

5. Who Is the Dark-Haired One?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

middle of the night. And they told me Lise had died."

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

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

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

Together they got into the wide bed and pulled up the covers. Annemarie blew out the candle and drew the dark curtains aside so that the open window near the bed let in some air. "See that blue trunk in the corner?" she said, pointing through the darkness. "Lots of Lise's things are in there. Even her wedding dress. Mama and Papa have never looked at those things, not since the day they packed them away."

Ellen sighed. "She would have looked so beautiful in her

wedding dress. She had such a pretty smile. I used to pretend that she was *my* sister, too."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Papa opened the front door to the soldiers.

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

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

"I understand you are a friend of your neighbors the Rosens, Mrs. Johansen," the soldier said angrily.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

entered the room.

One of the men aimed a flashlight around the bedroom. He went to the closet and looked inside. Then with a sweep of his gloved hand he pushed to the floor several coats and a bathrobe that hung from pegs on the wall.

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

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

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

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

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

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

wailing—or worse, she would be angry, and her fists would fly.

"Your names?" the officer barked.

"Annemarie Johansen. And this is my sister—"

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

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

The officer stared at them grimly.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6. Is the Weather Good for Fishing?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Yes?"

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

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

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

Mama put a hand on Papa's arm. "If only I go with the girls, it will be safer. They are unlikely to suspect a woman and her children. But if they are watching us—if they see all of us leave? If they are aware that the apartment is empty, that you don't go to your office this morning? Then they will know. Then it will be dangerous. I am not afraid to go alone."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

meadow and look across to Sweden!"

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

It was a very puzzling conversation.

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

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

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

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

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

Then she knew. It was Ellen.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The train started again. The door at the end of their car opened and two German soldiers appeared. Annemarie tensed. Not here, on the train, too? They were *everywhere*.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The soldier chuckled and moved on.

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

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

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

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

"Didn't you love the castle when we went through Helsingør, Ellen?" Kirsti asked. She had been talking about Kronborg Castle ever since they had seen it, sprawling massive and ancient, beside the sea, from the train. "I wish we could have stopped to visit the castle. Kings live there. And queens."

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

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

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

She turned, leading the way along a tiny, twisting street, heading toward the outskirts of the village. "Things have hardly changed here since I was a girl," she said. "My Aunt Gitte lived there, in that house"—she pointed—"and she's been dead for years. But the house is the same. She always had wonderful flowers in her

garden." She peered over the low stone wall and looked at the few flowering bushes as they passed the house. "Maybe they still do, but it's the wrong time of year—there are just those few chrysanthemums left.

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

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

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

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

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

At the end of the pasture, they entered the woods again and Annemarie knew they would soon be there. Uncle Henrik's house was in a clearing beyond these woods.

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

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

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