

Mendel's Daughter



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著者:Lemelman, Martin

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In 1989 Martin Lemelman videotaped his mother, Gusta, as she opened up about her childhood in 1930s Poland and her eventual escape from Nazi persecution. *Mendel's Daughter*, now in paperback and selected as one of the best books of 2006 by the *Austin Chronicle*, is Lemelman's loving transcription of his mother's harrowing testimony, bringing her narrative to life with his own powerful black-and-white drawings, interspersed with reproductions of actual photographs, documents and other relics from that era. The result is a wholly original, authentic and moving account of hope and survival in a time of despair. Gusta's story opens with a portrait of shtetl life, filled with homey images that evoke the richness of food and flowers, of family and friends and of Jewish tradition. Soon, however, Gusta's girlhood is cut short as her family experiences Hitler's rise, rumors of war, invasion, occupation, round-ups and pogroms, forcing Gusta into flight and hiding. *Mendel's Daughter* is Martin Lemelman's solemn and stirring testament to his mother's bravery and a celebration of her perseverance. The devastatingly simple power of a mother's words and a son's illustrations combine to create a work that is both intensely personal and universally resonant. *Mendel's Daughter* combines an unforgettable true story with elegant, haunting illustrations to shed new light on one of history's darkest periods.

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目录:

[Mendel's Daughter_ 下载链接1](#)

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[Mendel's Daughter_ 下载链接1](#)

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