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SECRETS AND SLIPPERS

By

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It was 1962 at the Academy Awards. Actress Audrey Hepburn held her breath. The host opened the envelope to read the winner for Best Actress in a movie. "Miss Audrey Hepburn for Roman Holiday," he announced.

Applause filled the theater as the actress walked up to receive her award. "I'm truly, truly grateful," she said, "and terribly happy."

The famous star felt blessed. It seemed like just yesterday that she was a girl in the middle of a war. Though glamour and excitement now filled her life, she never forgot what she had seen and heard.

Audrey had her eleventh birthday on May 4, 1940. Yet her best present came five days later when she watched her favorite ballerina, Margo Fonteyn, dance.

Audrey loved dancing. It soothed her. When her father left the family six years earlier, her heart had broken. Then she took dancing lessons at her boarding school in England and discovered something. When she danced, she forgot sad things for a while. Now she was back home in Arnhem, Holland and she longed to take lessons again.

Audrey couldn't take her eyes off Fonteyn as she soared across the stage. After the performance, Audrey presented tulips and roses to the star and told her she wanted to be a ballerina too. "It's what I dream about every night," she said. Audrey's heart filled with purpose. Around her though, the adults talked in worried whispers. They said war was coming to Arnhem.

The Second World War had started the year before. Adolf Hitler was the Chancellor of Germany. His Nazi soldiers had already conquered four countries and Hitler wanted to rule all of Europe. Three hours after Fonteyn's performance ended, the Germans attacked Holland. The next morning, Audrey and her big brothers, Alex and Ian, peeked out the shutters of their home. Like a sea of gray, trucks and troops swept through the streets and took over Arnhem.

Inside, Audrey danced and pushed away her fright. Outside, everything changed. Nazi flags unfurled over schools. Dutch books were thrown away. Students had to learn German and they could only read books that praised Hitler. Bicycles had once filled Arnhem's streets. Now tanks rumbled by, spewing exhaust onto the flower boxes.