

She thought of a story she had often told to Kirsti as they cuddled in bed at night.

"Once upon a time there was a little girl," she told herself silently, "who had a beautiful red cloak. Her mother had made it for her.

"She wore it so often that everyone called her Little Red Riding-Hood."

Kirsti would always interrupt there. "Why was it called a red riding hood?" Kirsti would ask. "Why didn't they just call her Little Red-Cloak?"

"Well, it had a hood that covered her head. She had beautiful curls, like you, Kirsti. Maybe someday Mama will make you a coat with a hood to cover your curls and keep you warm."

"But why," Kirsti would ask, "was it a *riding* hood? Was she riding a horse?"

"Maybe she had a horse that she rode sometimes. But not in this story. Now stop interrupting every minute."

Annemarie smiled, feeling her way through the dark, remembering how Kirsti always interrupted stories to ask questions. Often she just wanted to make the story last longer.

The story continued. "One day the little girl's mother said, 'I want you to take a basket of food to your grandmother. She is sick in bed. Come, let me tie your red cloak.'"

## On the Dark Path

Only now, entering the woods on the footpath, did Annemarie realize how cold the dawn was. She had watched and helped, earlier, as the others donned sweaters, jackets, and coats; and she had peered into the night, following them with her eyes, as they moved silently off, bulky in their garments, blankets in their arms.

But she wore only a light sweater over her cotton dress. Though the October day, later, would be warmed by sunlight, now it was gray, chilly, and damp. She shivered.

The path curved, and she could no longer look behind her and see the clearing with the farmhouse outlined against the pale sky and the lightening meadow beyond. Now there were only the dark woods ahead; underfoot, the path, latticed with thick roots hidden under the fallen leaves, was invisible. She felt her way with her feet, trying not to stumble.

The handle of the straw basket scratched her arm through her sweater. She shifted it and tried to run.

"The grandmother lived deep in the woods, didn't she?" Kirsti would ask. "In the dangerous woods, where wolves lived."

Annemarie heard a small noise — a squirrel perhaps, or a rabbit, scampering nearby. She paused, stood still on the path, and smiled again. Kirsti would have been frightened. She would have grabbed Annemarie's hand and said, "A wolf!" But Annemarie knew that these woods were not like the woods in the story. There were no wolves or bears or tigers, none of the beasts that populated Kirsti's vivid imagination. She hurried on.

Still, they were very dark, these woods. Annemarie had never followed this path in the dark before. She had told her mother she would run. And she tried.

Here the path turned. She knew the turning well, though it seemed different in the dark. If she turned to the left, it would take her to the road, out where it would be lighter, wider, more traveled. But more dangerous, too. Someone could see her on the road. At this time of the dawn, other fishermen would be on the road, hurrying to their boats for the long day at sea. And there might be soldiers.

She turned to the right and headed deeper into the woods. It was why Mama and Peter had needed to guide those who were strangers here — the Rosens

and the others. A wrong turn would have taken them into danger.

"So little Red Riding-Hood carried the basket of food and hurried along through the woods. It was a lovely morning, and birds were singing. Little Red Riding-Hood sang, too, as she walked."

Sometimes she changed that part of the story, telling it to Kirsti. Sometimes it was raining, or even snowing, in the woods. Sometimes it was evening, with long, frightening shadows, so that Kirsti, listening, would snuggle closer and wrap her arms around Annemarie. But now, telling it to herself, she wanted sunlight and bird song.

Here the path widened and flattened; it was the place where the woods opened on one side and the path curved beside a meadow at the edge of the sea. Here she could run, and she did. Here, in daylight, there would be cows in the meadow, and on summer afternoons Annemarie would always stop by the fence and hold out handfuls of grass, which the curious cows would take with their rough tongues.

Here, her mother had told her, Mama would always stop, too, as a child walking to school. Her dog, Trofast, would wriggle under the fence and run about in the meadow, barking excitedly, trying to chase the cows, who always ignored him.

The meadow was empty now, and colorless in the

half light. She could hear the churning sea beyond, and see the wash of daylight to the east, over Sweden. She ran as fast as she could, searching with her eyes for the place ahead where the path would re-enter the woods in its final segment, which led to town.

Here. The bushes were overgrown and it was difficult to see the path here. But she found the entrance, beside the high blueberry bushes — how often she had stopped here, in late summer, to pick a handful of the sweet berries! Her hands and mouth would be blue afterward; Mama always laughed when she came home.

Now it was dark again, as the trees and bushes closed around her, and she had to move more slowly, though she still tried to run.

Annemarie thought of Mama: her ankle so swollen, and her face so pained. She hoped Mama had called the doctor by now. The local doctor was an old man, brusque and businesslike, though with kind eyes. He had come to the farmhouse several times during the summers of the past, his battered car noisy on the dirt road; he had come once when Kirsti, a tiny baby then, had been sick and wailing with an earache. And he had come when Lise had spilled hot grease, cooking breakfast, and burned her hand.

Annemarie turned again as the path divided once more. The left fork would take her directly to the

village; it was the way they had come from the train, and the way Mama had walked to school as a girl. But Annemarie turned to the right, heading now toward the harborside, where the fishing boats lay at anchor. She had often come this way before, too, sometimes at the end of the afternoon, to pick out the *Ingeborg*, Uncle Henrik's boat, from the many returning, and to watch him and his helpers unload the day's catch of slippery, shimmering herring still flopping in their containers.

Even now, with the boats in the harbor ahead empty of fish, preparing to leave for the day's fishing, she could smell the oily, salty scent of herring, which always remained in the air here.

It wasn't far now, and it was getting lighter. She ran almost as fast as she had run at school, in the Friday footraces. Almost as fast as she had run down the Copenhagen sidewalk on the day that the soldier had stopped her with his call of "*Halte!*"

Annemarie continued the story in her head. "Suddenly, as Little Red Riding-Hood walked through the woods, she heard a noise. She heard a rustling in the bushes."

"A wolf," Kirsti would always say, shivering with fearful delight. "I know it's going to be the wolf!"

Annemarie always tried to prolong this part, to build up the suspense and tantalize her sister. "She didn't know *what* it was. She stopped on the path and

listened. Something was following her, in the bushes. Little Red Riding-Hood was very, very, *very* frightened."

She would stop, would stay silent for a moment, and beside her in the bed she could feel Kirsti holding her breath.

"Then," Annemarie would go on, in a low, dreadful voice, "she heard a *growl*."

Annemarie stopped, suddenly, and stood still on the path. There was a turn immediately ahead. Beyond it, she knew, as soon as she rounded the turn, she would see the landscape open to the sea. The woods would be behind her there, and ahead of her would be the harbor, the docks, and the countless fishing boats. Very soon it would be noisy there, with engines starting, fishermen calling to one another, and gulls crying.

But she had heard something else. She heard bushes rustling ahead. She heard footsteps. And — she was certain it was not her imagination — she heard a low growl.

Cautiously, she took a step forward. And another. She approached the turn in the path, and the noises continued.

Then they were there, in front of her. Four armed soldiers. With them, straining at taut leashes, were two large dogs, their eyes glittering, their lips curled.

## My Dogs Smell Meat!

Annemarie's mind raced. She remembered what her mother had said. "If anyone stops you, you must pretend to be nothing more than a silly little girl."

She stared at the soldiers. She remembered how she had stared at the others, frightened, when they had stopped her on the street.

Kirsti hadn't been frightened. Kirsti had been — well, nothing more than a silly little girl, angered because the soldier had touched her hair that afternoon. She had known nothing of danger, and the soldier had been amused by her.

Annemarie willed herself, with all her being, to behave as Kirsti would.

"Good morning," she said carefully to the soldiers.

They looked her up and down in silence. Both dogs were tense and alert. The two soldiers who held the leashes wore thick gloves.

"What are you doing here?" one of them asked.

Annemarie held out her basket, with the thick loaf of bread visible. "My Uncle Henrik forgot his lunch, and I'm taking it to him. He's a fisherman."

The soldiers were looking around; their eyes glanced behind her, and scanned the bushes on either side.

"Are you alone?" one asked.

Annemarie nodded. "Yes," she said. One of the dogs growled. But she noticed that both dogs were looking at the lunch basket.

One soldier stepped forward. The other, and the two holding the dogs, remained where they were.

"You came out before daybreak just to bring a lunch? Why doesn't your uncle eat fish?"

What would Kirsti reply? Annemarie tried to giggle, the way her sister might. "Uncle Henrik doesn't even *like* fish," she said, laughing. "He says he sees too much of it, and *smells* too much of it. Anyway, he wouldn't eat it raw!" She made a face. "Well, I suppose he would if he were starving. But Uncle Henrik always has bread and cheese for lunch."

Keep chattering, she told herself, as Kirsti would. A silly little girl. "I like fish," she went on. "I like it the way my mother cooks it. Sometimes she rolls it in bread crumbs, and —"

The soldier reached forward and grabbed the crisp loaf of bread from the basket. He examined it carefully. Then he broke it in half, pulling the two halves apart with his fists.

That would enrage Kirsti, she knew. "*Don't!*" she

said angrily. "That's Uncle Henrik's bread! My mother baked it!"

The soldier ignored her. He tossed the two halves of the loaf to the ground, one half in front of each dog. They consumed it, each snapping at the bread and gulping it so that it was gone in an instant.

"Have you seen anyone in the woods?" The soldier barked the question at her.

"No. Only you." Annemarie stared at him. "What are you doing in the woods, anyway? You're making me late. Uncle Henrik's boat will leave before I get there with his lunch. Or what's *left* of his lunch."

The soldier picked up the wedge of cheese. He turned it over in his hand. He turned to the three behind him and asked them something in their own language.

One of them answered "*Nein*," in a bored tone. Annemarie recognized the word; the man had replied "No." He had probably been asked, Annemarie thought, "Do you want this?" or perhaps, "Should I give this to the dogs?"

The soldier continued to hold the cheese. He tossed it back and forth between his hands.

Annemarie gave an exasperated sigh. "Could I go now, please?" she asked impatiently.

The soldier reached for the apple. He noted its brown spots, and made a face of disgust.

"No meat?" he asked, glancing at the basket and the napkin that lay in its bottom.

Annemarie gave him a withering look. "You know we have no meat," she said insolently. "Your army eats all of Denmark's meat."

Please, please, she implored in her mind. Don't lift the napkin.

The soldier laughed. He dropped the bruised apple on the ground. One of the dogs leaned forward, pulling at his leash, sniffed the apple, and stepped back. But both dogs still looked intently at the basket, their ears alert, their mouths open. Saliva glistened on their smooth pink gums.

"My dogs smell meat," the soldier said.

"They smell squirrels in the woods," Annemarie responded. "You should take them hunting."

The soldier reached forward with the cheese in one hand, as if he were going to return it to the basket. But he didn't. Instead, he pulled out the flowered cotton napkin.

Annemarie froze.

"Your uncle has a pretty little lunch," the soldier said scornfully, crumpling the napkin around the cheese in his hand. "Like a woman," he added, with contempt.

Then his eyes locked on the basket. He handed the cheese and napkin to the soldier beside him.

"What's that? There, in the bottom?" he asked in a different, tenser voice.

What would Kirsti do? Annemarie stamped her foot. Suddenly, to her own surprise, she began to cry. "I don't know!" she said, her voice choked. "My mother's going to be angry that you stopped me and made me late. And you've completely ruined Uncle Henrik's lunch, so now *he'll* be mad at me, too!"

The dogs whined and struggled against the leashes, nosing forward to the basket. One of the other soldiers muttered something in German.

The soldier took out the packet. "Why was this so carefully hidden?" he snapped.

Annemarie wiped her eyes on the sleeve of her sweater. "It wasn't hidden, any more than the napkin was. I don't know what it is." That, she realized, was true. She had no idea what was in the packet.

The soldier tore the paper open while below him, on the ground, the dogs strained and snarled, pulling against their leashes. Their muscles were visible beneath the sleek, short-haired flesh.

He looked inside, then glared at Annemarie. "Stop crying, you idiot girl," he said harshly. "Your stupid mother has sent your uncle a handkerchief. In Germany many the women have better things to do. They don't stay at home hemming handkerchiefs for their men."

He gestured with the folded white cloth and gave a short, caustic laugh. "At least she didn't stitch flowers on it."

He flung it to the ground, still half wrapped in the paper, beside the apple. The dogs lunged, sniffed at it eagerly, then subsided, disappointed again.

"Go on," the soldier said. He dropped the cheese and the napkin back into her basket. "Go on to your uncle and tell him the German dogs enjoyed his bread."

All of the soldiers pushed past her. One of them laughed, and they spoke to each other in their own language. In a moment they had disappeared down the path, in the direction from which Annemarie had just come.

Quickly she picked up the apple and the opened packet with the white handkerchief inside. She put them into the basket and ran around the bend toward the harbor, where the morning sky was now bright with early sun and some of the boat engines were starting their strident din.

The *Ingeborg* was still there, by the dock, and Uncle Henrik was there, his light hair windblown and bright as he knelt by the nets. Annemarie called to him and he came to the side, his face worried when he recognized her on the dock.

She handed the basket across. "Mama sent your lunch," she said, her voice quavering. "But soldiers

stopped me, and they took your bread." She didn't dare to tell him more.

Henrik glanced quickly into the basket. She could see the look of relief on his face, and knew that it was because he saw that the packet was there, even though it was torn open.

"Thank you," he said, and the relief was evident in his voice.

Annemarie looked quickly around the familiar small boat. She could see down the passageway into the empty cabin. There was no sign of the Rosens or the others. Uncle Henrik followed her eyes and her puzzled look.

"All is well," he said softly. "Don't worry. Everything is all right."

"I wasn't sure," he said. "But now" — he eyed the basket in his hands — "because of you, Annemarie, everything is all right."

"You run home now, and tell your mama not to worry. I will see you this evening."

He grinned at her suddenly. "They took my bread, eh?" he said. "I hope they choke on it."

## I Will Tell You Just a Little

"Poor Blossom!" Uncle Henrik said, laughing, after dinner that evening. "It was bad enough that your mother was going to milk her, after all these years of city life. But Annemarie! To do it for the very first time! I'm surprised Blossom didn't kick you!"

Mama laughed, too. She sat in a comfortable chair that Uncle Henrik had moved from the living room and placed in a corner of the kitchen. Her leg, in a clean white cast to the knee, was on a footstool.

Annemarie didn't mind their laughing. It *had* been funny. When she had arrived back at the farmhouse — she had run along the road to avoid the soldiers who might still be in the woods; now, carrying nothing, she was in no danger — Mama and Kirsti were gone. There was a note, hastily written, from Mama, that the doctor was taking her in his car to the local hospital, that they would be back soon.

But the noise from Blossom, forgotten, un milked, uncomfortable, in the barn, had sent Annemarie warily out with the milking bucket. She had done her

best, trying to ignore Blossom's irritated snorts and tossing head, remembering how Uncle Henrik's hands had worked with a firm, rhythmic, pulling motion. And she had milked.

"I could have done it," Kirsti announced. "You only have to pull and it squirts out. I could do it *easily*."

Annemarie rolled her eyes. I'd like to see you try, she thought.

"Is Ellen coming back?" Kirsti asked, forgetting the cow after a moment. "She said she'd make a dress for my doll."

"Annemarie and I will help you make a dress," Mama told her. "Ellen had to go with her parents. Wasn't that a nice surprise, that the Rosens came last night to get her?"

"She should have waked me up to say goodbye," Kirsti grumbled, spooning some imaginary food into the painted mouth of the doll she had propped in a chair beside her.

"Annemarie," Uncle Henrik said, getting up from the table and pushing back his chair, "if you come with me now to the barn, I'll give you a milking lesson. Wash your hands first."

"Me too," said Kirsti.

"Not you too," Mama said. "Not this time. I need your help here, since I can't walk very well. You'll have to be my nurse."



Kirsti hesitated, deciding whether to argue. Then she said, "I'm going to be a nurse when I grow up. Not a cow milker. So I have to stay here and take care of Mama."

Followed as usual by the kitten, Annemarie walked with Uncle Henrik to the barn through a fine misty rain that had begun to fall. It seemed to her that Blossom shook her head happily when she saw Henrik and knew that she would be in good hands again.

She sat on the stacked hay and watched while he milked. But her mind was not on the milking.

"Uncle Henrik," she asked, "where are the Rosens and the others? I thought you were taking them to Sweden on your boat. But they weren't there."

"They were there," he told her, leaning forward against the cow's broad side. "You shouldn't know this. You remember that I told you it was safer not to know."

"But," he went on, as his hands moved with their sure and practiced motion, "I will tell you just a little, because you were so very brave."

"Brave?" Annemarie asked, surprised. "No, I wasn't. I was very frightened."

"You risked your life."

"But I didn't even think about that! I was only thinking of —"

He interrupted her, smiling. "That's all that *brave* means — not thinking about the dangers. Just thinking about what you must do. Of course you were frightened. I was too, today. But you kept your mind on what you had to do. So did I. Now let me tell you about the Rosens."

"Many of the fishermen have built hidden places in their boats. I have, too. Down underneath. I have only to lift the boards in the right place, and there is room to hide a few people. Peter, and others in the Resistance who work with him, bring them to me, and to the other fishermen as well. There are people who hide them and help them, along the way to Gilleleje."

Annemarie was startled. "Peter is in the Resistance? Of course! I should have known! He brings Mama and Papa the secret newspaper, *De Frii Danske*. And he always seems to be on the move. I should have figured it out myself!"

"He is a very, very brave young man," Uncle Henrik said. "They all are."

Annemarie frowned, remembering the empty boat that morning. "Were the Rosens and the others there, then, underneath, when I brought the basket?"

Uncle Henrik nodded.

"I heard nothing," Annemarie said.

"Of course not. They had to be absolutely quiet for many hours. The baby was drugged so that it wouldn't wake and cry."

"Could they hear me when I talked to you?"

"Yes. Your friend Ellen told me, later, that they heard you. And they heard the soldiers who came to search the boat."

Annemarie's eyes widened. "Soldiers came?" she asked. "I thought they went the other way after they stopped me."

"There are many soldiers in Gilleleje and all along the coast. They are searching all the boats now. They know that the Jews are escaping, but they are not sure how, and they rarely find them. The hiding places are carefully concealed, and often we pile dead fish on the deck as well. They hate getting their shiny boots dirtied!"

He turned his head toward her and grinned.

Annemarie remembered the shiny boots confronting her on the dark path.

"Uncle Henrik," she said, "I'm sure you are right, that I shouldn't know everything. But, please, would you tell me about the handkerchief? I knew it was important, the packet, and that's why I ran through the woods to take it to you. But I thought maybe it was a map. How could a handkerchief be important?"

He set the filled pail aside and began to wash the cow's udder with the damp cloth. "Very few people

know about this, Annemarie," he said with a serious look. "But the soldiers are so angry about the escaping Jews — and the fact that they can't find them — that they have just started using trained dogs."

"They had dogs! The ones who stopped me on the path!"

Uncle Henrik nodded. "The dogs are trained to sniff about and find where people are hidden. It happened just yesterday on two boats. Those damn dogs, they go right through dead fish to the human scent."

"We were all very, very worried. We thought it meant the end of the escape to Sweden by boat."

"It was Peter who took the problem to scientists and doctors. Some very fine minds have worked night and day, trying to find a solution."

"And they have created a special drug. I don't know what it is. But it was in the handkerchief. It attracts the dogs, but when they sniff at it, it ruins their sense of smell. Imagine that!"

Annemarie remembered how the dogs had lunged at the handkerchief, smelled it, and then turned away.

"Now, thanks to Peter, we will each have such a handkerchief, each boat captain. When the soldiers board our boats, we will simply pull the handkerchiefs out of our pockets. The Germans will probably think we all have bad colds! The dogs will sniff

about, sniff the handkerchiefs we are holding, and then roam the boat and find nothing. They will smell nothing."

"Did they bring dogs to your boat this morning?"  
 "Yes. Not twenty minutes after you had gone. I was about to pull away from the dock when the soldiers appeared and ordered me to halt. They came aboard, searched, found nothing. By then, of course, I had the handkerchief. If I had not, well —" His voice trailed off, and he didn't finish the sentence. He didn't need to.

If she had not found the packet where Mr. Rosen had dropped it. If she had not run through the woods. If the soldiers had taken the basket. If she had not reached the boat in time. All of the ifs whirled in Annemarie's head.

"They are safe in Sweden now?" she asked.  
 "You're sure?"

Uncle Henrik stood, and patted the cow's head. "I saw them ashore. There were people waiting to take them to shelter. They are quite safe there."

"But what if the Nazis invade Sweden? Will the Rosens have to run away again?"

"That won't happen. For reasons of their own, the Nazis want Sweden to remain free. It is very complicated."

Annemarie's thoughts turned to her friends, hiding under the deck of the *Ingeborg*. "It must have been

awful for them, so many hours there," she murmured. "Was it dark in the hiding place?"

"Dark, and cold, and very cramped. And Mrs. Rosen was seasick, even though we were not on the water very long — it is a short distance, as you know. But they are courageous people. And none of that mattered when they stepped ashore. The air was fresh and cool in Sweden; the wind was blowing. The baby was beginning to wake as I said goodbye to them."

"I wonder if I will ever see Ellen again," Annemarie said sadly.

"You will, little one. You saved her life, after all. Someday you will find her again. Someday the war will end," Uncle Henrik said. "All wars do."

"Now then," he added, stretching, "that was quite a milking lesson, was it not?"

"Uncle Henrik!" Annemarie shrieked, and then began to laugh. "Look!" She pointed. "The God of Thunder has fallen into the milk pail!"