

LEO

I made a list of things I was no longer allowed to do. I carried it with me everywhere in case I forgot. I'd seen what happened to people who forgot.

Like Papa, when I'd seen him in the square. Except Papa hadn't even had time to remember. He'd barely had a day to learn the new rules before he was punished for breaking them.

We never talked about that day. Neither of us even acknowledged it had happened. Instead, we both pretended that our eyes hadn't met when he was kneeling on the ground, that he hadn't urged me to run away so I didn't face a similar fate, that I hadn't known any different when he came home and told Mama that he had slipped and fallen in the rain.

Sometimes I reran the events in my mind, trying to find even a sliver of possibility that I had misunderstood what I'd seen. I made up alternative versions and tried to convince myself they were real.

Papa had been playing a game with his friends. They were taking it in turns to be in charge. He had fallen, like he said to Mama. Mr Muller and Mr Weber and the others weren't

laughing and jeering *at* him, but *with* him. They *must* have been: those men were his friends.

Even Mr Fischer used to be friendly with him. He didn't really kick him in the stomach. He can't have done. He must have been doing something else.

But as the days went by and the friends stopped coming for dinner, and the clients started going elsewhere, and Papa grew so withdrawn he rarely spoke and no longer smiled, it became harder and harder to convince myself that they had been playing a game.

And when his beautiful studio window that had always been filled with photographs of smiling people had *JEW* daubed across it in red paint that dripped down the window like blood, I stopped trying to force my mind to lie to itself.

I knew what I had seen and why my father and the other men on the floor with him had been singled out by that crowd. And I knew it could happen again – to him, to me, to any other Jew in the city.

That was when I made my list of all the new laws that I needed to remember. Here's what it said:

I am no longer allowed to . . .

Go to school. (Except the Jewish school I now have to attend. I am still allowed to go there.)

Go to the park. (It's not as much fun without Elsa and Max anyway so this one is okay I suppose.)

Go to restaurants. (Just as well Mama is such a good cook.)

Go to public swimming pools. (Boo! I love swimming.)

Ride bicycles. (This is the WORST. I love my bike.)

Say 'Heil Hitler'. (I don't mind this one. I secretly hate Hitler. He is the one who told the men to beat up Papa, so I don't want to 'Heil' him or any of his horrible men.)

Join the Hitler Youth. (See above.)

Marry someone who is not Jewish. (This one might be useful one day as it means that Elsa will have to marry me because she won't be allowed to marry Max.)

I checked my list constantly. Every day, we would hear of someone else who had broken the laws. They were beaten or imprisoned or taken away, no one knew where. My life became a daily promise that I would not become one of those people.

So I memorized the new laws and followed them without question or exception. And every evening I opened the drawer where I kept the list. I read through every point then I folded the list back up and put it away, offering silent thanks that it had kept me safe for another day.