



# If I Should Die Before I Wake

By Han Nolan

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Somehow, in her mind, she has become Chana, a Jewish girl fighting for her own life in the ghettos and concentration camps of World War II.

Han Nolan offers powerful insight into one young woman's survival through the Holocaust and another's journey out of hatred and self-loathing.

Reader's guide and an interview with the author included.

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## **If I Should Die Before I Wake** By Han Nolan Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Few novels can match this effort for its stupefying lack of taste. Teenager Hilary, who has never recovered from the long-ago death of her father and from her Bible-thumping mother's temporary abandonment of her, lies in a coma, the victim of her own adventures with her neo-Nazi pals. Suddenly she "slips" into another life--that of a Jewish girl in Poland at the beginning of the Nazi occupation. It turns out that she is sharing the memories of her hospital roommate, whose telepathic communications eventually bring about Hilary's salvation. Gratuitously lurid subplots involve teenage American neo-Nazi depredations and the torture of Hilary's young Jewish neighbor; the Holocaust flashbacks feature a psychic grandmother. Passages about Nazi ghettos and concentration camps seem cobbled together from survivors' memoirs (noticeably, Kitty Hart's several autobiographies and Fania Fenelon's *Playing for Time* ), while the overall conceit owes a major debt to Jane Yolen's *The Devil's Arithmetic*. Any hope that the author will redeem this misbegotten first novel is quickly quashed by her unrelievedly airless prose. Ages 12-up.

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From School Library Journal

Grade 7-12-Hilary Burke, a young Neo-Nazi, is in a coma after a motorcycle accident. Ironically, she has been taken to a Jewish hospital and shares a room with elderly Chana, an Auschwitz survivor. Instrumental in the kidnapping of her 13-year-old Jewish neighbor, Hilary hates all Jews and believes one caused her father's death. Through Chana's memories, the girl is transported back to World War II, experiencing for herself the horrors suffered by Polish Jews just trying to survive, first in the Lodz ghetto, then in the concentration camp. While the subject matter is certainly compelling, this first novel is not as powerful as Jane Yolen's *The Devil's Arithmetic* (Viking, 1988) or as chilling as Jay Bennett's *Skinhead* (Watts, 1991). Nolan does a better job of portraying Chana than Hilary or her Bible-quoting mother, but Mrs. Burke's dysfunctional personality and Hilary's problems with her are clear. Interspersed are Biblical passages that are sometimes appropriate to the text, but often unnecessary and distracting. The ending is predictable and soppy: Chana dies leaving an album full of family photos to Hilary. Stick to the numerous, excellent-quality, existing examples of Holocaust literature.

*Jo-Anne Weinberg, Greenburgh Public Library, NY*

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From [Booklist](#)

Gr. 7-10. High-school student Hilary Burke, whose rebellion against her fundamentalist Christian mother takes the form of hanging out with local neo-Nazis, lies unconscious in an intensive-care ward after a motorcycle accident. The other patient in the unit is an aged Holocaust survivor, Chana Bergman. Before returning to consciousness, Hilary slips into Chana's memory and travels back in time to the Lodz ghetto and Auschwitz. Chana's chapters dominate the text until the elderly woman dies and Hilary returns to life, no longer anti-Semitic. This first novel has great strengths and weaknesses. The time travel is contrived, the characterization of Hilary's mother is shallow and unbelievable, a hospital fire set by neo-Nazis is an unnecessary plot element, and the preachy message about the "new" Hilary changing the world is tabloid psychodrama. Chana's story, however, is brilliantly rendered. Without sensationalizing or blurring, Nolan evokes the physical and emotional crowding of shared living space, the desperate struggle for food each day, and the compromises required for survival. Despite the contrived machinery through which it's introduced, Chana's story carries memorable emotional impact. *Mary Harris Veeder*

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

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What do you regarding book? It is not important together with you? Or just adding material when you require something to explain what you problem? How about your extra time? Or are you busy man? If you don't have spare time to accomplish others business, it is make you feel bored faster. And you have time? What did you do? Everyone has many questions above. They should answer that question since just their can do which. It said that about book. Book is familiar on every person. Yes, it is proper. Because start from on pre-school until university need this specific If I Should Die Before I Wake to read.

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