

THE CATS—AND ANNA’S COUSIN— NEED A HOME.

When Anna sees a family of stray cats behind her parents’ doll shop, she knows she must rescue them. But Papa’s rules are strict: *No pets allowed*. Meanwhile, Anna’s cousin Tania is coming from Russia to stay with Anna’s family, and Anna is so excited for her to arrive and be her new best friend. But when Tania moves in, she’s shy and nervous, and Anna’s sisters don’t seem to like Tania at all. Can Anna find a way to help both Tania and the cats?

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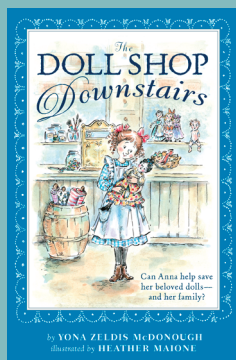
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about Anna and the dolls!



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Ages 8 up



I



WORDS FROM FAR AWAY

It all starts with the letters. Not that letters, all by themselves, are such an odd thing. Papa and Mama run Breittlemann's Doll Shop, where they make dolls, and they get letters all the time: from Mr. Greenfield, the buyer at the big, fancy toy store uptown called F.A.O. Schwarz, and from buyers at other stores, too. There are letters from suppliers of the different materials they use: velvet and cotton, wool and felt. Sometimes they get letters from people who have bought one of the dolls and want to know if there are any new models available.

But the letters I am talking about are different. They come all the way from Russia, where Mama and Papa were born, and they arrive in fragile envelopes that tear

when they are opened. My sisters and I can't read what is in the letters, because they are written in Yiddish, which is the language both of my parents' families spoke back in what Mama calls the "old country." Sophie, my big sister, can understand Yiddish when she hears it spoken, but even she—a regular smarty-pants, all A's and gold stars at school—cannot understand the words, which are written in Hebrew letters and crowded onto the thin, pearl gray sheets of paper.

First the letters come only once in a while. Then we begin to notice that they are coming every week, sometimes even twice a week. Mama rips the envelopes in her haste to open them—did I mention they are fragile?—and all the features on her face seem to draw together, as if pulled tight by a thread, as she reads. Sometimes she looks worried long after she has finished reading the letters. Tonight is one of those times.

"What's wrong, Mama?" asks Trudie, my younger sister. It is a Sunday in August, and we're all sitting together at our small, crowded table. Dinner—cold beet soup called borscht, with dumplings and bread—is over, and I am wondering if Mama will let us go downstairs

and play in the doll shop. Even though we girls are getting older—Trudie is nine, I’m eleven, and Sophie is thirteen—we still like to play with our dolls.

“Nothing’s wrong,” Mama says to Trudie. But the tone of her voice lets me know this is not true, and because of this, I don’t ask to go downstairs after all. I decide to stay up here, so I can keep an eye on what is happening. And sure enough, after Sophie and I have finished doing the dinner dishes, Mama calls us all together in the tiny parlor that is just off the kitchen. Papa sits in his chair on one side of the room. Mama sits in her chair on the other. But instead of the sewing basket she usually brings out in the evenings, she has the letters—all of them it seems—fanned out in her lap.

“Girls, we are going to have a visitor,” Mama says.

“A visitor? Who is it?” Trudie asks.

“Is it someone we know?” asks Sophie.

“Not yet,” Mama says, glancing over at Papa. “But you’ll get to know her soon. In fact, you’ll get to know her very well.”

“Tell us who it is, Mama!” Trudie pleads.

“It’s your cousin Tania,” Mama says.

“She’s Aunt Rivka’s daughter,” I say. Mama has told us about her. “She and I have exactly the same birthday and we’re exactly the same age. You said it was a coincidence that you and your sister both had baby girls on the very same day.”

“That’s right, Anna!” says Mama.

“So what’s she like?” Sophie asks me, as if she didn’t quite believe it when I said I remembered hearing about her.

“Well, she has blonde hair . . .” I begin. I am not actually sure about this, but when I speak again, I try to make my voice sound very confident anyway. “Long blonde hair and bright blue eyes. Blue as . . .” I have to think for a minute. “Blue as forget-me-nots.”

“You’ve never even *seen* a forget-me-not,” says Sophie. She tosses her own shining brown hair—always brushed, always neat, and always perfect—back over her shoulders.

“How do you know?” I say hotly. Sophie and I get along pretty well most of the time, but every now and then she acts like she knows everything and I know just about nothing. I don’t know why it’s important to me to insist that Tania is blonde and blue-eyed. Maybe it’s

because I know Sophie wishes she were both.

“That’s enough, girls,” says Mama. “Tania does have blonde hair, or at least she did when she was a baby. It might have gotten darker by now. And Rivka says her eyes are very blue. But that’s not what’s important right now.”

“What *is* important, Mama?” Trudie asks. She is clutching her doll, Angelica Grace, to her chest. “The reason she’s coming here?”

“Yes, that’s it,” says Mama. “The reason that she’s coming here.” Mama puts her arm around Trudie. “You see, her papa died when she was a baby, and she has no brothers and sisters. So for a long time, it was just Rivka and Tania, living together in their little village. But now Aunt Rivka wants to move to the city. She’s going to be a maid in a very fine house in Moscow.”

“Isn’t that a good thing?” I ask. I know about the Great War that is still going on in Europe. Papa has said that jobs are scarce, and so I would think Aunt Rivka is lucky to have found one.

“It is, except the house where Rivka will be working has no place for Tania.”



“Then where will she live if she can’t live with her mother?” asks Trudie. She runs a finger across her doll’s smooth, painted face.

“That’s exactly why she’s going to come to live here,” says Papa, leaning forward in his chair. “And if she lives here, she’ll be able to go to school, like you girls do. She’ll learn to read and write and add and subtract. That means she’ll have some choices about what she wants to do when she’s grown up—just like all of you.”

“I’m going to be a teacher,” Sophia declares.

“And I’m going to be a ballerina!” adds Trudie. Trudie does love to dance.

“You can’t just decide to *be* a ballerina,” Sophie says. “You have to study for a long, long time.”

“Oh well,” says Trudie. “So I won’t be a ballerina. I’ll be an actress then. Or a singer.” She seems to consider the possibilities. “I know—a nurse! Just like Nurse Nora.” With her jaunty little outfit and sweet, caring expression, Nurse Nora is the most popular of the dolls we make in the shop.

I can see that Sophie does not believe any of this. She has that I’m-so-grown-up look on her face. Maybe

I shouldn't even say what I want to be. Sophie will find some way to make me think it's not possible. Or that it's silly. But I decide I don't care.

"I'm going to be a writer," I announce boldly. "I'll write stories and poems and maybe even plays." Everyone turns to look at me. "My books will be published in beautiful leather-covered volumes with gold lettering on the front. People everywhere will read them. They'll be in libraries all over the city. No, all over the country."

I happen to love libraries. Once a week, I walk up to the Tompkins Square Library on Tenth Street where I can check out books. I have my very own library card. The librarian, Miss Abbott, is so nice. She sets aside things she thinks I will like. She's always right, too. What if one day Miss Abbot were able to give a book I wrote to some other little girl coming through those doors? Wouldn't I feel proud!

"Those are all fine dreams," says Mama. "If you work hard in school, you'll make them come true. And Tania—we want her to have a chance to dream, too."

"How long will she be staying?" Sophie wants to know. "Will we have enough room for her?" I have to

admit these are good questions. Our apartment has only four small rooms—kitchen, parlor, and two bedrooms.

“Your mother and I have talked about that,” Papa says, glancing over at Mama. From that glance, I can tell that some of the conversations haven’t been so smooth. “Tania will be here with us for about a year,” he continues.

“A year! That’s a long time,” says Sophie.

“Aunt Rivka needs that much time to make the money for her own passage,” Mama says. “And then she’ll come over, too, and we’ll help her find an apartment of her own nearby.”

“It’s going to be crowded,” Trudie says. Sophie nods vigorously.

“Yes,” Mama says, lifting her chin a little. “It will be. And it may not be easy to have another girl living in your room.”

“We’ll manage,” I tell Mama. “You can count on us.” Sophie and Trudie don’t say a thing. “When will she be here?”

“That’s what Rivka and I are trying to arrange now,” says Mama. “I’ll let you know as soon we’ve figured it out.”



Shortly after that conversation, September starts and with it, school. Trudie is in fourth grade now. She has the same teacher I had back when I was in that class. Sophie is in eighth grade, her last year in our school. Next year she'll be in high school, which seems impossibly grown up to me. And I'm in sixth grade, right smack in the middle, where I always am.

I begin to take more careful notice of the letters. I ask Mama what they say, so she reads them to us at night, after our lessons are done. It seems I have more schoolwork than last year. History, arithmetic, geography, spelling, and reading—my favorite. Sometimes I don't finish until late, and so Mama reads the letters while we are already in bed. Of course she has to translate from the Yiddish, or Trudie and I won't understand.

"July 7, 1915," reads Mama one night just after school has started. She smooths the thin sheet of paper with her hand. "Today I went into town to get the papers Tania will need to make the trip. I'll fill them out and

then next week, I'll deliver them to the proper office."

"July?" says Trudie. "It's already September." She leans over to get closer to the letter—not that she can read it anyway—and her elbow pokes me in the side. *Ouch*. My sisters and I sleep together in one big bed. I didn't mind so much when we were little, but now that we are getting bigger, I wish we didn't have to share. Papa says since Tania is coming, he will be getting us new beds, one for each of us. No more sharing! I am looking forward to *that*.

"It takes time for the letters to get here," Mama explains. "A long time."

"Keep going," I say, inching away from Trudie as best I can. "What else does she say?" So Mama continues reading, and even though I can sense my sisters losing interest, I want to hear every word. I crane my neck so I can see the foreign letters on the page.

"Mama," I ask. "Will Tania be able to speak English?"

"No," Mama answers. "So I hope that's something you girls can help her with—learning English."

"I can do that," Sophie says, rather boastfully in my

opinion. “I’m going to be a teacher, remember?”

“That would be wonderful,” Mama says. “Just what we need.”

I don’t say anything, but privately I think that if Sophie is going to act like a know-it-all with our cousin, she isn’t going to be much help to her.

To my surprise, the next day there is another letter. Mama reads it to us after supper. “Tania’s application was finally approved. Now I have to buy the ticket and start packing.” As I listen, I wonder if Tania has a favorite doll. Will she bring it along with her? Then I wonder if she has a doll at all. For a long time, Sophie, Trudie, and I did not have dolls of our own, even though our parents had a doll repair shop. Dolls, especially bisque and porcelain dolls, are very costly. We used to play with the dolls our father fixed, but we did not own them.

Then the Great War broke out in Europe. America sided against Germany. All of the doll parts Papa used for repairs came from Germany. Because of the war, the parts were no longer available. Some of the dolls, including the ones we named Bernadette Louise, Victoria Marie, and Angelica Grace, were abandoned by their owners. It was

only for that reason that we were able to keep them. Now Mama and Papa do not fix dolls but make them instead. They produce Nurse Nora—who was *my* idea and is now everyone’s favorite—and also a fairy doll and a queen doll.

Mama told us that Aunt Rivka is poor, and it has taken her a long time to save the money for Tania’s ticket. So I am pretty sure that Tania will not have a doll, or even if she does, it will not be a very nice one. Well, if Sophie decided that she will be Tania’s English teacher, I decide that I will be the one to help her get a doll. Maybe it will be one of the dolls that Papa and Mama make. If I ask Papa, he will probably let Tania have Nurse Nora. I wonder if Tania would like her.

But then I get another idea. A much better idea. I will *make* a doll for Tania, all by myself. A Russian princess? A Spanish dancer? A bride with a long train and a lace veil? I don’t know yet. But what I do know is that she will be a very special doll, a gift to my cousin that comes straight from my heart.



2



OUT BACK

Although the big calendar Papa keeps posted in the doll shop says September 1915, the days are as beautiful, warm, and golden as summer. I lag behind my sisters on the way to school, wishing I could stay outside and play instead of going inside to join my class. And on the way home, I let them get even farther ahead, stopping to look in all the shop windows along the way. There's a shop that sells only buttons, and another that sells hats of all kinds. My favorite is the store that sells the prettiest undergarments for ladies and girls. I love the frilly petticoats and delicate camisoles, the embroidered nightdresses and matching robes. I wish I could buy Mama a set like that for her birthday.

When I get to the candy store at the corner of Hester Street, I check my pocket. Empty—too bad. If I had any money from my allowance—two cents a week—I would stop for a soda or a milk shake.

When I finally do get home, I still don't want to go inside, so I head out in back of the shop, where there is the barest sliver of a yard with hard, parched dirt that grows exactly nothing. Even the weeds struggle back here.

"There you are!" I turn to see Sophie, who has followed me outside. "Trudie and I have been home for an hour. We were wondering where you were."

"I came home a different way," I tell her.

"I've just about finished my lessons. You haven't even started yours yet," Sophie says.

"In a minute," I tell her.

"Suit yourself," says Sophie, and goes back inside.

I sigh. There was a time not so long ago when I thought Sophie was beginning to view me not as a little sister but as an equal. Lately though, it seems she has gone back to thinking that I am just so far behind.

Sophie is changing, both outside and in. She has gotten taller, and though it pains me to admit it, even

prettier. She no longer wears her hair in braids and is occasionally allowed to wear it up, like when we go to *shul* on the holidays or when Mama and Papa invite company for dinner. And on her last birthday, Mama gave her a pair of earrings with real garnets at the center. The dark red stones glow against Sophie's pale skin. I am so jealous of those earrings! They belonged to Mama's own mother, and Mama says when I am a little older, she will give me a pair, too, but it is hard to wait.

Is it any wonder that I sometimes need to be by myself, even if that means sitting in the drab, cramped yard, looking up at the backs of the neighboring buildings and the network of black metal fire escapes that are attached to them? There is another tiny yard directly behind ours, separated by a brick wall. At the end of that yard is a building much like the one we live in. The view is pretty dull, but I continue to look at it anyway, because there is nothing else to look at.

So that is how I happened to see her—the big ginger-colored kitty padding along the third-story fire escape attached to the building just behind ours. Judging from her

swollen belly, I am almost sure that she is going to have kittens. Soon. In fact, I'll bet she is probably looking for a place to have them right now.

Immediately, I head back into the shop, where the three worktables are covered with scraps of fabric and dolls in different stages of production. Papa is cutting the twine on a box. Mama is attaching capes to Nurse Nora dolls. Our two new employees, Kathleen and Michael O'Leary, are busy working on other dolls. Michael gives me a little wave. I smile back, but I don't stop to chat.

"Sophie!" I call. "Sophie! Trudie! Come quick."

Trudie comes right away, but Sophie doesn't answer. So I lead Trudie out back, where the cat is now sitting on the fire escape.

"Look!" I say, pointing upward.

"What?" Trudie does not see.

"There! I wave my arm excitedly. "That big orange cat. Don't you see her?"

"I do now!" says Trudie. "But why is she so fat?"

"She's going to have kittens," I explain. "And she's looking for a good place to have them."



“The fire escape doesn’t seem like a very good place,” Trudie says.

“The fire escape doesn’t seem like a very good place for what?” Sophie comes out into the yard. She has arranged her hair in a new way, with two small braids wound around her head and secured with pins. The rest, long and loose, hangs down her back. Where did she get the idea for *that*? The style makes her look a bit unfamiliar. And older, too.

“Doesn’t seem like a good place to have kittens,” says Trudie.

“Who’s having kittens?”

Together, Trudie and I point to the ginger cat, who is now pacing nervously across the fire escape.

“Trudie, go get that box that’s under the table by the window,” Sophie says. Then she turns to me. “Can you find something soft and warm, Anna? One of the rags Mama uses for cleaning. Or even two?”

Trust Sophie to waltz in late and start taking over like she is the one in charge. Still, I can see what she has in mind—a bed for the soon-to-be-mother cat. And she did

ask me very nicely about the rags. So I run upstairs in search of the rag basket.

Inside, Mama is in the kitchen making supper. One of our neighbors, Mrs. Kornblatt, is sitting at the table. She and Mama are chattering away and take no notice of me. I slip past them and dig through the rag basket, where I find two pieces of faded blue flannel. Perfect to line a cat bed. I go downstairs to where Trudie is waiting with the box, but I don't see Sophie. I lay the flannel inside.

"Do you think the cat will come down here?" Trudie asks.

"We need something to lure her," I say.

"I've got just the thing," says Sophie, walking back into the yard with a bag on her arm. "Look." She pulls out a tiny pitcher filled with cream, and a saucer.

"Where did you get that?" Trudie asks. Cream is a luxury in our home. Mama does not buy it often.

"I took just a little while Mama was busy talking to Mrs. Kornblatt."

"What if she finds out?" Trudie asks.

"It's for a good cause," Sophie says. "She'll understand."

I ponder that. Papa and Mama are in favor of good causes, and encourage us to perform small acts of *tzedakah*—charity—whenever we can.

“Well, I guess it will be all right then. . . .” Trudie says.

“Of course it will,” says Sophie. “Just look at her! Don’t you think she needs help?”

The cat sits down on her haunches. She seems to be looking directly at me with her big, amber eyes. I look back at her. Yes, I decide. Sophie is right.

We set the box near the brick wall and place the saucer of cream next to it.

“How will she get over the wall to reach the box?” asks Trudie.

“Cats are good climbers,” I say.

“Even cats that are going to have kittens?”

Trudie has a point. But we can’t get over the wall, so we have no other choice.

“If she really wants to, she can climb over,” Sophie says.

Just at that moment, we hear our mother’s voice. “Trudie! Anna! Sophie!” she called. “Time for supper! Come inside to wash your hands.”

“My hands are *clean*,” grumbles Trudie, but she follows us to the sink just the same.

When we are all seated round the small oak table in our little kitchen, Mama sets the blue-and-white platter of corned beef and cabbage down in front of us. Fragrant steam rises off the food.

While I am mopping up the tasty liquid from the cabbage with a slice of fresh rye bread, Mama tells us about the most recent letter she received from Aunt Rivka. Tania’s boat is sailing on the fifteenth of September. Today is the fourth—that’s eleven days off.

“That means she’ll be here soon!” I exclaim. “But not for Rosh Hashanah.” Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish new year, is on the eighth, and Mama has invited a few people over for dinner to celebrate with us: our next door neighbors the Kleins, Mrs. Schwebel, a widow from our *shul*, and Mr. Umansky, one of Papa’s old friends.

“No, not for the holiday,” says Mama. She begins to clear the plates and sets out the bowl of stewed fruit for dessert.

“How long does it take to get here on the boat?” Trudie asks.

“The crossing takes about two weeks,” Mama replies.

“Which is not as long as when we did it,” Papa points out. He helps himself and then passes the bowl around.

“So if she leaves on the fifteenth, that means she’ll get here on the twenty-ninth,” I say, doing the arithmetic in my head.

“The date is not exact,” Mama says, taking a spoonful of her fruit. “It’s just an approximation. We’ll look for the notice of the ship’s arrival in the newspaper. That’s where it’s announced.”

When we have all finished dessert, I help Mama clean up while Sophie and Trudie work on their lessons. Our kitchen is compact but efficient. It contains a deep sink—the only one we have, so we use it for washing up, brushing our teeth, and filling our water pitcher. We are lucky to have both a stove and an icebox. Not all our neighbors do. And our bathtub is in the kitchen, covered with a hinged piece of wood when we are not using it. Mama stands a folding screen in front of it whenever someone takes a bath.

“Mama, tell me about the crossing,” I say as I bring the plates to the sink. The word has stayed with me

ever since Mama said it at supper; it makes the ocean journey sound like a grand adventure. I know my parents made “the crossing” years ago, before they had us or even had met each other. Papa came with his mother and two brothers. Mama’s parents had died, so she came with her aunt, uncle, and cousins. But I don’t know the details. “Was it exciting? Was it fun?”

“Fun?” Mama turns to look at me. “No, I wouldn’t have called it fun. The boat was filthy and crowded. Sometimes the ocean was rough. There were big storms that made the waves swell. We were so frightened. And on top of that, everyone got seasick.”

“Did you?” I ask.

“Almost every day,” she says. “It was terrible. Throwing up, headaches—I was never so sick in my life.” She stops washing the plate she is holding.

“That does sound terrible,” I say.

“And here’s something I haven’t thought of in years.” Mama puts the plate in the dish rack and sits down on a chair. “I had a doll with me on the trip. Just a little rag doll, but she was the only doll I had. My mother had made her for me when I was just a tiny girl.”

“Really?” Mama never told me this before. “What was her name?”

“Suki.” Mama smiles. “Isn’t that a funny name? She had two little black buttons for eyes, and her mouth was a red X that had been sewn on with embroidery thread.”

“You must have loved her,” I say.

“I did,” Mama agrees. “And when we were on the boat, I lost her.”

“Lost her!” I exclaim. “How sad!”

“It was,” says Mama. “I cried and cried. My aunt made me another doll, but it wasn’t the same.” She gets up from the chair. “Well, the dishes aren’t going to get done by sitting around and thinking about the past, are they?” She reaches for another plate. “I only hope Tania has a better time of it. She won’t have her mother or an aunt with her, after all. She’ll be with a friend of Aunt Rivka’s. . . .” sighs Mama.

As soon as we are through in the kitchen. I go in search of my books so I can start my spelling lesson.

“The crossing” no longer sounds like a great adventure. Instead, it sounds, well, awful. I am glad I do not have to do it. But Tania does. Before I settle down to

work, I take Bernadette Louise from her place in our room. She always makes me feel better when I am worried about something. Looking at her smooth, glazed face, I realize that she made a “crossing,” too, when she was first brought over from Germany. And although she is not human, the trip was still dangerous. She could easily have gotten broken or lost. Instead, she had a safe trip and ended up here with me. I find myself wishing, hard, that Tania will be as lucky.



3



A SWEET YEAR

We have just finished our poetry lesson in school when the dismissal bell rings. I stuff my pencils, books, and papers into my satchel and hurry home with my sisters. We immediately head out through the shop, where Kathleen and Michael are working, to the yard, to check on the cat. She is nowhere to be seen. The box we prepared yesterday is empty, and the cream is untouched except for a few flecks of soot that have settled on its surface. Trudie and I are both horrified as we watch Sophie pour it into the dirt.

“Well, we can’t give her cream that’s been sitting out all night, can we? It may be spoiled.”

I suppose she is right, though the waste of it bothers

me. But the absence of the cat bothers me even more.

“Where do you suppose she went?” I ask Sophie. “She looked like she was going to have those kittens soon.”

“I know,” Sophie says. “But we’ve done everything we can, haven’t we?”

“Maybe we can try to tempt her with something else,” I say. “Something she won’t be able to resist.”

“Mama said we’re having fish soup tonight,” Trudie pipes up. “I’ll bet she’s upstairs in the kitchen making it right now.”

“Cats love fish,” Sophie declares in that know-it-all way of hers. She turns to Trudie. “If Mama is making fish soup, there will be fish scraps. Go inside and get some from the garbage pail.”

“I don’t want to,” whines Trudie.

“Why not?” Sophie demands.

“They smell so bad,” Trudie says.

“So what?” Sophie admonishes. “The cat will think those smelly old scraps are the most delicious treat in the world.” Trudie stops whining and goes inside.

While she is gone, I look over at the third-story fire escape where we saw the cat yesterday.

“What’s that?” I ask Sophie.

“What’s what?”

“That gray thing. In the corner.”

She follows my gaze upward. “It looks like a blanket.”

I nod. It is a blanket.

“Do you think someone left it there for the cat?” I ask.

Sophie and I continue to look.

“No,” she says finally. “It’s not folded or laid out nicely. It’s just stuffed in the corner. As if it’s trash.” And I have to agree.

Trudie returns with the fish scraps in a clean saucer.

“Did Mama ask you what you wanted them for?”

Sophie asks.

“I took them from the garbage. Just like you said. She didn’t notice.”

“Good,” says Sophie, setting the saucer in the box.

“You don’t want Mama and Papa to know what we’re doing?” Trudie asks.

“Not exactly,” Sophie.

“Why not?” I ask.

“You know how Papa is about cats and dogs living inside,” Sophie reminds me. It’s true. Whenever we have

asked about getting a kitten or a puppy Papa has always said no. He told us how back in Russia, no one kept animals like that in the house. He said there were cats where he lived, but they had to catch their own food and never came inside. So he probably won't like our feeding this cat. With a last glance at the blanket on the fire escape across the yard, we troop inside to start our lessons.

In the days before Tania gets here, Mama doesn't receive any more letters from Aunt Rivka. But we have plenty to keep us busy. Rosh Hashanah is coming, and we all pitch in to prepare for the big dinner that Mama makes on the eve of the holiday.

There is a lot to do: polishing, ironing, sweeping, and dusting. We add two leaves to the table, so that there will be enough room for everyone to sit down. Mama roasts two chickens and bakes three round loaves of her delicious golden challah. She also prepares *tzimmes* with carrots, prunes and chunks of pumpkin; sponge cake; and slices of apple dipped in honey. Tradition says that this will make the new year sweet.

I don't have much time to think about Tania, or about the cat out back either. But when I do think of Tania,

I feel a pleasant tingle of anticipation. Since we are the same age, she won't act like a baby, the way Trudie still does at times. Just the other day, she scribbled on a drawing I was doing for school. When I told Papa, she burst out crying, like it was all my fault. And Tania won't treat *me* like a baby, the way Sophie sometimes does. No, with Tania, everything will be just right.



Our *erev* Rosh Hashanah dinner is a success. Mr. Uman-sky, Papa's friend from *shul*, presents me with a bouquet of flowers when I open the door. I giggle as I reach into the cabinet for a vase. Once we are seated, everyone ex-claims over how pretty the table looks. Since I was the one to set it, I feel especially pleased. Mr. Klein eats three helpings of *tzimmes*, and we all devour Mama's delicious challah. Only a few crumbs, which Mama will scatter to the sparrows that gather on the sidewalk in front of the shop, are left. After dinner, some of the guests start singing songs that they learned in the old country. Mama sings a ballad in Yiddish. I don't understand the words, but the melody is so pretty it makes me go quiet for a few

minutes. At the end, everyone claps, and I feel so proud of her.

The beautiful weather has continued, and even though it is nighttime, I have the sudden urge to go up on the roof. I ask my sisters if they want to join me. But Sophie doesn't want to, and Trudie is too tired. So I take Bernadette Louise under my arm and head up to the roof myself. I probably should ask my parents, but they are so busy with our company I decide I won't bother. Besides, I won't stay up there for very long.

Since the time Bernadette Louise actually became mine forever and always, I have sewed her several new outfits, including a tweed cape, a calico skirt and blouse, and a dark green corduroy suit. I've been sewing since I was a little girl. Mama, who can sew just about anything, taught all of us early on, and though I am not as talented as she is, the clothes turned out all right. Tonight Bernadette Louise wears a dress made from blue polished cotton with a red ribbon at her waist. The fabric was left over from material that Mama used for a dress of mine.