

CHAPTER 1



AUGUST 10, 1944
LODA FOREST
EASTERN POLAND

All across Europe, Jewish people were being hunted.

Millions were already dead.

But eleven-year-old Max Rosen was determined to stay alive.

Max thought that he and his little sister, Zena, would be safe in this forest.

But now they were caught in a massive bombing attack.

German planes roared through the sky, dropping 1,000-pound bombs that fell with shattering explosions.

Kaboom!

Enormous trees became flaming torches.

Sparks showered down like burning snowflakes.

Twisted metal and razor-sharp shards of wood blew up all around them.

And this was only the beginning.

Soon, soldiers with machine guns would stampede through the forest, hunting for people who had survived the explosions and fires. Anyone they caught would be shot on the spot.

Max gripped Zena's hand and they ran for their lives. Their only hope was a nearby swamp. They could hide in the mud and slime, with the snakes and the snapping turtles and the razor-sharp grass.

But then came the biggest explosion of all.

KABOOM!

The force ripped Max away from Zena, and sent him flying through the air.

His body twisted and turned. His mind swirled with terror.

Smack!

He landed in a ditch. He lay there, dazed.

Was he still alive?

But then there was a thundering crack above.

Max looked up just in time to see a massive flaming tree crashing down on top of him.