



A LIFE REVEALED

When Liv finds a secret box from her grandmother's childhood, she discovers a great-aunt she never knew she had and uncovers an extraordinary story of bravery, betrayal, and daring defiance.

Holland, 1942. The world is at war, and as the Nazis' power grows, Jewish families face increasing threat. Twelve-year-old Mila and her older sister, Hannie, are sent to live with a family in another city with new identities and strict instruction not to reveal that they are Jewish.

Mila does her best to make friends and keep out of trouble. But Hannie is determined to fight back and is swept into the Dutch resistance as an undercover agent: Code Name Kingfisher. Dangers face them both at every turn, and the sisters are soon left questioning who they can trust and just how far they will be asked to go in order to survive.

★ "An intense story, gorgeously told."

—SLJ, starred review

"A stirring story that will give any reader a boost of bravery in the face of adversity."

—Booklist



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LIZ KESSLER

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BY LIZ KESSLER

ALADDIN

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Prologue

AMSTERDAM, 1942

The boy knew even before entering the house that this was the day they'd warned him about.

It didn't matter that he'd forgotten his key as usual: the front door was hanging from its hinges. He glanced furtively down the street before going inside.

He could barely breathe as he looked round the room. He took in the upturned chairs, the broken glass, the drawers pulled out and emptied onto the floor, curtains dragged from their rails and torn to shreds. A cold feeling reached across his chest.

He closed his eyes, trying to stop himself from picturing what had happened here. Still, his imagination was vivid and cruel. He could practically hear the baying laughter of the Nazi soldiers as they tore apart the only home he had

ever known. He could almost taste his parents' tears.

No. He couldn't give in to his imagination. He had a job to do. He'd been prepared for this day.

He hurried to the kitchen at the back of the house. Kneeling down, he opened a low cupboard, crawled inside, and pushed at the back of the cupboard where a loose panel gave way. He crept through, then reached back round to pull the door closed and replace the false panel.

He was in a space big enough to sit up. There was water, a tiny bit of food, a worn blanket on the floor. He felt for the watch on his wrist. His father had given it to him only days earlier. He traced the face of it with his finger and felt his heart settle a tiny bit as he closed his eyes and pictured his father's smile.

Then he made himself as comfortable as he possibly could, and he waited for the people who would know what to do. The people who still helped children like him.

"Please come for me soon," he whispered over and over in the darkness. "Please come for me."

Chapter One

LIV, PRESENT DAY

I'm in my bedroom, doing my homework, when the police car turns onto our road.

Instinctively, I pick up my phone and type a message to Karly. I hit send and go back to the window.

My phone pings a minute later. I open it and read Karly's reply.

Is it the creepy guy at number fifty-four who we always thought turned hedgehogs into wigs?

I smile. Karly always knows how to make me laugh. My phone pings again.

Or maybe Gladys at sixty-two has finally been done for crimes against fashion.

I'm about to reply when a third text pings through.

Not that Miss Dressed-by-Dad knows anything about fashion.

This last one is followed by a row of laughing emojis.

It feels like she's reached right out of the phone and slapped me. But I tell myself not to be silly.

Karly and I have been best friends forever. Since we first sat next to each other in Year Three. She's always been the one with the loud personality. I've always been happy to let her be in charge. I've never really cared what we do; as long as we do it together, it's always fun.

At least, it *was* always fun. Not so much recently. It changed when we started Year Eight last month and were put in different sets for some of our classes. Karly got in with a new group of girls and hasn't had as much time for me lately. We still walk to school together and hang out on the weekends sometimes, and to be honest I'm happy with that. Well, I'm not *happy*, but there's very little I can do about it if that's what she wants. I'd never say anything to her about it in case she ended up dropping me completely.

So I know her text is just a joke. She has a sharp sense of humor. And if I'm occasionally on the receiving end of it then I guess I have to put up with it. It's just how she is.

The Dressed-by-Dad thing stings a bit, though. Karly's parents are divorced and she bounces between them on

weekends and on the holidays. We used to have loads of sleepovers and she'd always want to have them at my house rather than hers. Mum's a regional manager for a big charity and is always out on the road. Dad's an artist. He has a studio in the garden and I suppose he's what you'd call a stay-at-home dad. Karly's always said how lucky I am to have them both, and how much fun my dad is.

But she's been making fun of my clothes ever since she bumped into me and Dad out shopping. She was with one of her new friends—Sal—and I can only assume this new name has something to do with her.

Anyway. I'm not going to get upset about it. I send a few laughing faces in reply, so she knows I'm cool with her teasing me. Then I put my phone down. Leaning against the wall, I look out the window again.

The police car is already halfway down the road, moving slowly as if the driver is looking for the right house, checking the numbers on the gates as they pass. It slows even more before finally coming to a stop.

Outside our house.

I move closer to the window, keeping out of sight behind the curtain. Two police officers are helping someone get out of the back of the car.

It's Bubbe. My grandmother. She's wearing a dressing gown.

You've got to be kidding me.

As they walk up the drive, I huddle deeper into the cover of the curtain and feel a weird kind of relief that Karly isn't here to witness this. My cheeks heat up at the thought of her seeing the disheveled old woman shuffling up our driveway in her slippers. She'd never let me forget it. The stories she'd tell her new friends. The laughter.

The doorbell rings. I creep out of my bedroom and listen from the landing as Dad goes to the door. I don't hear everything, just snatches of the conversation.

“ . . . neighbor saw her outside the house . . . ”

“ . . . seemed distressed . . . ”

“ . . . said she'd only gone to put the milk bottles out, and the door locked behind her . . . ”

“ . . . gave us this address. Said you've got a spare key . . . ”

I lean over the banister to hear more clearly. “I'm so sorry to have put you to this trouble,” Dad is saying. “She's my mother. We'll look after her. I'll take her home shortly.”

“Mum,” Dad says softly, after the police have gone. “Why didn't you just phone me as we'd agreed?”

“I couldn't,” Bubbe replies sharply. “I left my phone in the house.”

There's a pause, and I hold my breath in the silence. Then Dad says, “It's in your bag, Mum.”

“Which bag?” Bubbe snaps.

“The one round your neck. The one I bought you so you'd always know where your phone was, remember?”

Bubbe mumbles something under her breath.

I've heard enough. I slink back into my room and hope Dad doesn't call me down and make me talk to her.

It's not that I dislike Bubbe. I just have literally nothing in common with her. There's about eighty years between us so I think I can be forgiven for that.

It was different when Pop was alive. Pop was my grandad. We'd go round to their house every Friday night for *Shabbat* dinner. Bubbe was mostly in the kitchen, cooking with Mum. Her roast chicken was mouthwateringly delicious, and she always made a chocolate cake that was the high point of my week. Bubbe always said the cake had a special ingredient. She'd never tell me what it was.

"Family secret," she'd say, tapping her nose with a finger.

Sometimes I think her whole life is a family secret. Even back then, she wouldn't talk about herself much. Dad says it's because she had a difficult childhood. When I ask him why it was difficult, he shrugs. "She's never talked about it," he'll say. "It's off-limits, and I respect that."

All I know is that everything seems to be off-limits when it comes to Bubbe. Her cake recipes, her childhood. No wonder we've never been close.

Pop was the one who greeted us with a smile that felt like he'd switched the lights on. We'd play rummy while we waited for dinner, and afterward he'd show me card tricks. He taught me how to do a few of them. He didn't mind

sharing his secrets. Warm and open, that was Pop.

The opposite of Bubbe. She's brittle, like a sharp frost. Especially with me. It's as if there's always been an invisible door between us, and I've never known how to open it. To be honest, I've never tried all that hard.

Pop died three years ago, just before my tenth birthday. Friday night dinners were never the same. Without Pop to light the place up, everything in their house merged into a dull gray. Including Bubbe. She stopped making chocolate cakes, and then she stopped making Friday night dinners at all. It felt like she was done with us, with life.

She'd had her son—my dad—pretty late in life. She and Pop were both in their forties. She used to say he was their miracle child. My mum would roll her eyes when they said that. "It'd be a miracle if he remembered our wedding anniversary one year," she'd say, and we'd all laugh.

It feels weird to think of there being laughter in that house. Now there's only dim lights, hushed voices, and memories that barely feel real.

We started inviting Bubbe to our place on Friday nights instead after Pop died, but after a while she stopped coming. She retreated even further behind the invisible door and locked it behind her. Then I began secondary school and, as my world grew bigger, I guess Bubbe's grew smaller.

And now she's here, shuffling around our house, and all I can think is: *Please take her home soon.*