

Elin – May

Chapter 1 – A Normal Day in Rotterdam

On May 9, 1940, Elin woke up like on any normal spring morning. The sun was shining through her window, but something in the air felt strange, almost tense, as if everyone was holding their breath. She was eleven years old, with blonde braids and curious eyes, and she ran down the stairs to peek into the kitchen. Her mother was slicing bread carefully, while her father sat nearby, listening to the radio so intently that it seemed he wanted to remember every single word.

Elin thought it would be an ordinary day, filled with playing in the garden with her neighbor, Thomas, but she noticed how differently the adults were speaking, as if something big and dangerous was about to happen, something she could not yet understand.

Chapter 2 – The First Signs of War

Early on May 10, Elin woke up to the loud, deep rumble of airplanes flying overhead, a sound that seemed to shake the entire city. She ran to the window and saw dark shapes moving across the sky. At first, they looked like huge birds, but they were actually German bombers, flying low and looking threatening. Her father pulled her quickly away from the window and shouted that they had to hide, while Thomas trembled with fear outside.

Elin felt her heart pounding in her chest and realized for the first time that the war had truly begun and that nothing in her life would ever be the same again.

Chapter 3 – Fear and Confusion

That day, the streets were full of people running in every direction. Some were crying, others shouting, and the air was filled with the sound of sirens. The noise of the airplanes came closer and closer, and sometimes the ground even shook beneath their feet. Elin felt small and afraid, but she had to be brave for herself and for Thomas, who she held tightly as they ran through the chaos to find a safe place.

That evening, Elin sat in the small kitchen with her family, listening to the radio telling news about the German advance, battles in the sky, and the growing number of injured people. Her mother tried to smile, but Elin could feel the fear that everyone in the city was carrying in their hearts.

Chapter 4 – The Bombing of Rotterdam

On May 14, the unthinkable happened. Elin saw with her own eyes German planes circling above the city, dropping bombs that destroyed everything in their path. The noise was so loud that it felt like the world itself was collapsing. Windows shattered, doors

flew open, and thick black smoke filled the air.

Elin ran with her parents and Thomas to the quay, where thousands of people had gathered, frightened and confused, while houses crumbled and fires burned everywhere. She held her mother's hand tightly and tried not to look at the destruction around her, knowing that their lives had been changed forever.

Chapter 5 – Life After the Bombs

The following days were quiet, but filled with sadness. Rotterdam lay in ruins; many neighbors had lost everything, and everywhere there were injured people and destroyed houses. Elin helped her mother distribute the small amount of food they had, which was barely enough for their own family, and she quickly learned that sharing had never been more important, because everyone was hungry and hope seemed very small.

Even so, Elin felt that she had to stay strong, keep going, and notice the small things that could bring comfort, like a neighbor's smile or a moment of silence by the river, which made her forget her fear for a little while.

Chapter 6 – School and Secrets

School was no longer the same. Sometimes there were no teachers, and sometimes children had to learn in small groups in buildings that were still standing. Elin noticed that some children came to school hungry, and no one laughed like they used to. Yet her teacher always tried to smile and tell stories that gave a little hope.

Elin also learned that some people had secrets, like hidden places where friends or family could hide. One day, she helped Thomas and his little sister hide under the floor of their house. Even though she was scared, she felt proud that she could protect someone in danger.

Chapter 7 – Hope and Small Moments of Happiness

Despite everything, there were still small moments of happiness. Sometimes Elin walked with Thomas and their parents to the river, where they skipped stones across the water and watched the sunlight sparkle on its surface. Sometimes neighbors sang softly to chase away their fear.

Elin learned that even in a world full of chaos and sadness, friendship, courage, and hope were important, and that even a small smile could give strength. These moments helped her keep going, knowing that one day life after the war would come.

Chapter 8 – Growing Up in Difficult Times

Elin grew up in a world very different from anything she had known. She learned that war

was dangerous and sad, but also that people could be strong and kind, and that even small acts of kindness could make a big difference.

Although Rotterdam would take years to recover and the war would continue for a long time, Elin knew that she and her family would survive, that they had memories that would never fade, and that hope could exist even in the darkest times.

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Elin – May

Chapter 1 – A Strange Morning in Rotterdam

On May 9, 1940, Elin woke up as she always did on spring mornings, with sunlight streaming through her bedroom window and the smell of fresh bread drifting up from the kitchen. But today something felt different. The air seemed heavy, almost tense, as if the city itself was holding its breath. Elin was eleven, with blonde braids that bounced as she ran, and her bright eyes were always curious, always searching. She hurried down the stairs to peek into the kitchen. Her mother was carefully slicing bread, and her father sat listening to the radio, his eyes fixed, as if every word could change the world. Elin thought it would be a normal day of laughter and games with her neighbor, Thomas, in the garden. But there was a strange seriousness in the way the adults spoke, as if a shadow of worry had fallen over the city, something she did not yet understand.

Chapter 2 – The First Signs of War

Early the next morning, May 10, Elin was awakened by a deep, powerful roar that shook her window. Planes! She raced to the window and saw black dots crawling across the sky. At first, they looked like giant birds, flapping their wings, but then she realized—they were German bombers, flying low and ominous, moving as if nothing could stop them. Her father grabbed her hand and pulled her away, shouting that they had to hide. Outside, Thomas was frozen, trembling, unable to speak. Elin felt her heart pounding like a drum in her chest. The reality hit her like a wave: the war had begun, and nothing—nothing—would ever be the same again.

Chapter 3 – Streets of Fear

The city streets were chaos. People ran in every direction, some crying, some shouting, their voices mixing with the blaring sirens and the relentless drone of airplanes overhead. The ground sometimes shook beneath their feet, as if the earth itself were frightened. Elin felt tiny, almost invisible, but she had to be brave for herself and for Thomas, who clung to her hand as they ran toward safety. That evening, the family huddled in the small kitchen, listening to the radio. Reports of German advances, battles in the sky, and the growing number of wounded filled the

room. Her mother tried to smile, but Elin could feel the fear in every heartbeat, every shadow in the room, and in every house on their street.

Chapter 4 – The Bombing of Rotterdam

On May 14, the unthinkable happened. Elin watched from a distance as German planes hovered over Rotterdam, dropping bombs that tore through streets, homes, and shops. The explosions were so loud that it felt as if the sky itself had cracked open. Windows shattered, doors flew off their hinges, and thick black smoke curled upward, covering the sun.

Elin ran with her parents and Thomas to the quay, where thousands of frightened, confused people had gathered. Fires raged everywhere, and buildings crumbled like sandcastles under the sea. Elin held her mother's hand tightly, trying not to look at the devastation, but she could not stop the tears that stung her eyes. She understood that their lives had been changed forever.

Chapter 5 – Life After the Bombs

The days after the bombing were quiet, but the silence was heavy with sorrow. Rotterdam lay in ruins, neighbors had lost everything, and the streets were full of people searching for family, friends, or any scrap of hope. Elin helped her mother hand out what little food they had, barely enough for their own family. She learned that sharing, even the smallest piece of bread, could make a huge difference. Yet Elin also discovered the power of small joys. A neighbor's quiet smile, a moment of stillness by the river, or the sunlight reflecting on broken windows—these tiny things helped her feel safe and reminded her that even in the darkest times, life could hold beauty.

Chapter 6 – School and Hidden Secrets

School was no longer the same. Sometimes there were no teachers, sometimes children gathered in small groups in buildings that had survived the bombing. Many arrived hungry, their faces pale and tired, and laughter had become rare. But her teacher tried to bring hope through stories and gentle smiles.

Elin also discovered the secrets that people kept to protect each other. One day, she helped Thomas and his little sister hide under the floorboards of a house, holding her breath as they waited. Fear pulsed through her, but so did pride—she realized that even a small act of courage could make a world of difference.

Chapter 7 – Moments of Hope

Even in the middle of chaos, there were moments of happiness. Elin sometimes walked with Thomas and their parents to the river, where they skipped stones across the water and watched the sunlight dance on the ripples. Sometimes neighbors sang quietly to chase away fear, their voices trembling but brave.

Elin learned that friendship, courage, and hope could survive even in the darkest moments, and that even a tiny smile could give strength. These moments became her lifeline, reminding her that life after the war would return, somehow.

Chapter 8 – Growing Stronger

Elin grew up faster than most children, in a world unlike any she had known. She learned that war was cruel and dangerous, but also that people could be incredibly strong, kind, and brave. Small acts of kindness—sharing food, offering comfort, protecting someone—could make a huge difference.

Though Rotterdam would take years to heal and the war would continue for a long time, Elin knew that she and her family would survive. They had memories that would never fade, and hope, even in the darkest moments, could remain alive.