

Adventures in  
**ODYSSEY**

FOCUS ON THE FAMILY PRESENTS

**31**

# THE **IMAGINATION STATION**



## **Big Risks in Russia**

MARIANNE HERING

OVER 1 MILLION SOLD IN SERIES



# ***Big Risks in Russia***

**BOOK 31**

**MARIANNE HERING  
ILLUSTRATIONS BY SERGIO CARIELLO**

**FOCUS  
ON THE FAMILY®**

*A Focus on the Family resource  
published by Tyndale House Publishers*

To Jeff and Jeana Kendrick—obedient to  
their calling as smugglers and missionaries  
in Eastern Europe and the USSR. –M.H.

Also in memory of “God’s Smuggler,”  
Brother Andrew (1928–2022).

---

*Big Risks in Russia*

Copyright © 2024 by Focus on the Family. All rights reserved.

A Focus on the Family book published by Tyndale House Publishers,  
Carol Stream, Illinois 60188

*The Imagination Station*, *Adventures in Odyssey*, and *Focus on the Family*, and  
the accompanying logos and designs, are federally registered trademarks of  
Focus on the Family, 8605 Explorer Drive, Colorado Springs, CO 80920.

*Tyndale* and Tyndale’s quill logo are registered trademarks of Tyndale House  
Ministries.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or  
transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy,  
recording, or otherwise—without prior written permission of Focus on the  
Family.

Cover design by Michael Heath

Cover and main interior illustrations by Sergio Cariello; additional spot  
illustrations from Shutterstock and Adobe Stock

Photos of author and illustrator courtesy of Marianne Hering and Sergio Cariello

Scripture taken from the Holy Bible, *New International Reader’s Version*,<sup>®</sup>  
*NIrV*.<sup>®</sup> Copyright © 1995, 1996, 1998, 2014 by Biblica, Inc.<sup>®</sup> Used by  
permission. All rights reserved worldwide. Some additional Bible verses used  
within the story have been adapted from the *Holy Bible*, King James Version.

With the exception of known historical figures, all characters are the product  
of the author’s imagination.

For manufacturing information regarding this product, please call  
1-855-277-9400.

For information about special discounts for bulk purchases, please contact  
Tyndale House Publishers at [csresponse@tyndale.com](mailto:csresponse@tyndale.com), or call 1-855-277-9400.

ISBN 978-1-64607-117-3

Printed in China

30 29 28 27 26 25 24  
7 6 5 4 3 2 1



# ***Contents***

●	Prologue	v
1	The VW Bus	1
2	Pastor Lars Spens	10
3	The Money Belt	26
4	Matzo Bread	34
5	The Lecture	46
6	The Russian Bible	57
7	The KGB Escort	70
8	The Inspection	77
9	The Daffodils	85
10	Amelia	98
11	Agent John Whittaker	107
12	St. Basil's Museum	120
13	Amelia Again	128
14	4 Gorky Street	141
15	The Handoff	150
16	The Police Station	163
17	The Cave Again	176
	Secret Word Puzzle	183





# ***Prologue***



The Imagination Station was invented by a kind, older gentleman named John Avery Whittaker. Whit has built several different Imagination Stations. One looked a little like a helicopter cockpit. Another was built around an old Model T automobile. Whit loaned the Model T machine to the government.

In their last adventure in the Imagination

## ***BIG RISKS IN RUSSIA***

Station, cousins Patrick and Beth visited the time of Noah's ark. They helped Noah's family care for the animals and prepare the ark for the coming rains. A government agent named Amelia Darling followed them into the adventure using the Model T machine. Amelia had developed technology that linked the different Imagination Stations together using remote controllers.

Here's what you need to know:

- Amelia doesn't really have good moral judgment. She causes all kinds of trouble wherever she goes.
- The cousins have one of Amelia's remote controllers for the Imagination Stations.
- The cousins want to find out why Amelia linked the two machines together and why she has been following them.

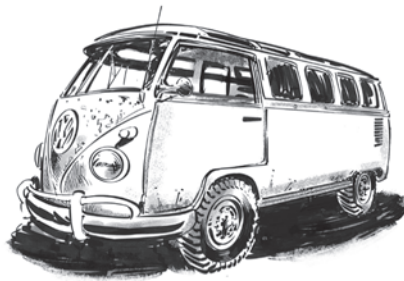
## ***Prologue***

- Whit suggested that the cousins follow Amelia on their next adventure. That way, they can find out what she is planning and try to stop her if she is causing more trouble.





## ***The VW Bus***



Patrick slammed open the school's exit door. He raced toward the soccer field, dribbling a black-and-white ball with his feet. His backpack bounced against his ribcage. He was excited to play soccer with his friends after school. Suddenly, he heard a familiar voice behind him.

Patrick stopped in mid-dribble and turned around.

## ***BIG RISKS IN RUSSIA***

“Patrick!” Beth hurried toward him, waving something in her hand. “We have to go to Whit’s End right away.”

“Why?” Patrick asked.

“Amelia Darling is using the Model T Imagination Station,” Beth said. “We’re supposed to use the remote controller to follow her in the other machine.”

Beth showed Patrick the remote. “It’s blinking.”

“I think that means Amelia is on the move!” Patrick said. “Let’s get to Whit’s End.”

The cousins ran four blocks, passing Odyssey’s town library and the big park on the way. They came to the door of Whit’s End and slowed down.

Beth opened the door, and the bell above it jingled.

Patrick stepped inside and smelled the wonderful food being served in the soda shop.

## *The VW Bus*

He wished they had time for a root beer float or a chocolate soda. He waved to Connie Kendall, who was working the cash register. The two cousins turned away from the soda shop and headed down the stairs.

Down in Whit's workshop, Beth called out, "Mr. Whittaker! Are you here?"

There was no answer. The inventor didn't seem to be there. But they could see the Imagination Station sitting in the middle of the room. It was humming. It sounded like it was ready to go. Patrick rushed to the machine.

He noticed a small keyboard had been installed on the dashboard. Also, there was a new light on it. The light was blinking green. The label below read *Amelia*.

Beth looked inside the machine too. "Hey! What's this on the seat?" She reached in and held up a folded piece of paper.

## **BIG RISKS IN RUSSIA**

“Read it and find out.” Patrick climbed in the machine and buckled his seat belt.

Beth buckled in too. “It looks like Whit’s handwriting.” She read the note:

*To follow Amelia, push the green button on the remote three times. On the third push, push the red button on the dashboard. You’ll follow Amelia to see what she’s up to. Along the way, you’ll meet one of my friends. Help him if you can. And remember to do things the Royal Way.*

Beth looked at Patrick. “The Royal Way?”

Patrick shrugged. “Maybe we’re going to meet a royal family?”

Beth held the remote in her right hand. “One,” she said and pushed the green button.

Patrick put his hand over the red button on the dashboard.

“Two,” Beth said, pressing the button. “And . . . three.” Beth pushed the button once

## *The VW Bus*

more. Patrick's palm pressed down on the red dashboard button at the same time.

The machine tilted and whirled. Patrick felt as if he were free-falling from an airplane. His stomach lurched. His head spun.

Then everything went black.



The cousins climbed out of the Imagination Station. A crisp breeze swept over them. Beth felt a shiver and hugged herself to keep warm.

That's when she noticed her clothes. She wore a pink and navy-blue plaid blazer along with a navy-blue skirt. Her penny-loafer shoes were also navy blue. She felt her head and pulled off a navy-blue beret.

Patrick's clothes had a similar color pattern. His navy-blue blazer had two rows of gold buttons. A pink handkerchief was tucked into

## ***BIG RISKS IN RUSSIA***

his breast pocket. The rest of his clothes—pants, turtleneck, and shoes—were bright white.

Beth thought the word *snazzy* described their outfits. She put her beret back on.

“We’re in the sixties,” Beth said. “The clothes say it all.”

“But *where* in the sixties?” Patrick asked.

Beth looked around. They were standing on the side of a wide dirt road. The road’s shoulder sloped steeply toward a lush landscape. Evergreens and cedars covered rolling hills.

“The grass is returning,” Beth said. “And the flowers are sprouting leaves. It’s spring!”

Suddenly an orange van came over the top of a hill. The engine’s roar startled a flock of crows. They flew off to rest in a nearby evergreen tree.

## *The VW Bus*

“Maybe this van is part of the adventure.” Patrick moved closer to the road. “I’ll flag it down.”

“Okay,” Beth said. “Nothing here except countryside. And Amelia isn’t the type to stick around here. Maybe this is Mr. Whittaker’s friend?”

Patrick stepped to the middle of the road. He waved his arms above his head.

The van slowed and then stopped. Patrick recognized the vehicle as a classic Volkswagen van.

A tall man stepped out of the boxy vehicle. His hair and skin were pale as milk. He looked at the cousins and grinned. “Hello,” he said. “I’m Swedish, but I speak English. Or perhaps you know German?”

“English,” Patrick said. “Though Beth’s grammar is better.”

Beth smiled at the compliment.

## **BIG RISKS IN RUSSIA**

“Let me guess,” the man said. A smile tugged at his bottom lip. “Are you children of aristocrats hiding from the communists?”

Beth knew that communists had a very different type of government than the United States did. And the word *aristocrat* gave Beth images of rich people in Europe. Lords and duchesses. People born wealthy and powerful. *Snooty*, she thought.

“Well,” Beth said, “I do think my parents dislike communism. But we aren’t rich.”

The man laughed. “You’re certainly not ‘of the workers,’” he said. “How did you afford those snazzy clothes?”

*Snazzy*. Beth smiled. She’d been exactly right about their look.

Patrick frowned. “Well, I *am* kind of a worker,” he said. “I deliver newspapers on the weekends.”

“Hmm,” the man said. He seemed lost in

## ***The VW Bus***

thought. Then he leaned over and whispered as if he didn't want the crows to hear him.

“How would you two like to deliver *Bibles* instead?”