

Chapter 1

TAKEN

BERLIN, GERMANY, 1942

“**H**ERE, TAKE THIS envelope,” my mother told my brother Peter and me, and gave us directions to the delivery location. “When you come up from the subway station, a man will meet you there and give you his code name. Give him the envelope, and he’ll give you one to bring back to me.”

I was nine years old, and Peter was almost eleven. We guessed that the envelopes contained messages to and from my father, who was a prisoner in a German concentration camp but still communicated with my mother and the Resistance through the Gestapo guards he bribed.

Peter and I exchanged envelopes with the man and rode the subway back home. As we walked away from the subway station and turned the corner onto Meineke Street, we saw Gestapo and SS cars up the road in front of our apartment and stopped in our tracks. We decided to wait for the cars to leave, then go home and ask our mother what the police were doing there. But then we watched the agents take her out of our apartment, force her into a car, and drive her away.

We had overheard our parents and grandparents talking about their friends and relatives who had disappeared, but why are they taking our mother? Where are they taking her?

Peter and I looked at the envelope, then at each other. We didn’t dare open it but figured whatever was inside would get us, our parents, the man who gave

it to us, and anyone else whose name appeared in it into big trouble. We ran back down into the subway station, ripped the envelope to shreds, and threw it in a trash can.

We couldn't get into our apartment because the Gestapo sealed the front door with a sign displaying a swastika and the warning: RESTRICTED AREA. NO TRESPASSING. CIVILIANS WILL BE EXECUTED. Now what?

Peter called the person my mother gave us as an emergency contact in case this ever happened—her lawyer, Alwin Grossman—who found a place for us to stay. Then we set out on a mission to find our mother. I don't remember how, but a couple of days later we found out that the Nazis were holding her at the Alt-Moabit prison in downtown Berlin. *We'll take our chances with the Nazis. We've got to go see her!*

We took the subway downtown and walked into the prison. It's a miracle that we got inside—I guess the guards didn't pay much attention to young kids. We walked up a couple of levels and in one of the long corridors, stopped to look out the window. A group of prisoners meandered around below in a courtyard—it must have been exercise time.

There's Mom!

We watched and waited until my mother went back inside, then searched from floor to floor to find her. Guards were all over the place, but we ignored them and they ignored us.

There she is!

We rushed to her cell. "Mom, what's happening?"

She didn't take the time to explain. She said that she loved us and told us to study hard in school, then ordered us to leave because she was afraid we would end up in the prison with her. As we walked away from our mother's cell, guards spotted us and figured out that we had come to see a prisoner. They grabbed us but we wrestled away from them and took off running as fast as we could. The guards chased us but couldn't catch us and gave up once we escaped out the prison gate onto the streets.

I never saw my mother again. Peter and I fled by train back to our hiding place 200 miles away in Dangast, Germany, on the North Sea, and the Nazis sentenced my mother to Auschwitz.

Chapter 2



A STORYBOOK FAMILY

Think of all the beauty in yourself and in everything around you and be happy.

- Anne Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl*

GUTENSTEIN, AUSTRIA, 1932-1936

INTERFAITH MARRIAGES WERE rare in the 1920s and 1930s, and so taboo that when my Roman Catholic father, Karl Wurfl, married my Jewish mother, Margaret, he was excommunicated from the Church.

Divorce was also rare, but both of my parents were previously married and divorced. Maybe they got together after their divorces, or maybe their getting together is why they divorced their previous spouses, I don't know. I'm just glad my parents didn't listen to people who told them what they couldn't do.

In the year I was born, 1932, most European women delivered their babies at home with the help of a midwife. As the time of my birth approached, my mother, who everyone called Gretel, traveled over 300 miles by train to her parents' home in Dresden, Germany. There my grandmother could provide additional help with the new grandchild.

I was born on June 15. My parents never told me how or why they chose the name Jochen, and I never asked. There were no Jochens on the family tree so as far as I can tell, they picked it out of thin air.

Soon after my birth, my mother took me home to my father and my seventeen-month-old brother, Peter, in Gutenstein, Austria, a small village with a population of about 1,800 located 40 miles northeast of Vienna.

FAMILY TREES

My mother came from a German family, the Cohns, who reached millionaire status from their popular department store on Wilhelm Street in Bernburg and their other real estate holdings in Germany. My grandmother, Lina Cohn, married Ferdinand Baruch, a World War I veteran of the German Army and recipient of the Iron Cross for combat heroism. Ferdinand joined my grandmother's brothers, Willy and Adolf, in the Cohn family business as a partner.



My grandparents, Ferdinand and Lina Baruch

My grandparents lived an affluent lifestyle in their early years. They moved from Dresden to the capital city, Berlin, and socialized with business owners, professors, and others in the higher social strata. They collected art—including a model of the Stephan Sinding sculpture, Valkyrie, that's now on display at a museum in Denmark, and three paintings by Lovis Corinth, whose works have sold for over \$1 million. And they spoiled their only child, Gretel, my mother.

I know very little about my father's family other than they were a Catholic family from Linz, Austria. My father had four brothers, and two sisters who both became Catholic nuns. I don't know much about my father as a young man either, other than he served in the Austrian Navy and was stationed on battleships on the Mediterranean Sea. I know that only because I found postcards he sent to his parents updating them about the ships he was on.

My father had one son, also named Karl, from his first marriage. Karli, as I called him, was about eight years older than me. Peter and I always looked forward to his visits because he taught us how to play soccer and other "big boy" games.

HOLLYWOOD MATERIAL

I can still picture our two-story home in Gutenstein, with the hedge where the porcupines grazed. Mountains surrounded us, and on Sundays we hiked

the paths and trails. One particular steep, rocky trail leading into the mountains was always crawling with huge snails, but they never deterred us because we had a bigger purpose: lunch at the top of Artz mountain at a restaurant owned by a friend of my father's.

Not that we ate out often because my mom was a great cook. Like most women in that era, she graduated from "home economics" school where they taught cooking, housekeeping, and child-rearing.

Besides hiking, winter sports were popular in Austria. My father, six feet tall and athletic, was an avid skier and bobsledder. Peter and I loved to frolic in the snow.

My father worked for the office of the chancellor of Austria, Kurt von Schuschnigg, and was stationed in Vienna. He commuted by train, and Peter and I loved meeting our dad when he got off the train, mostly because we were happy to see him, and partly because we were mesmerized when the train circled the turntable and headed back north.

Growing up in Austria, the home of Mozart, classical music is all we heard in the house. I've always liked Mozart, and Haydn—all light, pleasant music. I also enjoy Wagner, and Strauss's Vienna music. Vienna is the birthplace of the waltz, and my mother took Peter and me to dance lessons. "Everybody in Austria waltzes," she said.

My mother's only worry was the Roma nomads—Gypsies. She didn't like us playing in the front yard because it was common for Gypsies to ride down the street in their horse-drawn wagons and steal children. Always the protective mother, whenever she heard a wagon coming down the street she'd run outside and hold onto Peter and me.

Gypsies excepted, our family was living such a storybook life in our early



*Winter sports were popular in Austria.
I'm on the sled between my mother
and Peter while my father skis*



I'm on the left in this still image taken from the home movies Hedy Lamarr shot for our family

years in Gutenstein that my father asked Austrian-born Hollywood movie star Hedy Lamarr, who was a good friend of both of my parents, to bring her film crew to our house and shoot home movies of our family. I'm so lucky to still have the footage. I only wish she had popped herself into one of the scenes.

THE STORY TURNS

I don't know how my father knew Hedy Lamarr, but he might have dated her after divorcing his first wife. I've lost it but I once had a clipping from a Vienna newspaper that mentioned the two of them driving together in my father's car, so they had some kind of friendship. The story made the news because my father accidentally ran into a policeman.

Most people remember Hedy Lamarr only as a steamy actress, but she played integral roles in the Allied victory in World War II, and the development of the cell phone.