

Lost Children

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Lost Children

Frankfurt, I remember my home, the way it always smelled, and the sounds that echoed through it. The sound of Papa's infamous typing, although I have come to miss it and his prickly beard that tickled me when he hugged me. Or you would hear my mother playing her music. It was the most beautiful sound I had ever known. Any thuds or creaks you heard must have been Oscar or at least an animal he had snuck in. Oscar has always been mischievous but I do not know how I could live without him.

In December, 1938 I was fifteen and Oscar was twelve. My mother was ill, papa said it was only a cold, but she did not agree. Papa left me in charge of caring for her when he worked. One night when papa was working late mama held my hand and said to me, "do not cry liebe, but smile for all the good memories we shared". After mama died the house was chillingly quiet, her piano because no one dared to touch it. It was rare to hear papa's typing and he never read to us anymore.

The beginning of January, 1941 is when papa disappeared, he did not come home one night, and Oscar and I never really knew what happened. We were horrified to say the least, and after two weeks, even if we never knew if papa had been caught I knew we had to leave home. Oscar and I packed our things, layering most of our clothes on our persons. We would eat one last dinner in our home and slip out through the back window into the woods behind our house. I got a map and a few other things from papa's office stuffing it all into one suitcase. I found a slip of paper under papa's type writer, and on it was an address and in large lettering "safe". After deciding that was where we would go, we ate our soup and bread and left the dishes unclean on the table. When we were leaving Oscar stopped at mama's piano and placed his hand on it, I did the same.

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After what seemed like hours of walking we emerged from the woods and found ourselves surrounded by tall grass. We could see a barn and house not too far away. The sun was starting to rise and Oscar said something about chickens and bad ideas. We walked up to the door and knocked. A spindly child appeared in the doorway, staring at us with wide eyes. I greeted the child and introduced myself, "my name is Jane and this is my brother, Oscar," I pulled the paper from my coat pocket and held it out to her, "We came because of this."

The girls name was Ruth and she was about eleven that year. She pulled us into the warm house and told us to stay put before scurrying down the hall. Oscar held onto my hand tightly as Siegal. Miss. Siegal told us that we would have to stay in the barn with two other children, Ruth and Daniel, who was Oscar's age. She woke us up at five every morning to start our chores in the barn, and sometimes she let us in the house to help bake bread. Ruth was always quiet and polite but Daniel was aggressive and insistent but somehow we all managed to get along well.

One afternoon in May, 1942 Ruth and I were in Miss. Seigal's office looking for pencil and paper. Ruth and Daniel wanted me to teach them some math and we did not think Miss. Siegal would mind if we took some paper. I remember Ruth's small hands pull at my arm bringing my attention to a small book that was open on the desk. On the pages you could read a list of names and dates that had a line through them, except for the very last four. Ruth, Daniel, Oscar, and Jane. We found out that day that Miss. Siegal was planning to turn us over to the Nazis for a reward, just as she had with the other children. We told the others and started to plan our escape.

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We packed very little, food, two blankets and we wore all our clothes. Miss. Siegal would not be back to the house until late. I showed them Sweden on papa's map, and how we would get there. We decided to go during the day, not wanting to risk getting caught by Miss. Siegal. I could see how upset Oscar was, and tried to cheer him up. Daniel joined me by saying Miss Siegal was lucky he did not pull her mole right off her nose, I only shook and said, "Perhaps you are the lucky one."

By night fall we had gotten deep into the woods so we got ready to sleep. I could not sleep that night even though I was exhausted, I was too worried. I had not expected the journey to be easy, but somehow I did not think it would be so hard either. The way papa always told his stories, journeys always seemed so easy and even fun. We slept in hidden places during the day and moved quickly during the night, never leaving a trace. Somehow we made it to safety, and we met lovely people.

March sixteenth 2000, Sweden, today is my seventy seventh birthday. Ruth is cutting my cake into slices, handing the biggest to Daniel. I gratefully took the cake from her, closing eyes. Not lost anymore.