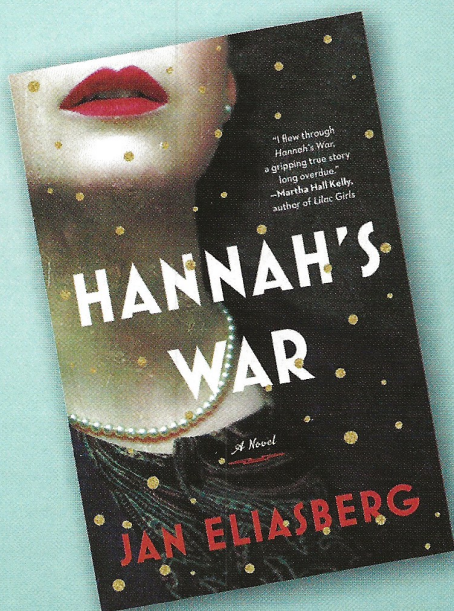


BOOK REVIEW

By Wolf Schneider



HANNAH'S WAR

RIVETING SPY THRILLER IS SET IN WWII LOS ALAMOS

PARIS HAS BEEN LIBERATED. In Los Alamos, NM, scientists overseen by Dr. Robert Oppenheimer are secretly building the gadget, among them the self-determined Austrian Jewish physicist Dr. Hannah Weiss. It's 1945. The Germans are also developing atomic weapons. Somebody seems to be sending them data from Los Alamos. Major Jack Delaney has three days to catch the possible spy.

Espionage thriller *Hannah's War*, a novel written by director-screenwriter Jan Eliasberg, was inspired by the real-life Dr. Lise Meitner, a female Austrian Jewish physicist who experimented with fission for the Germans, then later had to flee for her life to the Netherlands when the Nazis annexed Austria.

In Los Alamos, Jack zeroes in on Hannah as his potential suspect. While telling each other a combustible mix of truths and lies, the two plunge into a seductive relationship, revealing more about themselves than either intends. Jack recalls, "There was this girl..." and Hannah responds, "I knew there'd be a girl," adding, "Every good story begins with a girl." On a trip to Santa Fe, she observes, "You never answer a question just because it's asked. Neither of us do." He offers, "I don't want every man who says he loves you to be a liar." Love. Lies. Chain reactions. Betrayal. The laws of physics. Inscrutable messages on postcards. References to Goethe's *Faust*. A jeweled hair ornament from the past that Hannah prizes inordinately. Eliasberg has written a haunting, Casablanca-ish novel spotlighting two highly developed characters caught in a gripping web involving the lasting effects of loyalty, treason, escape, and pursuit during a time when nobody knows who to trust. The stakes couldn't be higher here during the waning days of World War II, as the cat-and-mouse rapport between Jack and Hannah intensifies. ■



Jan Eliasberg
Photo by Nina Subin