



Across Great Divides

Monique Roy

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Across Great Divides is a timeless story of the upheavals of war, the power of family, and the resiliency of human spirit. When Hitler came to power in 1933, one Jewish family refused to be destroyed and defied the Nazis only to come up against another struggle—confronting apartheid in South Africa.

Sixteen-year-old Eva and her twin sister, Inge, witness their lives in Berlin change before their eyes. Their best friend, Trudy, betrays them when she becomes a member of the Hitler Youth. A valuable family heirloom, a beautiful emerald and diamond pendant necklace, is confiscated by the Nazis as they continue to harass Jewish families and businesses.

Their younger brother, Max, a member of the underground resistance, sees even greater danger ahead. Their father, Oskar, a diamond merchant with a thriving business, refuses to leave his beloved Germany and believes Hitler will eventually fail. Their mother, Helene, the elegant matriarch of the family, holds her family together.

The family is conflicted whether they should leave home. But after the devastation of Kristallnacht in 1938, they finally flee Germany with the help of the underground resistance after hiding many diamonds. They seek refuge in Antwerp, but war follows them as Belgium is occupied by the Germans.

A young German man, a nun, a countess conspiring against the Nazis, and a winegrower secretly hiding Jewish children, help them to escape Europe. They hike over the Pyrenees Mountains while eluding German patrols and Spanish informers. Then, they spend agonizing days on a ship bound for Rio de Janeiro that is targeted by a German U-boat. As Rio's diamond business is corrupt, they decide to go to South Africa, another diamond market.

In Cape Town, Eva encounters an impoverished colored woman, Zoe, who is in need of work. The family hires Zoe as their maid and shields her and her daughter, Zola, from the dangers they face in the slums of District Six and from the horrors of apartheid, which are all too reminiscent of Nazi Germany.

But, when Max gets into trouble with the South African police over his participation in an anti-apartheid march, will he be subject to imprisonment?

In a thrilling conclusion, the family comes to terms with the evils of society, both in their memories and current situation in South Africa.

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