

Jewish Book World Review *Awake in the Dark*

“This collection of four mysteries may seem like a good choice for bedtime reading, but it led this reader into an “all-nighter.” The primary characters of these stories, which are primarily set in America, are the children of Holocaust survivors, or think they are. Each tale begins with a provocative sentence and ends with a shock. The adventures take place in the middle of the story, in which the author frequently uses the device of passages alternating between the present quest and its solution in the German past, which the main character uncovers after finding hidden evidence. The daughter of a dying mother senses that something doesn’t ring true and goes back to Germany to find out what it is, in “The House on Konenstrasse,” while in “The Porcelain Monkey” Rinat, the eldest daughter of an Orthodox mother of seven, questions her mother why she, Rinat, has blue eyes while the rest of her family are brown-eyed. In “The Lamp,” a loving daughter respects her dead mother’s need to keep the secrets of who her father was, and why her mother bothered to carry a heavy lamp to America when the two fled from Germany. The fourth story, named “Dark Urges of the Blood,” is the longest and most convoluted. Despite similar techniques among the stories, each is suspenseful and beautifully written.”