

A Portrait of Grandma's Dog

By

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For Rose and Kate,
in memory of their Grandma

Prologue

The elderly lady peered out the window, gazing down the street and anticipating the mailman. He was late today, as usual.

The lady had just passed her eightieth birthday. Her thinning white hair and thick glasses attested to this. Yet she was a spry woman for her age. Having lived for close to a century, she had endured many things but enjoyed few. Now she often was left alone in her ramshackle house with only her cats and garden to tend. Some days, she had trouble remembering the names of her son and grandchildren. But several weeks before, when the strange news had come from Germany, she had remembered many things.

Grandma Gertrude had left Germany – fled actually – nearly fifty years before. Though she had returned after the war for visits, she never lived in Germany again after her flight. She was not welcome there; maybe she never had been. Many of her family had died during the war – it was a time about which Grandma Gertrude said very little. Clearly, it greatly pained her.

When the news had come from Germany, Gertrude

had recalled many things: her secret, night time flight from her once-safe home, the deaths in her family, the cruel treatment of her father and siblings, her incessant fear. But with the news came some good memories of growing up in Germany, as well. She remembered light-hearted childhood times that came prior to the war. Mostly, she remembered the Catholic girls' school she had attended, and she remembered Gretchen.

Chapter 1

Patschkau

Gertrude had thoroughly enjoyed learning at the Catholic school. Though she and her sister were among only a few Jewish girls who attended St. Agatha's School, Gertrude never felt different from her peers. The nuns treated all the girls equally, but did, as teachers sometimes do, pay special attention to outstanding students. Gertrude, along with her sister Anna, had been outstanding. Gertrude loved animals and science and promptly absorbed the basic principles of biology and the other sciences. Anna had also loved school and retained science as well as history and art. It was a very small school—only 48 students—on the edge of the town of Patschkau near the border of Poland. Its size enhanced the quality and love of learning bestowed by the eight nuns who taught there.

Specifically, Gertrude remembered Sister Mary Helga. She had taught fifth grade and had introduced Gertrude to the stars—literally. Even though Gertrude's first love

had been animals, when Sister Mary Helga had talked about the stars and other planets, Gertrude had found her fascinating. Later, when Sister Mary Helga had moved on to things like politics and society, Gertrude, then eleven years old, had hung on the nun's every word. It was 1935, and, in a rather tumultuous world, Gertrude was just beginning to develop a sense of self and to form and value her own opinion. The nun encouraged her, and Gertrude found herself questioning her world in the same ways as did Sister Mary Helga. Unfortunately, neither nun nor student could foresee what was about to happen in Germany.

By the time Gertrude's sister Anna entered Sister Mary Helga's fifth grade two years later, life was becoming much more dangerous for Jews in Germany. Anna and Gertrude's father had been forced to sell his taxidermy business for a ridiculously low price, throwing his family into near poverty. The Nazi party was in full power in Germany by then, and they were making many laws that would, ultimately, make it impossible for Jews to exist in Europe. Though Gertrude had always disliked the taxidermy business, due to her love of animals, she was disturbed to see her father in such a situation. A few of Gertrude's father's friends had already been arrested for "failure to comply" with the beliefs of the current government. This made no sense to Gertrude, who agreed with Sister Mary Helga when she said "People are people and are entitled to their individual ideas, religious and otherwise." Anna and Gertrude were only allowed to continue to attend St. Agatha's School because of the persistence of Sister Mary Helga and the other nuns who refused to be intimidated by the new German government. However, most of the other Jewish children at the school were either kept at home by their parents or had already fled Germany.

Gertrude was acutely aware of the danger in which her and Anna's presence put St. Agatha's School. On one hand, Gertrude desperately did not want any harm to come to Sister Mary Helga and the other nuns. On the other hand, Gertrude understood the unfairness of the laws that would keep her from school, and she intended to defy that unfairness. Their school attendance and risk continued through Anna's fifth year. However, by autumn of 1938, when Anna would be entering sixth grade and Gertrude ninth, the girls and their teachers were faced with even further trouble.

On the day that school was to begin, Anna and Gertrude rose early, as usual. Even though the family no longer owned their business, they still occupied their small house on the outskirts of Patschkau. Their three younger siblings—Freidrich, Curt, and Katy-- had never begun attendance at St. Agatha's School, due to the pressures of the current government. However, since Gertrude and Anna had begun school, their father had decided to allow them to continue for as long as they could manage. This was a first day of school that no one in their family would ever forget.

The girls entered the kitchen of their home to eat breakfast before school and found their father sitting at the table, his head in his hands.

"Gertrude, Anna, sit down," he commanded, though he sounded less commanding and more discouraged than the two sisters had ever heard him.

"You have to go away," he stated, then lowered his head to the table and began to cry silently. Gertrude and Anna had only seen their father cry once, three years before, when their mother had died after a sudden illness. The girls were aghast—if their father was crying, this was serious. Where did they have to go? They had seen family friends—Jewish friends—disappear overnight.

They had heard whisperings—even subtle warnings from Sister Mary Helga during the previous school term—but they had refused to believe that the disappearances were serious. People were just being forced to move elsewhere—it was not life threatening.

Their father raised his head and carefully studied his daughters. It seemed clear to Gertrude that he was looking at her as if he would never see her again. When he finally spoke, it was with complete conviction.

“Gertrude, you are going first,” he whispered, nodding. Horrified, Gertrude gasped, “Where?”

“I’m sending you to England, where you might be safe. You go first because you are the oldest. With luck, you will be able to get a job and find a place where the rest of your brothers and sisters can eventually join you.”

“But, Papa, I live here with you,” Gertrude cried. “I can’t go to England alone. I’m only just fifteen. Where will I live? How can I go alone?” She was convinced that her father was over reacting to the current situation in Patschkau and the rest of Germany. Certainly she had heard the rumors, but she did not—could not—believe they were true.

“You must go, Gertrude,” her father pleaded. “We will all die here if you don’t.” He was firm now—and frightening. Gertrude became hysterical.

“I can’t go—I won’t. I won’t and you can’t make me!” she screamed, just as Sister Mary Helga slipped through the kitchen door. She silenced Gertrude with a look, then came around the table to take the terrified girl in her arms.

“There, child,” she said soothingly. “You do not want the neighbors to hear you, and you do not want to disrespect your father. He is trying to protect you and Anna and your family from what is to come.” She stroked Gertrude’s hair and held a bewildered Anna’s hand. Sister Mary Helga had never been to their house and had

rarely even spoken to their father. Now here she was, dictating their fate. Gertrude wanted none of it.

"I don't understand," she cried. "Don't you want me anymore, Papa?" Her question brought steady streams of tears from her father's eyes.

"Gertrude," he choked. "It is because I want you that you have to go away. It is no longer safe for Jewish people to live in Germany."

"But, Papa," she whined. "We barely even practice our faith. We haven't been to the synagogue since Mama died." This was a difficult truth for her father, both because he had turned his back on his faith when his wife died, and because turning his back made no difference to the Nazis but had obviously had a profound effect on his daughter. His regret and anger defeated him, and he gazed at his daughter, realizing that his life was now out of his control, and all he could do was try to save his children. Perhaps it was too late even for that...

Sister Mary Helga tried to intervene. "Girls," she said, as brightly as she could, as if she were reintroducing them to the stars, "England is a beautiful place, with a countryside that is lovely in autumn. You can live there in peace, and eventually go to school again. And most importantly, you can be who you are without fear of persecution."

Gertrude and Anna stared at their beloved teacher. Why had she turned on them and taken their father's side? Did she no longer want them either? Suddenly, the girls looked and acted six and nine, instead of fifteen and twelve.

"I will not go," Gertrude stated emphatically. "If you want to have a new home for us in England, Papa, then you go get it started!" Gertrude could not believe her own defiance.

"Please, Gertrude," was all he could say.

Sister Mary Helga, sensing his defeat, tried a different tactic – the truth. "Gertrude, when your father says it is

not safe for Jews in Germany any longer, he is telling you the truth. Every day, more and more Jews are disappearing. First, they lose their jobs or businesses, as your father already has. Then, they are banned from certain public places – like schools, as you two have now been.”

The girls looked as Sister Mary Helga. They were not as surprised as they were disappointed. Couldn't she have come up with a better way to tell them that they could no longer attend school? But, she carried on.

“Then, they are arrested, frequently with no warning. And these people are never seen again. Reports come in of mass shootings and forced labor camps. Many people, like your father and I, do not believe it will end at this. Hitler will not stop until there are no Jews left in Germany.

Gertrude and Anna could not believe what they were hearing – especially from Sister Mary Helga. They wanted this to be a lie, but she had never lied to them. Finally, Anna spoke.

“I'm second to the oldest. How soon would I have to join Gertrude in England?”

Chapter 2

Gretchen

Silent plans were being made all around Gertrude and Anna. The girls had no distractions left, as they had been forbidden to return to school. The days dragged by, and while Gertrude was filled with anxiety and fear, Anna seemed to be drawing upon some inner strength that Gertrude had not seen in her before. Though turmoil was all around them in Germany, and there were frequent threats against Jews, they had not heard of any recent disappearances. The most noticeable change, aside from not going to school, was the occasional appearance of Sister Mary Helga in their home. The girls understood that she came to help further the plans for Gertrude's escape to England, yet they were told very little about what was going on. All Gertrude knew was that soon she would be separated from her family and living in a strange country where she hardly even knew the language.

As September passed, Gertrude began drawing, a

hobby she had long since given up in favor of more intellectual pursuits. However, as her anxiety level rose, her need to draw pictures increased. It was therapeutic for her. Her younger siblings were amused by some of her less serious pictures, but Anna was not—it seemed that she could read her sister's fear in the drawings she made. One afternoon as Gertrude sketched some wildflowers in the yard, Anna approached.

"So what are we the most afraid of?" she asked Gertrude. Anna was never one to sidestep an issue.

"Nothing," stated Gertrude flatly. She had not been happy with Anna since the day that their father had announced that he was sending Gertrude to England. Anna had agreed far too readily for Gertrude's taste. Now, Anna was again annoying Gertrude with her forthrightness.

"Don't lie to me, Gertrude," she cajoled her sister. You are frightened to death to go to England alone, and I don't blame you."

"What do you know about it? I'm going first, establishing a place for you and the children and Papa. You are staying here, probably safe and sound for years, while I go out into a strange country all alone." Gertrude thought she might cry, and as her lip trembled, her sister put an arm around her shoulder.

"I'm scared, too," assured Anna. "But I think I'm more scared to stay here. Remember what Sister Mary Helga said? And Papa? Safe and sound don't exist for us here anymore." Sister Mary Helga had begun providing the girls with information about threats and attacks against the Jews but since she had no information about disappearances (deportations, Sister called them), Gertrude was not convinced that Germany was dangerous. Anna, however, was.

"Papa and Sister Mary Helga say it's going to get worse, that we have to flee in order to save ourselves," Anna said.

"Well, I don't believe it," said Gertrude emphatically. "We have lived here in Patschkau our whole lives. We can't just be run out."

"But it's happened to Jews before. Remember reading about the pogroms in Russia? People were ordered to leave their homes and marched for miles, only to have to begin their lives over with nothing but the clothes on their backs. And they were the lucky ones..." Anna's voice trailed off.

Unfortunately, Gertrude did remember. "If you are so certain of danger, so afraid of it, then you go!" Gertrude shouted at Anna. The girls were sitting on the little front porch of their house, on a street crowded with other houses with similar porches. They had been warned against discussing Gertrude's flight when they were anywhere outside of the house. Now, Gertrude's outburst drew the attention of the elderly couple next door in their garden. Gertrude closed her mouth and waved politely. They had always been friends with the Schmitts, but now everything was different. Gertrude was afraid she might just have endangered her whole family. This instant fear made her consider that Anna might be right about the dangers they were facing.

She turned away from both the Schmitts and Anna and began to draw again. Frustrated, she crumpled the picture of the wildflowers that she had been sketching. As she did, Gretchen trotted up to Gertrude. Gretchen was the neighborhood dog—a stray German shepherd that everyone up and down the street petted and fed. Gretchen did not need a specific home. Frankensteina Street was her home, and everyone loved her, an unusual gift for a stray dog, especially during hard times. Gretchen

sniffed Gertrude's sweater pockets—a place where she often found cookies or other treats—and, finding nothing, sat at Gertrude's feet and stared up at her.

"She's such a sweet dog," Anna commented. She was clearly trying to get back into Gertrude's good graces. Gertrude said nothing. Anna put a hand on her sister's shoulder, rose to her feet, and turned to enter the house. Alone with Gretchen, Gertrude decided to draw a picture of the dog. Perhaps she could take this sketch along with her to England in order to remember all that she left behind in Patschkau. Obliging, Gretchen looked up at Gertrude and cocked her head, as dogs sometimes do. Gertrude began to draw.

Chapter 3

Kristallnacht

September turned into October, and the Catholic Holy Day, the Feast of All Saints, approached. This was a day celebrated by Sister Mary Helga and the nuns, and frequently celebrated by Gertrude and Anna as well. Sadly, both Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur had passed with little attention that year. Traditionally, Yom Kippur was the Day of Atonement for Jews, a time to reflect and reconcile any conflicts with others in the family or community. Gertrude had not felt much like facing atonement; her fear and resentment were too great.

It was a lovely autumn in Patschkau, as the weather tried to deceive Gertrude and Anna into a false sense of serenity. Sister Mary Helga's presence was everyday in their home, until one day Gertrude heard the words she had both dreaded and feared.

"Gertrude," Sister Mary Helga began. "We must discuss what you can take with you to England. You

must prepare since your departure is imminent. You must travel lightly so it will look as if you mean to return to Germany."

Gertrude eyed her sadly. She did mean to return to Germany – if not immediately, certainly some time in the future. What would she take along on this voyage? Gertrude could not have cared less. After little discussion, Gertrude and Sister Mary Helga determined that Gertrude would take two small trunks – one with clothes and a few family pictures and another with clothes, books, and a few art supplies.

Gertrude was to travel by train across Germany and into France where she would sail for England from the French port city of Calais. A London family had need of a nanny/housekeeper, and Gertrude was to fill that position. It was an arrangement made by her father and Sister Mary Helga. Other Jewish girls had managed to escape Germany on the same pretense. It was to appear that Gertrude would only remain in London until shortly after the first of the New Year. She had work papers that allowed her this much freedom. She was to return to Germany on February 1, 1939. The truth was that Gertrude was to stay indefinitely. Gertrude was to depart on November 15, 1938, just two weeks after the Feast of All Saints. Her despair seemed to mount by the hour.

The morning of November 9 dawned cold and rainy. Gertrude felt that the weather matched her mood perfectly. She was the first one awake in a house that had now grown too silent with dread. She was making coffee and considering her pending job in London when Sister Mary Helga arrived. As a nun, Sister Mary Helga could move around early in the morning unnoticed by the Nazi soldiers now occupying Patschkau. As a Jew, Gertrude had to wear a yellow Star of David sewn onto the lapel of her coat. Gertrude and her yellow star never went unnoticed. She had taken to never leaving the house.

“Gertrude, there is news,” Sister Mary Helga grimly announced upon her arrival. “Please wake your father and Anna. Let the younger children sleep.”

Obediently and feeling without choice, Gertrude obeyed the sister. The last thing Gertrude wanted to hear was news from Sister Mary Helga. Her news was never good anymore. Gone were the days of studying the stars and dreaming of bright tomorrows. Gertrude assumed that Sister’s news had to do with deportations – or worse, shootings – as she went to get her father and Anna.

They gathered around the kitchen table, a familiar sight by now. They had gathered there often over the last few weeks, always to discuss plans for Gertrude’s escape to England and the subsequent departure of Anna. Today, the urgency in Sister Mary Helga’s attitude told the girls and their father that danger was close at hand.

“We have just received word,” Sister began, “that there has been a shooting in Paris. A young Jewish man has shot and killed a German diplomat. The repercussions of this are sure to be violent. Gertrude, I’m afraid you must leave at once, or you might be trapped here. We must make hasty arrangements for the rest of your family to leave Germany, too.”

“I don’t understand,” wailed Gertrude, as Anna made every effort to quiet her so she would not wake the younger children. Their father just shook his head, stunned.

“Gertrude,” Sister Mary Helga said, reaching across the table for the girl’s hand. “You must see that the Nazis will blame the entire Jewish community for the death of their German diplomat.”

“But it isn’t fair. It wasn’t our fault he was killed,” Gertrude continued emphatically. However, by this time, Gertrude knew it was little use to argue with Sister Mary Helga. The nun had somehow more access to news and information than anyone in Patschkau at the time.

Gertrude sensed that she was leaving Patschkau—perhaps forever—and very soon.

Their father, still looking stunned and also far away, rose from the table and stood gazing out the window, down Frankensteina Street.

“Rachel, what have I done?” he uttered. Shocked, the girls had not heard him mention their mother’s name in a long time. Anna stood and walked up behind her father, rubbing his back with the palm of her hand. He was a tall man, much taller than Anna’s four feet and ten inches.

“Papa,” she said softly. “What is it? You haven’t done anything wrong. You can’t stop the Nazis and their horrendous beliefs.”

“Child,” he responded. “You have no idea. I turned my back on God when he took your mother. I left the synagogue and vowed never to go again. I blamed Him for her illness and swore I did not need Him or any religion. Now, look...” his voice trailed off.

Anna and Gertrude were speechless. They knew that their father had stopped going to the synagogue in nearby Breslau shortly after their mother’s funeral. They also had gone less often since then. However, they had never felt that they had turned their backs on God. Now their father seemed to be blaming himself and his grief over their mother for all of their troubles.

“I don’t understand,” said Anna.

“Don’t you?” replied her father. “I turned my back on God, and he has turned his back on all of us.”

Even at thirteen, Anna had some understanding of her father’s sense of loss and irrational guilt.

“You can’t change the course of this inhumanity,” said Sister Mary Helga quietly. “This is a horror with a mind of its own. Perhaps, though, you could begin to pray again.” Sister Mary Helga was addressing their

father. The girls exchanged glances, and Gertrude tried desperately to remember a Shabbat in her recent past. Friday night prayers had begun to lose their significance in her home.

Sister Mary Helga spoke again with great determination. "We have other, more important matters at hand." Silently, Gertrude wondered what could be more important than God and prayers to a nun. She was soon to find out.

"I have Gertrude's work papers and tickets to England. She must leave in the morning," she said.

"No," shouted Gertrude. "I have five more days." And Anna left her father's turned back to hold her weeping sister in her arms.

Chapter 4

Calais

It was a cold, damp, and gray day when Gertrude arrived in Calais, the port city in France where she would board a ship and depart for England. The weather suited her mood for it had been a long and tense journey for her thus far. It wasn't the time passage that made the journey long, but the despair and fear that had worn her down and frayed her nerves.

It had been only two days since Sister Mary Helga had arrived in the early morning and told Gertrude that she must leave. Since then, as Sister had predicted, violence had erupted. Synagogues throughout Germany were vandalized, their windows smashed. Others were burned. Jewish owned stores and businesses were destroyed. Jews were arrested in an array of destruction. Gertrude and Anna were terrified. Kristallnacht, as this night would come to be known, had changed the girls' world forever, though they did not realize that yet.

Twice during the journey from Breslau to Calais the train had been stopped by Nazi soldiers who boarded, apparently searching for Jews and other “enemies” who were trying to leave Germany illegally. As she tried desperately to hide the yellow Star of David on her coat, Gertrude had to produce her identity papers that Sister Mary Helga had obtained for her. The papers identified Gertrude and stated her profession as nanny for the family in London to whom she was traveling. Though her papers were in order, with her return to Germany scheduled for February, the Nazi soldiers terrified Gertrude—though they had no way of knowing she never intended to return, both times she was certain they suspected her intentions and that she was about to be deported to some unknown place where she would never again see her father, Anna, or her younger brothers and sister. Gertrude was convinced that it was a miracle when the train crossed the border, entered France, and arrived in Calais. Sadly, her relief was tainted by exhaustion and a growing sense of frustration at becoming an “enemy” in her own country. She still held onto the belief she had shared, albeit angrily, with Anna the day Gertrude drew the picture of Gretchen, the dog. They had lived in Patschkau their whole lives— they couldn’t be run out. But hadn’t she just been?

Gertrude trudged off the train and searched for a porter to help her carry her trunks. Both she and her belongings had to be transferred to the ship to England. According to Gertrude’s watch, she only had a few hours until the ship departed. She had never even been to Calais before, and hadn’t a clue where the dock was or how she was going to get there. This was the one leg of the journey that Sister Mary Helga had left vague.

Though she had the money for a cab, she certainly could not locate and haul her own trunks. As she scanned the crowd on the railroad platform, a porter magically appeared.

"Excuse me, sir," ventured Gertrude.

"Oui?"

His query startled Gertrude. Sister Mary Helga had repeatedly reminded her that she must use French in Calais. Gertrude's French was halting at best, but Sister Mary Helga had helped her learn a few basic phrases, all the while pointing out that Gertrude must not draw attention to herself by using German.

"Ou sont les bagages?" she asked. His response was to point toward the railroad station and walk away. Gertrude felt as unwelcome in France as she had begun to feel in Germany. She walked toward the station, wondering what London would be like if Calais was this unfriendly. Had the whole of Europe begun to hate Jews? Or was it Germans they resented? Gertrude's frustration mounted.

She managed to locate baggage claim without bothering any more porters. Her trunks sat dejectedly off to the side of a pile of other suitcases and bags. She realized with a start that two trunks might make it appear that she did not intend to return to Germany; then she remembered that she was safely in France and away from the Nazis. Even if the French disliked Germans or Jews, they were still not deporting them.

Her next dilemma was to figure out how to get her trunks to a cab. She hoped, for a fee, a cab driver might consider hauling them, but she was again faced with the language problem. The fearful train journey had erased what little French she could remember. With a fleeting glance at her trunks, she headed for the station door that led to the street.

Immediately, Gertrude saw several cabs, with drivers leaning on hoods or passenger doors. None of them looked friendly. As Gertrude studied the line of cabs warily, a familiar voice spoke behind her.

"Gertrude, is that you?" It was Frau Schmitt, Gertrude's next door neighbor from Patschkau, the one Gertrude believed had heard her arguing with Anna on the day she drew Gretchen's picture.

"Where is your father, dear?" Frau Schmitt asked Gertrude.

Gertrude's defenses rose instantly. Sister Mary Helga had repeatedly lectured both her and Anna to trust no one. Gertrude was doubly concerned about Frau Schmitt because Gertrude thought Frau Schmitt might know of their secret plans since she had probably overheard her argument with Anna.

"My father is at home in Patschkau, where else?" answered Gertrude, trying not to sound insolent.

"So are you traveling alone or with Anna?" Frau Schmitt continued.

Though Gertrude wanted desperately to say "None of your business!" she refrained and answered quietly, "Alone."

"Well, then" said Frau Schmitt with an air of satisfaction, "Let's share a cab, shall we?"

Gertrude was speechless. What should she do? She did not want to disclose her destination to Frau Schmitt. She had lived next door to the girls their whole lives, had known their mother. Even though Gertrude did not particularly care for Frau Schmitt, she did not feel that she could lie to the woman. Frau Schmitt knew, from years of observing Gertrude's family, that it would be unlikely for her father to send Gertrude to London alone at her age. Frau Schmitt might sense their fear, realize that Gertrude did not intend to return to Germany, tell people, and endanger the rest of the family. Gertrude tried to think quickly.

"I imagine you're heading for the port," Frau Schmitt proceeded expectantly. Gertrude felt trapped.

"My dear," she said. "I'm not a foolish woman, and you needn't look so startled. If you were my daughter, I would

send you to London, too. It isn't safe for Jews in Germany anymore. But why did you leave poor Anna behind?"

Gertrude was near tears both from Frau Schmitt's blatant comments and her question. Why had Gertrude left Anna behind? Gertrude desperately wished Anna were there beside her. Anna would know how to silence Frau Schmitt and how to calm Gertrude. As it was, Gertrude sighed, she was on her own. The bitter realization sent a tear down each cheek. Frau Schmitt studied her carefully.

"Come, Gertrude," she said, putting an arm around her shoulders and guiding her to the nearest cab.

"Have you any suitcases?" Frau Schmitt asked her.

"Two trunks—inside," Gertrude answered, pointing back to the station.

In clear French, Frau Schmitt instructed the driver of the cab to follow Gertrude into the station, retrieve her trunks, and load them into the waiting cab. As Gertrude led the cab driver to her trunks, she was almost positive that Frau Schmitt had referred to Gertrude as her niece. However, Gertrude's French was failing her at the moment, and she did not want to trust Frau Schmitt, even though it seemed logical to do so.

With the trunks loaded, Gertrude and Frau Schmitt climbed into the cab. Gertrude noted, with interest, that Frau Schmitt carried no luggage. As she was about to ask why, Frau Schmitt directed the driver to the port, and Gertrude was struck by an interesting thought. What if Frau Schmitt had been sent by Sister Mary Helga or her father to be certain that Gertrude boarded the ship safely? Though she could not confirm her idea, it comforted her greatly.

Shortly, they arrived at the docks. Steamers were everywhere. Gertrude could not remember the last time she had seen the ocean, but she knew it was before her mother's death. The driver pulled up among a maze of

other cabs. Gertrude wondered how she would ever navigate her way to the waiting ship. The cab driver was depositing her trunks on the dock, amidst many other bags and cases. Gertrude and Frau Schmitt got out of the cab, and as Gertrude reached for her pocketbook to pay the driver, Frau Schmitt stopped her.

"I'll need the cab to take me to my sister's house," she announced. "I'll pay him for the whole ride when we arrive there."

"But I have money," Gertrude insisted, disappointedly noting Frau Schmitt's explanation for her visit to Calais.

"Save your money, child. I'm sure you will need it." Frau Schmitt said. Gertrude could not remember a time when Frau Schmitt had been so kind. As she turned to get back into the cab, Gertrude called "Thank You."

Frau Schmitt only smiled and gave a brief wave. As the cab returned to the snarl of dockside traffic, Gertrude wondered again if Frau Schmitt had been sent to help her or if their meeting was merely a stroke of luck. She shook off the feeling of uncertainty, positive that her nerves were playing tricks on her. She knew she had to find further assistance to get her trunks loaded onto the ship. Time was short. Gertrude plodded forward, dodging children, baggage, and other waiting passengers.

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