

SAPPHIRE PROMISE -
EPILOGUE

A TIMELINE CONTINUATION OF ANNIKA'S LIFE



SALLY BRANDLE

CHAPTER 1



OCTOBER 1945

BANGKOK, THAILAND

*A*nnika inhaled. From the banks of Bangkok's Chao Phraya River, smells of pungent refuse, fish, and – at times – a whiff of refreshing Jasmine hit her nose. “It’s a nice break to smell something besides bleach and ether in the hospital tent.” She squeezed Phillip’s hand.

He stopped walking and kissed her cheek. “Freedom smells great in any form, especially walking beside the woman I adore.” They continued their leisurely pace and approached a three-story hotel with a British flag hanging from the porch.

“Here we are, my sweet.” They ascended the hotel’s steps hand-in-hand. “Tonight, we’ll be alone and in a comfortable bed,” he whispered. “Two weeks in that warehouse-sized tent at Kanchanaburi was all I could take. You handled the bawdy, crowded conditions well. I love you more every day.”

A blush warmed her cheeks. “And I feel the same.” At the Allied forces’ warehouse-sized temporary shelter, she and Phillip had slept on mats stuffed with leaves—along with thousands of other freed Dutch, European, and Australian POWs. The supposed privacy – created by the same flimsy mats hung on all sides of their small chamber – was a sham. Couples reuniting after four years apart hadn’t much cared about discretion. “I’m also looking forward to a bath if I can arrange one.” Annika’s bloat from beriberi and the medicine was gone, but only a good soak would remove the layers of dust.

“We’ll make that a priority.” Phillip led her to the check-in desk. “I thought the line would be longer,” he said. “The men in uniform ahead of us are both generals. The one speaking to the clerk is British and the other man is from the British Indian Army.”

Annika shook her head. “So many joined the Allied campaign. It astounds me.”

The British officer took the key from the counter. “Good day and thank you.” He lifted his bag from the floor and proceeded toward the stairs to the left.

The Indian general moved to face the desk clerk

and said a few words. The clerk's face tightened, and then he mumbled a reply.

The general's posture stiffened. "I'd book the room for a week," he stated.

The clerk shook his head and crossed his arms over his chest.

Annika scanned the empty lobby. They couldn't be out of rooms.

Phillip turned to her. "This doesn't sit well. If he doesn't get a key, catch his sleeve and have him wait," he whispered. "I heard that by the end of the war British India had the largest volunteer army to date. Supposedly over two and a half million Indian men fought. Their commanders should be treated with respect."

Annika nodded and watched as the Indian general left the desk. She stepped aside, and caught up to him. "Sir, please wait for a moment." She turned toward the front desk.

The clerk's haughty gaze skimmed over Phillip. "The remaining rooms are reserved for officers," he snapped.

Annika rolled her eyes. Phillip's best clothing hadn't survived years in the POW camp. Thankfully, the Allies had issued the clean clothes he wore. His new Dutch officer's uniform was being altered. Phillip squared his shoulders and offered the ID that proved his rank of First Lieutenant. "I'd like a room for the week," he said.

“Of course, lieutenant.” The clerk studied a printed list, looked up, and smiled. “We have a lovely one with a balcony.” He turned and handed Phillip the key.

“I’d like to pay in advance for the week,” Phillip stated. The clerk told him the amount and he fished the bills from his pocket and placed them on the counter.

“Enjoy your stay,” the clerk said.

Phillip nodded, then approached Annika and the Indian general. “Here’s the key to a nice room, paid for a week in advance. I don’t condone the clerk’s behavior, Sir.”

The general smiled. “Very gracious of you, lieutenant.” He removed a money clip from his pocket and peeled off a stack of bills. “I will wait here for an hour. If you cannot find another hotel room for you and your lovely wife, please return.”

“We will.” Phillip pocketed the repayment. “Annika, let’s try the Mandarin Oriental Hotel.”

“That sounds delightful.” Annika took Phillip’s hand, and they booked a room at the beautiful hotel. Their stay proved to be the best second honeymoon Annika could have imagined. Whatever challenges they’d face, two were stronger than one.

Their days together flew by, and much to Annika’s dismay, Phillip’s two weeks of leave had ended. He returned to his military career in the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army (KNIL) Intelligence

Division as the lead intelligence officer—often gone for several days at a time. Annika borrowed whatever medical texts she could find to read in the evenings, in the hopes that one day she would be a licensed nurse. During the day, she volunteered at the nearby hospital for soldiers—some still recovering from POW trauma and others injured in the Indonesians' battle against the Dutch and British.

A week into the new routine of living in a small cabin, Annika's observation skills had come in handy. Thank goodness she'd been about to do her first rounds for the morning and had spotted a dehydrated Thai girl vomiting in the dirt road leading to the medical tent. The remainder of the day had been a scramble to isolate the girl. Cholera.

The near disaster at the field hospital outside the city would not be forgotten for a long, long time. Annika rolled her shoulders to relieve tension. She let out a slow breath. By having managed to hold the girl at a safe distance and get her quarantined, the deadly disease hadn't spread to the recuperating Dutch soldiers. The sick teenager now lay on a cot in a field, protected from the sun by sections of canvas secured into a lean-to style structure. Tomorrow, and the days following, Annika would bring her food and water, leaving it a safe distance away for her to retrieve it until she'd passed the infectious stage. Thank the Lord the Allies provisioned their temporary medical tents with new equipment and plenty of

medicine. It was state-of-the-art compared to what she'd seen at Tjideng. She rubbed her temple. How young and naïve she'd been four years ago, at eighteen, when she'd begun assisting doctors on all types of surgeries at the Tjikini Hospital, the makeshift Tjideng POW hospital, and in Bandoeng at the hospital who'd operated on Tante Julia. Thanks to the Japanese invasion, she'd received the equivalent of a decade or two worth of hands-on training, given to her by kind and competent doctors.

Phillip returned that evening from his overnight maneuver into Burma with an odd look on his face. He kissed her and lifted off his bamboo slouch hat. Having one side of the brim flipped up, it accented his handsome profile. Annika sighed. Jaunty hat or not, she'd never tire of admiring his movie star looks.

"Annika," he began. "You've told me you'd love to travel more. How would you feel about spending a month in India? I've been assured the British army would welcome your nursing skills there, also."

"What would you be doing? Isn't that a British colony?"

"Currently, yes. There are problems between the Indian population fighting against colonial rule, same as here and on Java. When I'm off work, I try to shut off my job. Maybe my habit of holding back that information from you isn't entirely fair," Phillip said. "My commanding officer felt my intelligence

gathering expertise could be useful to the British. Will you go with me?" His voice lacked the steady calm she'd grown accustomed to.

Did he think she could ever resist him? "Of course, I'll go along. I knew you'd be required to move around when we met. You can't get rid of me that easy, liefje," she teased her darling, her husband.

He pulled her into a hug. "I'll never want to get rid of you. Banish that thought. Pack your bags and we can leave tomorrow. Don't worry, the cabin won't be used while we're away."

"Then I'll leave things in place, ready for our return." She filled a duffel bag with all the clothes she owned. When she'd lived at Mansion Annika, her underwear alone would have taken up the same amount of space. Someday she'd have suits and dresses again. For now, the few sturdy outfits she owned would suffice—as long as she had Phillip by her side. The very thought brought a feeling of contentment.

The airplane trip the next day was uneventful, but the month in India was not a vacation by any means. The repercussions of war had everyone on edge. The local Indian community did not welcome Annika and Phillip the same way the Indonesian culture had done prior to the war. But life around the world had changed and colonial rule had lost favor in the eyes of some Allies. Phillip wouldn't admit it,

but she'd seen the strain in his face each night. They were both relieved to return to Thailand, as they heard about kidnappings, beatings, and murders taking place on Java. Unfortunately, Phillip's bouts of malaria persisted and appeared to be getting worse.

In December of 1945, Annika and Phillip were horrified to hear on a radio broadcast that a band of Indonesian rebel extremists murdered nearly everyone (primarily Christians) who'd lived in Depok, a city south of Batavia. The final three months of 1945 and early into 1946, the so-called Bersiap period ("be ready" in Malayan) was violent and chaotic. The KNIL Intelligence Division sent Phillip on many overnight missions throughout the surrounding islands. One of his trips to Java took place in April of 1946 to assess the Depok massacre. A famous photographer, Willem van de Poll, met Phillip and filmed him and the other KNIL soldiers while they spoke to the local population and viewed the horrors which had transpired a few months earlier.

Phillip didn't speak much about his work, or the Bersiap period. Annika knew the brutality he'd witnessed weighed heavily on him. In May of 1946, after his especially depressing Depok trip, she could at least share wonderful personal news. "Phillip, you've wanted to be a father," Annika began. "You're going to get your chance sometime in January. God

willing, 1947 will begin with the birth of our first child.”

“That’s great news!” Phillip kissed her and then placed his palm on her tummy. “Will we have a son or a daughter, I wonder? Either way, I’ll be thrilled.”

“I’m wondering about choosing a pediatrician and a hospital. I know doctors I’d trust in Batavia. Could you get us transferred there, maybe a few months before our baby is due?”

He pulled her close and rubbed her back. “Every intelligence report I receive shows that the fighting between the Dutch and the Indonesian Nationals has intensified all around us. This is a good reason for me to put in now for a six-month medical leave to go to Holland. I can’t seem to get over malaria here. And, I’d feel better if you had our baby in Holland, where it’s safe.”

Annika let out a sigh of relief. They’d return to Europe together, where they’d both be reunited with their families. The future was very, very bright.



In 1941 he had become a 1st Lieutenant with little idea of what was in store for him



December 1945: This Photo was taken one hour before he departed to liberate the remaining provinces in the Dutch East Indies



In early 1946, prior to leaving for Holland, the KNIL sent my husband to Depok, near Batavia. The people of Depok were considered to be pro-Dutch by some of the nationalists - although they were not Dutch or even Eurasians really.

On the 11th of October 1945 all the men and young boys over the age of 13 were imprisoned. Some of the men had been executed by beheading. The women and children were held at the "Gemeentebestuur" or the Municipal Government building. They were rescued by Allied forces and with the men who'd been imprisoned and then rescued, they remained for four years in Allied camps in Bogor. It has never really been ascertained who actually led the attack. It could have been the people known as the Ora Depok, or the Laskar Rakyat or Peoples' Soldiers, an armed unit outside of the government, the Badan Keamanan Rakyat or Peoples' Security Agency (an Indonesian government security agency) or the Tentara Keamanan Rakyat or Peoples' Security Force. **



Many of the original Depok families fled for their lives after the war and moved to the Netherlands as part of the Indo community. They'd gotten to safety. But, back in Indonesia, paramilitary organizations and gangs of pemuda killed or tortured non-Indonesians who'd allied with the Dutch.



More photographs from Depok



His job as an Intelligence Officer for the KNIL included talks with the Indonesians who remained near Depok.

CHAPTER 2



SEPTEMBER 1946

*A*nnika breathed a sigh of relief. Phillip's six month leave and a return trip to Holland had finally come through and ship passage had been arranged.

Uneventful, slow, and steady described Annika and Phillip's boat trip.

On the lengthy voyage to Amsterdam, they spoke to Dutch, European, and Indo people who were also being repatriated. At dinner one night, a government worker shared the sad estimate that during the Japanese occupation of the Dutch East Indies, it was thought that four million people had died as a result of famine and forced labor, including 30,000 European civilian internee deaths. He'd voiced the

opinion that the so-called Indonesian National Revolution, which Phillip had recently fought against, had been brewing for decades. Apparently, the revolution moved forward through the careful planning of the Japanese to manipulate control of the islands. They'd politicized Indonesians down to the village level. The government worker went on to detail the studies he'd read of how the Japanese had educated, trained, and armed many young Indonesians and had given their nationalist leaders a political voice. Phillip listened with a solemn look on his face and barely commented. After coffee that night, Annika pleaded a headache, and took Phillip's hand after they excused themselves. They took a turn around the peaceful boat deck before going to bed. Phillip stayed unusually withdrawn. Was he considering what his future military career would entail after their leave in Holland ended? Tonight wasn't the time to begin a discussion. They were both tired after the troublesome dinner conversation.

Annika tossed and turned that night. Would the war ever end? Would she and Phillip be able to return to island life on a safe and prosperous Java someday, or would the Dutch continue to be hated? She took deep breaths to calm her body. The words to the hymn from their wedding came to mind—"show me to carry the present only, with a calm and peaceful mind." The baby growing inside her needed nurturing, not worry.

The return to Holland gave her and Phillip a needed break. Staying in the Hague with her maternal grandparents couldn't have been lovelier. Reuniting with her parents, Rudy, Claude, and connecting briefly with cousin Emily gave Annika's soul some respite. Emily's life would continue in Australia with Quinn, and she'd boarded a boat to meet him in November.

During their time in Holland, Rudy was presented with a medal from Queen Juliana for his flying during the war. He had piloted both a Spitfire and a P-51, and during one encounter, he was the only pilot to return from his squadron. The story made Annika both proud and sad. So many good men, men like Rudy, had died. A group he belonged to is pictured next.



Exercise was compulsory during the RAF training phase. In August 1943, a largely Dutch team from the Initial Training Wing in Cambridge proved to be by far the best in a swimming competition. Group photo, above, of the Kite class. (Itz is local target zone)

Top row: Th. Limbosch, originally Marine, crashed with Hell-Cat; FWL Herckenrath was with KM ARO, went to RAF and later to the Air Force; R. Visser, midshipman, was Ittz , killed during 1st police action near Lawang, East Java; D. van Dongen, midshipman, was Itz a / b British aircraft carrier, killed during exercise with Hell-Cat.

Ditmarsch was ARO, became F / O with the RAF, gensneuveld in P-51 near Leiden in 1944; BK Swart was a midshipman, became It with RN and died over Japan in July 1945; Unknown British aviator.

Seated: E. Kragt was midshipman, went to 860 sqn a / b MAC ships; J. Buning was ARO, shot down as RAF F / O over Germany as CDT Lancaster; unknown Briton, unknown Briton; Unknown from India; JH van Harmelen became ground crew at RAF; unknown.

Front row: Unknown Briton, unknown Briton, and

Rudy, who was a midshipman with the RAF F / O, flew a Spitfire and P-51.

Dating to 1942-08 Place Cambridge, England Collection Dutch at the RAF ****



Claude joined the military and was captured by the Japanese. He had a terrible time as a teenager in their concentration camp! At one point they left him to die because he was so sick and weakened .Thank God his last wish was granted to him, rice with extra sharp chili paste, sambal as we call it. That saved his life!

CHAPTER 3



While in the Netherlands, Phillip was determined to beat malaria. After several months spent visiting various military doctors in Holland, Dr. Bosch treated Phillip successfully with a single shot to his arm. What a relief it was to all of them to have him on the road to a full recovery.

In January of 1947, Annika gave birth to a beautiful daughter, Justine, in a modern Dutch hospital. Phillip was the happiest new father she'd ever seen.

Pappie, Mamma, Oma and Opa were thrilled to have a happy baby in their home. Phillip's six-month leave ended in February, and as his health had drastically improved, he was sent back to Sumatra in February to continue as an intelligence officer with the KNIL. The tough decision was made for Annika to remain in Holland until a suitable home could be

found in Sumatra for their family. Being separated yet again was a blow to Annika, but the baby's needs took precedence.

Annika took her stroller to the mailbox every day, anticipating another letter from Phillip. Corresponding with him and sending photos of Justine sufficed for the short term, but when Phillip wrote of the ten-bedroom mansion the military had found for them to share with other officers, she jumped at the chance to join him.



How blessed to be in Holland with my parents
and maternal grandparents.



I love this photo, taken just before he left for Sumatra.



We all love the huge perambulator!
We've just arrived in Sumatra.



I am so glad I learned to drive a jeep!



Our second home in Medan, Sumatra.



Commuting to the post without a ballerina on board!

CHAPTER 4



MAY 1947 MEDAN, SUMATRA

*A*nnika booked the flight to reunite with Phillip. Justine had reached four months old and was an easy baby. Stewardesses who pampered her on the commercial airplane gave Annika the inkling that a better life awaited her in Sumatra.

Phillip's eyes lit up at the site of Annika exiting the plane with Justine in her arms. He leaned over the baby and gave her a very welcoming kiss, then lowered his head and stroked the tiny, fine tuft of Justine's brown hair, then looked at Annika. "She's growing more wonderful by the month, isn't she?"

"Yes. And we are finally the wonderful and reunited family!"

"I have more good news to share," Phillip said.

“We’ve been given the master suite on the upper floor of our new quarters, which has an adjoining room perfect for a nursery. This place is even bigger than Mansion Annika.”

“The home and our suite sound fabulous, but a long time ago, before we were married, I determined I’d be happy living in a tent with you.” Annika grinned and patted the baby’s cheek. “I was still a girl then, not a mother. I hope there are some tasks to keep me busy. I’m not planning to find a nanny for a while, so my nursing career will be on hold if that’s okay.”

“Of course. In fact, my commander heard me brag about your organizational skills.” He took the baby and cradled her in his arms, rocking his body back and forth. “Your mommy is smart, little Justine. And if she can put together menus and direct the household staff, we’ll live for free and have a lot more money for beautiful, frilly dresses.”

Annika had watched her mother work with their servants. The thought brought a heaviness to her heart. “I won’t have Kokkie, Ahmad, or Luther, but I’ll try my best.” From the rave reviews they received in the next months on delicious food and comfortable living quarters from the officers, she’d succeeded.

Phillip fulfilled the role of doting father whenever he spent an evening at their home in Sumatra. He would often be out on maneuvers for several days or

weeks at a time, as were the other officers. The length of his time away became increasingly extended as the Indonesian National Revolution continued.

On a clear night with a sliver of a moon, Annika and Justine were alone in the house. She'd put the baby in her bassinet and gone to bed. Scraping noises woke her to full alert. This wasn't a bug. It was a person using a tool. Her heartbeat jumped while she listened for the location. Where could they enter? Bars protected all the bedroom windows on the first and second floors.

She threw her legs over the bed. Someone was prying open the wooden shutters on the smaller bathroom window next to their suite. No bars secured its opening. Her pulse pumped as she scanned their bedroom, dimly lit with a nightlight in the doorway between their bedroom and the nursery.

She would allow no one to harm her or Justine. There was one thing she could use as a weapon, a pick-stick which gardeners used for spearing leaves. She'd brought one inside to kill bugs and kept it tilted against the wall behind their bedroom door. If she caught the robber climbing into the window, she could poke him back outside using the pointed metal end. She grabbed the handle and crept to the bathroom.

Metal tapping against wood came from the

window's slatted shutters. Annika's eyes adjusted to the darkened room. The noise stopped and the intruder's fingers poked through the gap which lay between the two wooden shutters that closed in the middle. The flimsy metal hook and loop latch in the center groaned as the nails holding them in place came free.

Annika crept to within a few feet, took a warrior stance with one foot forward, and aimed the spear at the middle of the window.

The latch burst, the shutters sprang open, and the intruder, a man, put his hands on the edges of the window. His head and torso appeared as a dark outline as he prepared to hoist himself inside.

Annika drew back, took a step, and thrust the spear at his chest. She jabbed until his fingers released.

"Oomph!" he cried, and fell backward. Thumps on the roof tiles and a loud crunch from the shrubs below told her he'd fallen to the ground.

Annika ran to the open window and looked out. Dim light from a lamppost on the street shone onto their driveway. A skinny man, hunkered over and holding his chest, ran from their yard and disappeared into darkness. She sunk onto the toilet seat. Was he breaking in to steal things or murder them? Her breathing came in gasps as she rubbed her shaking fingers onto her bare legs. If they were to stay in Sumatra, where the Allied military was hated,

she'd need to be armed. For tonight, she'd use the key to lock the bathroom door from the hallway side.

Phillip returned from the trip, insisted bars be put on all the windows, and taught Annika how to fire a gun and a rifle. After Blanche, their second daughter, was born in a Sumatran hospital in November of 1948, the family moved into a home of their own. They'd been told it was a safer neighborhood for the remaining Dutch.

Unfortunately, the fighting between the Dutch and the Indonesians continued. Muggings, break-ins, and worse plagued any Europeans living on the islands. One moonlit night after Phillip had left for another two weeks of maneuvers, Annika remained home alone with the children. Voices outside woke her from a sound sleep. The voices were close to the house, not just floating in from the street out front. Through a crack in her shuttered bedroom window, she saw a group of men enter their yard.

She checked on the children in the bedroom next to theirs. Justine lay curled in the crib, and their infant, Blanche, slept peacefully in her cradle—so sweet, so innocent, so vulnerable.

The rifle and handgun lay next to their bed. Annika hustled to the master bedroom, lifted the rifle from the floor and loaded in shells. The gun felt heavy in her hands, but it would surely scare the trespassers off. She stepped to the living room window and folded back the shutter. Bars protected

them, but those men could break down the door. The trespassers outside were not late-night revelers, they were discussing in Malay whether to bust in the door or pry open a window.

Annika stuck the rifle barrel between the metal bars, pulled back the lever, and racked a bullet into the chamber. "Stop where you are, or I'll shoot!" she yelled at them, and hoped they could see enough to know she meant business.

They laughed and continued toward her front door. One carried a stick of some type.

Her heart thundered in her chest. There were six of them, and they could easily find a way to get inside. Annika swallowed. "Any closer and I will shoot." The bottom of the open window sat low enough for her to use the kneeling position Phillip had shown her. She dropped to one knee, kept the other one bent, and cradled the gun's long barrel in her hand. She propped her elbow onto her bent knee for stability, placed the rifle's butt against her right shoulder, and pressed her cheek against the stock.

They kept walking, getting to within thirty feet of the house. Phillip had instructed her repeatedly to, "Aim for their balls." With that in mind, Annika sighted low on the first one's torso, took a breath, and squeezed the trigger. The recoil threw her back a few inches.

The man she'd targeted folded over and hugged his leg. "I'm hit!" he screamed in Malay.

“Yes!” Annika hissed. Close to where she’d aimed! But would it stop them? She racked another bullet. “The next shot will be to your chest!”

Three of the men ran to the road. Two of the thugs grabbed the injured man and dragged him out of the yard. Annika set the rifle on the ground. A baby cried from the bedroom. She rushed in and settled Justine back to sleep. “All is well, little one,” she cooed. But it wasn’t. A cold sweat broke out on her forehead.

Phillip returned the following day, heard the story, and moved them into his office on the military base.

A few weeks later at a gathering, Phillip shared the story with other officers. One of them asked, “Why do you leave Annika alone? Why haven’t you sent your family back to Holland?”

“Hell,” he said, “She can shoot better than many of my soldiers.” But he’d already put in a request to return to Holland.



My girls met Oudje just before we sailed for Holland ,
Saying goodbye was tough for us both.



These ships travelled between Java and Holland.

CHAPTER 5



APRIL 1949

*P*risoners occupied the hold in the lower part of the ship headed from Medan, Sumatra to Batavia, Java. While older Dutch women on board doted on her two girls, Annika volunteered as a nurse on the three-day voyage. Phillip coordinated handling the Dutch, Indo-European, and Indonesian military prisoners who had been found guilty and were being returned to a prison on Java. Phillip was very correct, helpful, and fair in his decisions on the ship. She'd heard the same from Pappie about Phillip's treatment of the other POWs.

Annika came out on deck and gazed across the foaming water. They'd been delayed by rough seas

and she'd be glad to be on land again. One more boat trip to Holland and they might finally live a normal life. In the two years they'd spent in Sumatra, she'd had Phillip at home, sporadically, maybe totaling three months' time. That was now in the past. In her future, she'd need to say tearful goodbyes.

After their boat arrived in Batavia, they had a two-day layover before their departure on the ship headed for Holland. Annika had written ahead and contacted her beloved nanny, Oudje, to arrange a visit. When Phillip checked in at the base, he'd found a Jeep she could use for the day. It was the same vintage as the vehicle she'd borrowed to retrieve her family jewelry from Mansion Annika. That was a story he wouldn't hear for a while.

Phillip secured Blanche in her bassinet on the floorboard, and strapped Justine into a padded box on the passenger seat. Annika drove slowly through town and avoided the dangerous areas Phillip had mentioned. Oudje still lived with her sister's family and their reunion took place at a small, secluded park. Both women knew that it could be the last time they saw one another. Oudje spread a blanket under a shady tree. Annika set the bassinet between them and found blocks for Justine to play with in her satchel. She watched Oudje slowly lower herself to the ground.

Justine plopped down beside the bassinet and

leaned her back against Oudje's knee, as if she sensed how safe and secure a place she'd found. The toddler looked up at Annika and flashed her bright smile.

Annika vowed to remember this moment forever. How wonderful it would be to have Oudje by her while she raised her children. She turned to Oudje. "Would you join us in Holland? There wouldn't be any work, only your wise counsel," she suggested, trying not to sound as needy as she felt. She held her breath, wishing with all her heart that her dear baboe would accompany her home.

Oudje blinked, and wiped tears from her dark eyes. "I knew you'd ask and I discussed it with my family. My niece has children who need my care. They all told me I'd die up north in the cold." She lifted Blanche from the bassinet.

Holland had brutal winters. A parrot flew overhead, and Annika followed its path across the bright blue sky. Oudje belonged on Java. "I understand." Her heart ached once more.

"You'll have your mother and father to dote on your babies." Oudje kissed Blanche's smooth forehead and inhaled. "Ahh. The smell of a baby is precious. Your children won't lack for loving attention." She gave Annika the comforting smile which had soothed her fears during untold childhood calamities. They chatted for another hour, but too soon their time together had come to an end.

Annika's chest tightened. Would she ever see her sweet-souled nanny again? "I'll never forget the loving care that you gave me," she kissed Oudje's smooth cheek. "I'll write you letters and send photos. And you know your house will be my first stop when we return to Batavia."

Oudje nodded, the skin around her eyes pinched in a pained expression. "I'm afraid it won't be safe for you to visit here for a long while." She stroked Justine's fine hair. "I'm relieved Phillip is taking you to Holland. The young fighters hate the Dutch. I hear their angry speeches at the market. It scared me to death to think of you alone in Sumatra. You were a brave girl to defend your home. I shared your letters with my family."

"We've all learned to survive, haven't we?" She hugged Oudje. "Please know there will always be a place for you in Holland, should you change your mind. I'm off to see the animals next. I'll give Newtnewt a banana for you."

Oudje helped her load the girls into the jeep. Annika climbed inside and leaned out to give her dear friend a final hug. They squeezed hands, both unable to speak. The jeep's engine rumbled to life, and she headed south while tears streamed down her cheeks.

Dr. Subroto's voice had sounded excited on the phone when she'd called to ask permission to visit her animals. Her pulse quickened as she turned onto

the lane that ended at his veterinary clinic. She glanced at her daughters. The baby slept, and Justine's head had flopped to the side while she took her late afternoon nap. Her darlings, her world.

Maggy and Penny grazed in a pasture. Noir stood on the other side of the fence, which separated them. Their coats were glossy and their body contours perfect. The barn had a fresh coat of paint, and a newer car sat in the drive, all indicators that Dr. Subroto's business had prospered. Regardless, she knew to keep the visit short, so as not to put him and his family in danger with the locals. She parked the jeep and jumped out.

A taller Mina ran out to meet them, smiling and confident. She carried Newt-newt on her shoulder and Foxy ambled beside her, his walk showing his advanced age. "Nonna Annika, we're so happy to see you," she called. "I take turns riding each of your horses. Maybe I'll enter a show someday." Delight shone on her pretty face.

Annika let out a long breath. Leaving her furry friends here was for the best. A long voyage would be hard on Foxy. Newt-newt wouldn't like the cold, either. And the horses, well, they deserved a girl truly devoted to them. "They belong to your family now, Mina. I hope you will send me photos. I know my animals love it here." With that, she said her goodbyes to her ponies, scratching noses and taking a deep, comforting smell of them. As Mina

approached, Maggy nickered again, greeting the girl as she'd just greeted Annika. All would be well.

While Annika's life continued in an unknown direction after she left the tropical climate, she knew her cherished pets would receive great care in familiar surroundings with a loving family.



A photo I still cherish, from when I first got Penny, my pony.



Servants always helped Rudy, Claude, and I when we went for rides on our first horses.



Not many girls can say that they had a mansion named after them!



Fun times with my brothers and cousins.
I was always the only girl.



Pappie loved his Willys Knight.



Would I ever see Java again?

CHAPTER 6



NOVEMBER 1950 AMSTERDAM, THE
NETHERLANDS

The second voyage from Batavia to Holland had gone as smoothly as the first. They'd settled into a tidy Dutch home and been blessed in February with another healthy daughter, Annelise. Even with help from two sets of grandparents, overseeing for the care of three small children kept Annika nearly as slim as when she'd been married at eighteen. She checked her watch. Today she'd arrived early at the train station to meet Phillip on his return from another overnight military session at the Netherlands'-Germany border. He'd been posted there along with dozens of other soldiers. It was estimated that over two-hundred-fifty thousand Dutch

nationals had repatriated back to Holland from Indonesia, many of them continuing their military careers.

A different train pulled in and Annika glanced at the departing passengers. Her mother's brother-in-law, a businessman, stepped off. Uncle Henk van Raayen was followed by an elegantly dressed, slim man. "Annika," her uncle called. "I'd like you to meet fashion designer Jacque Fath. He's come to Amsterdam to do a trunk show of his spring collection. He hob-knobs in Paris with Christian Dior." Her uncle's broad smile took over his round face.

Dior and Fath? She'd seen both those names in Mamma's fashion magazines. Annika smiled at the handsome man. Luckily, today she'd worn a suit Mamma had just sewn for her, a stylish hat, and her matching gloves. "Bon jour," she said to him in her best French.

Monsieur Fath greeted her politely, gave her an appraising glance, and walked toward a waiting Mercedes. She chatted a moment with her uncle, then spotted Phillip departing his train, and excused herself to meet him.

Later that evening, her uncle called and told her that Jacque was wondering if she would be interested in modeling at his upcoming show. Uncle Henk told her to look at the ad in the paper, placed in hopes of hiring local models. Jacque had

mentioned to him that she had the right figure to suit his clothes.

Annika found the advertisement and contacted the person in charge. The timing was right. Justine had contracted encephalitis, and through a contact of Rudy's, they'd been put in touch with Queen Juliana's pediatrician. The expense was tough on their family, even with Phillip having now achieved the rank of Captain in the Dutch Army. She'd earn as much modeling in the three day show as a secretary could earn in a year.

The following day, she arrived at the Victorian Hotel, was instantly hired, and soon found herself walking the runway between rows of tables draped with white linen tablecloths. Patrons seated elbow to elbow nibbled appetizers and drank fancy beverages while the models paraded in the beautiful garments. This collection was called Lily, and many of the skirts were created to resemble flowers. At the end of the third day, they allowed the models to keep some of the couture clothes. Annika kept a blue jacket and matching skirt, and a floral blouse.

While at the show, she met Marianna Löhle, a textile and clothing designer who sold her collections to stores in Holland, Belgium, and Germany. The two women hit it off, and Annika was invited to visit her business. The clothes were designed and manufactured in Holland, in a large commercial building. The

first floor held the office and showrooms for the clothing. The second-floor warehoused rows and rows of expensive bolts of fabric. A large third floor space hosted the seamstresses, who worked to cut and sew the clothes. Annika worked for Mevrouw Löhle for a few months, and then she offered a partnership to Annika. Her parents were thrilled to babysit all three girls if she wanted to work.

Phillip wasn't enthused, as she would've earned a sizeable income. "No wife of mine is going to make more money than me," he declared.

So, Annika modeled for Mevrouw Löhle but did not become a partner, as she knew it would have deflated Phillip's ego. During her time at the factory, she saw how much beautiful fabric was being thrown out from the ends of bolts. She suggested the seamstresses take note of the scrap yardage and type of fabric, then roll it into bundles. With the owner's approval, she put low prices on the fabric scraps. The seamstresses were excited to buy them to take home.

Annika purchased the warmer wool material to make suitable clothing so her children could play outside in Holland's cold winter weather. They wore the best clothes imaginable, due to Mamma's design and sewing skills. As did Annika. Her work for Mevrouw Löhle continued until someone showed Phillip photos of Annika modeling clothing in the Amsterdam paper.

The Netherlands had suffered extensive damage

during the war and, added to that, the government had repatriated over a quarter million people from the former Dutch East Indies, now independent Indonesia. With so many soldiers in the Dutch military, there wasn't much room for Phillip's advancement. Even though his military career had stalled, he felt strongly that an officer's wife shouldn't be featured in fashion show photos in the newspaper. And sadly, Annika knew that he was trying so hard to be a good provider so she wouldn't have to work. A man's ego could only take so much battering before depression hit. She wouldn't let that happen to her liefje.

Phillip's brother had emigrated from Holland to the United States and enjoyed working as an engineer for General Electric. Annika had grown up with big homes, servants, and yards. Phillip knew they wouldn't have that in Holland due to the limited military pay and not much else in other career opportunities.

As Phillip became more disenchanted, others – including the Allied soldiers he was stationed with while on duty – spoke to him of reasons to go to America. Annika hosted dinners to entertain a variety of the officers Phillip worked with. One of the American soldiers was a man named Alex, handsome, charming, and the son of a wealthy Chicago family. He spent many evenings with Phillip and Annika at their home.

One evening when Phillip, Alex and Annika were relaxing after dinner, Alex asked of Phillip, “Do you know why I like Annika so much?”

Phillip laughed. “Of course, because she treats you so nicely.”

“No,” Alex replied quietly. “Because she is so grateful for everything in her life.”

And Annika was. Phillip had survived the war along with all of her family. Oma Elodie would not have done well in Tjideng. Her death was a blessing. “Thank you, Alex. I truly do feel grateful for what I have in life.”

While Phillip was out of town, he visited Annika for a last time before he shipped out to the States. She left the children with Mamma and toured him around Amsterdam for the day. She made nothing of it, but assumed it was simply a friendly gesture to one of Phillip’s friends.

A few days later, in a phone conversation before Alex left London, he said to Phillip, “If you ever get tired of Annika, write me and I’ll come and bring her to America.”

Phillip told Annika his friend’s remark and chuckled. “How could he think he could ever rob me of my wife?”

He was correct. Her love for Phillip would never waiver, but still, Annika held her head a little higher the next day.

One night shortly after, Phillip asked Annika to

sit at the kitchen table. “Maybe the U.S. is a good option for us? My army friend, Robert, wrote and told me to come to the United States. I’ve been well-educated in mathematics and engineering. He’s in Seattle and thinks I could easily work for Boeing. He said I can make lots of money and we can have a big house.”

Annika smiled. During the war, she’d had many discussions with Major General Yamamoto Moichirō after she’d given him his daily shot of what must have been insulin. The general had painted a grand picture of America.

Annika sighed. She could relocate again. Times had certainly changed. If not for the war, she’d never have thought herself capable of surviving the horrors and challenges of Tjideng.

Phillip made arrangements to fly to the East Coast, never mentioning a visit to Alex in Chicago.

CHAPTER 7



1956 VERONA, NEW JERSEY

*A*t thirty-two, Annika left behind all her close family and their friends as she and Phillip arrived in American with four small children. They'd been blessed with a fourth child, a son named Gaspard, now the youngest and a toddler of two. Boeing wasn't hiring, so they opted to stay in New Jersey. Their American sponsors put them in touch with the Van Leer family and Annika became friends with their daughter. Mr. Van Leer had opened his chocolate factory on Christmas Day of 1949. He spoke with Phillip at a party and offered him a job as a salesman. To Annika, having access to premium chocolate was a dream come true. With Phillip's

quiet personality, sales was not his dream job, nor was their cramped housing.

The apartment they'd rented sat above a real estate office. A ball dropped on the slanted floor would roll downhill. The home they'd left in Holland had been much nicer. Phillip left Van Leer and began selling life insurance to other Dutch families in the area. It suited his personality better, but the severe winters and hot, humid summers didn't appeal to either of them. Annika worked part-time at the drug store across the street, keeping the window displays current and assisting the manager. In the evenings, she studied medical books in English from the library. She was determined to return to her nursing career as a licensed practitioner.

Another friend of Phillip's from the military insisted that the West Coast would be perfect for them and that Seattle had endless job possibilities. What was one more move?

CHAPTER 8



SEATTLE, WA FALL OF 1959

*P*hillip had taken young Gaspard and flown to Seattle, settled in, and then sent for Annika. With the help of a dear family friend, Annika packed the three girls in the car and with his assistance, they drove cross country. It took them a week, as there were no freeways or highways.

When they arrived, they found out there wouldn't be a job in engineering at Boeing for Phillip unless he got a degree. So much for trusting an overzealous friend without verifying the facts. While Phillip went to the University of Washington, Annika took classes at a hospital and then was tested in all the departments to be an RN. At the hiring interview, a director who'd read her experience nursing

on Java asked if she'd have a problem treating Japanese patients? Annika shook her head. "These are not the people who hurt me. Why would I ever feel that way?" She was hired and worked full-time as a nurse to support her family of six, while Phillip worked part-time and went to school.

Her nursing career continued full time until she was sixty-seven and part time until she was seventy. In the large home they bought on Myers Way, she had a ballet bar installed in a downstairs bonus room and taught ballet. She only retired from nursing due to Phillip's health issues. Her last position was as the head nurse on a floor of Standring Memorial Hospital.

CHAPTER 9



SEATTLE 1990

Boeing hired Phillip and he spent the remainder of his career as an engineer there. He realized his dream to finally become a pilot after he'd retired from Boeing. Annika was a bit nervous to fly with him, as he was eight years older, and he suffered from diabetes and high blood pressure.

Every time he'd prepare to leave for Boeing Field, where the planes were kept, he would ask Annika, "Come on, come and fly."

Annika would shake her head. "No, I can't bring you down if you become sick, and you're so much older." This went on for six months. On her days off, she went to the Blue Max restaurant on Boeing

Field and took a seat where she could watch him take off and land the plane he used from the Boeing Flight Club. Pilots went in and out of a nearby building. After Phillip went up one day, she ventured into the building and met Phillip's instructor, Doug McDonald, a former WWII fighter pilot in England. A plan to fly with Phillip resonated in her mind. "Hey Doug, I'm a nurse, and I have free hours during the day. Can you teach me to fly?" she asked.

"Yes, and as long as you only want your Powder Puff license, it won't cost you much. The difference is that you are learning from an instructor, instead of going to a school for pilots." He told her to attend ground school classes at South Seattle College.

Annika enrolled in the flight classes and fibbed to Phillip that she was taking extra nursing classes to keep up. When she'd finished the courses, she prearranged everything needed for her surprise. She caught Phillip before he left for his typical Thursday trip to Boeing Field, "I'd like to fly with you today, but first I'll want you to tell me all about piloting the airplane."

"Of course." He gave her his movie star smile. "I'd expect no less from my curious meisje, my spunky little girl."

They arrived at the airport on a glorious sunny afternoon. Would her plan work? Annika asked him about all the pre-flight things one needed to do as

they approached the plane, and then she opened the pilot's door.

"Annika, you'll be sitting next to me, on the other side," Phillip said.

"Oh, I'm only going to take a close look. Why don't you go in the passenger seat and explain more to me?" She closed the door and he hopped in the passenger seat.

Phillip complied and began, "You have to let the control tower know what you are going to do."

Doug, the instructor, was aware of the plan. Annika used the radio to alert the tower they were preparing to leave, started the plane, pulled the throttle, and off they went.

Phillip screamed, "What are you doing? What are you doing?"

"Calm down. I've got my Powder Puff license," Annika announced proudly.

Phillip wouldn't talk to her for a few minutes. She flew them away from Boeing Field and headed West over the rippling water of Puget Sound.

Phillip cleared his throat and wiped moisture from his eyes, "This is the most romantic day in my life, that you would do this to spend time with me." His voice was choked with emotion.

"There's no one I'd rather be with. I've known that from first glance." Annika looked out at blue sky and the Olympic Mountains, knowing the dreams of her lovestruck, fifteen-and-a-half-year-old self all had

come true. On her right hand she wore the heavy gold signet ring etched with the de Fisicat family crest, and on her left hand, her wedding set. Because of how she'd been raised, she'd embraced her nursing training as a teenager and survived World War II, then blossomed into a woman who continued to hold the attention of her handsome Phillip, the love of her life.

Phillip squeezed her hand. A bright world lay ahead of them.

His faithful love kept her heart flying during their sixty-one years of marriage.

AFTERWORD

A final note from the author.

This completes the story of Phillip and Annika. My beta readers insisted they needed to know what else my friend, Iris, had encountered in her life. How she faced challenges and opportunities still amazes me, and how she evolved, from, in her terms, “a spoilt girl.” I wrote the story from her viewpoint, and because I never heard Iris use derogatory terms regarding her Japanese captors, I did not have Annika voice those terms in the story. As an RN in Seattle, I feel certain that Iris treated a diverse group of patients with care and respect.

If you haven't yet reviewed the book on Amazon, BookBub, or Goodreads, I truly hope you will. Reviews inspire writers to continue crafting stories and puts your favorite tales in front of a wider audience.

AFTERWORD

Warm regards,
Sally Brandle

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