

# Good-bye, Pink Rabbit

It's 1933. Nine-year-old Anna is not sure who Hitler is, but she sees his face on posters all over Berlin. Then one morning, Anna awakes to find her beloved father gone! Her mother explains that their father has left Germany and soon they secretly will join him in Switzerland. Anna and her older brother, Max, are shocked and confused. Why do their parents keep insisting that Germany is no longer safe for Jews such as they? Because of Hitler, Anna must leave everything behind.

Anna and her family move several times: to Switzerland, France, and finally England. Along the way they must learn new languages and new customs, and make new friends—all the time staying one step ahead of danger. It's not easy, but Anna knows that as long as their family stays together, that's all that really matters.

★ "An engrossing autobiographical novel."

—*School Library Journal*, starred review

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## *Chapter One*

Anna was walking home from school with Elsbeth, a girl in her class. A lot of snow had fallen in Berlin that winter. It did not melt, so the street cleaners had swept it to the edge of the pavement, and there it had lain for weeks in sad, greying heaps. Now, in February, the snow had turned into slush and there were puddles everywhere. Anna and Elsbeth skipped over them in their lace-up boots.

They both wore thick coats and woollen caps which kept their ears warm, and Anna had a muffler as well. She was nine but small for her age and the ends of the muffler hung down almost to her knees. It also covered up her mouth and nose, so the only parts of her that showed were her green eyes and a tuft of dark hair. She had been hurrying because she wanted to buy some crayons at the paper shop and it was nearly time

for lunch. But now she was so out of breath that she was glad when Elsbeth stopped to look at a large red poster.

"It's another picture of that man," said Elsbeth. "My little sister saw one yesterday and thought it was Charlie Chaplin."

Anna looked at the staring eyes, the grim expression. She said, "It's not a bit like Charlie Chaplin except for the moustache."

They spelled out the name under the photograph.

*Adolf Hitler.*

"He wants everybody to vote for him in the elections and then he's going to stop the Jews," said Elsbeth. "Do you think he's going to stop Rachel Lowenstein?"

"Nobody can stop Rachel Lowenstein," said Anna. "She's form captain. Perhaps he'll stop me. I'm Jewish too."

"You're not!"

"I am! My father was talking to us about it only last week. He said we were Jews and no matter what happened my brother and I must never forget it."

"But you don't go to a special church on Saturdays like Rachel Lowenstein."

"That's because we're not religious. We don't go to church at all."

"I wish my father wasn't religious," said Elsbeth. "We have to go every Sunday and I get cramp in my seat." She looked at Anna curiously. "I thought Jews were supposed to have bent noses, but your nose is quite ordinary. Has your brother got a bent nose?"

"No," said Anna. "The only person in our house with a bent nose is Bertha the maid, and hers only got like that because she broke it falling off a tram."

Elsbeth was getting annoyed. "Well then," she said, "if you look the same as everyone else and you don't go to a special church, how do you know you *are* Jewish? How can you be sure?"

There was a pause

"I suppose . . ." said Anna, "I suppose it's because my

mother and father are Jews, and I suppose their mothers and fathers were too. I never thought about it much until Papa started talking about it last week."

"Well, I think it's silly!" said Elsbeth. "It's silly about Adolf Hitler and people being Jews and everything!" She started to run and Anna followed her.

They did not stop until they reached the paper shop. There was someone talking to the man at the counter and Anna's heart sank as she recognised Fraulein Lambeck who lived nearby. Fraulein Lambeck was making a face like a sheep and saying, "Terrible times! Terrible times!" Each time she said "terrible times" she shook her head and her ear-rings wobbled.

The paper shop man said, "1931 was bad enough, 1932 was worse, but mark my words, 1933 will be worst of all." Then he saw Anna and Elsbeth and said, "What can I do for you, my dears?"

Anna was just going to tell him that she wanted to buy some crayons when Fraulein Lambeck spied her.

"It's little Anna!" cried Fraulein Lambeck. "How are you, little Anna? And how is your dear father? Such a wonderful man! I read every word he writes. I've got all his books and I always listen to him on the radio. But he hasn't written anything in the paper this week—I do hope he's quite well. Perhaps he's lecturing somewhere. Oh, we do need him in these terrible, terrible times!"

Anna waited until Fraulein Lambeck had finished. Then she said, "He's got 'flu."

This provoked another outburst. You would have thought that Fraulein Lambeck's nearest and dearest were lying at death's door. She shook her head until the ear-rings rattled. She suggested remedies. She recommended doctors. She would not stop talking until Anna had promised to give her father Fraulein Lambeck's best wishes for a speedy recovery. And then she turned back in the doorway and said, "Don't say best wishes from Fraulein Lambeck, little Anna—just say from an admirer!"—before she finally swept out.

Anna bought her crayons quickly. Then she and Elsbeth stood together in the cold wind outside the paper shop. This was where their ways normally parted, but Elsbeth lingered. There was something she had wanted to ask Anna for a long time and it seemed a good moment.

"Anna," said Elsbeth, "is it nice having a famous father?"

"Not when you meet someone like Fraulein Lambeck," said Anna, absent-mindedly setting off for home while Elsbeth equally absent-mindedly followed her.

"No, but apart from Fraulein Lambeck?"

"I think it's quite nice. For one thing Papa works at home, so we see quite a lot of him. And sometimes we get free theatre tickets. And once we were interviewed by a newspaper, and they asked us what books we liked, and my brother said Zane Grey and the next day someone sent him a whole set as a present!"

"I wish my father was famous," said Elsbeth. "But I don't think he ever will be because he works in the Post Office, and that's not the sort of thing people get famous for."

"If your father doesn't become famous perhaps you will. One snag about having a famous father is that you almost never become famous yourself."

"Why not?"

"I don't know. But you hardly ever hear of two famous people in the same family. It makes me rather sad sometimes." Anna sighed.

By this time they were standing outside Anna's white-painted gate. Elsbeth was feverishly trying to think of something she might become famous for when Heimpi who had seen them from the window opened the front door.

"Goodness!" cried Elsbeth, "I'll be late for lunch!"—and she rushed off up the street.

"You and that Elsbeth," grumbled Heimpi as Anna went inside. "You'd talk the monkeys off the trees!"

Heimpi's real name was Fraulein Heimpel and she had looked after Anna and her brother Max since they were babies.

Now that they were older she did the housekeeping while they were at school, but she liked to fuss over them when they came back. "Let's have all this off you," she said, unwinding the muffler. "You look like a parcel with the string undone." As Heimpi peeled the clothes off her Anna could hear the piano being played in the drawing room. So Mama was home.

"Are you sure your feet aren't wet?" said Heimpi. "Then go quickly and wash your hands. Lunch is nearly ready."

Anna climbed up the thickly carpeted stairs. The sun was shining through the window and outside in the garden she could see a few last patches of snow. The smell of chicken drifted up from the kitchen. It was nice coming home from school.

As she opened the bathroom door there was a scuffle inside and she found herself staring straight at her brother Max, his face scarlet under his fair hair, his hands hiding something behind his back.

"What's the matter?" she asked, even before she caught sight of his friend Gunther who seemed equally embarrassed.

"Oh, it's you!" said Max, and Gunther laughed, "We thought it was a grown-up!"

"What have you got?" asked Anna.

"It's a badge. There was a big fight at school today—Nazis against Sozis."

"What are Nazis and Sozis?"

"I'd have thought even you would know that at your age," said Max who was just twelve. "The Nazis are the people who are going to vote for Hitler in the elections. We Sozis are the people who are going to vote against."

"But you're none of you allowed to vote," said Anna. "You're too young!"

"Our fathers, then," said Max crossly. "It's the same thing."

"Anyway, we beat them," said Gunther. "You should have seen those Nazis run! Max and I caught one of them and got his badge off him. But I don't know what my Mum is going to say about my trousers." He looked dolefully down at a large tear in the worn cloth. Gunther's father was out of work and there was no money at home for new clothes.

"Don't worry, Heimpi will fix it," said Anna. "Can I see the badge?"

It was a small piece of red enamel with a black hooked cross on it.

"It's called a swastika," said Gunther. "All the Nazis have them."

"What are you going to do with it?"

Max and Gunther looked at each other.

"D'you want it?" asked Max.

Gunther shook his head. "I'm not supposed to have anything to do with the Nazis. My Mum's afraid I might get my head cut open."

"They don't fight fair," agreed Max. "They use sticks and stones and everything." He turned the badge over with increasing dislike. "Well, I certainly don't want it."

"Put it down the what-not!" said Gunther. So they did. The first time they pulled the chain it would not flush away, but the second time, just as the gong went for lunch, it disappeared very satisfactorily.

They could still hear the piano as they went downstairs but it stopped while Heimpi was filling their plates and a moment later the door burst open and Mama came in.

"Hullo children, hullo Gunther," she cried, "how was school?"

Everybody immediately began to tell her and the room was suddenly filled with noise and laughter. She knew the names of all their teachers and always remembered what they had told her. So when Max and Gunther talked about how the Geography master had flown into a rage she said, "No wonder, after the way you all played him up last week!" And when Anna told her that her essay had been read out in class she said, "That's marvellous—because Fraulein Schmidt hardly ever reads anything out, does she?"

When she listened she looked at whoever was talking with the utmost concentration. When she talked all her energy went into it. She seemed to do everything twice as hard as other

people—even her eyes were a brighter blue than any Anna had ever seen.

They were just starting on the pudding which was apple strudel when Bertha the maid came in to tell Mama that there was someone on the telephone, and should she disturb Papa?

“What a time to ring up!” cried Mama and pushed her chair back so hard that Heimpi had to put out her hand to stop it falling over. “Don’t any of you dare eat my apple strudel!” And she rushed out.

It seemed very quiet after she had gone though Anna could hear her footsteps hurrying to the telephone and, a little later, hurrying even faster up the stairs to Papa’s room. In the silence she asked, “How is Papa?”

“Feeling better,” said Heimpi. “His temperature is down a bit.”

Anna ate her pudding contentedly. Max and Gunther got through three helpings but still Mama had not come back. It was odd because she was particularly fond of apple strudel.

Bertha came to clear away and Heimpi took the boys off to see to Gunther’s trousers. “No use mending these,” she said, “they’d split again as soon as you breathed. But I’ve got an outgrown pair of Max’s that will just do you nicely.”

Anna was left in the dining-room wondering what to do. For a while she helped Bertha. They put the used plates through the hatch into the pantry. Then they brushed the crumbs off the table with a little brush and pan. Then, while they were folding up the table cloth, she remembered Fraulein Lambeck and her message. She waited until Bertha had the table cloth safely in her hands and ran up to Papa’s room. She could hear Papa and Mama talking inside.

“Papa,” said Anna as she opened the door, “I met Fraulein Lambeck . . .”

“Not now! Not now!” cried Mama. “We’re talking!” She was sitting on the edge of Papa’s bed. Papa was propped up against the pillows looking rather pale. They were both frowning.

“But Papa, she asked me to tell you . . .”



Mama got quite angry.

"For goodness sake, Anna," she shouted, "we don't want to hear about it now! Go away!"

"Come back a little later," said Papa more gently. Anna shut the door. So much for that! It wasn't as though she'd ever wanted to deliver Fraulein Lambeck's silly message in the first place. But she felt put out.

There was no one in the nursery. She could hear shouts outside, so Max and Gunther were probably playing in the garden, but she did not feel like joining them. Her satchel was hanging on the back of a chair. She unpacked her new crayons and took them all out of their box. There was a good pink and quite a good orange, but the blues were best. There were three different shades, all beautifully bright, and a purple as well. Suddenly Anna had an idea.

Lately she had been producing a number of illustrated poems which had been much admired both at home and at school. There had been one about a fire, one about an earthquake and one about a man who died in dreadful agonies after being cursed by a tramp. Why not try her hand at a shipwreck? All sorts of words rhymed with sea and there was "save" to rhyme with "wave", and she could use the three new blue crayons for the illustration. She found some paper and began.

Soon she was so absorbed that she did not notice the early winter dusk creeping into the room, and she was startled when Heimpi came in and switched on the light.

"I've made some cakes," said Heimpi. "Do you want to help with the icing?"

"Can I just quickly show this to Papa?" asked Anna as she filled in the last bit of blue sea. Heimpi nodded.

This time Anna knocked and waited until Papa called "Come in". His room looked strange because only the bedside lamp was lit and Papa and his bed made an island of light among the shadows. She could dimly see his desk with the typewriter and the mass of papers which had, as usual, overflowed from the desk on to the floor. Because Papa often wrote

late at night and did not want to disturb Mama his bed was in his workroom.

Papa himself did not look like someone who was feeling better. He was sitting up doing nothing at all, just staring in front of him with a kind of tight look on his thin face, but when he saw Anna he smiled. She showed him the poem and he read it through twice and said it was very good, and he also admired the illustration. Then Anna told him about Fraulein Lambeck and they both laughed. He was looking more like himself, so Anna said, "Papa, do you really like the poem?"

Papa said he did.

"You don't think it should be more cheerful?"

"Well," said Papa, "a shipwreck is not really a thing you can be very cheerful about."

"My teacher Fraulein Schmidt thinks I should write about more cheerful subjects like the spring and the flowers."

"And do you want to write about the spring and the flowers?"

"No," said Anna sadly. "Right now all I seem to be able to do is disasters."

Papa gave a little sideways smile and said perhaps she was in tune with the times.

"Do you think then," asked Anna anxiously, "that disasters are all right to write about?" Papa became serious at once.

"Of course!" he said. "If you want to write about disasters, that's what you must do. It's no use trying to write what other people want. The only way to write anything good is to try to please yourself."

Anna was so encouraged to hear this that she was just going to ask Papa whether by any chance Papa thought she might become famous one day, but the telephone by Papa's bed rang loudly and surprised them both.

The tight look was back on Papa's face as he lifted the receiver and it was odd, thought Anna, how even his voice sounded different. She listened to him saying, "Yes . . . yes . . ." and something about Prague before she lost interest. But the conversation was soon over.

"You'd better run along now," said Papa. He lifted his

arms as though to give her a big hug. Then he put them down again. "I'd better not give you my 'flu," he said.

Anna helped Heimpi ice the cakes and then she and Max and Gunther ate them—all except three which Heimpi put in a paper bag for Gunther to take home to his Mum. She had also found some more of Max's outgrown clothes to fit him, so he had quite a nice parcel to take with him when he left.

They spent the rest of the evening playing games. Max and Anna had been given a games compendium for Christmas and had not yet got over the wonder of it. It contained draughts, chess, Ludo, Snakes and Ladders, dominoes and six different card games, all in one beautifully made box. If you got tired of one game you could always play another. Heimpi sat with them in the nursery mending socks and even joined them for a game of Ludo. Bed-time came far too soon.

Next morning before school Anna ran into Papa's room to see him. The desk was tidy. The bed was neatly made.

Papa had gone.