

# ANGELS *of the* RESISTANCE

A NOVEL



**READERS'  
GUIDE**



USA TODAY Bestselling Author of *THE FLIGHT GIRLS*

**NOELLE SALAZAR**

# ANGELS OF THE RESISTANCE

A NOTE FROM NOELLE SALAZAR

Dear Reader,

Every once in a while, you hear a story so intriguing your brain lights on fire. This is what happened when I learned of the Oversteegen sisters. I read a tiny online article a few paragraphs long and had to know more. Who were these girls? Why did they choose to help in the Dutch resistance effort in WWII? What was it like to do these terrifying jobs that would most certainly get them killed if caught? How did it alter them?

Freddie and Truus Oversteegen were the daughters of a single mother living in the small town of Haarlem on the west coast of The Netherlands. At fourteen and sixteen, they decided to risk their lives for their country and join the Resistance against their Nazi oppressors.

Their jobs started small, mainly consisting of distributing illegal newspapers, but eventually included forging documents, delivering weapons, and sabotage. Tensions rose as Germany, who'd once considered their Dutch neighbors to be part of their superior Aryan race, began imposing the same restrictions they'd placed on other countries. The girls took shooting lessons. Later, disguised as "Moffen girls," a derogatory word for women who got involved with Nazi soldiers, they led high-ranking Nazi officers and Dutch collaborators into the forest where they shot and killed them.

I was inspired by these young women and the huge risks they took. Especially as all around them friends and neighbors were harassed, attacked, killed in the streets, or loaded on trucks and trains to be shipped off to the nightmarish concentration camps. I was moved by their bravery, and knew I wanted to tell their story in whatever way I could.





After reading everything I could find on the Oversteegen sisters, I needed to see the town where they lived and worked to get a sense of their surroundings. The sounds and smells. What they might've seen in their daily lives as they walked down the cobblestone streets. How narrow were the alleys? How dark were they at night? How did the bell of the great church echo through the town? And so, in January 2020, I traveled 4,582 miles from Seattle to Haarlem.

The first thing I noticed when I stepped off the train was the distinct Dutch architecture. The beautiful, narrow, tilting houses with their brick facades, ornate gables, steep roofs, and large windows. There were bicycles. So. Many. Bicycles. Single riders. Double. Teenagers giving rides to other teenagers on handlebars. Fathers with a steady hand on their young children's backs. Mothers steering babies bundled against the cold in open wood boxes attached to their bikes.

Winter there is cold. The wind off the North Sea cuts through your layers to deliver its bite. The screeches of the gulls overhead pierce like darts, the sound startling as it knifes through the quiet.

Silence lies like a blanket over Haarlem, insulating the town and its people. It is in this peaceful setting that the story in my mind shifted from the Oversteegens' history, to the fictional Vinke sisters' story and the adventures I imagined for them.

As I walked the streets and stared up at the buildings, passed through the historic center of the city and the Grote Markt (Great Market), threaded through darkened alleyways, and meandered through Haarlemmerhout Park... I could see them. Lien and Elif Vinke. A pair of young girls. Sisters. Loosely inspired by two daring, courageous, and real young ladies.



They walked with me and their story took shape. I picked a house for them to live in, a corner shop to visit, alleys to race down, and trees to hide behind, their guns concealed in pockets and waistbands. And that quiet. It seeped into my skin, providing me, and them, with a false calm before the storm. I could feel their fear as the air vibrated with planes thundering overhead and the earth rocked below them, ravaged by bombs. The strike of soldiers' boots on the cobblestones. The frightening sound of tanks rolling down streets, rattling windows and bringing children to tears. This beautiful, stark town—a haven of brightly colored tulips and a happy people—reduced to a shadow of what it had been.

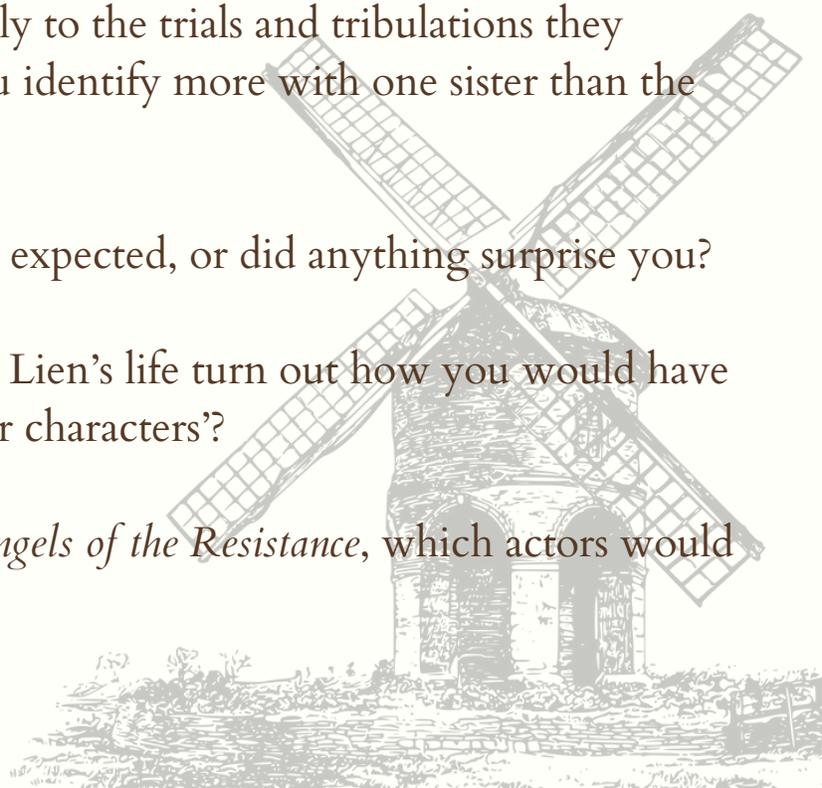
I was struck by the decisions these girls would have to face. What would they do to survive? Would they hide, collaborate, or even flee? Would they take up arms, and meet the invaders with equal force? My mind lit up with the possibilities. I now needed to find out.

As I once found myself moved by the bravery and pure moxie of the Oversteegen sisters, I hope this fictional story of two imagined young women motivates you to look into the women who inspired it. I hope that it brings you comfort, realizing the possibilities of human courage in our darkest hour.

**Noelle Salazar**

# QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1.This novel explores some of the unseen but important “ordinary heroes” during World War II. How else did ordinary people help in the war effort?
- 2.Did you learn anything new about World War II from this story?
- 3.Did you have a favorite character in this novel? If so, who was it and why?
- 4.Lien has many great examples of strong, educated women in her life, from her own mother to Mrs. Aberman to Mrs. Vox. How do you think her exposure to these women has helped shape her character?
- 5.How have the loss of her father and younger sister shaped Lien’s character at the beginning of the story? How do her experiences throughout the novel shape her further?
- 6.Lien wishes to help in the Resistance effort, finagling her way into dangerous assignments. What did you think of her tenacity? Was it brave or foolish?
- 7.How do Lien and Elif respond differently to the trials and tribulations they experience throughout the story? Did you identify more with one sister than the other? Which one, and why?
- 8.Did the story unfold as you would have expected, or did anything surprise you?
- 9.What did you think of the ending? Did Lien’s life turn out how you would have hoped after the war? How about the other characters’?
- 10.If you were to make a movie out of *Angels of the Resistance*, which actors would you cast?





# A CONVERSATION WITH THE AUTHOR



## **What inspired you to write ANGELS OF THE RESISTANCE?**

I love reading stories about women during WWII. The Oversteegen sisters were especially intriguing to me because of the nature of the jobs they did, and at such young and impressionable ages. How terrifying it must have been to make the kinds of choices they did. How brave. And while this isn't their story, it is certainly inspired by the work they did, their tenacity, determination, and love of their country and countrymen.

## **This is your second novel. What were the major differences between writing your debut, THE FLIGHT GIRLS, and this one?**

The biggest difference was time. I had all the time in the world to write my first novel. Book two was bought as a proposal, which came with a deadline—and was written during a pandemic. (Not—ahem—highly recommended if one has the choice.) The lovely part of writing a second novel is the lessons you learned from the first. It wasn't easier. If anything, it was harder. But I had experience under my belt. I knew the process. I caught mistakes quicker. I knew story structure better. And I had confidence. I'd done it before. I could do it again.

## **What's the question you get asked most by readers? What's your response?**

Where do I get my stories. When it comes to historical fiction, I am inspired by real human stories. For *The Flight Girls* I found a short but sweet book on the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) and was smitten with the anecdotes of their time serving. For *Angels of the Resistance* I was sent an article about the Oversteegen sisters. For a 1920s jazz era book I'm working on, it was my own family's early Seattle log boom beginnings that caused a story to develop. As far as other genres I one day hope to delve into, a lot of those ideas come from a scene in my life. A terrible breakup. A young girl quietly following my son around a candy shop. A young woman coming into her own.

## **What was the most enjoyable part of writing this novel? The most challenging?**

I loved getting to know who Lien was and exploring her relationship with her sister and mother. The most challenging part was trying to decide what I wanted to include in the story. How to keep it somewhat true to what the Oversteegen sisters experienced. This is not meant to be a true telling of their time working for the Resistance, merely a story inspired by them. There are some similarities between their story and this one, and many differences. They did live in Harlem. It was just the two of them and their mother. And there was a redheaded girl. Hannie Schaft worked with the Oversteegen sisters and was caught and executed in the dunes days before The Netherlands was liberated.



# A CONVERSATION WITH THE AUTHOR



**Haarlem plays such a huge role in this novel, and really comes alive on the page.**

**Have you ever traveled to Haarlem? What can you tell us about it?**

I had the good fortune to travel to Haarlem in early 2020 (right before the pandemic began). Haarlem is a small and beautiful town near the North Sea in The Netherlands. It is quiet. Winter is bitterly cold (I wore three layers every time I went out). The people are lovely. There are bicycles absolutely everywhere you look. Good food, the sound of the church bell, the startling screech of the seagulls, that amazing Dutch architecture. There is a simplicity to the area. An elegance and gentleness. Three days there wasn't nearly enough, and in winter, there were no tulips to be seen. I should probably go back...

**Do you have a favorite scene or passage in the book? What is it and why?**

I love the scene where Lien shows up at target practice. I love her defiance, determination, and confidence in her own skill. I am also completely in love with the entire epilogue. Full circle moments slay me every time.

**What kinds of books do you most enjoy reading?**

There is no one particular genre I like over another. What I love is to be entertained. Torn apart and put back together again. I love to laugh and cry and get furious at an author for the emotional roller coaster they put me on. I love a good rom-com with characters that remind me of my own friends. I like suspense that fools me all the way until the end. A good sci-fi with amazing action scenes. Fantasy with a world I want to travel to and amazing characters I can't forget. Vampires. Nostalgia. Talking foxes... If a book makes me laugh AND cry—I will buy whatever that author writes next.

**If you could give aspiring authors one piece of advice, what would it be?**

Write. Everything. Down. Writers are collectors of life's most minute details. The way a person walks, the way the air smells, the light as a storm comes in. Notice these things, put words to them, write them down. I am constantly hearing book titles in conversations. I collect names I see or hear. I have scenes develop in my mind during movies, while driving, or as I fold the laundry. I write them all down. A scene I imagined many years ago, that had no place in any other book idea I've had, found its place in *Angels of the Resistance*. I had no idea if it would ever go anywhere—and then as I came to the terrible Diederik scene, I realized I'd already written his outcome. Write everything down.

**Can you tell us anything about what you're working on next?**

I am currently working on three different projects. A historical fiction set in 1920s jazz era Seattle. A women's fiction book I started with a friend that tells the story of two best friends and a spectacular house. And a YA I have dreamt of writing for nine years and am finally getting to see come to life on the page. I'm incredibly excited for all three.

# PHOTOS FROM THE AUTHOR

## HAARLEM, NETHERLANDS





## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

NOELLE SALAZAR was born and raised in the Pacific Northwest, where she's been a Navy recruit, a medical assistant, an NFL cheerleader, and always a storyteller. When she's not writing, she can be found dodging raindrops and daydreaming of her next book. Noelle lives in Bothell, Washington, with her family. Her debut, *The Flight Girls*, became an instant bestseller. *Angels of the Resistance* is her second novel.