

Anschluss. My mother calls it the cursed day when Austria became a part of Germany. Not one gunshot was fired. There was no fight. In one day I was no longer a Austrian. Instead, I had become a full German citizen. Many people cheered. Not us. In fact, not many Jews cheered. The thing was, being German meant belonging to Hitler.

Within the week, I had been kicked out of one of the best schools in Vienna. My little sister and I had been sent to a new school, one for us Jews. At our new school, we didn't learn much. We cowered in classrooms wondering what would happen next or who would be taken. Every day, we heard of another Jew who had gotten beaten or robbed. Sometimes we saw a Jewish woman being forced to scrub the Tuppenkreuz, the Austrian patriotic sign, off of the sidewalk. No one had been seen writing it, but us Jews were blamed. Everyday when I got home from school, my mother would rush to us and hug us saying, "Thank god they didn't take you!" We knew we had to leave.

Preferably to America, but my parents began looking at Africa, London, or even Cuba, too. The U.S. had a quota system. It took us less than an hour to get a number. The problem was this: the estimated time for our quota number to come up was two years. With Hitler in power, we knew we wouldn't be able to survive six months. We waited weeks until one night: Kristallnacht, the night of broken glass. I don't know what time it was when the screaming started. I don't remember when I heard all of the breaking glass. When we heard the first scream, my mother told us to stay still. When we heard the breaking glass, she pushed us into the bathroom. Then she pulled a large dresser in front of the door. She was putting pictures on the dresser to hide the door when we heard a sharp tap on our front door. I heard the *clunk, clunk, clunk* of Nazi boots. "We have come to take Heinz Bohm. If he does not come at will, you will all be taken by force," a loud, hard voice said. "But...why?" I heard my mother's timid voice ask. "That is for us to know," the voice said, "you have ten seconds. 10, 9, 8..." I heard the sharp click of my father's shoes on our wood floor, then a door closing, and soon the sound of my mother's sobbing. Four days after that awful night, my mother said, "Children, you are going to London." "How, Momma?" I

asked. "A train," she said, triumphant, "it's called the Kindrtransport. It takes Jewish children to London, where you will stay in a farmhouse or something of the sort."

"But... what about you, Momma," I ask, "where are you going?" "I'll be in London soon. Go pack your bags, girls. The train leaves tomorrow." I fight back tears as I pack my bag. What if Mother gets taken by the Nazis, too? What if she never makes it to London? What do we do then? The next day comes all too soon. I kiss Mother goodbye, a tear creating a path in the dust on my face. "Promise me that you'll take care of your sister?" My mother says. "I promise, Momma," I say, weeping. My sister and I are led to a train car with five or six other girls in it already. The oldest one introduces herself as Lea. She and I become fast friends. Soon, a man comes and asks us to show him our money. He then tells us to give it to him, and that's when the What ifs start. What if these people are actually Nazis? What if they are taking us to a concentration camp? What if we never make it to London? Mother told me to protect my sister, but what if I can't? When the train stops, we hold our breath. A man comes and tells us that we will be attached to a boat that will take us to London. I let out a big sigh. We are not allowed to leave the train car until we get to London. When we get there, we will be taken home with a man or woman. After that, we will be taken to a boarding school type place, where we will stay until our parents arrive.

"Simple enough," I think to myself. Deep down, I know no matter how simple it seems, it will never be the simple I want. I want the kind of simple where I can be free to be the Jew I am. I want the kind of simple where I can live my life without worrying for my mother, for my sister, for my father. Where I don't live in fear. When I have that, it will be simple. A man walks in and I lose my train of thought, "Please exit the train and wait in the station," a man says in English. I try to come up with a polite response, but with my German centered mind, the best I can do is, "Good day to you, ma'am." The English man looks at me funny, but doesn't reveal that what I've said to him is incorrect.

Once we enter the station, a man walks up to us and says, "You must be the Bohm sisters! Come with me!" This man is very plump, and he has a mustache that muffles his mouth when he speaks, making it hard for me to understand. He has rosy cheeks and he keeps checking his pocket watch as if he's late for some important meeting. The weirdest

thing about him by far is that he doesn't treat us like we are the leftover food that has gone bad weeks ago. Instead, he treats us like equals. In fact, no gives us dirty looks, no one spits at our feet. They all continue about themselves like we aren't even there. This is completely new to me. "So, what are your names, girls?" The man asks. I cannot figure out what he is trying to say, but thankfully my sister answers for me, "The weather is lovely today, sir," she says with a heavy German accent. "Oh, Heavens!" The man says, giving a hearty laugh, "Your English is a bit off, I must say!" I try to understand him, but I begin to mutter in German, trying to figure out what he wants. The next morning, my sister and I are transported to a giant house. Thankfully, the man who takes us is fluent in German, so we know what to do. He shows us to a room with about twenty-five other cots in it. In a room to the side there is a room with showers and toilets. I have only been in a shower once, and my sister hasn't even seen one. We have always been bathed in big tubs. The next morning, more girls arrive and we are escorted to the dining room, where we eat a breakfast bigger than I have seen in my entire life. Once our bellies are full, we are taken to the classroom to study English. I admire the high archways and the glass windows as I walk to the class. I almost feel at...home. I turn my thoughts elsewhere, but it is too late. I shed a tear wondering if I will ever see her again. Within the next month, all the girls are fluent in English. Then we are sent to a real school. I hate it there. I am ridiculed as a scrawny Jewish girl there. There are pretty blond girls with blue eyes who whisper to their friends. They point and laugh at our German accents and our funny names. What's even worse is that London is getting ready for the Germans to attack. Everyday we have an air-raid drill, some of them lasting less than five minutes, and some lasting for hours at end. During the long ones, we sing songs. The scariest part is that no one knows if it's real or not. Every time I hear that alarm, I pray to God that it is a drill. Deep down I know that a flimsy metal structure will not stand in the way of Hitler's bloodbath for power. The next month I am studying my English, when we get a knock on the door. "Come in!" I call. "Erika...Emilie?" I hear a familiar voice whisper. I look up, and run into Mother's arms, Erika following me. "Girls, I have news," my mother says, "our quota number came up....we leave for America tomorrow!" "But..." I say remembering, "what about Papa?" "He...died," my mother says, choking back tears, "they killed him..." I start shaking with tears. I will

never see Father again. He is dead. They *killed* him. “Come children,” my Mother says, “our new life starts tomorrow.”