

# FLIGHT FROM THE ENEMY

## CHAPTER 1 UNEXPECTED VISITORS

"Bam! Bam!"

"We got him, we got that mean old Nazi!"

Two girls came tearing around the corner of the barn. They were Rachel and Hannah. Their dark eyes danced with mischief as they skidded to a halt and crouched down behind a bale of hay. They pressed themselves against the weathered wood of the old barn and waited impatiently.

"Sshhh, here he comes!" Rachel poked Hannah and pressed her finger against her lips. She didn't want David to hear them! They heard the "clump-clump" of wooden shoes grow louder as someone rounded the corner and started toward them. Hannah giggled when she peeked through the wisps of hay and saw her brother eyeing the barn door suspiciously.

Oh, but now she'd done it.

"I heard you, Hannah, and I'm going to get you guys back!" David threatened, thinking about the lumps of sad which had whizzed past him when he had stepped out of the back door. He pulled the bale of hay aside. Rachel rose from her cramped position, giggling.

"I knew she could never stay quiet," she confided to her brother, but Hannah jumped up and stomped her foot.

"I can so," she argued, the corners of her mouth turned down in an angry pout.

David grinned and hurried to change the subject.

"What do you want to do?"

"Let's pretend we are Allies, and we're going to rescue Holland," Rachel suggested.

"And then we'll tell all the Germans to go back to their own country, right?" Hannah put in excitedly.

David stood as straight as he could. He clenched his hand against his shoulder, as if he was holding a gun. "Ready, march!" he ordered. He frowned at Hannah and added, "Just don't yell things about mean Nazi's anymore. Father says you never know who might hear you these days, remember?"

Hannah stuck out her chin and muttered stubbornly, "I don't care. I wish the Nazi's would go away." For a moment her lip quivered, but she saw David and Rachel marching away and quickly fell in step behind them, forgetting the real war which raged around them.

There they went, David first, because he was the oldest. A leaf was caught in his reddish brown hair, his ears were bright pink from the cold wind. He lifted his legs high, one by one, and he stomped his feet. He was a general, and he was leading his troops into battle. He tried to look stem and proud, just like a real general.

Behind him came Rachel. Her dress was too short, and her mitten had a hole in it. That was because of the war. Mother couldn't buy her new clothes, because the Germans were taking everything, and Father had no money.

Rachel had cried when Father and Mother hadn't given her a present for her seventh birthday. She had asked for a doll with a pretty lace dress and for a new set of colored pencils. Father had cupped his big, calloused hands around her face and had looked into her eyes.

"You're my big daughter," he had said, "and I wish I could give you a doll. But I can't. Someday, when this war is over, things will be better. Then I'll be able to give you lots of birthday presents." It had seemed as though there were shadows in his dark eyes, and his forehead had been creased with worry and pain.



Now Rachel just pretended she didn't mind that she didn't have ribbons to wear in her hair and that her shoes pinched her toes. No, she didn't cry. She didn't want to make Father and Mother sad.

She peered past her brother's back.

"Where are those Germans?" she questioned impatiently. Behind her, Hannah completed the little parade. Her black curls bobbed against her rosy cheeks. She took big steps and pounded her feet. She was marching too, just like a real soldier!

They neared the pasture. David swiveled around on his heel and raised a hand. "Halt!" he commanded. Then he lowered himself onto his stomach and aimed his imaginary gun. Rachel and Hannah followed his example.

"Bam! Bam!"

"Bam!"

David squinted into the sun and imagined the German soldiers running away, as fast as their legs could carry them, right out of Holland and back into Germany. He wished he was big enough to

fight. Those awful soldiers were everywhere, and if they hadn't come to take over his country, they would still be in their own house in the city, and Father and Mother would not be so sad. He had seen Mother cry, late at night, when they thought he was asleep on his cot in the kitchen. He clenched his fists. Now they were here, far from home, by Uncle Hank and Aunt Dina, the aunt and uncle who were really just a "pretend" aunt and uncle.

"Bam! Bam!" Hannah shouted vigorously next to him. But David did not join in. He listened.

"Bam!" Hannah yelled again.

David grabbed her arm and whispered, "Sshhh!"

Rachel turned and looked at him wonderingly. David sat up and strained to hear better. He heard the rumbling of an engine and loud voices. Suddenly all the exciting plans of chasing away the enemies were gone from his mind.

No, oh no, it couldn't be! Those voices, loud, harsh voices... those were not the voices of Uncle Hank and his hired man!

"Open up!" a voice bellowed.

"Wo hast du der Juden?" another voice demanded roughly.

Rachel grabbed David's shoulder and stared at him. Germans! Her eyes grew wide and her face pale as the truth dawned on her. "Der Juden!" They were those "der Juden!" The Germans had found out that they were Jews!

Hannah had heard the voices too.

"Mother!" she whimpered. Startled, David covered her mouth with his hand.

"They'll take Father and Mother away!" Rachel whispered, staring at the farm house. What was happening, over there, at the front of the house?

David swallowed. He had been brave just minutes ago, but now? His mind whirled. He had to get Rachel and Hannah out of sight! He jumped up and motioned for his little sisters to follow. Quickly, they scurried after him and gathered behind the barn.

"Take Hannah and hide in the haystack," David whispered to Rachel. Before she could object, he spun around and disappeared around the corner of the barn.

David stared at the house. He had to help Father and Mother! He edged closer and listened. The Germans were shouting and cursing.

Just then, the back door opened. A fat man in German uniform came storming out. A thin little man followed close behind him, pleading in a high, raspy voice, "Honestly, there are more Jews! There are three kids here too! They've got to be somewhere!"

"Tell me where then!" the German bellowed in broken Dutch, grabbing him by the collar. "And you better be telling me the truth!"

"On this farm, honestly! Maybe they are hiding somewhere out here!" The Dutchman's voice quivered.

The German shoved the little man aside. His face was red with rage as he strode across the cobblestone drive and twisted his head this way and that, his eyes scanning the area.

David drew back in alarm. His knees felt weak. Had the soldier seen him? Swallowing the lump in his throat, he turned and ran into the barn. His wooden shoes thudded dully against the packed dirt. He ran to the ladder and clambered into the loft, crawling back into the shadows as far as he could. There he lay still, his breath coming in ragged gasps. His heart was pounding; frightening thoughts tumbled through his mind, but they became all muddled and mixed up when he tried to sort them out. Raising himself up onto his knees, he brushed the cobwebs from the dusty little window and looked down.

The Dutchman stood by the back door; his hands hung limply by his sides.

"So that Nazi Dutchman figured out that we were Jews, and then he told the Germans," David thought angrily. He would never understand how someone from his own country could side with the enemies and give them information just for money. Then David spotted the German.

He was nearing the haystack. David sucked in his breath. That's where Rachel and Hannah were! He pressed his clenched fists against his cheeks and watched helplessly as the German disappeared around the back of the haystack.

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David didn't have to wait long before the German reappeared. Another soldier had come outside, yelling, "Let's go!"

His comrade glanced darkly at the barn but obeyed and headed back in the direction of the house.

Look, they were leaving! David shoved his fists into his eyes to keep from bursting into tears. Were they taking Father and Mother?

The uniformed men disappeared around the side of the house, the little Dutchman cowering behind them. David heard the engine start. He waited anxiously. At last, the hum of the engine faded away into the distance. Quickly, he scrambled down the ladder.

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David found Rachel and Hannah in the haystack, their arms wrapped tightly around each other. Seeing their tear streaked faces, David began to realize for the first time everything that had just happened. A wave of fear washed over him.

"Father!" he yelled. "Father!"

A thick silence answered him.

Father was gone.