



The Short, Strange Life of Herschel Grynszpan: A Boy Avenger, a Nazi Diplomat, and a Murder in Paris

Jonathan Kirsch

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"Reading this excellent, thought-provoking biography, one is all too easily reminded of Camus's 1942 novel, *The Stranger*."—Philip Kerr, *Wall Street Journal*

On the morning of November 7, 1938, Herschel Grynszpan, a desperate seventeen-year-old Jewish refugee, walked into the German embassy in Paris and shot Ernst vom Rath, a Nazi diplomat. Two days later vom Rath lay dead, and the Third Reich exploited the murder to unleash Kristallnacht in a bizarre concatenation of events that would rapidly involve Ribbentrop, Goebbels, and Hitler himself. But was Grynszpan a crazed lone gunman or agent provocateur of the Gestapo? Was he motivated by a desire to avenge Jewish people, or did his act of violence speak to an intimate connection between the assassin and his target, as Grynszpan later claimed? Part page-turning historical thriller and part Kafkaesque legal drama, *The Short, Strange Life of Herschel Grynszpan* brings to life the historical details and moral dimensions of one of the most enigmatic cases of World War II. This compelling biography presents a story with twists and turns that “no novelist could invent” (Alice Kaplan).

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