. Told through the eyes of a young boy coming of age in the throes of WW2. Descriptive, emotionally gripping and raw storytelling. Worth recommending.

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### **Susan Meissner says**

Before reading *Thief of Glory*, I had no idea what the war was like for the Dutch residents living in what had been Dutch-occupied Indonesia. The novel was eye-opening to say the least. As with other books I've read with young protagonists dealing with the harsh realities of adults at war (see *The Book Thief*, *Sarah's Key*, *Diary of A Young Girl*, *Stones from the River*) this one yanked fiercely on my mother-heart and left me astonished at what war expects of the children swept up into its maelstrom.

The book won't be released until mid-August but I suggest you put it on your To Be Bought list and then

most definitely on your To Be Read pile. You will be moved, appalled, changed.

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## **Maria says**

Thief of Glory by Sigmund Brouwer is historical fiction centered around WWII. The blurb talks about love amidst the internment camp, and it sounds like this really good story. But trust me, it's not... Buyer beware this shouldn't be considered a Christian book in any sense of the word. It's different but not in a good way.

When Jeremiah Prins is ten, the Japanese take over the Dutch East Indies. They force Jeremiah, his mother, and his three younger siblings into a camp where they have to learn how to survive with limited food and medicine. The Japanese control the camp with an iron grip leaving it's prisoners scared for their lives. But the Dutch don't give up easily....

Later Jeremiah finds his first love, Laura, in the camps. Life seems better with her as his friend and together they do daring things to help their families survive. Life takes a drastic turn when Jeremiah starts noticing something wrong with his mother.

This is my first read from this author, and I was impressed by his writing skill, but the story wasn't at all what I thought it was going to be. Usually you cheer with and like the main character, but I didn't like him at all. He was detached, mean, vindictive, and superior. I felt for all they went through at the Japanese internment camp, but for supposedly being a Christian story there was nothing Christian except for mentioning the Bible and hymns. Plus, there were a lot of thematic elements like some cursing, vulgarity, sensual topics, and violence especially at the beginning where it shocks you and makes you immediately dislike him.

I am used to reading WWII, nonfiction and fiction, so I know the evilness surrounding these places, but this story was just so dark with no redemptiveness to it at all. Even the ending was so strange and weird. The last chapters were poorly written, confusing, and made you dislike Jeremiah even more if possible. In my opinion, Jeremiah was just evil. They try to say he did it all for "good" reasons, but doing bad for a good end result is just as bad as doing wrong all the way. The story ends with him asking for mercy, but I would rather hear the author come right out and say he got saved. This book felt like such a waste. I will not be reading any of his books again.

I was given this book free from Blogging for Books in exchange for an honest review.

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