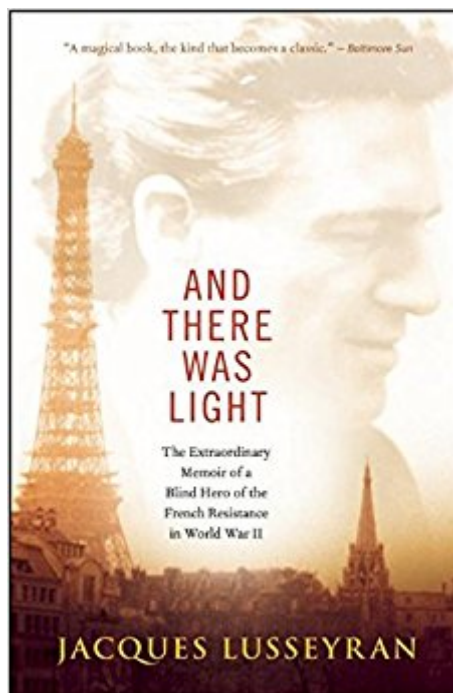




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# **And There Was Light: The Extraordinary Memoir Of A Blind Hero Of The French Resistance In World War II**



## Synopsis

The book that helped inspire Anthony Doerr's *All the Light We Cannot See* An updated edition of this classic World War II memoir, chosen as one of the 100 Best Spiritual Books of the Twentieth Century, with a new photo insert and restored passages from the original French edition When Jacques Lusseyran was an eight-year-old Parisian schoolboy, he was blinded in an accident. He finished his schooling determined to participate in the world around him. In 1941, when he was seventeen, that world was Nazi-occupied France. Lusseyran formed a resistance group with fifty-two boys and used his heightened senses to recruit the best. Eventually, Lusseyran was arrested and sent to the Buchenwald concentration camp in a transport of two thousand resistance fighters. He was one of only thirty from the transport to survive. His gripping story is one of the most powerful and insightful descriptions of living and thriving with blindness, or indeed any challenge, ever published.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“A magical book, the kind that becomes a classic.” — Baltimore Sun  
“One of the most powerful memoirs I’ve ever encountered...[Lusseyran’s] experience is thrilling, horrible, honest, spiritually profound, and utterly full of joy.” — Ethan Hawke, in the Village Voice  
“One of the most extraordinary books I have ever read. It is why books are published at all.” — Mark Nepo, author of *Seven Thousand Ways to Listen*  
“Lusseyran writes like an angel, like a mystic. His response to losing his sight at an early age is so surprising that it will change the way anyone thinks about blindness.” — Barbara Brown Taylor, author of *An Altar*

in the World and Learning to Walk in the Dark; Lusseyran allows us to glimpse both heaven and hell on Earth through the eyes of a man who has lived through both. His description of what it is like to "see" as a blind man is fascinating and inspiring; his account of Buchenwald, where he was condemned to the living hell of the "Invalids" Barracks, is one of the most anguishing fragments of Holocaust testimony that I have ever encountered. • Jonathan Kirsch, Los Angeles Times; A stunning revelation of human courage and love arising in the midst of implacable human evil. Under it all runs a deep current of mystical truth and hope. • Jacob Needleman, author of An Unknown World; An exciting, inspirational account of a life without sight. • Library Journal; What normally would seem a tragic plunge into darkness becomes a thrilling journey into light. • Peter Brook, director of the International Centre for Theatre Research, Paris; This book is his testament to the joy which exists in all of us, a joy which no conditions • not even the worst • can kill. • Roshi Philip Kapleau, author of The Three Pillars of Zen

Jacques Lusseyran (1924-1971) became a professor in the United States at Case Western Reserve University after World War II. He died in a car accident in France.

This is a fascinating but hard read. The first half or so of the book has to do with the insight that a blind person develops. It is well spoken but the author needed to pare it down because it tends to drag the reader down. Several times I almost gave up, but if I wanted and hoped for more so I kept going. When he finally got to the work with the French resistance it was a very interesting story but I wanted him to tell me more about their actual activities. His insight into people and motives and truth in character now was a matter of life and death. Now I realized why he spent so much time in the first part of the book developing this train of thought. The descriptions of the inner lives of people in the prison camp was so well written and thought out. It made the whole reading worth the effort it took to get through it. Though I have read much about this period of history nothing looked at the inner life struggles in such a personal and intimate way. He was a master of deciphering the real soul of people around him. And, in the last half of the book he was very successful helping the reader to grasp a much deeper level of the horror or the holocaust.

This memoir is unlike anything I ever read. Poetic, loving, joyous are not words one would ordinarily associate with the loss of one's sight, founding a youth resistance movement during the Nazi occupation of France, and more. More than any other book I've read about WW II, this one tells it

like it was, yet retains a love of life and a deep humanity that can only pierce the heart. At least it pierced mine to the core.

I believe this book is a necessity of our time. I refer to it yet again after almost two decades. It tells the inner journey of the existence of 'I am-ness' - of that quality of Self that travels anywhere, in all circumstances, in all conditions, in all relationships. It is the living of physical darkness giving inner illumination, the way, that does not and cannot negotiate the conditions we meet in Life yet beckons - more and more love and more and more surrender - the inner light that reveals the way; the capacity to recognize where we contract inwardly or release into openness. It's a brilliant, compassionate and dissolving of coming to senses that ultimately shed light on what matters.

Although somewhat long, the author's discussion in the first half of the book regarding how he coped with his blindness was very "eye opening" as to a blind person's inner experience of his/her world. I found his description of his experiences intriguing and very additive to my understanding of blindness. I was especially moved by the author's comment at several points in the narrative that one's happiness and sense of meaning and purpose in life comes from within as a result of one's spiritual experience which transcends and overcomes the materialistic world and any sense of being controlled by others. I admired the author's tenacity and inner strength in fighting to liberate France from the Nazis during WWII. His strong will and love of his fellow man, which carried him successfully through the war, was very touching! He was quite a fellow!!

Life is a lonely existence until it reaches into one's own inner sanctum and begins to see the true light that illuminates everything and connects everyone. Lusseyran teaches us how light is a gift not only for those with visible eyes to see but for those with invisible eyes to see. His account of his finding joy in this light even after a childhood accident that left him blind brings comfort since many harbor some fear of going blind with age or disease. His account of courage in a beautiful marriage of dependence on others while maintaining a fiercely independent and loving personality gives us the courage to live our own lives with passion and self-worth while remembering the worth of others. His account of enduring the trials of Nazi cruelty in a concentration camp brings resolve, hope and meaning to those enduring trials in life such as cancer, hunger and suffering that might otherwise seem unjustified except the knowledge that Lusseyran reminds us of: that there is always light and joy to be found inside us if we dispel the darkness of despair and choose to see love even more fully defined because of our trials.

If it were only an insight into the ways a blind person might think, this would have been worth it. Lusseyran was a compelling writer, observer, and with a sensitivity that I can only describe as totally blessed and God given. I don't imagine everyone has the experiences he shares--I've worked with blind people before, and never heard these kinds of observations. He himself would have said so. His participation as a very young man in the inception of the French resistance is amazing. That he could have been so young and so central to the development of this movement is totally mind-boggling. That he should have made it to Liberation is equally astounding. I liked the book, would have given it a 5 except that I got a little bogged down in some of his observations. But I'd recommend it to anyone.

found out much more about the french resistance and the capacity of a man. Well worth reading. Share name of this book. It should be read by many.

This memoir is very unusual for at least these reasons: 1. Jacques led a French resistance group during World War II. 2. Jacques also survived his time at a Nazi concentration camp. He did both of the above as a blind person. The first part of the book is slower than the rest, as he tells of his youth and his happiness. He then writes of his student years. Once he gets into World War II, the story speeds up. What is so strange, and worth the read, is how Jacques found Light despite being blind. He discovered this Light early after becoming blind, and knew that he could trust it. An extraordinary memoir, read, and encounter with the Light..

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