

# In the Land of Hiding

## A Spring of Time Story



by Russell Eric Allen  
illustrated by Julie Ferris



Level 3 Book 4

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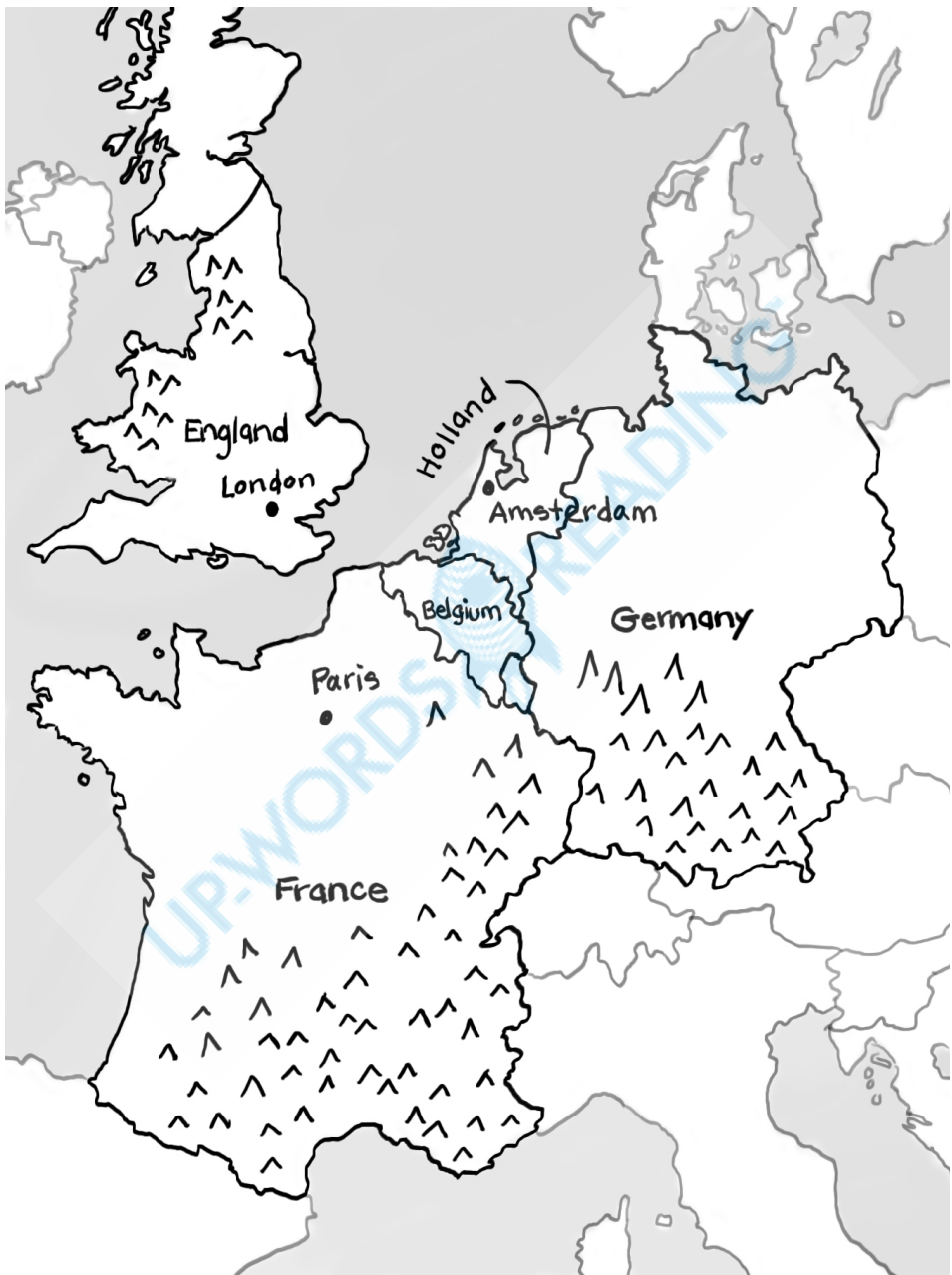


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## Contents

Chapter 1: The Sickness	6
Chapter 2: Trapped	14
Chapter 3: Miss Corrie	22
Chapter 4: Mr. Ten Boom's Story	31
Chapter 5: The Broadcast	40
Chapter 6: Visitor	48
Chapter 7: The Storm Before the Quiet	57
Chapter 8: A Farewell to Heroes	64
Epilogue	75

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## Chapter 1: The Sickness

Tabitha felt it the minute they walked into town. They had stopped by Bethlehem to change back into their old clothes, then jumped into the Spring of Time and come out in a flat field, freshly cut. A town lay on the other side of the field, marked by a line of three and four-story buildings that rose up so suddenly that it looked like the town itself had sprung up from seed. That's where they'd headed.

That's when Tabitha had felt it.

She couldn't put her finger on it yet. Nothing was out of the ordinary as far as she could see. The day was fine and clear, with a deep blue sky overhead that faded to nearly white at the horizon. She didn't know where they were yet, but she could tell they were back in her future. The houses were skinny, four and five levels tall, built so close together that they touched. Otherwise, they seemed as normal as the sky.

Nothing was out of the ordinary that she could hear, either. There were rumbles that she'd learned to recognize as cars off in the distance. Birds chirped. Those contraptions that Sam called bicycles



clattered along cobblestone streets. These were all normal sounds.

Still, she felt it – like some invisible sickness hanging in the air, or a silent poison flowing underground. She couldn't see it with her eyes, and she couldn't hear it with her ears, but she could feel it in her spirit. Something was wrong here. But what?

She noticed something: none of the bike wheels had tires. She'd learned to ride a bike during her stay with Sam's family, and she'd learned that bike wheels had rubber tires on them. She remembered because she'd never seen rubber before, so Sam had taught her about it. But these bikes all rattled along the pavement on metal rims. Why did none of the bikes have tires?

She looked around and noticed something else. They were several blocks into the town now. Here and there, people walked along the sidewalks, but they kept their heads down and didn't look at each other. They walked fast. They didn't say hello. They didn't call out to neighbors or friends they saw on the street. Tabitha wondered if everyone in this time and place was antisocial.

No. These people weren't antisocial, Tabitha felt. These people all seemed . . . afraid.

"Where are we?" she asked.

"Judging from how flat it is, I'd guess Holland," James said.

"I thought it looked familiar," said Sam.

"You've been here before?" Tabitha asked.

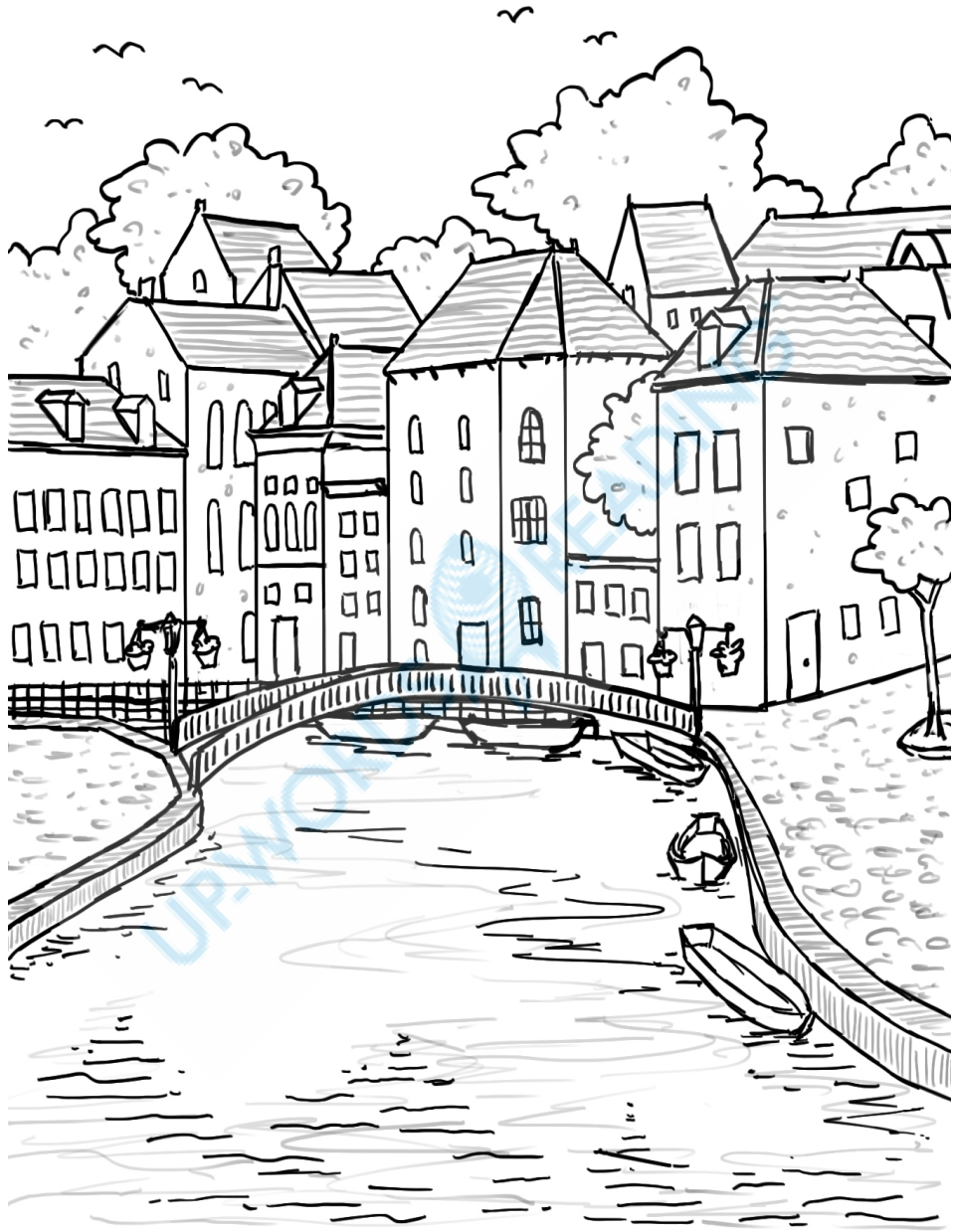
Sam explained that he, Kim and James had gone through the Spring of Time once before, to a place called England in the 1600s. From there, they'd traveled with some people called "the pilgrims" to Holland.

"It's pretty," Tabitha said.

"Yes, I love the canals in Holland," James said, pointing ahead of them. "See?"

Tabitha looked. The street they were walking down crossed a canal up ahead, over an arched bridge with white railings and flower baskets hanging from lampposts. A wall of narrow, squeezed houses, painted in all kinds of bright colors, overlooked the water. Little white boats sat in front of them, rocking slightly. The whole scene was beautiful.

So, what felt so wrong about the place?



Holland

They turned the corner and started walking down a street that ran alongside the canal. Up ahead, on the other sidewalk, Tabitha spotted two men wearing uniforms, walking toward them. They looked a little like the police of Sam's time. They wore long, drab coats and green, domed helmets, and they carried long guns hung on straps over their shoulders. They both wore the exact same arm band over their left sleeve, too: a broad strap of red with an odd-looking black cross on it, like an X with feet on all four of its legs.

Tabitha fought the urge to freeze or run away. She'd learned from Sam that she didn't have to be afraid of the police. She thrust her hands into her pockets, tried to keep moving and not let the police frighten her. To her surprise, she turned her head to see that Sam, Kim and James had frozen in place two steps behind her. Their faces were pale masks of dread, their eyes glued to the soldiers.

She stopped. "What?" she called back to them.

"Swastikas!" Kim whispered.

Tabitha didn't know the word. She turned and looked again at the soldiers. "What's a . . . swastika?" she asked.

Next thing she knew, James and Sam were on either side of her, pressed close. They said nothing. They didn't look around nor look up. Suddenly, they were acting like all the other people she'd seen in this town. Using their shoulders, they turned Tabitha around and started walking her the other direction. Kim fell in close behind them.

"What's going on?" Tabitha asked. "Why are you guys acting this way?"

"We have to get you out of here," James said.

"We have to get all of us out of here," Sam added.

"Why, because of the soldiers?" Tabitha asked. "I thought you said the soldiers in your time were nice."

"We're not in our time," James said. They turned a corner and started down a side street.

"So those men, they're called swastikas?" Tabitha asked. She was getting very confused, pushed along between James and Sam.

"Those men are called Nazis," Sam said.

"What's wrong with Nazis?" Tabitha asked. Now she was getting scared. She'd never seen her friends act like this.

"They hate . . . ." James didn't finish. He looked at Sam and kept walking.

"Hate what?" Tabitha pressed. "James, please tell me! Why are you all doing this?"

"They hate people like you, Tabitha," James said at last.

"Me?" Tabitha said. "But they don't even know me. How can they hate me?"

Sam looked pale as he leaned in and whispered.

"Jews, Tabitha," he said. "They hate Jews."

Tabitha felt like she'd been punched in the stomach. The fear in her grew so strong that she almost doubled over. Her legs grew weak. For the rest of the block, Sam and James half-carried her, squeezed between their shoulders, while she steadied herself.

So *that* was the sickness she'd felt! She'd heard of this. From the stories her father told her about the king of Egypt, centuries ago, ordering all the baby Jewish boys to be killed, to the tribes who tried to stop the Jews returning to Jerusalem from captivity in Babylon, there had always been people who hated the Jews. She'd never understood it, and she'd never experienced it for herself – until now.

"That's why we have to get you out of here," James said. "They'll stop you if you even look Jewish. They'd stop Sam, too."

"They didn't care much for black people either," Kim said from behind them.

Tabitha still walked along between James and Sam. "Sheesh, did they hate everybody?" she asked.

Sam's eyes darted about, scanning the street ahead for threats. "Pretty much," he said.

"What will they do to us if they catch us?" Tabitha asked.

Nobody answered.

"Sam?" Tabitha's voice quivered. She swallowed hard to make it stop. "What will they do to us?"

"We have to get back to the Spring," was all Sam said. "We have to get out of here."

"That's where I'm heading," James said. "Just keep walking."