

## My Wounded Heart: The Life of Lilli Jahn, 1900-1944

Martin Doerry



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A series of letters offer an incredible and tragic insight into the life of an ordinary Jewish woman under persecution in the Nazi regime. This is the heart-breaking story of a gifted Jewish doctor, the mother of five children, who, after being divorced by her Aryan husband, is arrested on an absurd charge and sent to a corrective labor camp in 1942. Lilli was a prolific letter writer and miraculously almost all her letters to her children and friends, together with a huge number of their letters to her (smuggled out of the camp at Breitenau before she was sent to Auschwitz), survived World War II and only came to light on the death of her son in 1998. In the letters and in Martin Doerry's superb commentary, we see the deterioration of a whole country through the eyes of an ordinary family driven asunder by pressure from the Nazi regime. We see Lilli's initial optimism and love of her husband begin to crack. We see her trying to support and run the family home from Breitenau camp, but relying totally on her 12-year-old daughter, Ilse. And we see the difficulties for the children of living with their father's mistress, now his wife, after a bombing raid destroys the family home. And perhaps most moving of all, we see Ilse's heroic attempts to meet her mother, even though it means going into the labor camp itself, and Lilli's courage in the face of her inevitable end.

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