8
There Has Been a Death

Through a haze of dreams Annemarie heard Henrik rise and leave the house, headed for the barn with his milking pail, at daybreak. Later, when she woke again, it was morning. She could hear birds calling outside, one of them close by the window in the apple tree; and she could hear Mama below, in the kitchen, talking to Kirsti.

Ellen was still asleep. The night before, so shortened by the soldiers in the Copenhagen apartment, seemed long ago. Annemarie rose quietly so that she wouldn't wake her friend. She pulled on her clothes and went down the narrow, curved staircase to find her sister kneeling on the kitchen floor trying to make the gray kitten drink water from a bowl.

"Silly," she said. "Kittens like milk, not water."

"I am teaching this one new habits," Kirsti explained importantly. "And I have named him Thor, for the God of Thunder."

Annemarie burst out laughing. She looked at the tiny kitten, who was shaking his head, irritated at his wet whiskers as Kirsti kept trying to dip his face to

the water. "God of Thunder?" Annemarie said. "He looks as if he would run and *hide* if there were a thunderstorm!"

"He has a mother someplace who would comfort him, I imagine," Mama said. "And when he wants milk, he'll find his mama."

"Or he could go visit the cow," Kirsti said.

Although Uncle Henrik no longer raised crops on the farm, as his parents had, he still kept a cow, who munched happily on the meadow grass and gave a little milk each day in return. Now and then he was able to send cheese into Copenhagen to his sister's family. This morning, Annemarie noticed with delight, Mama had made oatmeal, and there was a pitcher of cream on the table. It was a very long time since she had tasted cream. At home they had bread and tea every morning.

Mama followed Annemarie's eyes to the pitcher. "Fresh from Blossom," she said. "Henrik milks her every morning before he leaves for the boat.

"And," she added, "there's butter, too. Usually not even Henrik has butter, but he managed to save a little this time."

"Save a little from what?" Annemarie asked, spooning oatmeal into a flowered bowl. "Don't tell me the soldiers try to — what's the word? — *relocate* butter, too?" She laughed at her own joke.

But it wasn't a joke at all, though Mama laughed

ruefully. "They do," she said. "They relocate all the farmers' butter, right into the stomach of their army! I suppose that if they knew Henrik had kept this tiny bit, they would come with guns and march it away, down the path!"

Kirsti joined their laughter, as the three of them pictured a mound of frightened butter under military arrest. The kitten darted away when Kirsti's attention was distracted, and settled on the windowsill. Suddenly, here in this sunlit kitchen, with cream in a pitcher and a bird in the apple tree beside the door — and out in the Kattegat, where Uncle Henrik, surrounded by bright blue sky and water, pulled in his nets filled with shiny silver fish — suddenly the specter of guns and grim-faced soldiers seemed nothing more than a ghost story, a joke with which to frighten children in the dark.

Ellen appeared in the kitchen doorway, smiling sleepily, and Mama put another flowered bowl of steaming oatmeal on the old wooden table.

"Cream," Annemarie said, gesturing to the pitcher with a grin.

All day long the girls played out of doors under the brilliant clear sky and sun. Annemarie took Ellen to the small pasture beyond the barn and introduced her to Blossom, who gave a lazy, rough-textured lick to

the palm of Ellen's hand when she extended it timidly. The kitten scampered about and chased flying insects across the meadow. The girls picked armfuls of wildflowers dried brown, now, by the early fall chill, and arranged them in pots and pitchers until the table tops were crowded with their bouquets.

Inside the house, Mama scrubbed and dusted, tsk-tsking at Uncle Henrik's untidy housekeeping. She took the rugs out to the clothesline and beat them with a stick, scattering dust into the air.

"He needs a wife," she said, shaking her head, and attacked the old wooden floors with a broom while the rugs aired.

"Just look at this," she said, opening the door to the little-used formal living room with its old-fashioned furniture. "He *never* dusts." And she picked up her cleaning rags.

"And, Kirsti," she added, "the God of Thunder made a very small rain shower in the corner of the kitchen floor. Keep an eye on him."

Late in the afternoon, Uncle Henrik came home. He grinned when he saw the newly cleaned and polished house, the double doors to the living room wide open, the rugs aired, and the windows washed.

"Henrik, you need a wife," Mama scolded him.

Uncle Henrik laughed and joined Mama on the steps near the kitchen door. "Why do I need a wife, when I have a sister?" he asked in his booming voice.

Mama sighed, but her eyes were twinkling. "And you need to stay home more often to take care of the house. This step is broken, and there is a leaking faucet in the kitchen. And —"

Henrik was grinning at her, shaking his head in mock dismay. "And there are mice in the attic, and my brown sweater has a big moth hole in the sleeve, and if I don't wash the windows soon —"

They laughed together.

"Anyway," Mama said, "I have opened every window, Henrik, to let the air in, and the sunlight. Thank goodness it is such a beautiful day."

"Tomorrow will be a day for fishing," Henrik said, his smile disappearing.

Annemarie, listening, recognized the odd phrase. Papa had said something like it on the telephone. "Is the weather good for fishing, Henrik?" Papa had asked. But what did it mean? Henrik went fishing every day, rain or shine. Denmark's fishermen didn't wait for sunny days to take their boats out and throw their nets into the sea. Annemarie, silent, sitting with Ellen under the apple tree, watched her uncle.

Mama looked at him. "The weather is right?" she asked.

Henrik nodded and looked at the sky. He smelled the air. "I will be going back to the boat tonight after supper. We will leave very early in the morning. I will stay on the boat all night."

Annemarie wondered what it would be like to be on a boat all night. To lie at anchor, hearing the sea slap against the sides. To see the stars from your place on the sea.

"You have prepared the living room?" Uncle Henrik asked suddenly.

Mama nodded. "It is cleaned, and I moved the furniture a bit to make room.

"And you saw the flowers," she added. "I hadn't thought of it, but the girls picked dried flowers from the meadow."

"Prepared the living room for what?" Annemarie asked. "Why did you move the furniture?"

Mama looked at Uncle Henrik. He had reached down for the kitten, scampering past, and now held it against his chest and scratched its chin gently. It arched its small back with pleasure.

"Well, girls," he said, "it is a sad event, but not *too* sad, really, because she was very, very old. There has been a death, and tonight your Great-aunt Birte will be resting in the living room, in her casket, before she is buried tomorrow. It is the old custom, you know, for the dead to rest at home, and their loved ones to be with them before burial."

Kirsti was listening with a fascinated look. "Right here?" she asked. "A dead person right here?"

Annemarie said nothing. She was confused. This was the first she had heard of a death in the family.

No one had called Copenhagen to say that there had been a death. No one had seemed sad.

And — most puzzling of all — she had never heard the name before. Great-aunt Birte. *Surely* she would have known if she had a relative by that name. Kirsti might not; Kirsti was little and didn't pay attention to such things.

But Annemarie did. She had always been fascinated by her mother's stories of her own childhood. She remembered the names of all the cousins, the great-aunts, and -uncles: who had been a tease, who had been a grouch, who had been such a scold that her husband had finally moved away to a different house, though they continued to have dinner together every night. Such wonderful, interesting stories, filled with the colorful personalities of her mother's family.

And Annemarie was quite, quite certain, though she said nothing. There was no Great-aunt Birte. She didn't exist.

9
Why Are You Lying?

Annemarie went outside alone after supper. Through the open kitchen window she could hear Mama and Ellen talking as they washed the dishes. Kirsti, she knew, was busy on the floor, playing with the old dolls she had found upstairs, the dolls that had been Mama's once, long ago. The kitten had fled when she tried to dress it, and disappeared.

She wandered to the barn, where Uncle Henrik was milking Blossom. He was kneeling on the straw-covered floor beside the cow, his shoulder pressed against her heavy side, his strong tanned hands rhythmically urging her milk into the spotless bucket. The God of Thunder sat alertly poised nearby, watching.

Blossom looked up at Annemarie with big brown eyes, and moved her wrinkled mouth like an old woman adjusting false teeth.

Annemarie leaned against the ancient splintery wood of the barn wall and listened to the sharp rattling sound of the streams of milk as they hit the sides of the bucket. Uncle Henrik glanced over at her

and smiled without pausing in the rhythm of milking. He didn't say anything.

Through the barn windows, the pinkish light of sunset fell in irregular shapes upon the stacked hay. Flecks of dust and straw floated there, in the light.

"Uncle Henrik," Annemarie said suddenly, her voice cold, "you are lying to me. You and Mama both."

His strong hands continued, deftly pressing like a pulse against the cow. The steady streams of milk still came. He looked at her again, his deep blue eyes kind and questioning. "You are angry," he said.

"Yes. Mama has never lied to me before. Never. But I know there is no Great-aunt Birte. Never once, in all the stories I've heard, in all the old pictures I've seen, has there been a Great-aunt Birte."

Uncle Henrik sighed. Blossom looked back at him, as if to say "Almost done," and, indeed, the streams of milk lessened and slowed.

He tugged at the cow gently but firmly, pulling down the last of the milk. The bucket was half full, frothy on the top. Finally he set it aside and washed the cow's udder with a clean damp cloth. Then he lifted the bucket to a shelf and covered it. He rubbed the cow's neck affectionately. At last he turned to Annemarie as he wiped his own hands with the cloth.

"How brave are you, little Annemarie?" he asked suddenly.

She was startled. And dismayed. It was a question she did not want to be asked. When she asked it of herself, she didn't like her own answer.

"Not very," she confessed, looking at the floor of the barn.

Tall Uncle Henrik knelt before her so that his face was level with hers. Behind him, Blossom lowered her head, grasped a mouthful of hay in her mouth, and drew it in with her tongue. The kitten cocked its head, waiting, still hoping for spilled milk.

"I think that is not true," Uncle Henrik said. "I think you are like your mama, and like your papa, and like me. Frightened, but determined, and if the time came to be brave, I am quite sure you would be very, very brave.

"But," he added, "it is much *easier* to be brave if you do not know everything. And so your mama does not know everything. Neither do I. We know only what we need to know.

"Do you understand what I am saying?" he asked, looking into her eyes.

Annemarie frowned. She wasn't sure. What did bravery mean? She had been very frightened the day — not long ago, though now it seemed far in the past — when the soldier had stopped her on the street and asked questions in his rough voice.

And she had not known everything then. She had not known that the Germans were going to take away

the Jews. And so, when the soldier asked, looking at Ellen that day, "What is your friend's name?" she had been able to answer him, even though she was frightened. If she had known everything, it would not have been so easy to be brave.

She began to understand, just a little. "Yes," she said to Uncle Henrik, "I think I understand."

"You guessed correctly," he told her. "There is no Great-aunt Birte, and never has been. Your mama lied to you, and so did I.

"We did so," he explained, "to help you to be brave, because we love you. Will you forgive us for that?"

Annemarie nodded. She felt older, suddenly.

"And I am not going to tell you any more, not now, for the same reason. Do you understand?"

Annemarie nodded again. Suddenly there was a noise outside. Uncle Henrik's shoulders stiffened. He rose quickly, went to the window of the barn, stood in the shadows, and looked out. Then he turned back to Annemarie.

"It is the hearse," he said. "It is Great-aunt Birte, who never was." He smiled wryly. "So, my little friend, it is time for the night of mourning to begin. Are you ready?"

Annemarie took her uncle's hand and he led her from the barn.

*

The gleaming wooden casket rested on supports in the center of the living room and was surrounded by the fragile, papery flowers that Annemarie and Ellen had picked that afternoon. Lighted candles stood in holders on the table and cast a soft, flickering light. The hearse had gone, and the solemn-faced men who had carried the casket indoors had gone with it, after speaking quietly to Uncle Henrik.

Kirsti had gone to bed reluctantly, complaining that she wanted to stay up with the others, that she was grownup enough, that she had never before seen a dead person in a closed-up box, that it wasn't *fair*. But Mama had been firm, and finally Kirsti, sulking, had trudged upstairs with her dolls under one arm and the kitten under the other.

Ellen was silent, and had a sad expression. "I'm so sorry your Aunt Birte died," Annemarie heard her say to Mama, who smiled sadly and thanked her.

Annemarie had listened and said nothing. So now I, too, am lying, she thought, and to my very best friend. I could tell Ellen that it isn't true, that there is no Great-aunt Birte. I could take her aside and whisper the secret to her so that she wouldn't have to feel sad.

But she didn't. She understood that she was protecting Ellen the way her mother had protected her. Although she didn't understand what was hap-

pening, or why the casket was there — or who, in truth, was in it — she knew that it was better, *safer*, for Ellen to believe in Great-aunt Birte. So she said nothing.

Other people came as the night sky grew darker. A man and a woman, both of them dressed in dark clothing, the woman carrying a sleeping baby, appeared at the door, and Uncle Henrik gestured them inside. They nodded to Mama and to the girls. They went, following Uncle Henrik, to the living room and sat down quietly.

"Friends of Great-aunt Birte," Mama said quietly in response to Annemarie's questioning look. Annemarie knew that Mama was lying again, and she could see that Mama understood that she knew. They looked at each other for a long time and said nothing. In that moment, with that look, they became equals.

From the living room came the sound of a sleepy baby's brief wail. Annemarie glanced through the door and saw the woman open her blouse and begin to nurse the infant, who quieted.

Another man arrived: an old man, bearded. Quietly he went to the living room and sat down, saying nothing to the others, who only glanced at him. The young woman lifted her baby's blanket, covering its face and her own breast. The old man bent his head

forward and closed his eyes, as if he were praying. His mouth moved silently, forming words that no one could hear.

Annemarie stood in the doorway, watching the mourners as they sat in the candlelit room. Then she turned back to the kitchen and began to help Ellen and Mama as they prepared food.

In Copenhagen, she remembered, when Lise died, friends had come to their apartment every evening. All of them had brought food so that Mama wouldn't need to cook.

Why hadn't these people brought food? Why didn't they talk? In Copenhagen, even though the talk was sad, people had spoken softly to one another and to Mama and Papa. They had talked about Lise, remembering happier times.

Thinking about it as she sliced cheese in the kitchen, Annemarie realized that these people had nothing to talk about. They couldn't speak of happier times with Great-aunt Birte when there had never been a Great-aunt Birte at all.

Uncle Henrik came into the kitchen. He glanced at his watch and then at Mama. "It's getting late," he said. "I should go to the boat." He looked worried. He blew out the candles so that there would be no light at all, and opened the door. He stared beyond the gnarled apple tree into the darkness.

"Good. Here they come," he said in a low, relieved voice. "Ellen, come with me."

Ellen looked questioningly toward Mama, who nodded. "Go with Henrik," she said.

Annemarie watched, still holding the wedge of firm cheese in her hand, as Ellen followed Uncle Henrik into the yard. She could hear a sharp, low cry from Ellen, and then the sound of voices speaking softly.

In a moment Uncle Henrik returned. Behind him was Peter Neilsen.

Tonight Peter went first to Mama and hugged her. Then he hugged Annemarie and kissed her on the cheek. But he said nothing. There was no playfulness to his affection tonight, just a sense of urgency, of worry. He went immediately to the living room, looked around, and nodded at the silent people there.

Ellen was still outside. But in a moment the door opened and she returned — held tightly, like a little girl, her bare legs dangling, against her father's chest. Her mother was beside them.

10
Let Us Open the Casket

"You are all here now," Uncle Henrik said, looking around the living room. "I must go."

Annemarie stood in the wide doorway, looking in from the hall. The baby slept now, and its mother looked tired. Her husband sat beside her, his arm across her shoulders. The old man's head was still bent.

Peter sat alone, leaning forward with his elbows on his knees. It was clear that he was deep in thought.

On the sofa Ellen sat between her parents, one hand clasped tightly in her mother's. She looked up at Annemarie but didn't smile. Annemarie felt a surge of sadness; the bond of their friendship had not broken, but it was as if Ellen had moved now into a different world, the world of her own family and whatever lay ahead for them.

The elderly bearded man looked up suddenly as Uncle Henrik prepared to go. "God keep you safe," he said in a firm but quiet voice.

Henrik nodded. "God keep us all safe," he replied. Then he turned and left the room. A moment

later Annemarie heard him leave the house.

Mama brought the teapot from the kitchen, and a tray of cups. Annemarie helped her pass the cups around. No one spoke.

"Annemarie," Mama whispered to her in the hall, "you may go to bed if you want to. It is very late."

Annemarie shook her head. But she was tired. She could see that Ellen was, too; her friend's head was leaning on her mother's shoulder, and her eyes closed now and then.

Finally Annemarie went to the empty rocking chair in the corner of the living room and curled there with her head against its soft, padded back. She dozed.

She was startled from her half sleep by the sudden sweep of headlights, through the sheer curtains and across the room, as a car pulled up outside. The car doors slammed. Everyone in the room tensed, but no one spoke.

She heard — as if in a recurring nightmare — the pounding on the door, and then the heavy, frighteningly familiar staccato of boots on the kitchen floor. The woman with the baby gasped and began, suddenly, to weep.

The male, accented voice from the kitchen was loud. "We have observed," he said, "that an unusual number of people have gathered at this house tonight. What is the explanation?"

"There has been a death," Mama's voice replied

calmly. "It is always our custom to gather and pay our respects when a family member dies. I am sure you are familiar with our customs."

One of the officers pushed Mama ahead of him from the kitchen and entered the living room. There were others behind him. They filled the wide doorway. As always, their boots gleamed. Their guns. Their helmets. All of them gleamed in the candlelight.

Annemarie watched as the man's eyes moved around the room. He looked for a long time at the casket. Then he moved his gaze, focusing on each person in turn. When his eyes reached her, she looked back at him steadily.

"Who died?" he asked harshly.

No one answered. They watched Annemarie, and she realized that the officer was directing the question at her.

Now she knew for certain what Uncle Henrik had meant when he had talked to her in the barn. To be brave came more easily if you knew nothing.

She swallowed. "My Great-aunt Birte," she lied, in a firm voice.

The officer moved forward suddenly, across the room, to the casket. He placed one gloved hand on its lid. "Poor Great-aunt Birte," he said, in a condescending voice.

"I *do* know your customs," he said, turning his

gaze toward Mama, who still stood in the doorway. "And I know it is the custom to pay one's respects by looking your loved one in the face. It seems odd to me that you have closed this coffin up so tightly." His hand was in a fist, and he rubbed it across the edge of the polished lid.

"Why is it not open?" he demanded. "Let us open it up and take one last look at Great-aunt Birte!"

Annemarie saw Peter, across the room, stiffen in his chair, lift his chin, and reach slowly with one hand toward his side.

Mama walked quickly across the room, directly to the casket, directly to the officer. "You're right," she said. "The doctor said it should be closed, because Aunt Birte died of typhus, and he said that there was a chance the germs would still be there, would still be dangerous. But what does he know — only a country doctor, and an old man at that? Surely typhus germs wouldn't linger in a dead person! And dear Aunt Birte; I have been longing to see her face, to kiss her goodbye. Of *course* we will open the casket! I am glad you suggested —"

With a swift motion the Nazi officer slapped Mama across her face. She staggered backward, and a white mark on her cheek darkened.

"You foolish woman," he spat. "To think that we have any interest in seeing the body of your diseased aunt! Open it after we leave," he said.

With one gloved thumb he pressed a candle flame into darkness. The hot wax spattered the table. "Put all these candles out," he said, "or pull the curtains."

Then he strode to the doorway and left the room. Motionless, silent, one hand to her cheek, Mama listened — they all listened — as the uniformed men left the house. In a moment they heard the car doors, the sound of its engine, and finally they heard it drive away.

"Mama!" Annemarie cried.

Her mother shook her head quickly, and glanced at the open window covered only by the sheer curtain. Annemarie understood. There might still be soldiers outside, watching, listening.

Peter stood and drew the dark curtains across the windows. He relit the extinguished candle. Then he reached for the old Bible that had always been there, on the mantel. He opened it quickly and said, "I will read a psalm."

His eyes turned to the page he had opened at random, and he began to read in a strong voice.

O praise the Lord.
How good it is to sing psalms to our God!
How pleasant to praise him!
The Lord is rebuilding Jerusalem;
he gathers in the scattered sons of Israel.
It is he who heals the broken in spirit

and binds up their wounds,
he who numbers the stars one by one . . .

Mama sat down and listened. Gradually they each began to relax. Annemarie could see the old man across the room, moving his lips as Peter read; he knew the ancient psalm by heart.

Annemarie didn't. The words were unfamiliar to her, and she tried to listen, tried to understand, tried to forget the war and the Nazis, tried not to cry, tried to be brave. The night breeze moved the dark curtains at the open windows. Outside, she knew, the sky was speckled with stars. How could anyone number them one by one, as the psalm said? There were too many. The sky was too big.

Ellen had said that her mother was frightened of the ocean, that it was too cold and too big.

The sky was, too, thought Annemarie. The whole *world* was: too cold, too big. And too cruel.

Peter read on, in his firm voice, though it was clear he was tired. The long minutes passed. They seemed hours.

Finally, still reading, he moved quietly to the window. He closed the Bible and listened to the quiet night. Then he looked around the room. "Now," he said, "it is time."

First he closed the windows. Then he went to the casket and opened the lid.

11
Will We See You Again Soon, Peter?

Annemarie blinked. Across the dark room, she saw Ellen, too, peering into the narrow wooden box in surprise.

There was no one in the casket at all. Instead, it seemed to be stuffed with folded blankets and articles of clothing.

Peter began to lift the things out and distribute them to the silent people in the room. He handed heavy coats to the man and wife, and another to the old man with the beard.

"It will be very cold," he murmured. "Put them on." He found a thick sweater for Mrs. Rosen, and a woolen jacket for Ellen's father. After a moment of rummaging through the folded things, he found a smaller winter jacket, and handed it to Ellen.

Annemarie watched as Ellen took the jacket in her arms and looked at it. It was patched and worn. It was true that there had been few new clothes for anyone during the recent years; but still, Ellen's mother had always managed to make clothes for her daughter, often using old things that she was able to

take apart and refashion in a way that made them seem brand-new. Never had Ellen worn anything so shabby and old.

But she put it on, pulled it around her, and buttoned the mismatched buttons.

Peter, his arms full of the odd pieces of clothing, looked toward the silent couple with the infant. "I'm sorry," he said to them. "There is nothing for a baby."

"I'll find something," Mama said quickly. "The baby must be warm." She left the room and was back in a moment with Kirsti's thick red sweater.

"Here," she said softly to the mother. "It will be much too big, but that will make it even warmer for him."

The woman spoke for the first time. "Her," she whispered. "She's a girl. Her name is Rachel."

Mama smiled and helped her direct the sleeping baby's arms into the sleeves of the sweater. Together they buttoned the heart-shaped buttons — how Kirsti loved that sweater, with its heart buttons! — until the tiny child was completely encased in the warm red wool. Her eyelids fluttered but she didn't wake.

Peter reached into his pocket and took something out. He went to the parents and leaned down toward the baby. He opened the lid of the small bottle in his hand.

"How much does she weigh?" Peter asked.

"She was seven pounds when she was born," the young woman replied. "She's gained a little, but not very much. Maybe she weighs eight pounds now, no more."

"A few drops will be enough, then. It has no taste. She won't even notice."

The mother tightened her arms around the baby and looked up at Peter, pleading. "Please, no," she said. "She always sleeps all night. Please, she doesn't need it, I promise. She won't cry."

Peter's voice was firm. "We can't take a chance," he said. He inserted the dropper of the bottle into the baby's tiny mouth, and squeezed a few drops of liquid onto her tongue. The baby yawned, and swallowed. The mother closed her eyes; her husband gripped her shoulder.

Next, Peter removed the folded blankets from the coffin, one by one, and handed them around. "Carry these with you," he said. "You will need them later, for warmth."

Annemarie's mother moved around the room and gave each person a small package of food: the cheese and bread and apples that Annemarie had helped her prepare in the kitchen hours before.

Finally, Peter took a paper-wrapped packet from the inside of his own jacket. He looked around the room, at the assembled people now dressed in the

bulky winter clothing, and then motioned to Mr. Rosen, who followed him to the hall.

Annemarie could overhear their conversation. "Mr. Rosen," Peter said, "I must get this to Henrik. But I might not see him. I am going to take the others only to the harbor and they will go to the boat alone.

"I want you to deliver this. Without fail. It is of great importance." There was a moment of silence in the hall, and Annemarie knew that Peter must be giving the packet to Mr. Rosen.

Annemarie could see it protruding from Mr. Rosen's pocket when he returned to the room and sat down again. She could see, too, that Mr. Rosen had a puzzled look. He didn't know what the packet contained. He hadn't asked.

It was one more time, Annemarie realized, when they protected one another by not telling. If Mr. Rosen knew, he might be frightened. If Mr. Rosen knew, he might be in danger.

So he hadn't asked. And Peter hadn't explained.

"Now," Peter said, looking at his watch, "I will lead the first group. You, and you, and you." He gestured to the old man and to the young people with their baby.

"Inge," he said. Annemarie realized that it was the

first time that she had heard Peter Neilsen call her mother by her first name; before, it had always been "Mrs. Johansen"; or, in the old days, during the merriment and excitement of his engagement to Lise, it had been, occasionally, "Mama." Now it was Inge. It was as if he had moved beyond his own youth and had taken his place in the world of adults. Her mother nodded and waited for his instructions.

"You wait twenty minutes, and then bring the Rosens. Don't come sooner. We must be separate on the path so there is less chance of being seen."

Mrs. Johansen nodded again.

"Come directly back to the house after you have seen the Rosens safely to Henrik. Stay in the shadows and on the back path — you know that, of course.

"By the time you get the Rosens to the boat," Peter went on, "I will be gone. As soon as I deliver my group, I must move on. There is other work to be done tonight."

He turned to Annemarie. "So I will say goodbye to you now."

Annemarie went to him and gave him a hug. "But we will see you again soon?" she asked.

"I hope so," Peter said. "Very soon. Don't grow much more, or you will be taller than I am, little Longlegs!"

Annemarie smiled, but Peter's comment was no

longer the lighthearted fun of the past. It was only a brief grasp at something that had gone.

Peter kissed Mama wordlessly. Then he wished the Rosens Godspeed, and he led the others through the door.

Mama, Annemarie, and the Rosens sat in silence. There was a slight commotion outside the door, and Mama went quickly to look out. In a moment she was back.

"It's all right," she said, in response to their looks. "The old man stumbled. But Peter helped him up. He didn't seem to be hurt. Maybe just his pride," she added, smiling a bit.

It was an odd word: *pride.* Annemarie looked at the Rosens, sitting there, wearing the misshapen, ill-fitting clothing, holding ragged blankets folded in their arms, their faces drawn and tired. She remembered the earlier, happier times: Mrs. Rosen, her hair neatly combed and covered, lighting the Sabbath candles, saying the ancient prayer. And Mr. Rosen, sitting in the big chair in their living room, studying his thick books, correcting papers, adjusting his glasses, looking up now and then to complain good-naturedly about the lack of decent light. She remembered Ellen in the school play, moving confidently across the stage, her gestures sure, her voice clear.

All of those things, those sources of pride — the

candlesticks, the books, the daydreams of theater — had been left behind in Copenhagen. They had nothing with them now; there was only the clothing of unknown people for warmth, the food from Henrik's farm for survival, and the dark path ahead, through the woods, to freedom.

Annemarie realized, though she had not really been told, that Uncle Henrik was going to take them, in his boat, across the sea to Sweden. She knew how frightened Mrs. Rosen was of the sea: its width, its depth, its cold. She knew how frightened Ellen was of the soldiers, with their guns and boots, who were certainly looking for them. And she knew how frightened they all must be of the future.

But their shoulders were as straight as they had been in the past: in the classroom, on the stage, at the Sabbath table. So there were other sources, too, of pride, and they had not left everything behind.

12
Where Was Mama?

Mr. Rosen tripped on the loose step outside the kitchen door. His wife grasped his arm, and he regained his balance.

"It's very dark," Mama whispered as they stood in the yard with their blankets and bundles of food gathered in their arms, "and we can't use any kind of light. I'll go first — I know the way very well — and you follow me. Try not to stumble over the tree roots in the path. Feel carefully with your feet. The path is uneven.

"And be very, very quiet," she added, unnecessarily.

The night was quiet, too. A slight breeze moved in the tops of the trees, and from across the meadow came the sound of the sea's movement, which was a constant sound here and had always been. But no birds called or cried here now, in the night. The cow slept silently in the barn, the kitten upstairs in Kirsti's arms.

There were stars here and there, dotting the sky

among thin clouds, but no moon. Annemarie shivered, standing at the foot of the steps.

"Come," Mama murmured, and she moved away from the house.

One by one the Rosens turned and hugged Annemarie silently. Ellen came to her last; the two girls held each other.

"I'll come back someday," Ellen whispered fiercely. "I *promise.*"

"I know you will," Annemarie whispered back, holding her friend tightly.

Then they were gone, Mama and the Rosens. Annemarie was alone. She went into the house, crying suddenly, and closed the door against the night.

The lid of the casket was closed again. Now the room was empty; there was no sign of the people who had sat there for those hours. Annemarie wiped her eyes with the back of her hand. She opened the dark curtains and the windows; she curled once more in the rocker, trying to relax; she traced their route in her mind. She knew the old path, too — not as well as her mother, who had followed it almost every day of her childhood with her dog scampering behind. But Annemarie had often walked to town and back that way, and she remembered the turns, the twisted

trees whose gnarled roots pushed the earth now and then into knotted clumps, and the thick bushes that often flowered in early summer.

She walked with them in her mind, feeling the way through the darkness. It would take them, she thought, half an hour to reach the place where Uncle Henrik was waiting with his boat. Mama would leave them there — pausing a minute, no more, for a final hug — and then she would turn and come home. It would be faster for Mama alone, with no need to wait as the Rosens, unfamiliar with the path, slowly felt their way along. Mama would hurry, sure-footed now, back to her children.

The clock in the hall struck once; it was two-thirty in the morning. Her mother would be home in an hour, Annemarie decided. She rocked gently back and forth in the old chair. Mama would be home by three-thirty.

She thought of Papa, back in Copenhagen alone. He would be awake, too. He would be wishing he could have come, but knowing, too, that he must come and go as always: to the corner store for the newspaper, to his office when morning came. Now he would be afraid for them, and watching the clock, waiting for word that the Rosens were safe, that Mama and the girls were here at the farm, starting a new day with the sun shining through the kitchen window and cream on their oatmeal.

It was harder for the ones who were waiting, Annemarie knew. Less danger, perhaps, but more fear.

She yawned, and her head nodded. She fell asleep, and it was a sleep as thin as the night clouds, dotted with dreams that came and went like the stars.

Light woke her. But it was not really morning, not yet. It was only the first hint of a slightly lightening sky: a pale gleam at the edge of the meadow, a sign that far away somewhere, to the east where Sweden still slept, morning would be coming soon. Dawn would creep across the Swedish farmland and coast; then it would wash little Denmark with light and move across the North Sea to wake Norway.

Annemarie blinked in confusion, sitting up, remembering after a moment where she was and why. But it was not right, the pale light at the horizon — it should be dark still. It should still be night.

She stood stiffly, stretching her legs, and went to the hall to look at the old clock. It was past four o'clock.

Where was Mama?

Perhaps she had come home, not wanted to wake Annemarie, and had gone to bed herself. Surely that was it. Mama must have been exhausted; she had been up all night, had made the dangerous journey to the boat, and returned through the dark woods, wanting only to sleep.

Quickly Annemarie went up the narrow staircase. The door to the bedroom where she had slept with Ellen was open. The two small beds were neatly made, covered with the old quilts, and empty.

Beside it, Uncle Henrik's door was open, too; and his bed, too, was unused and empty. Despite her worry, Annemarie smiled slightly when she saw some of Henrik's clothes crumpled in a chair and a pair of shoes, caked with the barnyard dirt, lying on the floor.

He needs a wife, she said to herself, imitating Mama.

The door to the other bedroom, the one Kirsti and Mama were sharing, was closed. Quietly, not wanting to wake them, Annemarie pushed it open.

The kitten's ears moved, standing up straight; its eyes opened wide, and it raised its head and yawned. It pried itself out of Kirsti's arms, stretched, and then jumped lightly to the floor and came to Annemarie. It rubbed itself against her leg and purred.

Kirsti sighed and turned in her sleep; one arm, free now of the kitten's warmth and comfort, flung itself across the pillow.

There was no one else in the wide bed.

Annemarie moved quickly to the window, which overlooked the clearing that led to the path's entrance. The light outside was still very dim, and she peered through the dimness, trying to see, looking

for the opening in the trees where the path began, looking for Mama hurrying home.

After a second she saw a shape there: something unfamiliar, something that had not been there the day before. A dark shape, no more than a blurred heap, at the beginning of the path. Annemarie squinted, forcing her eyes to understand, needing to understand, not wanting to understand.

The shape moved. And she knew. It was her mother, lying on the earth.

13
Run! As Fast As You Can!

Still moving quietly so as not to wake her sister, Annemarie sped down the stairs and through the kitchen door. Her foot caught the loose step and she faltered for a moment, righting herself, then dashed across the ground to the place where her mother lay.

"Mama!" she called desperately. "Mama!"

"Shhh," Mama said, raising her head. "I'm all right!"

"But, Mama," Annemarie asked, kneeling beside her, "what's wrong? What happened?"

Her mother pulled herself to a sitting position. She winced in pain. "I'm all right, really. Don't worry. And the Rosens are with Henrik. That's the important thing."

She smiled a little, though her face was drawn with pain and she bit her lip, the smile fading. "We got there quite quickly, even though it was still so dark and it was difficult for the Rosens, not knowing the path. Henrik was there waiting, on the boat, and he took them aboard and down below so quickly to the cabin that they were invisible in an instant. He said

the others were already there; Peter got them there safely, too.

"So I turned and hurried home. I was so anxious to get back to you girls. I should have been more careful." Talking softly, she brushed some grass and dirt from her hands.

"Can you believe it? I was very nearly here — well, maybe just halfway — when I tripped over a root and went sprawling."

Mama sighed. "So clumsy," she said, as if she were scolding herself. "I'm afraid my ankle is broken, Annemarie. Thank goodness it is nothing worse. An ankle mends. And I am home, and the Rosens are with Henrik.

"You should have seen me, Annemarie," she said, shaking her head with a wry look. "Your proper mama, crawling inch by inch! I probably looked like a drunkard!"

She reached for Annemarie's arm. "Here, let me lean on you. I think if you support me on this side, I can make my way up to the house. Goodness, what a clumsy fool I am! Here, let me put my arm over your shoulders. You're such a good, strong, brave girl. Now — very slowly. There."

Mama's face was white with pain. Annemarie could see it even through the faint light of the approaching dawn. She hobbled, leaning heavily on

her daughter, pausing again and again, toward the house.

"When we get inside, I'll have a cup of tea and then we'll call the doctor. I'll tell him that I fell on the stairs. You'll have to help me wash away the grass and twigs. Here, Annemarie, let me rest for a minute."

They had reached the house, and Mama sank down to the steps and sat. She took several deep breaths.

Annemarie sat beside her and held her hand. "Mama, I was so worried when you didn't come back."

Mama nodded. "I knew you would be. I thought of you, worrying, as I dragged myself along. But here I am — safe with you, now. Everything is fine. What time is it?"

"It must be four-thirty, or close to it."

"They will sail soon." Mama turned her head and gazed across the meadow to the sea and the vast sky above it. There were no stars now, only the gray, pale sky, with pinkness at its border. "Soon they will be safe, too."

Annemarie relaxed. She stroked her mother's hand and looked down at the discolored, swollen ankle.

"Mama, what is this?" she asked suddenly, reaching into the grass at the foot of the steps.

Mama looked. She gasped. "Oh, my God," she said.

Annemarie picked it up. She recognized it now, knew what it was. It was the packet that Peter had given to Mr. Rosen.

"Mr. Rosen tripped on the step, remember? It must have fallen from his pocket. We'll have to save it and give it back to Peter." Annemarie handed it to her mother. "Do you know what it is?"

Her mother didn't answer. Her face was stricken. She looked at the path and down at her ankle.

"It's important, isn't it, Mama? It was for Uncle Henrik. I remember Peter said it was very important. I heard him tell Mr. Rosen."

Her mother tried to stand, but fell back against the steps with a groan. "My God," she murmured again. "It may all have been for nothing."

Annemarie took the packet from her mother's hand and stood. "I will take it," she said. "I know the way, and it's almost light now. I can run like the wind."

Mama spoke quickly, her voice tense. "Annemarie, go into the house and get the small basket on the table. Quickly, quickly. Put an apple into it, and some cheese. Put this packet underneath; do you understand? *Hurry*."

Annemarie did instantly as she was told. The basket. The packet, at the bottom. She covered it

with a napkin. Then some wrapped cheese. An apple. She glanced around the kitchen, saw some bread, and added that. The little basket was full. She took it to where her mother was.

"You must run to the boat. If anyone should stop you —"

"Who would stop me?"

"Annemarie, you understand how dangerous this is. If any soldiers see you, if they stop you, you must pretend to be nothing more than a little girl. A silly, empty-headed little girl, taking lunch to a fisherman, a foolish uncle who forgot his bread and cheese."

"Mama, what *is* it in the bottom?"

But her mother still didn't answer the question. *"Go,"* she said firmly. "Go right now. And *run*! As fast as you can!"

Annemarie kissed her mother quickly, grabbed the basket from her mother's lap, turned, and ran toward the path.

14
On the Dark Path

Only now, entering the woods on the footpath, did Annemarie realize how cold the dawn was. She had watched and helped, earlier, as the others donned sweaters, jackets, and coats; and she had peered into the night, following them with her eyes, as they moved silently off, bulky in their garments, blankets in their arms.

But she wore only a light sweater over her cotton dress. Though the October day, later, would be warmed by sunlight, now it was gray, chilly, and damp. She shivered.

The path curved, and she could no longer look behind her and see the clearing with the farmhouse outlined against the pale sky and the lightening meadow beyond. Now there were only the dark woods ahead; underfoot, the path, latticed with thick roots hidden under the fallen leaves, was invisible. She felt her way with her feet, trying not to stumble.

The handle of the straw basket scratched her arm through her sweater. She shifted it and tried to run.

She thought of a story she had often told to Kirsti as they cuddled in bed at night.

"Once upon a time there was a little girl," she told herself silently, "who had a beautiful red cloak. Her mother had made it for her.

"She wore it so often that everyone called her Little Red Riding-Hood."

Kirsti would always interrupt there. "Why was it called a red riding hood?" Kirsti would ask. "Why didn't they just call her Little Red-Cloak?"

"Well, it had a hood that covered her head. She had beautiful curls, like you, Kirsti. Maybe someday Mama will make you a coat with a hood to cover your curls and keep you warm."

"But why," Kirsti would ask, "was it a *riding* hood? Was she riding a horse?"

"Maybe she had a horse that she rode sometimes. But not in this story. Now stop interrupting every minute."

Annemarie smiled, feeling her way through the dark, remembering how Kirsti always interrupted stories to ask questions. Often she just wanted to make the story last longer.

The story continued. "One day the little girl's mother said, 'I want you to take a basket of food to your grandmother. She is sick in bed. Come, let me tie your red cloak.' "

"The grandmother lived deep in the woods, didn't she?" Kirsti would ask. "In the dangerous woods, where wolves lived."

Annemarie heard a small noise — a squirrel perhaps, or a rabbit, scampering nearby. She paused, stood still on the path, and smiled again. Kirsti would have been frightened. She would have grabbed Annemarie's hand and said, "A wolf!" But Annemarie knew that these woods were not like the woods in the story. There were no wolves or bears or tigers, none of the beasts that populated Kirsti's vivid imagination. She hurried on.

Still, they were very dark, these woods. Annemarie had never followed this path in the dark before. She had told her mother she would run. And she tried.

Here the path turned. She knew the turning well, though it seemed different in the dark. If she turned to the left, it would take her to the road, out where it would be lighter, wider, more traveled. But more dangerous, too. Someone could see her on the road. At this time of the dawn, other fishermen would be on the road, hurrying to their boats for the long day at sea. And there might be soldiers.

She turned to the right and headed deeper into the woods. It was why Mama and Peter had needed to guide those who were strangers here — the Rosens

and the others. A wrong turn would have taken them into danger.

"So little Red Riding-Hood carried the basket of food and hurried along through the woods. It was a lovely morning, and birds were singing. Little Red Riding-Hood sang, too, as she walked."

Sometimes she changed that part of the story, telling it to Kirsti. Sometimes it was raining, or even snowing, in the woods. Sometimes it was evening, with long, frightening shadows, so that Kirsti, listening, would snuggle closer and wrap her arms around Annemarie. But now, telling it to herself, she wanted sunlight and bird song.

Here the path widened and flattened; it was the place where the woods opened on one side and the path curved beside a meadow at the edge of the sea. Here she could run, and she did. Here, in daylight, there would be cows in the meadow, and on summer afternoons Annemarie would always stop by the fence and hold out handfuls of grass, which the curious cows would take with their rough tongues.

Here, her mother had told her, Mama would always stop, too, as a child walking to school. Her dog, Trofast, would wriggle under the fence and run about in the meadow, barking excitedly, trying to chase the cows, who always ignored him.

The meadow was empty now, and colorless in the

half light. She could hear the churning sea beyond, and see the wash of daylight to the east, over Sweden. She ran as fast as she could, searching with her eyes for the place ahead where the path would re-enter the woods in its final segment, which led to town.

Here. The bushes were overgrown and it was difficult to see the path here. But she found the entrance, beside the high blueberry bushes — how often she had stopped here, in late summer, to pick a handful of the sweet berries! Her hands and mouth would be blue afterward; Mama always laughed when she came home.

Now it was dark again, as the trees and bushes closed around her, and she had to move more slowly, though she still tried to run.

Annemarie thought of Mama: her ankle so swollen, and her face so pained. She hoped Mama had called the doctor by now. The local doctor was an old man, brusque and businesslike, though with kind eyes. He had come to the farmhouse several times during the summers of the past, his battered car noisy on the dirt road; he had come once when Kirsti, a tiny baby then, had been sick and wailing with an earache. And he had come when Lise had spilled hot grease, cooking breakfast, and burned her hand.

Annemarie turned again as the path divided once more. The left fork would take her directly to the

village; it was the way they had come from the train, and the way Mama had walked to school as a girl. But Annemarie turned to the right, heading now toward the harborside, where the fishing boats lay at anchor. She had often come this way before, too, sometimes at the end of the afternoon, to pick out the *Ingeborg,* Uncle Henrik's boat, from the many returning, and to watch him and his helpers unload the day's catch of slippery, shimmering herring still flopping in their containers.

Even now, with the boats in the harbor ahead empty of fish, preparing to leave for the day's fishing, she could smell the oily, salty scent of herring, which always remained in the air here.

It wasn't far now, and it was getting lighter. She ran almost as fast as she had run at school, in the Friday footraces. Almost as fast as she had run down the Copenhagen sidewalk on the day that the soldier had stopped her with his call of *"Halte!"*

Annemarie continued the story in her head. "Suddenly, as Little Red Riding-Hood walked through the woods, she heard a noise. She heard a rustling in the bushes."

"A wolf," Kirsti would always say, shivering with fearful delight. "I know it's going to be the wolf!"

Annemarie always tried to prolong this part, to build up the suspense and tantalize her sister. "She didn't know *what* it was. She stopped on the path and

listened. Something was following her, in the bushes. Little Red Riding-Hood was very, very, *very* frightened."

She would stop, would stay silent for a moment, and beside her in the bed she could feel Kirsti holding her breath.

"Then," Annemarie would go on, in a low, dread-filled voice, "she heard a *growl.*"

Annemarie stopped, suddenly, and stood still on the path. There was a turn immediately ahead. Beyond it, she knew, as soon as she rounded the turn, she would see the landscape open to the sea. The woods would be behind her there, and ahead of her would be the harbor, the docks, and the countless fishing boats. Very soon it would be noisy there, with engines starting, fishermen calling to one another, and gulls crying.

But she had heard something else. She heard bushes rustling ahead. She heard footsteps. And — she was certain it was not her imagination — she heard a low growl.

Cautiously, she took a step forward. And another. She approached the turn in the path, and the noises continued.

Then they were there, in front of her. Four armed soldiers. With them, straining at taut leashes, were two large dogs, their eyes glittering, their lips curled.

15
My Dogs Smell Meat!

Annemarie's mind raced. She remembered what her mother had said. "If anyone stops you, you must pretend to be nothing more than a silly little girl."

She stared at the soldiers. She remembered how she had stared at the others, frightened, when they had stopped her on the street.

Kirsti hadn't been frightened. Kirsti had been — well, nothing more than a silly little girl, angered because the soldier had touched her hair that afternoon. She had known nothing of danger, and the soldier had been amused by her.

Annemarie willed herself, with all her being, to behave as Kirsti would.

"Good morning," she said carefully to the soldiers.

They looked her up and down in silence. Both dogs were tense and alert. The two soldiers who held the leashes wore thick gloves.

"What are you doing here?" one of them asked.

Annemarie held out her basket, with the thick loaf of bread visible. "My Uncle Henrik forgot his lunch, and I'm taking it to him. He's a fisherman."

The soldiers were looking around; their eyes glanced behind her, and scanned the bushes on either side.

"Are you alone?" one asked.

Annemarie nodded. "Yes," she said. One of the dogs growled. But she noticed that both dogs were looking at the lunch basket.

One soldier stepped forward. The other, and the two holding the dogs, remained where they were.

"You came out before daybreak just to bring a lunch? Why doesn't your uncle eat fish?"

What would Kirsti reply? Annemarie tried to giggle, the way her sister might. "Uncle Henrik doesn't even *like* fish," she said, laughing. "He says he sees too much of it, and *smells* too much of it. Anyway, he wouldn't eat it raw!" She made a face. "Well, I suppose he would if he were starving. But Uncle Henrik always has bread and cheese for lunch."

Keep chattering, she told herself, as Kirsti would. A silly little girl. "I like fish," she went on. "I like it the way my mother cooks it. Sometimes she rolls it in bread crumbs, and — "

The soldier reached forward and grabbed the crisp loaf of bread from the basket. He examined it carefully. Then he broke it in half, pulling the two halves apart with his fists.

That would enrage Kirsti, she knew. *"Don't!"* she

said angrily. "That's Uncle Henrik's bread! My mother baked it!"

The soldier ignored her. He tossed the two halves of the loaf to the ground, one half in front of each dog. They consumed it, each snapping at the bread and gulping it so that it was gone in an instant.

"Have you seen anyone in the woods?" The soldier barked the question at her.

"No. Only you." Annemarie stared at him. "What are you doing in the woods, anyway? You're making me late. Uncle Henrik's boat will leave before I get there with his lunch. Or what's *left* of his lunch."

The soldier picked up the wedge of cheese. He turned it over in his hand. He turned to the three behind him and asked them something in their own language.

One of them answered *"Nein,"* in an bored tone. Annemarie recognized the word; the man had replied "No." He had probably been asked, Annemarie thought, "Do you want this?" or perhaps, "Should I give this to the dogs?"

The soldier continued to hold the cheese. He tossed it back and forth between his hands.

Annemarie gave an exasperated sigh. "Could I go now, please?" she asked impatiently.

The soldier reached for the apple. He noted its brown spots, and made a face of disgust.

"No meat?" he asked, glancing at the basket and the napkin that lay in its bottom.

Annemarie gave him a withering look. "You know we have no meat," she said insolently. "Your army eats all of Denmark's meat."

Please, please, she implored in her mind. Don't lift the napkin.

The soldier laughed. He dropped the bruised apple on the ground. One of the dogs leaned forward, pulling at his leash, sniffed the apple, and stepped back. But both dogs still looked intently at the basket, their ears alert, their mouths open. Saliva glistened on their smooth pink gums.

"My dogs smell meat," the soldier said.

"They smell squirrels in the woods," Annemarie responded. "You should take them hunting."

The soldier reached forward with the cheese in one hand, as if he were going to return it to the basket. But he didn't. Instead, he pulled out the flowered cotton napkin.

Annemarie froze.

"Your uncle has a pretty little lunch," the soldier said scornfully, crumpling the napkin around the cheese in his hand. "Like a woman," he added, with contempt.

Then his eyes locked on the basket. He handed the cheese and napkin to the soldier beside him.

"What's that? There, in the bottom?" he asked in a different, tenser voice.

What would Kirsti do? Annemarie stamped her foot. Suddenly, to her own surprise, she begin to cry. "I don't know!" she said, her voice choked. "My mother's going to be angry that you stopped me and made me late. And you've completely ruined Uncle Henrik's lunch, so now *he'll* be mad at me, too!"

The dogs whined and struggled against the leashes, nosing forward to the basket. One of the other soldiers muttered something in German.

The soldier took out the packet. "Why was this so carefully hidden?" he snapped.

Annemarie wiped her eyes on the sleeve of her sweater. "It wasn't hidden, any more than the napkin was. I don't know what it is." That, she realized, was true. She had no idea what was in the packet.

The soldier tore the paper open while below him, on the ground, the dogs strained and snarled, pulling against their leashes. Their muscles were visible beneath the sleek, short-haired flesh.

He looked inside, then glared at Annemarie. "Stop crying, you idiot girl," he said harshly. "Your stupid mother has sent your uncle a handkerchief. In Germany the women have better things to do. They don't stay at home hemming handkerchiefs for their men."

He gestured with the folded white cloth and gave a short, caustic laugh. "At least she didn't stitch flowers on it."

He flung it to the ground, still half wrapped in the paper, beside the apple. The dogs lunged, sniffed at it eagerly, then subsided, disappointed again.

"Go on," the soldier said. He dropped the cheese and the napkin back into her basket. "Go on to your uncle and tell him the German dogs enjoyed his bread."

All of the soldiers pushed past her. One of them laughed, and they spoke to each other in their own language. In a moment they had disappeared down the path, in the direction from which Annemarie had just come.

Quickly she picked up the apple and the opened packet with the white handkerchief inside. She put them into the basket and ran around the bend toward the harbor, where the morning sky was now bright with early sun and some of the boat engines were starting their strident din.

The *Ingeborg* was still there, by the dock, and Uncle Henrik was there, his light hair windblown and bright as he knelt by the nets. Annemarie called to him and he came to the side, his face worried when he recognized her on the dock.

She handed the basket across. "Mama sent your lunch," she said, her voice quavering. "But soldiers

stopped me, and they took your bread." She didn't dare to tell him more.

Henrik glanced quickly into the basket. She could see the look of relief on his face, and knew that it was because he saw that the packet was there, even though it was torn open.

"Thank you," he said, and the relief was evident in his voice.

Annemarie looked quickly around the familiar small boat. She could see down the passageway into the empty cabin. There was no sign of the Rosens or the others. Uncle Henrik followed her eyes and her puzzled look.

"All is well," he said softly. "Don't worry. Everything is all right.

"I wasn't sure," he said. "But now" — he eyed the basket in his hands — "because of you, Annemarie, everything is all right.

"You run home now, and tell your mama not to worry. I will see you this evening."

He grinned at her suddenly. "They took my bread, eh?" he said. "I hope they choke on it."

16
I Will Tell You Just a Little

"Poor Blossom!" Uncle Henrik said, laughing, after dinner that evening. "It was bad enough that your mother was going to milk her, after all these years of city life. But Annemarie! To do it for the very first time! I'm surprised Blossom didn't kick you!"

Mama laughed, too. She sat in a comfortable chair that Uncle Henrik had moved from the living room and placed in a corner of the kitchen. Her leg, in a clean white cast to the knee, was on a footstool.

Annemarie didn't mind their laughing. It *had* been funny. When she had arrived back at the farmhouse — she had run along the road to avoid the soldiers who might still be in the woods; now, carrying nothing, she was in no danger — Mama and Kirsti were gone. There was a note, hastily written, from Mama, that the doctor was taking her in his car to the local hospital, that they would be back soon.

But the noise from Blossom, forgotten, unmilked, uncomfortable, in the barn, had sent Annemarie warily out with the milking bucket. She had done her

best, trying to ignore Blossom's irritated snorts and tossing head, remembering how Uncle Henrik's hands had worked with a firm, rhythmic, pulling motion. And she had milked.

"I could have done it," Kirsti announced. "You only have to pull and it squirts out. I could do it *easily*."

Annemarie rolled her eyes. I'd like to see you try, she thought.

"Is Ellen coming back?" Kirsti asked, forgetting the cow after a moment. "She said she'd make a dress for my doll."

"Annemarie and I will help you make a dress," Mama told her. "Ellen had to go with her parents. Wasn't that a nice surprise, that the Rosens came last night to get her?"

"She should have waked me up to say goodbye," Kirsti grumbled, spooning some imaginary food into the painted mouth of the doll she had propped in a chair beside her.

"Annemarie," Uncle Henrik said, getting up from the table and pushing back his chair, "if you come with me now to the barn, I'll give you a milking lesson. Wash your hands first."

"Me too," said Kirsti.

"Not you too," Mama said. "Not this time. I need your help here, since I can't walk very well. You'll have to be my nurse."

Kirsti hesitated, deciding whether to argue. Then she said, "I'm going to be a nurse when I grow up. Not a cow milker. So I have to stay here and take care of Mama."

Followed as usual by the kitten, Annemarie walked with Uncle Henrik to the barn through a fine misty rain that had begun to fall. It seemed to her that Blossom shook her head happily when she saw Henrik and knew that she would be in good hands again.

She sat on the stacked hay and watched while he milked. But her mind was not on the milking.

"Uncle Henrik," she asked, "where are the Rosens and the others? I thought you were taking them to Sweden on your boat. But they weren't there."

"They were there," he told her, leaning forward against the cow's broad side. "You shouldn't know this. You remember that I told you it was safer not to know.

"But," he went on, as his hands moved with their sure and practiced motion, "I will tell you just a little, because you were so very brave."

"Brave?" Annemarie asked, surprised. "No, I wasn't. I was very frightened."

"You risked your life."

"But I didn't even think about that! I was only thinking of —"

He interrupted her, smiling. "That's all that *brave* means — not thinking about the dangers. Just thinking about what you must do. Of course you were frightened. I was too, today. But you kept your mind on what you had to do. So did I. Now let me tell you about the Rosens.

"Many of the fishermen have built hidden places in their boats. I have, too. Down underneath. I have only to lift the boards in the right place, and there is room to hide a few people. Peter, and others in the Resistance who work with him, bring them to me, and to the other fishermen as well. There are people who hide them and help them, along the way to Gilleleje."

Annemarie was startled. "Peter is in the Resistance? Of course! I should have known! He brings Mama and Papa the secret newspaper, *De Frei Danske.* And he always seems to be on the move. I should have figured it out myself!"

"He is a very, very brave young man," Uncle Henrik said. "They all are."

Annemarie frowned, remembering the empty boat that morning. "Were the Rosens and the others there, then, underneath, when I brought the basket?"

Uncle Henrik nodded.

"I heard nothing," Annemarie said.

"Of course not. They had to be absolutely quiet for many hours. The baby was drugged so that it wouldn't wake and cry."

"Could they hear me when I talked to you?"

"Yes. Your friend Ellen told me, later, that they heard you. And they heard the soldiers who came to search the boat."

Annemarie's eyes widened. "Soldiers came?" she asked. "I thought they went the other way after they stopped me."

"There are many soldiers in Gilleleje and all along the coast. They are searching all the boats now. They know that the Jews are escaping, but they are not sure how, and they rarely find them. The hiding places are carefully concealed, and often we pile dead fish on the deck as well. They hate getting their shiny boots dirtied!"

He turned his head toward her and grinned.

Annemarie remembered the shiny boots confronting her on the dark path.

"Uncle Henrik," she said, "I'm sure you are right, that I shouldn't know everything. But, please, would you tell me about the handkerchief? I knew it was important, the packet, and that's why I ran through the woods to take it to you. But I thought maybe it was a map. How could a handkerchief be important?"

He set the filled pail aside and began to wash the cow's udder with the damp cloth. "Very few people

know about this, Annemarie," he said with a serious look. "But the soldiers are so angry about the escaping Jews — and the fact that they can't find them — that they have just started using trained dogs."

"They had dogs! The ones who stopped me on the path!"

Uncle Henrik nodded. "The dogs are trained to sniff about and find where people are hidden. It happened just yesterday on two boats. Those damn dogs, they go right through dead fish to the human scent.

"We were all very, very worried. We thought it meant the end of the escape to Sweden by boat.

"It was Peter who took the problem to scientists and doctors. Some very fine minds have worked night and day, trying to find a solution.

"And they have created a special drug. I don't know what it is. But it was in the handkerchief. It attracts the dogs, but when they sniff at it, it ruins their sense of smell. Imagine that!"

Annemarie remembered how the dogs had lunged at the handkerchief, smelled it, and then turned away.

"Now, thanks to Peter, we will each have such a handkerchief, each boat captain. When the soldiers board our boats, we will simply pull the handkerchiefs out of our pockets. The Germans will probably think we all have bad colds! The dogs will sniff

about, sniff the handkerchiefs we are holding, and then roam the boat and find nothing. They will smell nothing."

"Did they bring dogs to your boat this morning?"

"Yes. Not twenty minutes after you had gone. I was about to pull away from the dock when the soldiers appeared and ordered me to halt. They came aboard, searched, found nothing. By then, of course, I had the handkerchief. If I had not, well —" His voice trailed off, and he didn't finish the sentence. He didn't need to.

If she had not found the packet where Mr. Rosen had dropped it. If she had not run through the woods. If the soldiers had taken the basket. If she had not reached the boat in time. All of the ifs whirled in Annemarie's head.

"They are safe in Sweden now?" she asked. "You're sure?"

Uncle Henrik stood, and patted the cow's head. "I saw them ashore. There were people waiting to take them to shelter. They are quite safe there."

"But what if the Nazis invade Sweden? Will the Rosens have to run away again?"

"That won't happen. For reasons of their own, the Nazis want Sweden to remain free. It is very complicated."

Annemarie's thoughts turned to her friends, hiding under the deck of the *Ingeborg*. "It must have been

awful for them, so many hours there," she murmured. "Was it dark in the hiding place?"

"Dark, and cold, and very cramped. And Mrs. Rosen was seasick, even though we were not on the water very long — it is a short distance, as you know. But they are courageous people. And none of that mattered when they stepped ashore. The air was fresh and cool in Sweden; the wind was blowing. The baby was beginning to wake as I said goodbye to them."

"I wonder if I will ever see Ellen again," Annemarie said sadly.

"You will, little one. You saved her life, after all. Someday you will find her again. Someday the war will end," Uncle Henrik said. "All wars do.

"Now then," he added, stretching, "that was quite a milking lesson, was it not?"

"Uncle Henrik!" Annemarie shrieked, and then began to laugh. "Look!" She pointed. "The God of Thunder has fallen into the milk pail!"

17
All This Long Time

The war would end. Uncle Henrik had said that, and it was true. The war ended almost two long years later. Annemarie was twelve.

Churchbells rang all over Copenhagen, early that May evening. The Danish flag was raised everywhere. People stood in the streets and wept as they sang the national anthem of Denmark.

Annemarie stood on the balcony of the apartment with her parents and sister, and watched. Up and down the street, and across on the other side, she could see flags and banners in almost every window. She knew that many of those apartments were empty. For nearly two years, now, neighbors had tended the plants and dusted the furniture and polished the candlesticks for the Jews who had fled. Her mother had done so for the Rosens.

"It is what friends do," Mama had said.

Now neighbors had entered each unoccupied, waiting apartment, opened a window, and hung a symbol of freedom there.

This evening, Mrs. Johansen's face was wet with tears. Kirsti, waving a small flag, sang; her blue eyes were bright. Even Kirsti was growing up; no longer was she a lighthearted chatterbox of a child. Now she was taller, more serious, and very thin. She looked like the pictures of Lise at seven, in the old album.

Peter Neilsen was dead. It was a painful fact to recall on this day when there was so much joy in Denmark. But Annemarie forced herself to think of her redheaded almost-brother, and how devastating the day was when they received the news that Peter had been captured and executed by the Germans in the public square at Ryvangen, in Copenhagen.

He had written a letter to them from prison the night before he was shot. It had said simply that he loved them, that he was not afraid, and that he was proud to have done what he could for his country and for the sake of all free people. He had asked, in the letter, to be buried beside Lise.

But even that was not to be for Peter. The Nazis refused to return the bodies of the young men they shot at Ryvangen. They simply buried them there where they were killed, and marked the graves only with numbers.

Later, Annemarie had gone to the place with her parents and they had laid flowers there, on the bleak, numbered ground. That night, Annemarie's parents

told her the truth about Lise's death at the beginning of the war.

"She was part of the Resistance, too," Papa had explained. "Part of the group that fought for our country in whatever ways they could."

"We didn't know," Mama added. "She didn't tell us. Peter told us after she died."

"Oh, Papa!" Annemarie cried. "Mama! They didn't shoot Lise, did they? The way they did Peter, in the public square, with people watching?" She wanted to know, wanted to know it all, but wasn't certain that she could bear the knowledge.

But Papa shook his head. "She was with Peter and others in a cellar where they held secret meetings to make plans. Somehow the Nazis found out, and they raided the place that evening. They all ran different ways, trying to escape.

"Some of them *were* shot," Mama told her sadly. "Peter was shot, in the arm. Do you remember that Peter's arm was bandaged, and in a sling, at Lise's funeral? He wore a coat over it so that no one would notice. And a hat, to hide his red hair. The Nazis were looking for him."

Annemarie didn't remember. She hadn't noticed. The whole day had been a blur of grief. "But what about Lise?" she asked. "If she wasn't shot, what happened?"

"From the military car, they saw her running, and simply ran her down."

"So it was true, what you said, that she was hit by a car."

"It was true," Papa told her.

"They were all so young," Mama said, shaking her head. She blinked, closed her eyes for a moment, and took a long, deep breath. "So very, very young. With so much hope."

Now, remembering Lise, Annemarie looked from the balcony down into the street. She saw that below, amid the music, singing, and the sound of the churchbells, people were dancing. It brought back another memory, the memory of Lise so long ago, wearing the yellow dress, dancing with Peter on the night that they announced their engagement.

She turned and went to her bedroom, where the blue trunk still stood in the corner, as it had all these years. Opening it, Annemarie saw that the yellow dress had begun to fade; it was discolored at the edges where it had lain so long in folds.

Carefully she spread open the skirt of the dress and found the place where Ellen's necklace lay hidden in the pocket. The little Star of David still gleamed gold.

"Papa?" she said, returning to the balcony, where her father was standing with the others, watching the

rejoicing crowd. She opened her hand and showed him the necklace. "Can you fix this? I have kept it all this long time. It was Ellen's."

Her father took it from her and examined the broken clasp. "Yes," he said. "I can fix it. When the Rosens come home, you can give it back to Ellen."

"Until then," Annemarie told him, "I will wear it myself."

Afterword

How much of Annemarie's story is true? I know I will be asked that. Let me try to tell you, here, where fact ends and fiction begins.

Annemarie Johansen is a child of my imagination, though she grew there from the stories told to me by my friend Annelise Platt, to whom this book is dedicated, who was herself a child in Copenhagen during the long years of the German occupation.

I had always been fascinated and moved by Annelise's descriptions not only of the personal deprivation that her family and their neighbors suffered during those years, and the sacrifices they made, but even more by the greater picture she drew for me of the courage and integrity of the Danish people under the leadership of the king they loved so much, Christian X.

So I created little Annemarie and her family, set them down in a Copenhagen apartment on a street where I have walked myself, and imagined their life there against the real events of 1943.

Denmark surrendered to Germany in 1940, it is

true; and it was true for the reasons that Papa explained to Annemarie: the country was small and undefended, with no army of any size. The people would have been destroyed had they tried to defend themselves against the huge German forces. So — surely with great sorrow — King Christian surrendered, and overnight the soldiers moved in. From then on, for five years, they occupied the country. Visible on almost every street corner, always armed and spit-shined, they controlled the newspapers, the rail system, the government, schools, and hospitals, and the day-to-day existence of the Danish people.

But they never controlled King Christian. It is true that he rode alone on his horse from the palace every morning, unguarded, and greeted his people; and though it seems so charming as to be a flight of author's fancy, the story that Papa told Annemarie, of the soldier who asked the Danish teenager, "Who is that man?" — that story is recorded in one of the documents that still remain from that time.

It is true, too, that in August 1943 the Danes sank their own entire navy in Copenhagen harbor as the Germans approached to take over the ships for their own use. My friend Annelise remembers it, and many who were children at the time would have been awakened, as little Kirsti was, by the explosions and the fiercely lighted sky as the ships burned.

On the New Year of the Jewish High Holidays in

1943, those who gathered to worship at the synagogue in Copenhagen, as the fictional Rosens did, were warned by the rabbi that they were to be taken and "relocated" by the Germans.

The rabbi knew because a high German official told the Danish government, which passed the information along to the leaders of the Jewish community. The name of that German was G. F. Duckwitz, and I hope that even today, so many years later, there are flowers on his grave, because he was a man of compassion and courage.

And so the Jews, all but a few who didn't believe the warning, fled the first raids. They fled into the arms of the Danes, who took them in, fed them, clothed them, hid them, and helped them along to safety in Sweden.

In the weeks following the Jewish New Year, almost the entire Jewish population of Denmark — nearly seven thousand people — was smuggled across the sea to Sweden.

The little hand-hemmed linen handkerchief that Annemarie carried to her uncle? Surely something made up by an author who wanted to create a heroine out of a fictional little girl?

No. The handkerchief as well is part of history. After the Nazis began to use police dogs to sniff out hidden passengers on the fishing boats, Swedish scientists worked swiftly to prevent such detection.

They created a powerful powder composed of dried rabbit's blood and cocaine; the blood attracted the dogs, and when they sniffed at it, the cocaine numbed their noses and destroyed, temporarily, their sense of smell. Almost every boat captain used such a permeated handkerchief, and many lives were saved by the device.

The secret operations that saved the Jews were orchestrated by the Danish Resistance, which, like all Resistance movements, was composed mainly of the very young and very brave. Peter Neilsen, though he is fictional, represents those courageous and idealistic young people, so many of whom died at the hands of the enemy.

In reading of the Resistance leaders in Denmark, I came across an account of a young man named Kim Malthe-Bruun, who was eventually captured and executed by the Nazis when he was only twenty-one years old. I read his story as I had read many others, turning the pages, skimming here and there: this sabotage, that tactic, this capture, that escape. After a while even courage becomes routine to the reader.

Then, quite unprepared, I turned the page and faced a photograph of Kim Malthe-Bruun. He wore a turtleneck sweater, and his thick, light hair was windblown. His eyes looked out at me, unwavering on the page.

Seeing him there, so terribly young, broke my

heart. But seeing the quiet determination in his boyish eyes made me determined, too, to tell his story, and that of all the Danish people who shared his dreams.

So I would like to end this with a paragraph written by that young man, in a letter to his mother, the night before he was put to death.

> . . . and I want you all to remember — that you must not dream yourselves back to the times before the war, but the dream for you all, young and old, must be to create an ideal of human decency, and not a narrow-minded and prejudiced one. That is the great gift our country hungers for, something every little peasant boy can look forward to, and with pleasure feel he is a part of — something he can work and fight for.

Surely that gift — the gift of a world of human decency — is the one that all countries hunger for still. I hope that this story of Denmark, and its people, will remind us all that such a world is possible.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lois Lowry is known for her versatility and invention as a writer and is the author of more than thirty books for young adults. She was born in Hawaii and grew up in New York, Pennsylvania, and Japan. After several years at Brown University, she turned to her family and to writing. She received Newbery Medals for two of her novels, *Number the Stars* and *The Giver,* and has received countless other honors, among them the Boston Globe–Horn Book Award, the Dorothy Canfield Fisher Award, the California Young Reader's Medal, and the Mark Twain Award. Her first novel, *A Summer to Die,* was awarded the International Reading Association's Children's Book Award. Ms. Lowry now divides her time between Cambridge and an 1840s farmhouse in Maine. To learn more about Lois Lowry, see her website at **www.loislowry.com.**