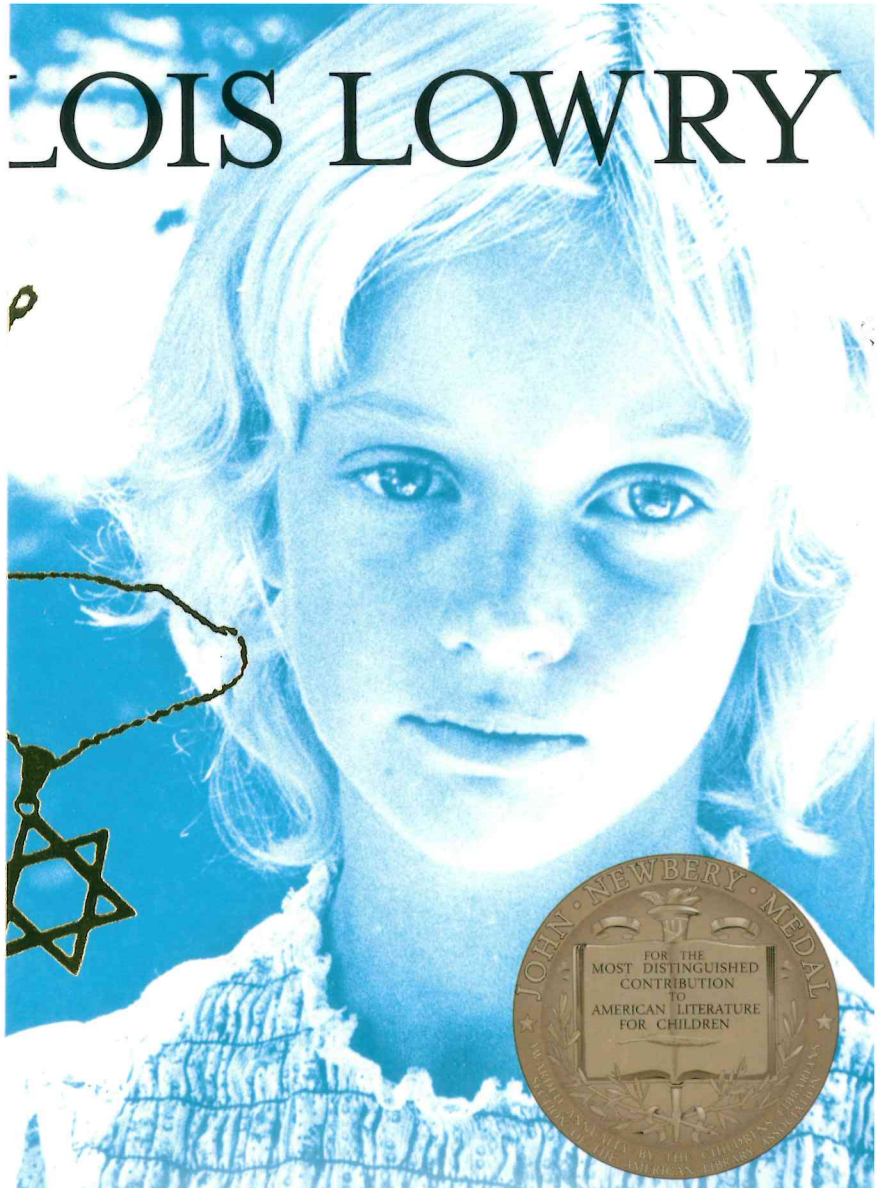
LOIS LOWRY



Number the Stars

With a new introduction by the author

Number the Stars

LOIS LOWRY

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INTRODUCTION

It's hard to believe that I wrote *Number the Stars* more than twenty years ago. It seems like yesterday that I answered the phone on a snowy January morning and received the news that it had been awarded the 1990 Newbery Medal.

Most books published that long ago have faded into a pleasant, undisturbed retirement on dusty library shelves, or become an occasional topic for a research paper. But *Number the Stars* seems to have acquired its own long and vibrant life; not a day goes by that I don't hear from a passionate reader of the book—some of them parents who remember it from their childhood and are now reading it with their own children.

I think readers of every age match themselves against the protagonists of books they love. *Would I have done that?* they ask themselves as they follow a fictional character through a novel. *What choice would I have made?*

And ten—the age of Annemarie in *Number the Stars,* and the approximate age of most of the book's readers—is an age when young people are beginning to develop a strong set of

personal ethics. They want to be honorable people. They want to do the right thing. And they are beginning to realize that the world they live in is a place where the right thing is often hard, sometimes dangerous, and frequently unpopular.

So they follow a story about a girl their age, caught in a frightening situation, who must make decisions. She could take the easy way out. She could turn her back on her friend. (As the readers of *Number the Stars* grow older and read other Holocaust literature, they'll find that many people in other countries, not Denmark, did just that). Young readers rejoice when Annemarie takes a deep breath, enters the woods, faces the danger, stands up to the enemy, and triumphs.

When the book was newly published, it found its way into the hands and hearts of children who had read about but never experienced war. Now, sadly, I have heard from young readers who have lost a parent or an older brother in Iraq or Afghanistan. We all know how easy it is, and how futile, to blame and to hate.

I think the history of Denmark has much to teach us all.

The book has been published in many countries now, translated into countless different languages from Hungarian to Hebrew. Everywhere children are still reading about the integrity that a small Scandinavian population showed almost seventy years ago. Books do change lives, I know; and many readers have told me that *Number the Stars* changed theirs when they were young, that it made them think about both cruelty and courage. "It was something that shaped my idea of how people should be treated," wrote a young woman recent-

ly, recalling her own fourth grade experience with the book.

The Danish friend who originally told me the story of her childhood in Copenhagen in 1943, and who became the prototype for the fictional Annemarie, is an old woman now. So am I. We both love thinking of the children reading the story today, coming to it for the first time and realizing that once, for a brief time and in a small place, a group of prejudice-free people honored the humanity of others.

Lois Lowry

1
Why Are You Running?

"I'll race you to the corner, Ellen!" Annemarie adjusted the thick leather pack on her back so that her schoolbooks balanced evenly. "Ready?" She looked at her best friend.

Ellen made a face. "No," she said, laughing. "You know I can't beat you — my legs aren't as long. Can't we just walk, like civilized people?" She was a stocky ten-year-old, unlike lanky Annemarie.

"We have to practice for the athletic meet on Friday — I *know* I'm going to win the girls' race this week. I was second last week, but I've been practicing every day. Come on, Ellen," Annemarie pleaded, eyeing the distance to the next corner of the Copenhagen street. "Please?"

Ellen hesitated, then nodded and shifted her own rucksack of books against her shoulders. "Oh, all right. Ready," she said.

"Go!" shouted Annemarie, and the two girls were off, racing along the residential sidewalk. Annemarie's silvery blond hair flew behind her, and Ellen's dark pigtails bounced against her shoulders.

"Wait for me!" wailed little Kirsti, left behind, but the two older girls weren't listening.

Annemarie outdistanced her friend quickly, even though one of her shoes came untied as she sped along the street called Østerbrogade, past the small shops and cafés of her neighborhood here in northeast Copenhagen. Laughing, she skirted an elderly lady in black who carried a shopping bag made of string. A young woman pushing a baby in a carriage moved aside to make way. The corner was just ahead.

Annemarie looked up, panting, just as she reached the corner. Her laughter stopped. Her heart seemed to skip a beat.

"*Halte!*" the soldier ordered in a stern voice.

The German word was as familiar as it was frightening. Annemarie had heard it often enough before, but it had never been directed at her until now.

Behind her, Ellen also slowed and stopped. Far back, little Kirsti was plodding along, her face in a pout because the girls hadn't waited for her.

Annemarie stared up. There were two of them. That meant two helmets, two sets of cold eyes glaring at her, and four tall shiny boots planted firmly on the sidewalk, blocking her path to home.

And it meant two rifles, gripped in the hands of the soldiers. She stared at the rifles first. Then, finally, she looked into the face of the soldier who had ordered her to halt.

"Why are you running?" the harsh voice asked. His Danish was very poor. Three years, Annemarie thought with contempt. Three years they've been in our country, and still they can't speak our language.

"I was racing with my friend," she answered politely. "We have races at school every Friday, and I want to do well, so I —" Her voice trailed away, the sentence unfinished. Don't talk so much, she told herself. Just answer them, that's all.

She glanced back. Ellen was motionless on the sidewalk, a few yards behind her. Farther back, Kirsti was still sulking, and walking slowly toward the corner. Nearby, a woman had come to the doorway of a shop and was standing silently, watching.

One of the soldiers, the taller one, moved toward her. Annemarie recognized him as the one she and Ellen always called, in whispers, "the Giraffe" because of his height and the long neck that extended from his stiff collar. He and his partner were always on this corner.

He prodded the corner of her backpack with the stock of his rifle. Annemarie trembled. "What is in here?" he asked loudly. From the corner of her eye, she saw the shopkeeper move quietly back into the shadows of the doorway, out of sight.

"Schoolbooks," she answered truthfully.

"Are you a good student?" the soldier asked. He seemed to be sneering.

"Yes."

"What is your name?"

"Annemarie Johansen."

"Your friend — is she a good student, too?" He was looking beyond her, at Ellen, who hadn't moved.

Annemarie looked back, too, and saw that Ellen's face, usually rosy-cheeked, was pale, and her dark eyes were wide.

She nodded at the soldier. "Better than me," she said.

"What is her name?"

"Ellen."

"And who is this?" he asked, looking to Annemarie's side. Kirsti had appeared there suddenly, scowling at everyone.

"My little sister." She reached down for Kirsti's hand, but Kirsti, always stubborn, refused it and put her hands on her hips defiantly.

The soldier reached down and stroked her little sister's short, tangled curls. Stand still, Kirsti, Annemarie ordered silently, praying that somehow the obstinate five-year-old would receive the message.

But Kirsti reached up and pushed the soldier's hand away. *"Don't,"* she said loudly.

Both soldiers began to laugh. They spoke to each other in rapid German that Annemarie couldn't understand.

"She is pretty, like my own little girl," the tall one said in a more pleasant voice.

Annemarie tried to smile politely.

"Go home, all of you. Go study your schoolbooks. And don't run. You look like hoodlums when you run."

The two soldiers turned away. Quickly Annemarie reached down again and grabbed her sister's hand before Kirsti could resist. Hurrying the little girl along, she rounded the corner. In a moment Ellen was beside her. They walked quickly, not speaking, with Kirsti between them, toward the large apartment building where both families lived.

When they were almost home, Ellen whispered suddenly, "I was so scared."

"Me too," Annemarie whispered back.

As they turned to enter their building, both girls looked straight ahead, toward the door. They did it purposely so that they would not catch the eyes or the attention of two more soldiers, who stood with their guns on this corner as well. Kirsti scurried ahead of them through the door, chattering about the picture she was bringing home from kindergarten to show Mama. For Kirsti, the soldiers were simply part of the landscape, something that had always been there, on every corner, as unimportant as lampposts, throughout her remembered life.

"Are you going to tell your mother?" Ellen asked Annemarie as they trudged together up the stairs. "I'm not. My mother would be upset."

"No, I won't, either. Mama would probably scold me for running on the street."

She said goodbye to Ellen on the second floor, where Ellen lived, and continued on to the third, practicing in her mind a cheerful greeting for her mother: a smile, a description of today's spelling test, in which she had done well.

But she was too late. Kirsti had gotten there first.

"And he poked Annemarie's book bag with his gun, and then he grabbed my hair!" Kirsti was chattering as she took off her sweater in the center of the apartment living room. "But I wasn't scared. Annemarie was, and Ellen, too. But not me!"

Mrs. Johansen rose quickly from the chair by the window where she'd been sitting. Mrs. Rosen, Ellen's mother, was there, too, in the opposite chair. They'd been having coffee together, as they did many afternoons. Of course it wasn't really coffee, though the mothers still called it that: "having coffee." There had been no real coffee in Copenhagen since the beginning of the Nazi occupation. Not even any real tea. The mothers sipped at hot water flavored with herbs.

"Annemarie, what happened? What is Kirsti talking about?" her mother asked anxiously.

"Where's Ellen?" Mrs. Rosen had a frightened look.

"Ellen's in your apartment. She didn't realize you were here," Annemarie explained. "Don't worry. It wasn't anything. It was the two soldiers who stand on the corner of Østerbrogade — you've seen them; you know the tall one with the long neck, the one who looks like a silly giraffe?" She told her mother and Mrs. Rosen of the incident, trying to make it sound humorous and unimportant. But their uneasy looks didn't change.

"I slapped his hand and shouted at him," Kirsti announced importantly.

"No, she didn't, Mama," Annemarie reassured her mother. "She's exaggerating, as she always does."

Mrs. Johansen moved to the window and looked down to the street below. The Copenhagen neighborhood was quiet; it looked the same as always: people coming and going from the shops, children at play, the soldiers on the corner.

She spoke in a low voice to Ellen's mother. "They must be edgy because of the latest Resistance incidents. Did you read in *De Frie Danske* about the bombings in Hillerød and Nørrebro?"

Although she pretended to be absorbed in unpacking her schoolbooks, Annemarie listened, and she knew what her mother was referring to. *De Frie Danske — The Free Danes* — was an illegal newspaper;

Peter Neilsen brought it to them occasionally, carefully folded and hidden among ordinary books and papers, and Mama always burned it after she and Papa had read it. But Annemarie heard Mama and Papa talk, sometimes at night, about the news they received that way: news of sabotage against the Nazis, bombs hidden and exploded in the factories that produced war materials, and industrial railroad lines damaged so that the goods couldn't be transported.

And she knew what Resistance meant. Papa had explained, when she overheard the word and asked. The Resistance fighters were Danish people — no one knew who, because they were very secret — who were determined to bring harm to the Nazis however they could. They damaged the German trucks and cars, and bombed their factories. They were very brave. Sometimes they were caught and killed.

"I must go and speak to Ellen," Mrs. Rosen said, moving toward the door. "You girls walk a different way to school tomorrow. Promise me, Annemarie. And Ellen will promise, too."

"We will, Mrs. Rosen. but what does it matter? There are German soldiers on every corner."

"They will remember your faces," Mrs. Rosen said, turning in the doorway to the hall. "It is important to be one of the crowd, always. Be one of

many. Be sure that they never have reason to remember your face." She disappeared into the hall and closed the door behind her.

"He'll remember *my* face, Mama," Kirsti announced happily, "because he said I look like *his* little girl. He said I was pretty."

"If he has such a pretty little girl, why doesn't he go back to her like a good father?" Mrs. Johansen murmured, stroking Kirsti's cheek. "Why doesn't he go back to his own country?"

"Mama, is there anything to eat?" Annemarie asked, hoping to take her mother's mind away from the soldiers.

"Take some bread. And give a piece to your sister."

"With butter?" Kirsti asked hopefully.

"No butter," her mother replied. "You know that."

Kirsti sighed as Annemarie went to the breadbox in the kitchen. "I wish I could have a cupcake," she said. "A big yellow cupcake, with pink frosting."

Her mother laughed. "For a little girl, you have a long memory," she told Kirsti. "There hasn't been any butter, or sugar for cupcakes, for a long time. A year, at least."

"When will there be cupcakes again?"

"When the war ends," Mrs. Johansen said. She

glanced through the window, down to the street corner where the soldiers stood, their faces impassive beneath the metal helmets. "When the soldiers leave."

2
Who Is the Man Who Rides Past?

"Tell me a story, Annemarie," begged Kirsti as she snuggled beside her sister in the big bed they shared. "Tell me a fairy tale."

Annemarie smiled and wrapped her arms around her little sister in the dark. All Danish children grew up familiar with fairy tales. Hans Christian Andersen, the most famous of the tale tellers, had been Danish himself.

"Do you want the one about the little mermaid?" That one had always been Annemarie's own favorite.

But Kirsti said no. "Tell one that starts with a king and a queen. And they have a beautiful daughter."

"All right. Once upon a time there was a king," Annemarie began.

"And a queen," whispered Kirsti. "Don't forget the queen."

"And a queen. They lived together in a wonderful palace, and —"

"Was the palace named Amalienborg?" Kirsti asked sleepily.

"Shhh. Don't keep interrupting or I'll never finish

the story. No, it wasn't Amalienborg. It was a pretend palace."

Annemarie talked on, making up a story of a king and queen and their beautiful daughter, Princess Kirsten; she sprinkled her tale with formal balls, fabulous gold-trimmed gowns, and feasts of pink-frosted cupcakes, until Kirsti's deep, even breathing told her that her sister was sound asleep.

She stopped, waited for a moment, half expecting Kirsti to murmur "Then what happened?" But Kirsti was still. Annemarie's thoughts turned to the real king, Christian X, and the real palace, Amalienborg, where he lived, in the center of Copenhagen.

How the people of Denmark loved King Christian! He was not like fairy tale kings, who seemed to stand on balconies giving orders to subjects, or who sat on golden thrones demanding to be entertained and looking for suitable husbands for their daughters. King Christian was a real human being, a man with a serious, kind face. She had seen him often, when she was younger. Each morning, he had come from the palace on his horse, Jubilee, and ridden alone through the streets of Copenhagen, greeting his people. Sometimes, when Annemarie was a little girl, her older sister, Lise, had taken her to stand on the sidewalk so that she could wave to King Christian. Sometimes he had waved back to the two of them, and smiled. "Now you are special forever," Lise had

told her once, "because you have been greeted by a king."

Annemarie turned her head on the pillow and stared through the partly opened curtains of the window into the dim September night. Thinking of Lise, her solemn, lovely sister, always made her sad.

So she turned her thoughts again to the king, who was still alive, as Lise was not. She remembered a story that Papa had told her, shortly after the war began, shortly after Denmark had surrendered and the soldiers had moved in overnight to take their places on the corners.

One evening, Papa had told her that earlier he was on an errand near his office, standing on the corner waiting to cross the street, when King Christian came by on his morning ride. One of the German soldiers had turned, suddenly, and asked a question of a teenage boy nearby.

"Who is that man who rides past here every morning on his horse?" the German soldier had asked.

Papa said he had smiled to himself, amused that the German soldier did not know. He listened while the boy answered.

"He is our king," the boy told the soldier. "He is the King of Denmark."

"Where is his bodyguard?" the soldier had asked.

"And do you know what the boy said?" Papa had

asked Annemarie. She was sitting on his lap. She was little, then, only seven years old. She shook her head, waiting to hear the answer.

"The boy looked right at the soldier, and he said, 'All of Denmark is his bodyguard.' "

Annemarie had shivered. It sounded like a very brave answer. "Is it true, Papa?" she asked. "What the boy said?"

Papa thought for a moment. He always considered questions very carefully before he answered them. "Yes," he said at last. "It is true. Any Danish citizen would die for King Christian, to protect him."

"You too, Papa?"

"Yes."

"And Mama?"

"Mama too."

Annemarie shivered again. "Then I would too, Papa. If I had to."

They sat silently for a moment. From across the room, Mama watched them, Annemarie and Papa, and she smiled. Mama had been crocheting that evening three years ago: the lacy edging of a pillowcase, part of Lise's trousseau. Her fingers moved rapidly, turning the thin white thread into an intricate narrow border. Lise was a grownup girl of eighteen, then, about to be married to Peter Neilsen. When Lise and Peter married, Mama said, Annemarie and Kirsti would have a brother for the very first time.

"Papa," Annemarie had said, finally, into the silence, "sometimes I wonder why the king wasn't able to protect us. Why didn't he fight the Nazis so that they wouldn't come into Denmark with their guns?"

Papa sighed. "We are such a tiny country," he said. "And they are such an enormous enemy. Our king was wise. He knew how few soldiers Denmark had. He knew that many, many Danish people would die if we fought."

"In Norway they fought," Annemarie pointed out.

Papa nodded. "They fought very fiercely in Norway. They had those huge mountains for the Norwegian soldiers to hide in. Even so, Norway was crushed."

In her mind, Annemarie had pictured Norway as she remembered it from the map at school, up above Denmark. Norway was pink on the school map. She imagined the pink strip of Norway crushed by a fist.

"Are there German soldiers in Norway now, the same as here?"

"Yes," Papa said.

"In Holland, too," Mama added from across the room, "and Belgium and France."

"But not in Sweden!" Annemarie announced, proud that she knew so much about the world. Sweden was blue on the map, and she had *seen* Sweden, even though she had never been there.

Standing behind Uncle Henrik's house, north of Copenhagen, she had looked across the water — the part of the North Sea that was called the Kattegat — to the land on the other side. "That is Sweden you are seeing," Uncle Henrik had told her. "You are looking across to another country."

"That's true," Papa had said. "Sweden is still free."

And now, three years later, it was *still* true. But much else had changed. King Christian was getting old, and he had been badly injured last year in a fall from his horse, faithful old Jubilee, who had carried him around Copenhagen so many mornings. For days they thought he would die, and all of Denmark had mourned.

But he hadn't. King Christian X was still alive.

It was Lise who was not. It was her tall, beautiful sister who had died in an accident two weeks before her wedding. In the blue carved trunk in the corner of this bedroom — Annemarie could see its shape even in the dark — were folded Lise's pillowcases with their crocheted edges, her wedding dress with its hand-embroidered neckline, unworn, and the yellow dress that she had worn and danced in, with its full skirt flying, at the party celebrating her engagement to Peter.

Mama and Papa never spoke of Lise. They never opened the trunk. But Annemarie did, from time to time, when she was alone in the apartment; alone, she touched Lise's things gently, remembering her quiet, soft-spoken sister who had looked forward so to marriage and children of her own.

Redheaded Peter, her sister's fiancé, had not married anyone in the years since Lise's death. He had changed a great deal. Once he had been like a fun-loving older brother to Annemarie and Kirsti, teasing and tickling, always a source of foolishness and pranks. Now he still stopped by the apartment often, and his greetings to the girls were warm and smiling, but he was usually in a hurry, talking quickly to Mama and Papa about things Annemarie didn't understand. He no longer sang the nonsense songs that had once made Annemarie and Kirsti shriek with laughter. And he never lingered anymore.

Papa had changed, too. He seemed much older and very tired, defeated.

The whole world had changed. Only the fairy tales remained the same.

"And they lived happily ever after," Annemarie recited, whispering into the dark, completing the tale for her sister, who slept beside her, one thumb in her mouth.

3
Where Is Mrs. Hirsch?

The days of September passed, one after the other, much the same. Annemarie and Ellen walked to school together, and home again, always now taking the longer way, avoiding the tall soldier and his partner. Kirsti dawdled just behind them or scampered ahead, never out of their sight.

The two mothers still had their "coffee" together in the afternoons. They began to knit mittens as the days grew slightly shorter and the first leaves began to fall from the trees, because another winter was coming. Everyone remembered the last one. There was no fuel now for the homes and apartments in Copenhagen, and the winter nights were terribly cold.

Like the other families in their building, the Johansens had opened the old chimney and installed a little stove to use for heat when they could find coal to burn. Mama used it too, sometimes, for cooking, because electricity was rationed now. At night they used candles for light. Sometimes Ellen's father, a teacher, complained in frustration because he couldn't

see in the dim light to correct his students' papers.

"Soon we will have to add another blanket to your bed," Mama said one morning as she and Annemarie tidied the bedroom.

"Kirsti and I are lucky to have each other for warmth in the winter," Annemarie said. "Poor Ellen, to have no sisters."

"She will have to snuggle in with her mama and papa when it gets cold," Mama said, smiling.

"I remember when Kirsti slept between you and Papa. She was supposed to stay in her crib, but in the middle of the night she would climb out and get in with you," Annemarie said, smoothing the pillows on the bed. Then she hesitated and glanced at her mother, fearful that she had said the wrong thing, the thing that would bring the pained look to her mother's face. The days when little Kirsti slept in Mama and Papa's room were the days when Lise and Annemarie shared this bed.

But Mama was laughing quietly. "I remember, too," she said. "Sometimes she wet the bed in the middle of the night!"

"I did not!" Kirsti said haughtily from the bedroom doorway. "I never, *ever* did that!"

Mama, still laughing, knelt and kissed Kirsti on the cheek. "Time to leave for school, girls," she said. She began to button Kirsti's jacket. "Oh, dear," she said, suddenly. "Look. This button has broken

right in half. Annemarie, take Kirsti with you, after school, to the little shop where Mrs. Hirsch sells thread and buttons. See if you can buy just one, to match the others on her jacket. I'll give you some kroner — it shouldn't cost very much."

But after school, when the girls stopped at the shop, which had been there as long as Annemarie could remember, they found it closed. There was a new padlock on the door, and a sign. But the sign was in German. They couldn't read the words.

"I wonder if Mrs. Hirsch is sick," Annemarie said as they walked away.

"I saw her Saturday," Ellen said. "She was with her husband and their son. They all looked just fine. Or at least the *parents* looked just fine — the son *always* looks like a horror." She giggled.

Annemarie made a face. The Hirsch family lived in the neighborhood, so they had seen the boy, Samuel, often. He was a tall teenager with thick glasses, stooped shoulders, and unruly hair. He rode a bicycle to school, leaning forward and squinting, wrinkling his nose to nudge his glasses into place. His bicycle had wooden wheels, now that rubber tires weren't available, and it creaked and clattered on the street.

"I think the Hirsches all went on a vacation to the seashore," Kirsti announced.

"And I suppose they took a big basket of pink-

frosted cupcakes with them," Annemarie said sarcastically to her sister.

"Yes, I suppose they did," Kirsti replied.

Annemarie and Ellen exchanged looks that meant: Kirsti is so *dumb.* No one in Copenhagen had taken a vacation at the seashore since the war began. There *were* no pink-frosted cupcakes; there hadn't been for months.

Still, Annemarie thought, looking back at the shop before they turned the corner, where was Mrs. Hirsch? The Hirsch family had gone *somewhere.* Why else would they close the shop?

Mama was troubled when she heard the news. "Are you sure?" she asked several times.

"We can find another button someplace," Annemarie reassured her. "Or we can take one from the bottom of the jacket and move it up. It won't show very much."

But it didn't seem to be the jacket that worried Mama. "Are you sure the sign was in German?" she asked. "Maybe you didn't look carefully."

"Mama, it had a swastika on it."

Her mother turned away with a distracted look. "Annemarie, watch your sister for a few moments. And begin to peel the potatoes for dinner. I'll be right back."

"Where are you going?" Annemarie asked as her mother started for the door.

"I want to talk to Mrs. Rosen."

Puzzled, Annemarie watched her mother leave the apartment. She went to the kitchen and opened the door to the cupboard where the potatoes were kept. Every night, now, it seemed, they had potatoes for dinner. And very little else.

Annemarie was almost asleep when there was a light knock on the bedroom door. Candlelight appeared as the door opened, and her mother stepped in.

"Are you asleep, Annemarie?"

"No. Why? Is something wrong?"

"Nothing's wrong. But I'd like you to get up and come out to the living room. Peter's here. Papa and I want to talk to you."

Annemarie jumped out of bed, and Kirsti grunted in her sleep. Peter! She hadn't seen him in a long time. There was something frightening about his being here at night. Copenhagen had a curfew, and no citizens were allowed out after eight o'clock. It was very dangerous, she knew, for Peter to visit at this time. But she was delighted that he was here. Though his visits were always hurried — they almost seemed secret, somehow, in a way she couldn't quite put her finger on — still, it was a treat to see Peter. It

brought back memories of happier times. And her parents loved Peter, too. They said he was like a son.

Barefoot, she ran to the living room and into Peter's arms. He grinned, kissed her cheek, and ruffled her long hair.

"You've grown taller since I saw you last," he told her. "You're all legs!"

Annemarie laughed. "I won the girls' footrace last Friday at school," she told him proudly. "Where have you been? We've missed you!"

"My work takes me all over," Peter explained. "Look, I brought you something. One for Kirsti, too." He reached into his pocket and handed her two seashells.

Annemarie put the smaller one on the table to save it for her sister. She held the other in her hands, turning it in the light, looking at the ridged, pearly surface. It was so like Peter, to bring just the right gift.

"For your mama and papa, I brought something more practical. Two bottles of beer!"

Mama and Papa smiled and raised their glasses. Papa took a sip and wiped the foam from his upper lip. Then his face became more serious.

"Annemarie," he said, "Peter tells us that the Germans have issued orders closing many stores run by Jews."

"Jews?" Annemarie repeated. "Is Mrs. Hirsch Jewish? Is that why the button shop is closed? Why have they done that?"

Peter leaned forward. "It is their way of tormenting. For some reason, they want to torment Jewish people. It has happened in the other countries. They have taken their time here — have let us relax a little. But now it seems to be starting."

"But why the button shop? What harm is a button shop? Mrs. Hirsch is such a nice lady. Even Samuel — he's a dope, but he would never harm anyone. How could he — he can't even see, with his thick glasses!"

Then Annemarie thought of something else. "If they can't sell their buttons, how will they earn a living?"

"Friends will take care of them," Mama said gently. "That's what friends do."

Annemarie nodded. Mama was right, of course. Friends and neighbors would go to the home of the Hirsch family, would take them fish and potatoes and bread and herbs for making tea. Maybe Peter would even take them a beer. They would be comfortable until their shop was allowed to open again.

Then, suddenly, she sat upright, her eyes wide. "Mama!" she said. "Papa! The Rosens are Jewish, too!"

Her parents nodded, their faces serious and drawn.

"I talked to Sophy Rosen this afternoon, after you told me about the button shop," Mama said. "She knows what is happening. But she doesn't think that it will affect them."

Annemarie thought, and understood. She relaxed. "Mr. Rosen doesn't have a shop. He's a teacher. They can't close a whole school!" She looked at Peter with the question in her eyes. "Can they?"

"I think the Rosens will be all right," he said. "But you keep an eye on your friend Ellen. And stay away from the soldiers. Your mother told me about what happened on Østerbrogade."

Annemarie shrugged. She had almost forgotten the incident. "It was nothing. They were only bored and looking for someone to talk to, I think."

She turned to her father. "Papa, do you remember what you heard the boy say to the soldier? That all of Denmark would be the king's bodyguard?"

Her father smiled. "I have never forgotten it," he said.

"Well," Annemarie said slowly, "now I think that all of Denmark must be bodyguard for the Jews, as well."

"So we shall be," Papa replied.

Peter stood. "I must go," he said. "And you, Longlegs, it is way past your bedtime now." He hugged Annemarie again.

Later, once more in her bed beside the warm

cocoon of her sister, Annemarie remembered how her father had said, three years before, that he would die to protect the king. That her mother would, too. And Annemarie, seven years old, had announced proudly that she also would.

Now she was ten, with long legs and no more silly dreams of pink-frosted cupcakes. And now she — and all the Danes — were to be bodyguard for Ellen, and Ellen's parents, and all of Denmark's Jews.

Would she die to protect them? *Truly?* Annemarie was honest enough to admit, there in the darkness, to herself, that she wasn't sure.

For a moment she felt frightened. But she pulled the blanket up higher around her neck and relaxed. It was all imaginary, anyway — not real. It was only in the fairy tales that people were called upon to be so brave, to die for one another. Not in real-life Denmark. Oh, there were the soldiers; that was true. And the courageous Resistance leaders, who sometimes lost their lives; that was true, too.

But ordinary people like the Rosens and the Johansens? Annemarie admitted to herself, snuggling there in the quiet dark, that she was glad to be an ordinary person who would never be called upon for courage.

4
It Will Be a Long Night

Alone in the apartment while Mama was out shopping with Kirsti, Annemarie and Ellen were sprawled on the living room floor playing with paper dolls. They had cut the dolls from Mama's magazines, old ones she had saved from past years. The paper ladies had old-fashioned hair styles and clothes, and the girls had given them names from Mama's very favorite book. Mama had told Annemarie and Ellen the entire story of *Gone With the Wind,* and the girls thought it much more interesting and romantic than the king-and-queen tales that Kirsti loved.

"Come, Melanie," Annemarie said, walking her doll across the edge of the rug. "Let's dress for the ball."

"All right, Scarlett, I'm coming," Ellen replied in a sophisticated voice. She was a talented performer; she often played the leading roles in school dramatics. Games of the imagination were always fun when Ellen played.

The door opened and Kirsti stomped in, her face tear-stained and glowering. Mama followed her with

an exasperated look and set a package down on the table.

"I won't!" Kirsti sputtered. "I won't ever, *ever* wear them! Not if you chain me in a prison and beat me with sticks!"

Annemarie giggled and looked questioningly at her mother. Mrs. Johansen sighed. "I bought Kirsti some new shoes," she explained. "She's outgrown her old ones."

"Goodness, Kirsti," Ellen said, "I wish my mother would get *me* some new shoes. I love new things, and it's so hard to find them in the stores."

"Not if you go to a *fish* store!" Kirsti bellowed. "But most mothers wouldn't make their daughters wear ugly *fish* shoes!"

"Kirsten," Mama said soothingly, "you know it wasn't a fish store. And we were lucky to find shoes at all."

Kirsti sniffed. "Show them," she commanded. "Show Annemarie and Ellen how ugly they are."

Mama opened the package and took out a pair of little girl's shoes. She held them up, and Kirsti looked away in disgust.

"You know there's no leather anymore," Mama explained. "But they've found a way to make shoes out of fish skin. I don't think these are too ugly."

Annemarie and Ellen looked at the fish skin shoes. Annemarie took one in her hand and examined it. It

was odd-looking; the fish scales were visible. But it was a shoe, and her sister needed shoes.

"It's not so bad, Kirsti," she said, lying a little.

Ellen turned the other one over in her hand. "You know," she said, "it's only the color that's ugly."

"Green!" Kirsti wailed. "I will never, *ever* wear green shoes!"

"In our apartment," Ellen told her, "my father has a jar of black, black ink. Would you like these shoes better if they were black?"

Kirsti frowned. "Maybe I would," she said, finally.

"Well, then," Ellen told her, "tonight, if your mama doesn't mind, I'll take the shoes home and ask my father to make them black for you, with his ink."

Mama laughed. "I think that would be a fine improvement. What do you think, Kirsti?"

Kirsti pondered. "Could he make them shiny?" she asked. "I want them shiny."

Ellen nodded. "I think he could. I think they'll be quite pretty, black and shiny."

Kirsti nodded. "All right, then," she said. "But you mustn't tell anyone that they're *fish*. I don't want anyone to know." She took her new shoes, holding them disdainfully, and put them on a chair. Then she looked with interest at the paper dolls.

"Can I play, too?" Kirsti asked. "Can I have a doll?" She squatted beside Annemarie and Ellen on the floor.

Sometimes, Annemarie thought, Kirsti was such a pest, always butting in. But the apartment was small. There was no other place for Kirsti to play. And if they told her to go away, Mama would scold.

"Here," Annemarie said, and handed her sister a cut-out little girl doll. "We're playing *Gone With the Wind.* Melanie and Scarlett are going to a ball. You can be Bonnie. She's Scarlett's daughter."

Kirsti danced her doll up and down happily. "I'm going to the ball!" she announced in a high, pretend voice.

Ellen giggled. "A little girl wouldn't go to a ball. Let's make them go someplace else. Let's make them go to Tivoli!"

"Tivoli!" Annemarie began to laugh. "That's in Copenhagen! *Gone With the Wind* is in America!"

"Tivoli, Tivoli, Tivoli," little Kirsti sang, twirling her doll in a circle.

"It doesn't matter, because it's only a game anyway," Ellen pointed out. "Tivoli can be over there, by that chair. 'Come, Scarlett,' " she said, using her doll voice, " 'we shall go to Tivoli to dance and watch the fireworks, and maybe there will be some handsome men there! Bring your silly daughter Bonnie, and she can ride on the carousel.' "

Annemarie grinned and walked her Scarlett toward the chair that Ellen had designated as Tivoli. She loved Tivoli Gardens, in the heart of Copenhagen;

her parents had taken her there, often, when she was a little girl. She remembered the music and the brightly colored lights, the carousel and ice cream and especially the magnificent fireworks in the evenings: the huge colored splashes and bursts of lights in the evening sky.

"I remember the fireworks best of all," she commented to Ellen.

"Me too," Kirsti said. "I remember the fireworks."

"Silly," Annemarie scoffed. "You never saw the fireworks." Tivoli Gardens was closed now. The German occupation forces had burned part of it, perhaps as a way of punishing the fun-loving Danes for their lighthearted pleasures.

Kirsti drew herself up, her small shoulders stiff. "I did too," she said belligerently. "It was my birthday. I woke up in the night and I could hear the booms. And there were lights in the sky. Mama said it was fireworks for my birthday!"

Then Annemarie remembered. Kirsti's birthday was late in August. And that night, only a month before, she, too, had been awakened and frightened by the sound of explosions. Kirsti was right — the sky in the southeast had been ablaze, and Mama had comforted her by calling it a birthday celebration. "Imagine, such fireworks for a little girl five years old!" Mama had said, sitting on their bed, holding

the dark curtain aside to look through the window at the lighted sky.

The next evening's newspaper had told the sad truth. The Danes had destroyed their own naval fleet, blowing up the vessels one by one, as the Germans approached to take over the ships for their own use.

"How sad the king must be," Annemarie had heard Mama say to Papa when they read the news.

"How proud," Papa had replied.

It had made Annemarie feel sad and proud, too, to picture the tall, aging king, perhaps with tears in his blue eyes, as he looked at the remains of his small navy, which now lay submerged and broken in the harbor.

"I don't want to play anymore, Ellen," she said suddenly, and put her paper doll on the table.

"I have to go home, anyway," Ellen said. "I have to help Mama with the housecleaning. Thursday is our New Year. Did you know that?"

"Why is it yours?" asked Kirsti. "Isn't it our New Year, too?"

"No. It's the Jewish New Year. That's just for us. But if you want, Kirsti, you can come that night and watch Mama light the candles."

Annemarie and Kirsti had often been invited to watch Mrs. Rosen light the Sabbath candles on

Friday evenings. She covered her head with a cloth and said a special prayer in Hebrew as she did so. Annemarie always stood very quietly, awed, to watch; even Kirsti, usually such a chatterbox, was always still at that time. They didn't understand the words or the meaning, but they could feel what a special time it was for the Rosens.

"Yes," Kirsti agreed happily. "I'll come and watch your mama light the candles, and I'll wear my new black shoes."

But this time was to be different. Leaving for school on Thursday with her sister, Annemarie saw the Rosens walking to the synagogue early in the morning, dressed in their best clothes. She waved to Ellen, who waved happily back.

"Lucky Ellen," Annemarie said to Kirsti. "She doesn't have to go to school today."

"But she probably has to sit very, very still, like we do in church," Kirsti pointed out. *"That's* no fun."

That afternoon, Mrs. Rosen knocked at their door but didn't come inside. Instead, she spoke for a long time in a hurried, tense voice to Annemarie's mother in the hall. When Mama returned, her face was worried, but her voice was cheerful.

"Girls," she said, "we have a nice surprise. To-

night Ellen will be coming to stay overnight and to be our guest for a few days! It isn't often we have a visitor."

Kirsti clapped her hands in delight.

"But, Mama," Annemarie said, in dismay, "it's their New Year. They were going to have a celebration at home! Ellen told me that her mother managed to get a chicken someplace, and she was going to roast it — their first roast chicken in a year or more!"

"Their plans have changed," Mama said briskly. "Mr. and Mrs. Rosen have been called away to visit some relatives. So Ellen will stay with us. Now, let's get busy and put clean sheets on your bed. Kirsti, you may sleep with Mama and Papa tonight, and we'll let the big girls giggle together by themselves."

Kirsti pouted, and it was clear that she was about to argue. "Mama will tell you a special story tonight," her mother said. "One just for you."

"About a king?" Kirsti asked dubiously.

"About a king, if you wish," Mama replied.

"All right, then. But there must be a queen, too," Kirsti said.

Though Mrs. Rosen had sent her chicken to the Johansens, and Mama made a lovely dinner large enough for second helpings all around, it was not an

evening of laughter and talk. Ellen was silent at dinner. She looked frightened. Mama and Papa tried to speak of cheerful things, but it was clear that they were worried, and it made Annemarie worry, too. Only Kirsti was unaware of the quiet tension in the room. Swinging her feet in their newly blackened and shiny shoes, she chattered and giggled during dinner.

"Early bedtime tonight, little one," Mama announced after the dishes were washed. "We need extra time for the long story I promised, about the king and queen." She disappeared with Kirsti into the bedroom.

"What's happening?" Annemarie asked when she and Ellen were alone with Papa in the living room. "Something's wrong. What is it?"

Papa's face was troubled. "I wish that I could protect you children from this knowledge," he said quietly. "Ellen, you already know. Now we must tell Annemarie."

He turned to her and stroked her hair with his gentle hand. "This morning, at the synagogue, the rabbi told his congregation that the Nazis have taken the synagogue lists of all the Jews. Where they live, what their names are. Of course the Rosens were on that list, along with many others."

"Why? Why did they want those names?"

"They plan to arrest all the Danish Jews. They plan to take them away. And we have been told that they may come tonight."

"I don't understand! Take them where?"

Her father shook his head. "We don't know where, and we don't really know why. They call it 'relocation.' We don't even know what that means. We only know that it is wrong, and it is dangerous, and we must help."

Annemarie was stunned. She looked at Ellen and saw that her best friend was crying silently.

"Where are Ellen's parents? We must help them, too!"

"We couldn't take all three of them. If the Germans came to search our apartment, it would be clear that the Rosens were here. One person we can hide. Not three. So Peter has helped Ellen's parents to go elsewhere. We don't know where. Ellen doesn't know either. But they are safe."

Ellen sobbed aloud, and put her face in her hands. Papa put his arm around her. "They are safe, Ellen. I promise you that. You will see them again quite soon. Can you try hard to believe my promise?"

Ellen hesitated, nodded, and wiped her eyes with her hand.

"But, Papa," Annemarie said, looking around the small apartment, with its few pieces of furniture: the fat stuffed sofa, the table and chairs, the small

bookcase against the wall. "You said that we would hide her. How can we do that? Where can she hide?"

Papa smiled. "That part is easy. It will be as your mama said: you two will sleep together in your bed, and you may giggle and talk and tell secrets to each other. And if anyone comes —"

Ellen interrupted him. "Who might come? Will it be soldiers? Like the ones on the corners?" Annemarie remembered how terrified Ellen had looked the day when the soldier had questioned them on the corner.

"I really don't think anyone will. But it never hurts to be prepared. If anyone should come, even soldiers, you two will be sisters. You are together so much, it will be easy for you to pretend that you are sisters."

He rose and walked to the window. He pulled the lace curtain aside and looked down into the street. Outside, it was beginning to grow dark. Soon they would have to draw the black curtains that all Danes had on their windows; the entire city had to be completely darkened at night. In a nearby tree, a bird was singing; otherwise it was quiet. It was the last night of September.

"Go, now, and get into your nightgowns. It will be a long night."

Annemarie and Ellen got to their feet. Papa suddenly crossed the room and put his arms around them both. He kissed the top of each head: Annemarie's

blond one, which reached to his shoulder, and Ellen's dark hair, the thick curls braided as always into pigtails.

"Don't be frightened," he said to them softly. "Once I had three daughters. Tonight I am proud to have three daughters again."

5
Who Is the Dark-Haired One?

"Do you really think anyone will come?" Ellen asked nervously, turning to Annemarie in the bedroom. "Your father doesn't think so."

"Of course not. They're always threatening stuff. They just like to scare people." Annemarie took her nightgown from a hook in the closet.

"Anyway, if they did, it would give me a chance to practice acting. I'd just pretend to be Lise. I wish I were taller, though." Ellen stood on tiptoe, trying to make herself tall. She laughed at herself, and her voice was more relaxed.

"You were great as the Dark Queen in the school play last year," Annemarie told her. "You should be an actress when you grow up."

"My father wants me to be a teacher. He wants *everyone* to be a teacher, like him. But maybe I could convince him that I should go to acting school." Ellen stood on tiptoe again, and made an imperious gesture with her arm. "I am the Dark Queen," she intoned dramatically. "I have come to command the night!"

"You should try saying, 'I am Lise Johansen!' " Annemarie said, grinning. "If you told the Nazis that you were the Dark Queen, they'd haul you off to a mental institution."

Ellen dropped her actress pose and sat down, with her legs curled under her, on the bed. "They won't really come here, do you think?" she asked again.

Annemarie shook her head. "Not in a million years." She picked up her hairbrush.

The girls found themselves whispering as they got ready for bed. There was no need, really, to whisper; they were, after all, supposed to be normal sisters, and Papa had said they could giggle and talk. The bedroom door was closed.

But the night did seem, somehow, different from a normal night. And so they whispered.

"How did your sister die, Annemarie?" Ellen asked suddenly. "I remember when it happened. And I remember the funeral — it was the only time I have ever been in a Lutheran church. But I never knew just what happened."

"I don't know *exactly*," Annemarie confessed. "She and Peter were out somewhere together, and then there was a telephone call, that there had been an accident. Mama and Papa rushed to the hospital — remember, your mother came and stayed with me and Kirsti? Kirsti was already asleep and she slept right through everything, she was so little then. But

I stayed up, and I was with your mother in the living room when my parents came home in the middle of the night. And they told me Lise had died."

"I remember it was raining," Ellen said sadly. "It was still raining the next morning when Mama told me. Mama was crying, and the rain made it seem as if the whole *world* was crying."

Annemarie finished brushing her long hair and handed her hairbrush to her best friend. Ellen undid her braids, lifted her dark hair away from the thin gold chain she wore around her neck — the chain that held the Star of David — and began to brush her thick curls.

"I think it was partly because of the rain. They said she was hit by a car. I suppose the streets were slippery, and it was getting dark, and maybe the driver just couldn't see," Annemarie went on, remembering. "Papa looked so angry. He made one hand into a fist, and he kept pounding it into the other hand. I remember the noise of it: slam, slam, slam."

Together they got into the wide bed and pulled up the covers. Annemarie blew out the candle and drew the dark curtains aside so that the open window near the bed let in some air. "See that blue trunk in the corner?" she said, pointing through the darkness. "Lots of Lise's things are in there. Even her wedding dress. Mama and Papa have never looked at those

things, not since the day they packed them away."

Ellen sighed. "She would have looked so beautiful in her wedding dress. She had such a pretty smile. I used to pretend that she was *my* sister, too."

"She would have liked that," Annemarie told her. "She loved you."

"That's the worst thing in the world," Ellen whispered. "To be dead so young. I wouldn't want the Germans to take my family away — to make us live someplace else. But still, it wouldn't be as bad as being dead."

Annemarie leaned over and hugged her. "They won't take you away," she said. "Not your parents, either. Papa promised that they were safe, and he always keeps his promises. And you are quite safe, here with us."

For a while they continued to murmur in the dark, but the murmurs were interrupted by yawns. Then Ellen's voice stopped, she turned over, and in a minute her breathing was quiet and slow.

Annemarie stared at the window where the sky was outlined and a tree branch moved slightly in the breeze. Everything seemed very familiar, very comforting. Dangers were no more than odd imaginings, like ghost stories that children made up to frighten one another: things that couldn't possibly happen. Annemarie felt completely safe here in her own home, with her parents in the next room and her best

friend asleep beside her. She yawned contentedly and closed her eyes.

It was hours later, but still dark, when she was awakened abruptly by the pounding on the apartment door.

Annemarie eased the bedroom door open quietly, only a crack, and peeked out. Behind her, Ellen was sitting up, her eyes wide.

She could see Mama and Papa in their nightclothes, moving about. Mama held a lighted candle, but as Annemarie watched, she went to a lamp and switched it on. It was so long a time since they had dared to use the strictly rationed electricity after dark that the light in the room seemed startling to Annemarie, watching through the slightly opened bedroom door. She saw her mother look automatically to the blackout curtains, making certain that they were tightly drawn.

Papa opened the front door to the soldiers.

"This is the Johansen apartment?" A deep voice asked the question loudly, in the terribly accented Danish.

"Our name is on the door, and I see you have a flashlight," Papa answered. "What do you want? Is something wrong?"

"I understand you are a friend of your neighbors

the Rosens, Mrs. Johansen," the soldier said angrily.

"Sophy Rosen is my friend, that is true," Mama said quietly. "Please, could you speak more softly? My children are asleep."

"Then you will be so kind as to tell me where the Rosens are." He made no effort to lower his voice.

"I assume they are at home, sleeping. It is four in the morning, after all," Mama said.

Annemarie heard the soldier stalk across the living room toward the kitchen. From her hiding place in the narrow sliver of open doorway, she could see the heavy uniformed man, a holstered pistol at his waist, in the entrance to the kitchen, peering in toward the sink.

Another German voice said, "The Rosens' apartment is empty. We are wondering if they might be visiting their good friends the Johansens."

"Well," said Papa, moving slightly so that he was standing in front of Annemarie's bedroom door, and she could see nothing except the dark blur of his back, "as you see, you are mistaken. There is no one here but my family."

"You will not object if we look around." The voice was harsh, and it was not a question.

"It seems we have no choice," Papa replied.

"Please don't wake my children," Mama requested again. "There is no need to frighten little ones."

The heavy, booted feet moved across the floor again and into the other bedroom. A closet door opened and closed with a bang.

Annemarie eased her bedroom door closed silently. She stumbled through the darkness to the bed.

"Ellen," she whispered urgently, "take your necklace off!"

Ellen's hands flew to her neck. Desperately she began trying to unhook the tiny clasp. Outside the bedroom door, the harsh voices and heavy footsteps continued.

"I can't get it open!" Ellen said frantically. "I never take it off — I can't even remember how to open it!"

Annemarie heard a voice just outside the door. "What is here?"

"Shhh," her mother replied. "My daughters' bedroom. They are sound asleep."

"Hold still," Annemarie commanded. "This will hurt." She grabbed the little gold chain, yanked with all her strength, and broke it. As the door opened and light flooded into the bedroom, she crumpled it into her hand and closed her fingers tightly.

Terrified, both girls looked up at the three Nazi officers who entered the room.

One of the men aimed a flashlight around the bedroom. He went to the closet and looked inside. Then with a sweep of his gloved hand he pushed to

the floor several coats and a bathrobe that hung from pegs on the wall.

There was nothing else in the room except a chest of drawers, the blue decorated trunk in the corner, and a heap of Kirsti's dolls piled in a small rocking chair. The flashlight beam touched each thing in turn. Angrily the officer turned toward the bed.

"Get up!" he ordered. "Come out here!"

Trembling, the two girls rose from the bed and followed him, brushing past the two remaining officers in the doorway, to the living room.

Annemarie looked around. These three uniformed men were different from the ones on the street corners. The street soldiers were often young, sometimes ill at ease, and Annemarie remembered how the Giraffe had, for a moment, let his harsh pose slip and had smiled at Kirsti.

But these men were older and their faces were set with anger.

Her parents were standing beside each other, their faces tense, but Kirsti was nowhere in sight. Thank goodness that Kirsti slept through almost everything. If they had wakened her, she would be wailing — or worse, she would be angry, and her fists would fly.

"Your names?" the officer barked.

"Annemarie Johansen. And this is my sister —"

"Quiet! Let her speak for herself. Your name?" He was glaring at Ellen.

Ellen swallowed. "Lise," she said, and cleared her throat. "Lise Johansen."

The officer stared at them grimly.

"Now," Mama said in a strong voice, "you have seen that we are not hiding anything. May my children go back to bed?"

The officer ignored her. Suddenly he grabbed a handful of Ellen's hair. Ellen winced.

He laughed scornfully. "You have a blond child sleeping in the other room. And you have this blond daughter —" He gestured toward Annemarie with his head. "Where did you get the dark-haired one?" He twisted the lock of Ellen's hair. "From a different father? From the milkman?

Papa stepped forward. "Don't speak to my wife in such a way. Let go of my daughter or I will report you for such treatment."

"Or maybe you got her someplace else?" the officer continued with a sneer. "From the Rosens?"

For a moment no one spoke. Then Annemarie, watching in panic, saw her father move swiftly to the small bookcase and take out a book. She saw that he was holding the family photograph album. Very quickly he searched through its pages, found what he was looking for, and tore out three pictures from three separate pages.

He handed them to the German officer, who released Ellen's hair.

"You will see each of my daughters, each with her name written on the photograph," Papa said.

Annemarie knew instantly which photographs he had chosen. The album had many snapshots — all the poorly focused pictures of school events and birthday parties. But it also contained a portrait, taken by a photographer, of each girl as a tiny infant. Mama had written, in her delicate handwriting, the name of each baby daughter across the bottom of those photographs.

She realized too, with an icy feeling, why Papa had torn them from the book. At the bottom of each page, below the photograph itself, was written the date. And the real Lise Johansen had been born twenty-one years earlier.

"Kirsten Elisabeth," the officer read, looking at Kirsti's baby picture. He let the photograph fall to the floor.

"Annemarie," he read next, glanced at her, and dropped the second photograph.

"Lise Margrete," he read finally, and stared at Ellen for a long, unwavering moment. In her mind, Annemarie pictured the photograph that he held: the baby, wide-eyed, propped against a pillow, her tiny hand holding a silver teething ring, her bare feet visible below the hem of an embroidered dress. The wispy curls. Dark.

The officer tore the photograph in half and

dropped the pieces on the floor. Then he turned, the heels of his shiny boots grinding into the pictures, and left the apartment. Without a word, the other two officers followed. Papa stepped forward and closed the door behind him.

Annemarie relaxed the clenched fingers of her right hand, which still clutched Ellen's necklace. She looked down, and saw that she had imprinted the Star of David into her palm.

6
Is the Weather Good for Fishing?

"We must think what to do," Papa said. "They are suspicious, now. To be honest, I thought that if they came here at all — and I hoped they wouldn't — that they would just glance around, see that we had no place to hide anyone, and would go away."

"I'm sorry I have dark hair," Ellen murmured. "It made them suspicious."

Mama reached over quickly and took Ellen's hand. "You have beautiful hair, Ellen, just like your mama's," she said. "Don't ever be sorry for that. Weren't we lucky that Papa thought so quickly and found the pictures? And weren't we lucky that Lise had dark hair when she was a baby? It turned blond later on, when she was two or so."

"In between," Papa added, "she was bald for a while!"

Ellen and Annemarie both smiled tentatively. For a moment their fear was eased.

Tonight was the first time, Annemarie realized suddenly, that Mama and Papa had spoken of Lise. The first time in three years.

Outside, the sky was beginning to lighten. Mrs. Johansen went to the kitchen and began to make tea.

"I've never been up so early before," Annemarie said. "Ellen and I will probably fall asleep in school today!"

Papa rubbed his chin for a moment, thinking. "I think we must not take the risk of sending you to school today," he said. "It is possible that they will look for the Jewish children in the schools."

"Not go to school?" Ellen asked in amazement. "My parents have always told me that education is the most important thing. Whatever happens, I must get an education."

"This will only be a vacation, Ellen. For now, your safety is the most important thing. I'm sure your parents would agree. Inge?" Papa called Mama in the kitchen, and she came to the doorway with a teacup in her hand and a questioning look on her face.

"Yes?"

"We must take the girls to Henrik's. You remember what Peter told us. I think today is the day to go to your brother's."

Mrs. Johansen nodded. "I think you are right. But I will take them. You must stay here."

"Stay here and let you go alone? Of course not. I wouldn't send you on a dangerous trip alone."

Mama put a hand on Papa's arm. "If only I go with the girls, it will be safer. They are unlikely to

suspect a woman and her children. But if they are watching us — if they see all of us leave? If they are aware that the apartment is empty, that you don't go to your office this morning? Then they will know. Then it will be dangerous. I am not afraid to go alone."

It was very seldom that Mama disagreed with Papa. Annemarie watched his face and knew that he was struggling with the decision. Finally he nodded, reluctantly.

"I will pack some things," Mama said. "What time is it?"

Papa looked at his watch. "Almost five," he said.

"Henrik will still be there. He leaves around five. Why don't you call him?"

Papa went to the telephone. Ellen looked puzzled. "Who is Henrik? Where does he go at five in the morning?" she asked.

Annemarie laughed. "He's my uncle — my mother's brother. And he's a fisherman. They leave very early, all the fishermen, each morning — their boats go out at sunrise.

"Oh, Ellen," she went on. "You will love it there. It is where my grandparents lived, where Mama and Uncle Henrik grew up. It is so beautiful — right on the water. You can stand at the edge of the meadow and look across to Sweden!"

She listened while Papa spoke on the telephone to

Uncle Henrik, telling him that Mama and the children were coming for a visit. Ellen had gone into the bathroom and closed the door; Mama was still in the kitchen. So only Annemarie was listening.

It was a very puzzling conversation.

"So, Henrik, is the weather good for fishing?" Papa asked cheerfully, and listened briefly.

Then he continued, "I'm sending Inge to you today with the children, and she will be bringing you a carton of cigarettes.

"Yes, just one," he said, after a moment. Annemarie couldn't hear Uncle Henrik's words. "But there are a lot of cigarettes available in Copenhagen now, if you know where to look," he went on, "and so there will be others coming to you as well, I'm sure."

But it wasn't true. Annemarie was quite certain it wasn't true. Cigarettes were the thing that Papa missed, the way Mama missed coffee. He complained often — he had complained only yesterday — that there were no cigarettes in the stores. The men in his office, he said, making a face, smoked almost anything: sometimes dried weeds rolled in paper, and the smell was terrible.

Why was Papa speaking that way, almost as if he were speaking in code? What was Mama *really* taking to Uncle Henrik?

Then she knew. It was Ellen.

*

The train ride north along the Danish coast was very beautiful. Again and again they could see the sea from the windows. Annemarie had made this trip often to visit her grandparents when they were alive, and later, after they were gone, to see the cheerful, suntanned, unmarried uncle whom she loved.

But the trip was new to Ellen, who sat with her face pressed to the window, watching the lovely homes along the seaside, the small farms and villages.

"Look!" Annemarie exclaimed, and pointed to the opposite side. "It's Klampenborg, and the Deer Park! Oh, I wish we could stop here, just for a little while!"

Mama shook her head. "Not today," she said. The train did stop at the small Klampenborg station, but none of the few passengers got off. "Have you ever been there, Ellen?" Mama asked, but Ellen said no.

"Well, someday you will go. Someday you will walk through the park and you will see hundreds of deer, tame and free."

Kirsti wriggled to her knees and peered through the window. "I don't see any deer!" she complained.

"They are there, I'm sure," Mama told her. "They're hiding in the trees."

The train started again. The door at the end of their car opened and two German soldiers appeared.

Annemarie tensed. Not here, on the train, too? They were *everywhere.*

Together the soldiers strolled through the car, glancing at passengers, stopping here and there to ask a question. One of them had something stuck in his teeth; he probed with his tongue and distorted his own face. Annemarie watched with a kind of frightened fascination as the pair approached.

One of the soldiers looked down with a bored expression on his face. "Where are you going?" he asked.

"Gilleleje," Mama replied calmly. "My brother lives there. We are going to visit him."

The soldier turned away and Annemarie relaxed. Then, without warning, he turned back. "Are you visiting your brother for the New Year?" he asked suddenly.

Mama stared at him with a puzzled look. "New Year?" she asked. "It is only October."

"And guess what!" Kirsti exclaimed suddenly, in a loud voice, looking at the soldier.

Annemarie's heart sank and she looked at her mother. Mama's eyes were frightened. "Shhh, Kirsti," Mama said. "Don't chatter so."

But Kirsti paid no attention to Mama, as usual. She looked cheerfully at the soldier, and Annemarie knew what she was about to say: This is our friend Ellen and it's *her* New Year!

But she didn't. Instead, Kirsti pointed at her feet. "I'm going to visit my Uncle Henrik," she chirped, "and I'm wearing my brand-new shiny black shoes!"

The soldier chuckled and moved on.

Annemarie gazed through the window again. The trees, the Baltic Sea, and the cloudy October sky passed in a blur as they continued north along the coast.

"Smell the air," Mama said when they stepped off the train and made their way to the narrow street. "Isn't it lovely and fresh? It always brings back memories for me."

The air was breezy and cool, and carried the sharp, not unpleasant smell of salt and fish. High against the pale clouds, seagulls soared and cried out as if they were mourning.

Mama looked at her watch. "I wonder if Henrik will be back yet. But it doesn't matter. The house is always unlocked. Come on, girls, we'll walk. It isn't far, just a little under two miles. And it's a nice day. We'll take the path through the woods instead of the road. It's a little longer, but it's so pretty."

"Didn't you love the castle when we went through Helsingør, Ellen?" Kirsti asked. She had been talking about Kronborg Castle ever since they had seen it, sprawling massive and ancient, beside the sea,

from the train. "I wish we could have stopped to visit the castle. Kings live there. And queens."

Annemarie sighed in exasperation with her little sister. "They do not," she said. "They did in the old days. But there aren't any kings there now. Denmark only *has* one king, anyway. And he lives in Copenhagen."

But Kirsti had pranced away, skipping along the sidewalk. "Kings and queens," she sang happily. "Kings and queens."

Mama shrugged and smiled. "Let her dream, Annemarie. I did the same when I was her age."

She turned, leading the way along a tiny, twisting street, heading toward the outskirts of the village. "Things have hardly changed here since I was a girl," she said. "My Aunt Gitte lived there, in that house" — she pointed — "and she's been dead for years. But the house is the same. She always had wonderful flowers in her garden." She peered over the low stone wall and looked at the few flowering bushes as they passed the house. "Maybe they still do, but it's the wrong time of year — there are just those few chrysanthemums left.

"And see, over there?" She pointed again. "My best friend — her name was Helena — lived in that house. Sometimes I used to spend the night with her. But more often she came to my house, on weekends. It was more fun to be in the country.

"My brother Henrik always teased us, though," she continued with a chuckle. "He told us ghost stories and scared us half to death."

The sidewalk ended and Mama turned onto a dirt path bordered by trees. "When I walked each morning into town for school," she said, "my dog followed me this far. At the end of the path he turned and went back home. I guess he was a country dog and didn't like town.

"And do you know what?" she went on, smiling. "I had named him Trofast — Faithful. And it was just the right name for him, because what a faithful dog he was! Every afternoon he was always right here, waiting for me to return. He knew the right time, somehow. Sometimes, as I come around this bend, even today, I feel as if I might come upon Trofast, waiting still, with his tail wagging."

But the path was empty today. No people. No faithful dogs. Mama shifted the bag she was carrying from one hand to the other, and they walked on through the woods until the path opened to a meadow dotted with cows. Here the path skirted the edge of the field, along a fence, and beyond it they could see the gray sea, ruffled by wind. The breeze moved the high grass.

At the end of the pasture, they entered the woods again and Annemarie knew they would soon be

there. Uncle Henrik's house was in a clearing beyond these woods.

"Do you mind if I run ahead?" she asked suddenly. "I want to be the first to see the house!"

"Go on," Mama told her. "Run ahead and tell the house we've come home."

Then she put her arm around Ellen's shoulders and added, "Say that we've brought a friend."

7
The House by the Sea

"Oh, Annemarie," Ellen said, with awe in her voice, "it is beautiful."

Annemarie looked around and nodded her head in agreement. The house and the meadows that surrounded it were so much a part of her childhood, a part of her life, that she didn't often look at them with fresh eyes. But now she did, seeing Ellen's pleasure. And it was true. They were beautiful.

The little red-roofed farmhouse was very old, its chimney crooked and even the small, shuttered windows tilted at angles. A bird's nest, wispy with straw, was half hidden in the corner where the roof met the wall above a bedroom window. Nearby, a gnarled tree was still speckled with a few apples now long past ripe.

Mama and Kirsti had gone inside, but Annemarie and Ellen ran across the high-grassed meadow, through the late wildflowers. From nowhere, a gray kitten appeared and ran beside them, pouncing here and there upon imagined mice, pausing to lick its paws, and then darting off again. It pretended to

ignore the girls, but looked back often to be certain that they were still there, apparently pleased to have playmates.

The meadow ended at the sea, and the gray water licked there at damp brown grass flattened by the wind and bordered by smooth heavy stones.

"I have never been this close to the sea," Ellen said.

"Of course you have. You've been to the harbor in Copenhagen a million times."

Ellen laughed. "I mean the *real* sea, the way it is here. Open like this — a whole world of water."

Annemarie shook her head in amazement. To live in Denmark, a country surrounded by water, and never to have stood at its edge?

"Your parents are really city people, aren't they?"

Ellen nodded. "My mother is afraid of the ocean," she said, laughing. "She says it is too big for her. And too cold!"

The girls sat on a rock and took off their shoes and socks. They tiptoed across the damp stones and let the water touch their feet. It *was* cold. They giggled and stepped back.

Annemarie leaned down and picked up a brown leaf that floated back and forth with the movement of the water.

"Look," she said. "This leaf may have come from a tree in Sweden. It could have blown from a tree

into the sea, and floated all the way across. See over there?" she said, pointing. "See the land? Way across there? That's Sweden."

Ellen cupped one hand over her eyes and looked across the water at the misty shoreline that was another country. "It's not so very far," she said.

"Maybe," Annemarie suggested, "standing over there are two girls just our age, looking across and saying, 'That's Denmark!' "

They squinted into the hazy distance, as if they might see Swedish children standing there and looking back. But it was too far. They saw only the hazy strip of land and two small boats bobbing up and down in the gray ruffles of separating water.

"I wonder if one of those is your Uncle Henrik's boat," Ellen said.

"Maybe. I can't tell. They're too far away. Uncle Henrik's boat is named the *Ingeborg,*" she told Ellen, "for Mama."

Ellen looked around. "Does he keep it right here? Does he tie it up so that it won't float away?"

Annemarie laughed. "Oh, no. In town, at the harbor, there's a big dock, and all the fishing boats go and come from there. That's where they unload their fish. You should smell it! At night they are all there, anchored in the harbor."

"Annemarie! Ellen!" Mama's voice came across the meadow. The girls looked around, and saw her

waving to them. They turned, picked up their shoes, and began walking toward the house. The kitten, who had settled comfortably on the stony shore, rose immediately and followed them.

"I took Ellen down to show her the sea," Annemarie explained when they reached the place where Mama waited. "She'd never been that close before! We started to wade, but it was too cold. I wish we had come in summer so we could swim."

"It's cold even then," Mama said. She looked around. "You didn't see anyone, did you? You didn't talk to anyone?"

Annemarie shook her head. "Just the kitten." Ellen had picked it up, and it lay purring in her arms as she stroked its small head and talked to it softly.

"I meant to warn you. You must stay away from people while we are here."

"But there's no one around here," Annemarie reminded her.

"Even so. If you see anyone at all — even someone you know, one of Henrik's friends — it is better if you come in the house. It is too difficult — maybe even dangerous — to explain who Ellen is."

Ellen looked up and bit her lip. "There aren't soldiers here, too?" she asked.

Mama sighed. "I'm afraid there are soldiers everywhere. And especially now. This is a bad time.

"Come in now and help me fix supper. Henrik will

be home soon. Watch the step there; it's loose. Do you know what I have done? I found enough apples for applesauce. Even though there is no sugar, the apples are sweet. Henrik will bring home some fish and there is wood for the fire, so tonight we will be warm and well fed."

"It is not a bad time, then," Annemarie told her. "Not if there is applesauce."

Ellen kissed the kitten's head and let it leap from her arms to the ground. It darted away and disappeared in the tall grass. They followed Mama into the house.

That night, the girls dressed for bed in the small upstairs bedroom they were sharing, the same bedroom that had been Mama's when she was a little girl. Across the hall, Kirsti was already asleep in the wide bed that had once belonged to Annemarie's grandparents.

Ellen touched her neck after she had put on Annemarie's flower-sprigged nightgown, which Mama had packed.

"Where is my necklace?" she asked. "What did you do with it?"

"I hid it in a safe place," Annemarie told her. "A very secret place where no one will ever find it. And I will keep it there for you until it is safe for you to wear it again."

Ellen nodded. "Papa gave it to me when I was very small," she explained.

She sat down on the edge of the old bed and ran her fingers along the handmade quilt that covered it. The flowers and birds, faded now, had been stitched onto the quilt by Annemarie's great-grandmother many years before.

"I wish I knew where my parents are," Ellen said in a small voice as she outlined one of the appliquéd birds with her finger.

Annemarie didn't have an answer for her. She patted Ellen's hand and they sat together silently. Through the window, they could see a thin, round slice of moon appear through the clouds, against the pale sky. The Scandinavian night was not very dark yet, though soon, when winter came, the night would be not only dark but very long, night skies beginning in the late afternoon and lasting through morning.

From downstairs, they could hear Mama's voice, and Uncle Henrik's, talking, catching up on news. Mama missed her brother when she hadn't seen him for a while, Annemarie knew. They were very close. Mama always teased him gently for not marrying; she asked him, laughing, when they were together, whether he had found a good wife yet, one who would keep his house tidier. Henrik teased back, and

told Mama that she should come to Gilleleje to live again so that he wouldn't have to do all the chores by himself.

For a moment, to Annemarie, listening, it seemed like all the earlier times, the happy visits to the farm in the past with summer daylight extending beyond bedtime, with the children tucked away in the bedrooms and the grownups downstairs talking.

But there was a difference. In the earlier times, she had always overheard laughter. Tonight there was no laughter at all.