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### The Extra

Tessa McMillan

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# Book Review

**Title:** The Extra

**Author:** Kathryn Lasky

**Reviewer:** Tessa McMillan

**Publisher:** Candlewick Press

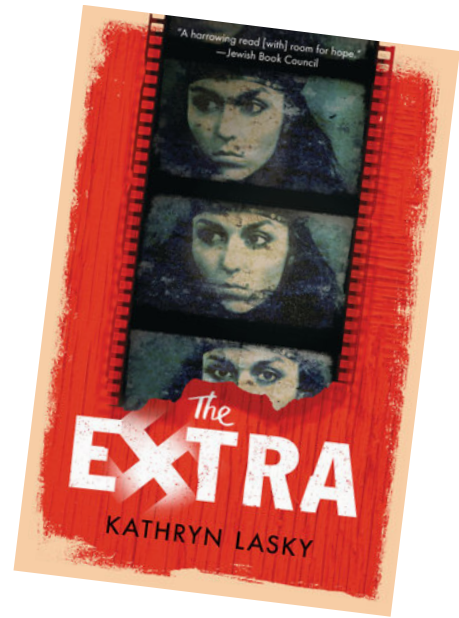
**Publication Year:** 2013

**ISBN:** 9780763680176

**Number of Pages:** 314

**Interest Level:** Young Adult

**Rating:** Dependable



## Review

Like many Gypsy families, Lilo Friwald and her parents are shipped off to concentration camps where they encounter the horrors of the Third Reich. Separated from Lilo's father, Lilo and her mother glean survival skills from Lilo's new friend, Django. But their camp life is disrupted when Hitler's favorite director, Leni Riefenstahl, visits Lilo's camp. Leni is seeking extras for a movie she is making on the Reich's dollar. Lilo, her mother, Django, and several other Gypsies are selected and the group is shipped out to Leni's first filming location. But life on Leni's set is just as dangerous as the Nazi camps. The group is guarded by Nazi soldiers, nearly starved, and the extras must subject themselves to Leni's deadly whims. When Lilo's mother dies during the movie's production, Lilo escapes and finds sympathetic citizens who house and safeguard her. But a misguided slip-up on Lilo's part causes her to be returned to the deadly concentration camps. Remembering Django's advice and her love for him, Lilo survives and is liberated by American soldiers.

From the stories of many Gypsy survivors comes Lasky's tale of Lilo Friwald and her fated time on the Tiefland set. Lasky explains that Lilo's character is mainly based on Anna Blach, a teenage Gypsy used as a stunt-double for Leni Riefenstahl during her horseback riding scenes. But the experiences Lilo has outside the film set are based on other Gypsy survival stories. Like many WWII historical fiction books, the Holocaust horrors are described, but Lasky does a good job at not making them too explicit in detail. This includes the experimental surgeries performed on inmates, the mass graves, and witnessed executions. But Lasky also describes the help many inmates received by sympathetic camp workers, guards, and courageous citizens. Unlike other Holocaust books, Lasky better explains the workings and purpose behind the different concentration camps. *The Extra* gives a new and fresh perspective to the many stories of WWII. Appropriate for ages 14 and up.

\*Contains sexual references and violence.