

# Mein Spatzi

Sofie sat on her bed holding her porcelain doll, Hanna, as her mother carefully folded clothes into a suitcase so big, Sofie could have fit inside it herself.

"The biggest clothes are going on the bottom, mein Spatzi. Just try not to grow so fast anymore. Ok?" Merika pinched her daughters nose and smiled.

Sofie laughed and reached for the small golden Star of David around her neck. It was smaller than her fingernail and the chain was thin and delicate. She ran the star back and forth along its chain delicately, gracefully.

Sofie looked into the suitcase full of clothes they had bought for her that morning. They ranged in size from just right, to very, very large on her. There were dresses, pants and shirts, two pairs of walking shoes and a pair of black boots that had buttons growing around them like ivy. Her mother had tried to pack a thick winter coat as well as her nice white parka, but there was no room for the parka so she left it in the closet.

"There are some cans of food at the bottom and I'm putting some bread in here, too, so don't forget about it and let it go stale. It would be such a waste."

"Ok, Mutti. I won't forget." Sofie put her doll down and looked up at her mother who was now rolling up pairs of woolen socks and sticking them into metal cups and bottles, squishing them deep into the suitcase. "Mutti? Why can't I go with you and Papa?"

Merika started shoving the rest of the things lying out on the bed down into the suitcase. A silver plated hair brush, ribbons wrapped in a handkerchief embroidered with bright birds and flowers, a notebook tied with a twine around the middle. "I told you, mein Spatzi. We don't know where we're going yet. It's just not safe. You'll be much better off with the other children. No more questions now."

Sofie looked at her mother and studied her face. She tried to memorize her cheekbones, strong and sharp, piercing up across her face toward her temples. Her dark eyes were rimmed in

circles of worry, and her brown curls were pinned up around her forehead. She had grown thinner in the last few weeks, ever since Sofie's grandfather had gone missing, and she was muttering *Oseh Shalom*, the prayer for peace, beneath her quickened breath.

"I love you, Mutti." Sofie hugged Hanna closer to her chest, never breaking her gaze toward her mother.

Merika stopped rearranging items in the suitcase and stared down at her feet. She grabbed herself around her waist, so thin these days. Silently, she began to shake, the sobs sending waves through her whole body. Sofie put Hanna down on the bed and moved closer towards her mother. Merika grabbed Sofie's head and pushed it to her bosom, bent down to kiss it, and held it there as her silence broke in panicked wails. Sofie hugged her mother and the two rocked back and forth, back and forth.