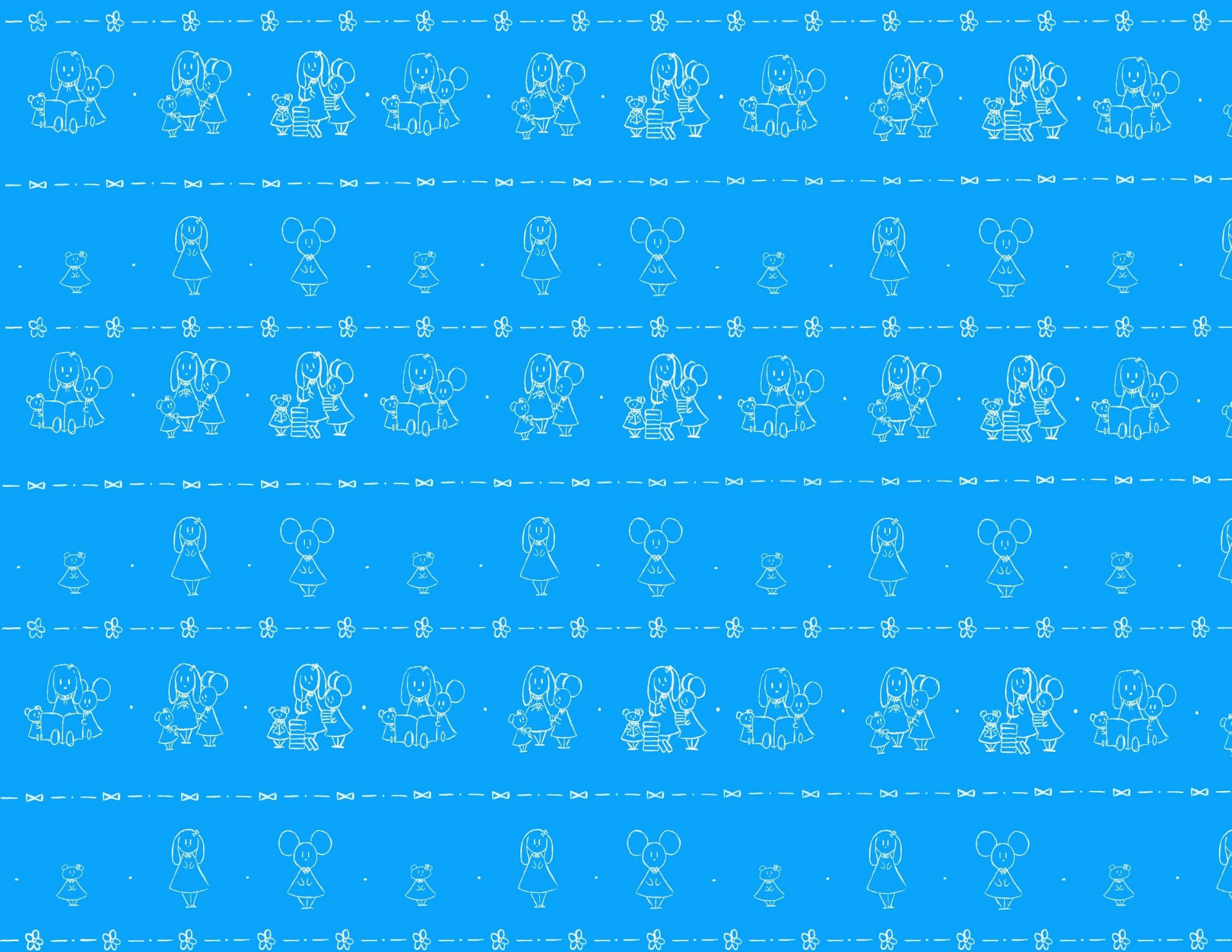
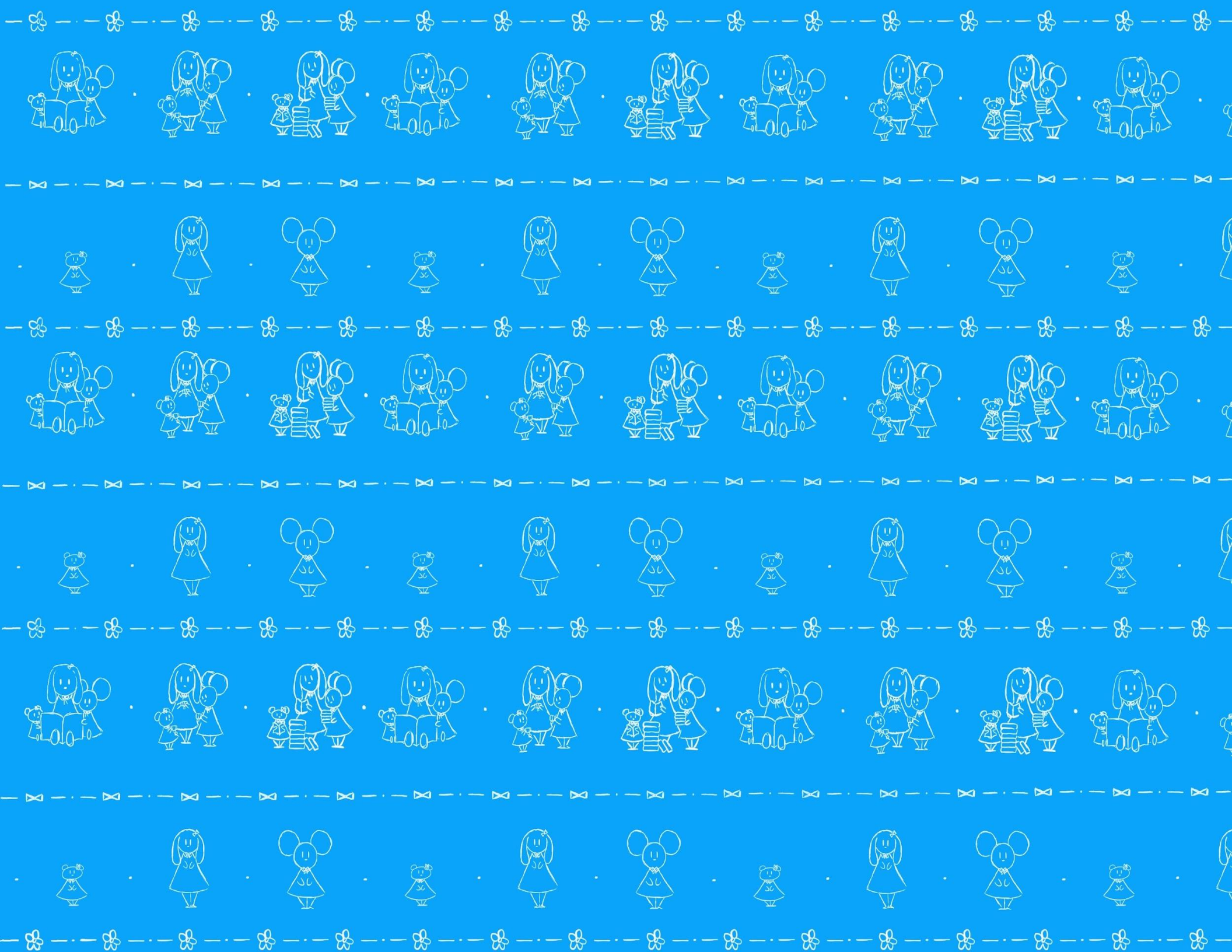


# Whispers of the Past

Ceyda K ksoy



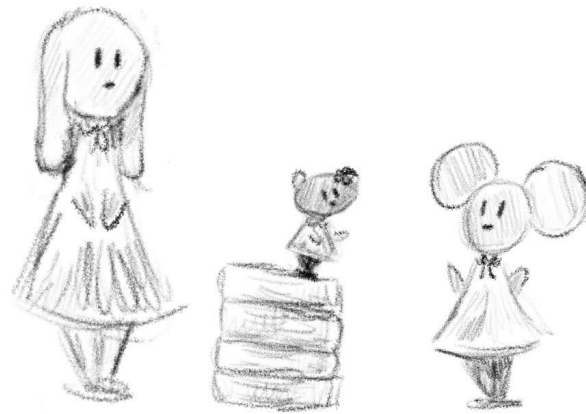








# Whispers of the Past



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For Rosette





# Introduction

In this book, you will be brought into a world of talking animals, hidden portals, and statues that whisper the oldest of tales, but amidst these enchanting elements, you will also encounter the true story of Holocaust survivor Rosette Goldstein.

In an era where separating opinion from truth grows increasingly challenging, and the willingness to see and understand reality and just how beautiful all aspects of that reality can be is fading, I aim to present truth through the kindness of fiction.

The Holocaust is not an easy event to explain, especially to the younger audience. By blending Rosette's story with the fictional elements of the Dover Academy, I hope to make this part of history more accessible and the ability to empathize stronger.

I am sincerely thankful to Rosette for her honesty and for granting me the privilege to share her memories, may our paths intertwine many times over.

I encourage you to keep an open mind and to remember that although most of our characters may be animals, they are no different than you and me and the world we live in regarding their behaviors, actions, and experiences. With that, I wish you the best in your reading journey as you embark on an adventure with Lopsy, Tottie, and Mousse, whom you will soon meet.

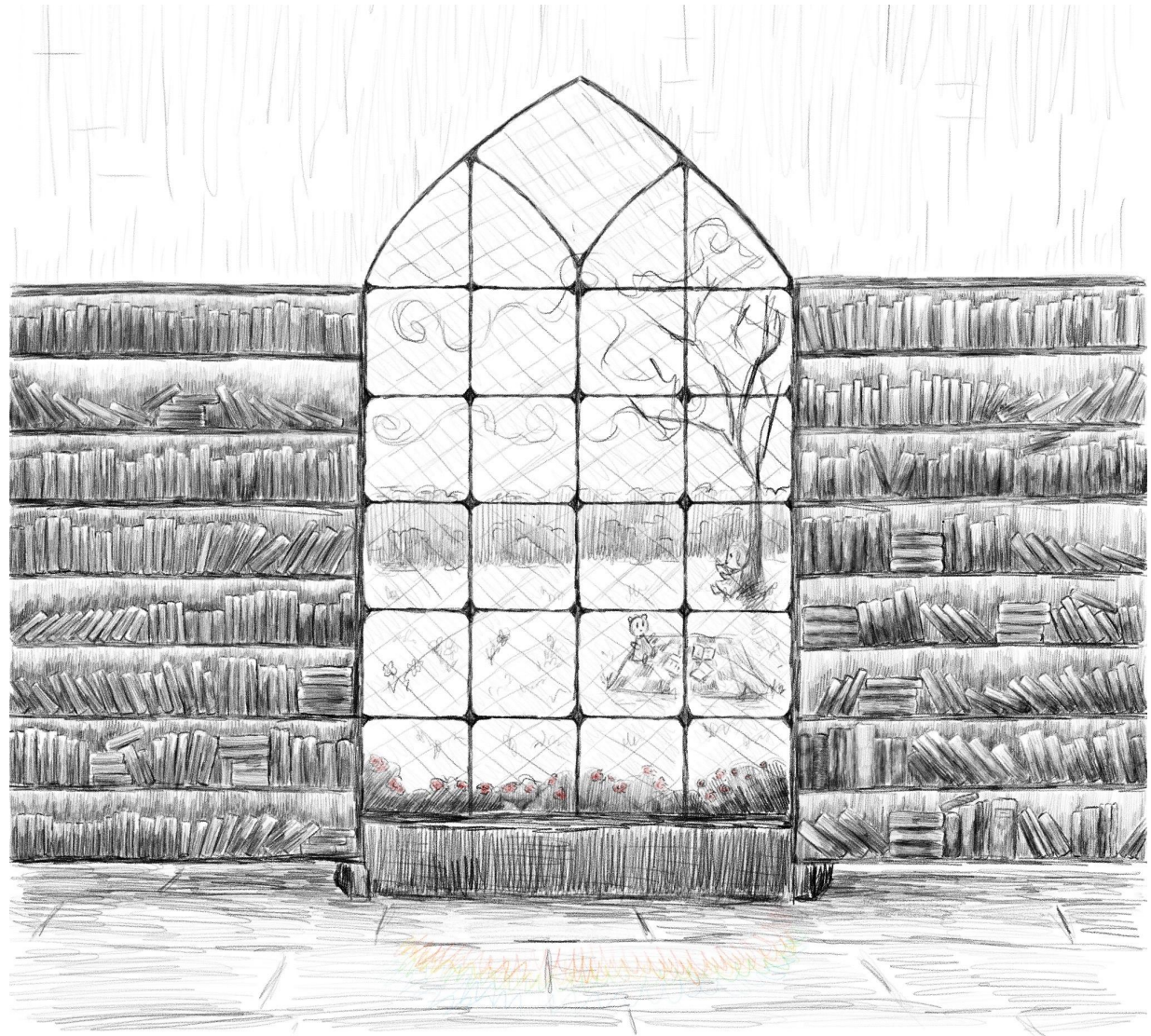


# The Labyrinth



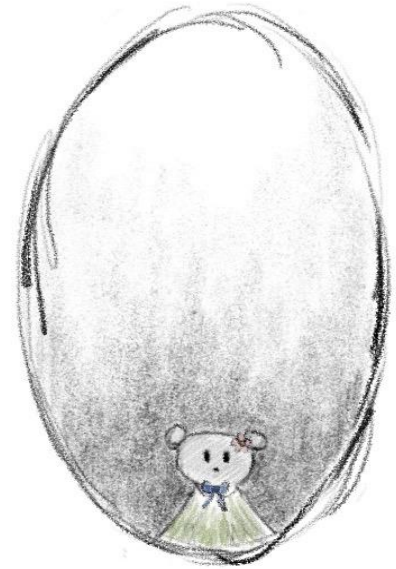
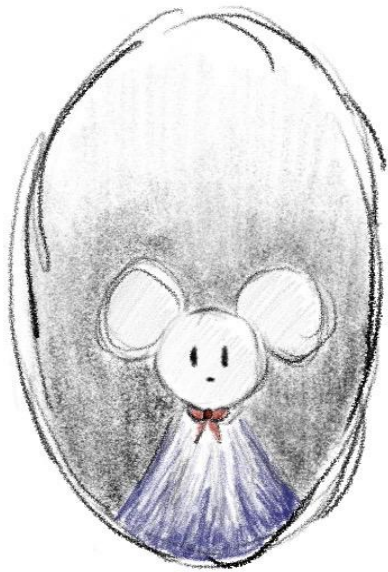
The Dover Academy, nestled on the White Cliffs of Dover in England, was a liberal arts boarding school characterized by its stone walls and vibrant stained-glass windows. Within its courtyard bloomed the most beautiful flowers, and among them stood statues that seemed to whisper tales of old. Though the Dover Academy was a sight to behold, its location presented a challenge: it almost always rained. While the rain brought an enchanting glow to everything it touched, the students often found themselves wishing for a glimpse of sunlight.

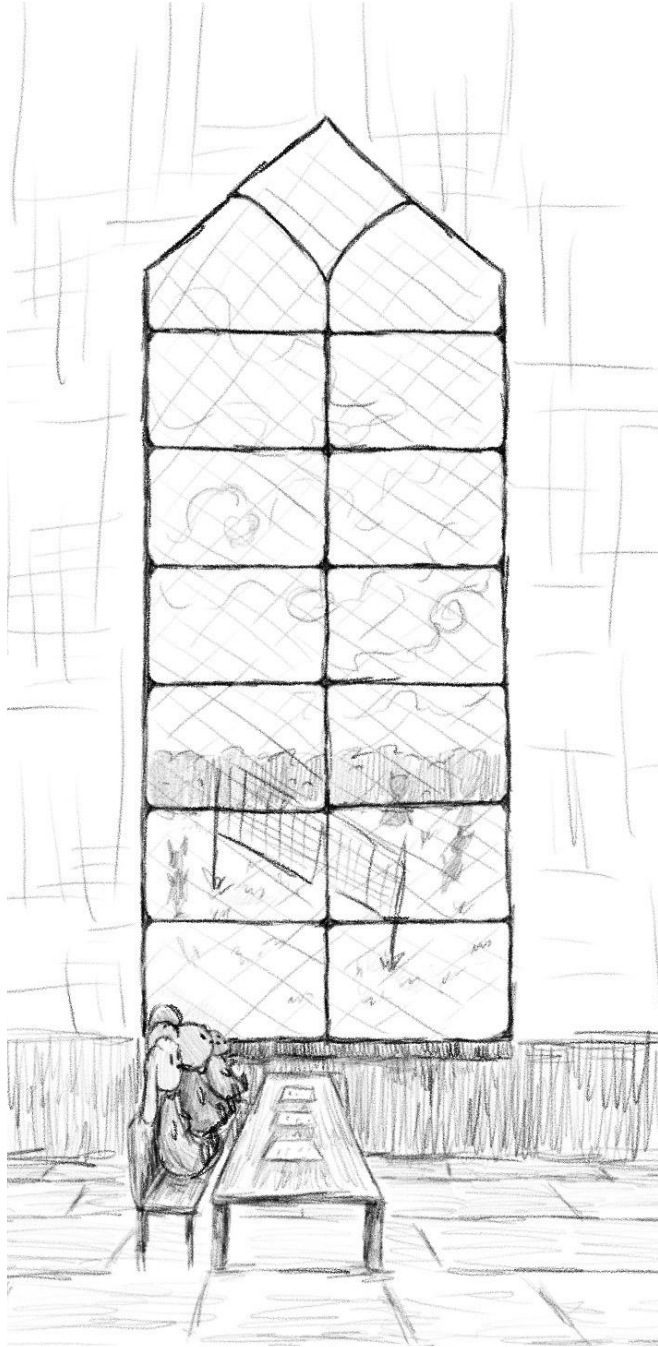
The Academy truly revealed its beauty under the sun's warm embrace. Sunlight would dance upon the wooden floors of the library, painting rainbows with its gentle touch through the crystal glass windows. Blades of grass outside would shimmer as if they were strands of gold. Students would eagerly grab their books and picnic blankets, running outside to soak up the warmth.





On one of those rare sunny days at the Dover Academy, Lopsy, Tottie, and Mousse found themselves stuck in class. The three had the loveliest of friendships which often sparked curiosity among others due to their differences. It was quite uncommon for a bunny, a bear, and a mouse to be such great companions. Their ages, too, became a topic of question, with Lopsy being eleven, Mousse nine, and Tottie six. The key to their friendship lay in a simple truth: despite their differences, they saw each other as equals.





Staring out the window, Lopsy, Tottie, and Mousse longed to frolic in the sun, but how unfair fate could be! For here they sat, forced to listen to a lecture. As time dragged on, their attention shifted more and more towards the enticing scene outside.

Through the glass, they spotted a group of cats engaged in a lively game of volleyball. What better way to make new friends than being united through such a game? With determination in their hearts, Lopsy, Tottie, and Mousse decided that as soon as the class ended, they would dash outside to join the cats in the warmth of the sun, amidst the field of flowers. And so they did. The second the bell chimed, they bolted from the classroom, racing through the halls, earning disapproving glances from teachers, and burst into the courtyard.

Entering the courtyard, Lopsy, Tottie, and Mousse flung their backpacks onto the grass and approached the group of cats. Sensing the trio's presence, the cats momentarily paused their game, exchanging questioning glances among themselves.

“We were wondering if we could join you?” asked Mousse, her voice filled with hopeful anticipation. Lopsy could hear the cats whispering and murmuring; she wondered if this was a good idea at all.

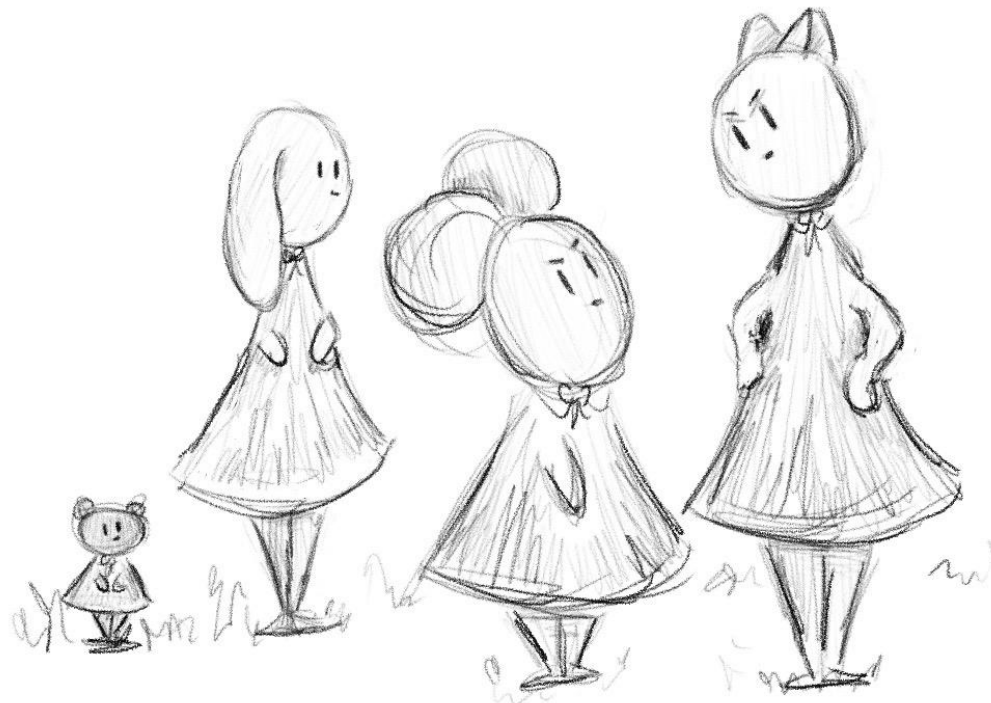
Then, one of the cats stepped forward, her demeanor guarded yet polite, “I’m afraid not,” replied she, her words punctuated by a sense of reservation. Lopsy, Tottie, and Mousse found this response very confusing, for they had barely seen the cats consider their request. “Well, why not?” said Mousse curiously; she couldn’t think of any reason why one wouldn’t enjoy more players in a game, she thought that was what made games fun in the first place. “You’re…” the cat hesitated, sizing the trio up and down with her eyes, “...different than us,” she concluded, her tone carrying subtle implications.

Mousse, who could make no sense of this, asked “What does that have to do with anything?” her tone sharp with disbelief. Meanwhile, Lopsy’s worry deepened; she knew how angry Mousse could get in situations like this.

“You see...” the cat began, her voice trailing off as she searched for words to explain. “That would spoil the game, since you’re not nearly as good as us.”

“No, I don’t see,” Mousse retorted, her frustration boiling over. “That’s nonsense, you don’t even know us!” she exclaimed, moving closer.

The cat, now irritated by Mousse’s closeness, pushed her away with force. “We don’t need to know you,” she snapped, her patience wearing thin. “It is a rather obvious fact.”





Not liking the cat's treatment of her friend, Lopsy summoned up the courage and retaliated by pushing the cat back. This sudden act of defiance ignited a skirmish between the trio and the cat, as Tottie, too, found herself caught up in this chaos. They pushed each other, pulled each other's ears, and, losing balance, began tumbling over flowers and through the hedges that surrounded the courtyard.

As they struggled to regain their footing, they realized they were far from where their quarrel had begun. Now, they stood surrounded by towering hedges, trapped within what seemed to be a labyrinth. It was a baffling discovery indeed, for no one had ever mentioned a maze within the grounds of the Dover Academy. Until this moment, they had considered the hedges merely as boundaries of the school's territory; not once had it occurred to them that they might have been the walls of a maze, but here they were, longing for a way out.

They started walking. They walked, turned, and walked some more, all the while bickering, nudging, and blaming each other, until they stumbled upon a door nestled between the hedges.

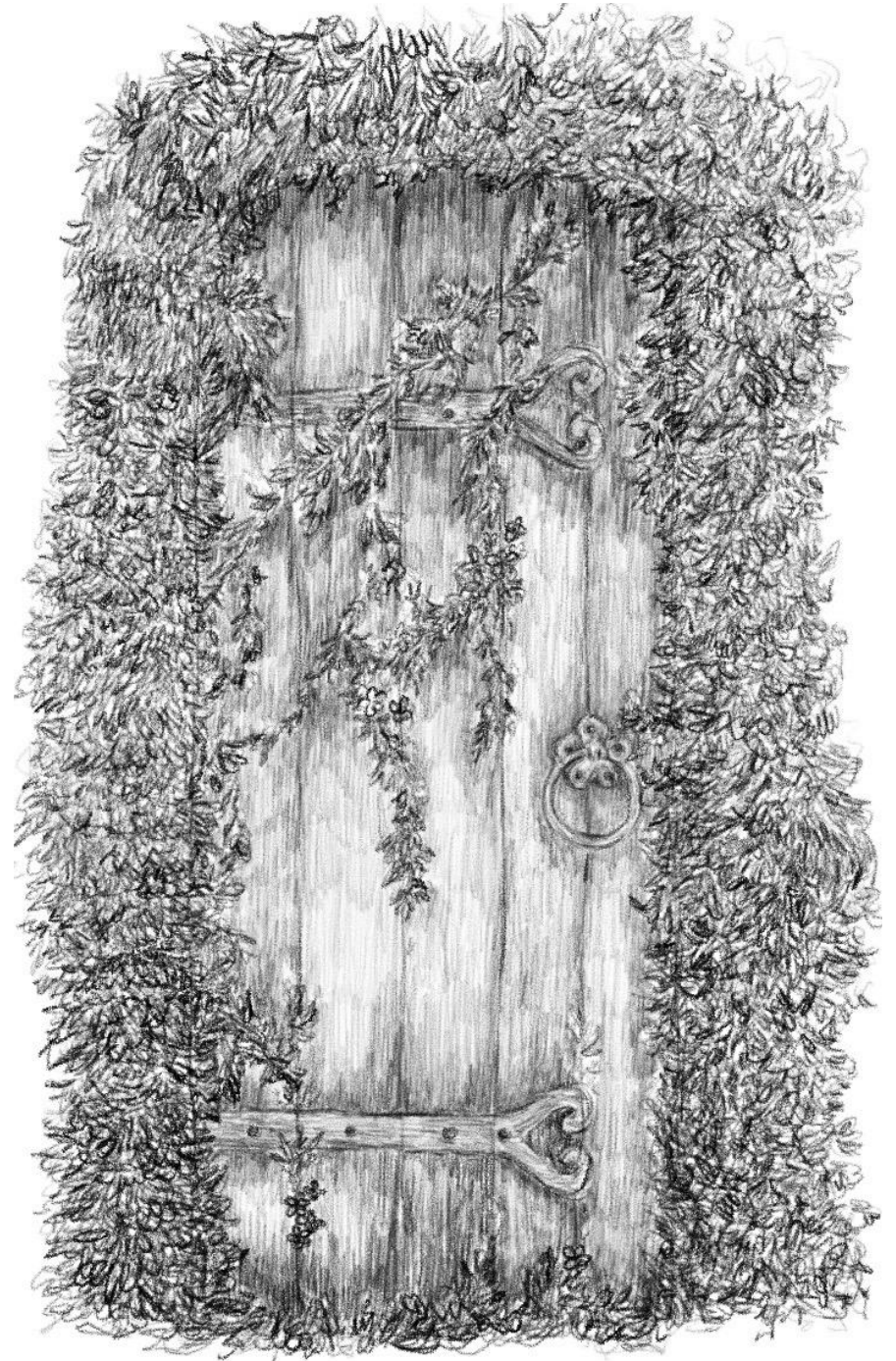




The door appeared quite old, with weathered wood and a rusting gold handle.

Vines had climbed over it over time, and flowers bloomed through the little cracks they had found. Lopsy, Tottie, Mousse, and the cat did not know where the door led.

What if it was a trap? What if it led to another maze? However, they were all so exhausted from the bickering, tumbling, and aimless walking that they saw the door as their only hope. So, Mousse walked up to the door, pulled the handle towards herself, and stepped back as it swung wide open.





Lopsy, Tottie, Mousse, and the cat peered curiously from doorway, gazing into the scenery before them. There, amidst the greenery, stood the most beautiful little cottage, its cobblestone path winding through a garden adorned with shrubs bursting with berries and rose bushes of every hue. Hesitantly, the group began to make their way towards the door of the cottage. Lopsy, Tottie, and Mousse walked ahead, while the cat chose to keep her distance, trailing behind. As they drew nearer, the sweet aroma of freshly baked dough, pistachio, and syrup wafted from an open window, filling up their senses. Their stomachs growled in response, and they shivered in the gathering cold as the sun hid behind clouds, beginning its slow descent.



Lopsy, Tottie, Mousse, and the cat brushed the dirt off their clothes, attempting to make themselves look more presentable as they stood before the cottage door. With a determined paw, Lopsy reached out and rang the doorbell. They waited anxiously, seconds stretching into eternity, until just as Lopsy was about to ring it again, a series of footsteps approached.





As the door creaked open, a sweet elderly lady stood before them. Her hair, a rich shade of brown, perfectly matched her eyes, which sparkled with warmth and kindness. The lines of her smile told tales of a life well-lived, gracefully etched at the corners of her eyes and the edges of her lips. Clad in a bright turquoise sweater that illuminated her face, she had a vibrant energy, her cheeks still retaining the rosy hue of youth. Peering curiously through a pair of black-framed glasses, she scanned the area in front of her before her gaze fell downward, only to see a bunny, a bear, a mouse, and a cat.

Not expecting any guests that day, especially not animals, the lady seemed utterly confused. However, upon seeing their tired and expectant expressions, she couldn't help but let them in. "I suppose you guys must be hungry," she remarked, leading them to the small table by the kitchen window. Once they were all seated, "I'm Rosette," she introduced herself, "What are your names?"

"I'm Mousse, and these are my friends Lopsy and Tottie," replied Mousse, gesturing towards her companions. Rosette noticed Mousse had not mentioned the cat, and she wondered if that was merely an accident.

"And what about you? Are you not their friend?" asked Rosette, turning towards the cat.

"No, and I don't want to be," came the curt reply from the cat. Rosette could see that this comment upset Lopsy, Tottie, and Mousse as they averted their gaze towards their paws.



Rosette couldn't shake the feeling that there was something peculiar about this strange group of animals. "What brings you to my door?" she inquired. "It is not often that I have critters like you as guests."

Mousse proceeded to recount their adventure, telling her about the game, the rejection by the cat, the skirmish, and their unexpected journey through the labyrinth that led them to the mysterious door, "... and then we smelled that delicious blend of syrup and pistachio coming from your window!" concluded Mousse. Rosette's smile widened at the explanation. Making her way to the oven, she remarked, "Oh that? That's baklava," as she wore her oven mitts. She then removed a tray from the oven, placed four pieces on a plate, and set it on the table. "Wait for it to cool off a bit or else you'll burn your mouth," Rosette warned warmly.





As Rosette sat down near the group of animals, she reflected on Mousse's story in her mind, unable to understand why the cat had rejected Mousse and her friends, especially when their intentions seemed so pure. Turning to the cat, she asked, "But why wouldn't you let them join if all they wanted was to have fun and make new friends?"

The cat's response echoed her previous sentiments. "Because they are different," she reiterated.

"But aren't you all animals?" Rosette countered.

"Yes, but my friends and I are cats, and a bunny, a mouse, and a little bear would simply disrupt our efficiency," explained the cat.

As the baklavas cooled on the table, Rosette pushed the plate towards the center, inviting her guests to take a piece. "But you are all still the same, and this is just a game. Help yourselves to some baklava, and I'll tell you my story. Perhaps you'll discover a few truths," she suggested.

Eagerly, everyone reached for a piece of baklava, relishing in the crunch of the golden crust and the delicate blend of sweetness from the syrup with the richness of the pistachio, and Rosette began her story.

# Rosette's Story

In 1938, Rosette came into the world in the warm embrace of Marais, Paris, to parents Bronia and David Adler.

Originally from Lodz, Poland, Bronia and David's tale began in an orphanage when they were teenagers. Fate wove its threads, and around the age of sixteen, they embarked on a journey to Berlin, Germany, where they reunited with their families who were already acquainted.

Bronia, with her passion for fashion, delved into the art of dressmaking, mastering its intricate stitches with grace and excellence. She spent her days tenderly teaching young girls with disabilities, stitching threads of hope and joy with every move of her needle. Meanwhile, David found comfort in his family's bakery, kneading dough and creating delectable treats that brought smiles to weary faces.

Yet, the shadow of misfortune loomed on the horizon. In 1933, the rise of Hitler cast a dark cloud over their once peaceful lives. But it was perhaps an unfortunate truth that all good things must come to an end. Faced with unfairness, Bronia and David's families made the difficult decision to flee Germany.

It was only the beginning of the story, but Lopsy, Tottie, Mousse, and the cat already had questions. This part of history was completely unfamiliar to them.

“What’s a Hitler?” questioned Tottie.

“I’m glad you asked,” said Rosette, “Hitler was a leader who used his power to do very bad things. He treated many individuals, especially Jewish people, very unfairly because of who they were. He made rules that hurt these people and caused a lot of sadness and fear,” Rosette explained as kindly as possible.

This explanation sparked a wave of curiosity among Rosette’s guests. “Oh, I suppose you’re wondering who Jewish people are, too,” Rosette went on. “Jewish people are individuals who follow a religion called Judaism and have their own unique beliefs and traditions, just like people from any other background,” she clarified.

Seeing that Lopsy, Tottie, Mousse, and the cat looked satisfied with her explanations, Rosette continued her story.





Bronia and David's families fled with hope, seeking refuge under strange skies. Some stayed behind in Berlin's embrace, which seemed to grow colder and unfamiliar by the moment, while others escaped to foreign lands.



Out of Bronia's sisters, Sofia, the eldest, journeyed to Cuba, Hella to Palestine, while Rose chose to stay in Berlin.

On the other hand, David's father and older brother fled to Palestine, while his eldest sister pursued her life in Paris. Following in his sister's footsteps to Paris, David went to join the French army in 1936. A year later, Bronia joined him in Paris, where they got married, creating a memory of happiness amidst all the chaos.

In their apartment in Marais, Rosette's family was the only Jewish family. Their home was small, with just one room where her mother sewed dresses for Rosette on a sewing machine by the window. They had a single bed, a kitchen the size of a closet, and a toilet, but no bathtub. Despite their humble surroundings, they considered themselves lucky to have what they did.

David, who was very friendly, formed close friendships with their neighbors, including the mayor of the district. During the frightening times when Paris was being bombed, they would all rush across the courtyard to seek shelter in the basement of the apartment building, where they looked out for one another and took care of each other.



When the Nazis, a group of people led by Hitler that believed in ideas that hurt others, invaded France in 1940, France began collaborating with them right away. Jewish people were required to go to the police station and report to the police their name, address, and home country so the police could keep track of them.



There were statutes that limited the presence of Jewish people in the public. They could only go out at certain times, had to ride the last car of the subway, and weren't allowed to own bicycles. Jewish teachers couldn't teach, Jewish doctors and lawyers couldn't practice. And when they went to buy food, they had to go at designated hours, and often there wasn't much food left.

Jewish people were made to wear a yellow star on their jackets. They had to go to the government offices, pay for the star, and sew it on themselves. If they didn't wear the star, they could get arrested.

The German invasion had deep effects on Rosette's family; Rosette's father was kicked out of the French army because he was Jewish. Despite his efforts, he struggled to find work due to discrimination. This placed the family in a difficult financial situation, relying heavily on Bronia's small income. Luckily, Bronia continued her work as a dressmaker from their apartment when one of their neighbors, who made costumes for the theater, offered Bronia an opportunity to help her.

When Rosette was three years old, her father learned that there was a need for Jewish men to work in French and German interests since German men, who mostly made up the workforce, were fighting in the war. The job also offered a certificate that would provide protection for Rosette and her mother if her father took the opportunity. So, he signed up and was chosen among many others to work as a lumberjack in Camp Beauregard. This camp was small, with only seventy men, located in the town of Clefs in Maine-et-Loire.

At Beauregard, the workers received little pay, and once their labor was done, they were allowed to wander the town to buy food to send back to their families. However, David thought it would be a better idea to venture into the neighboring town, Vaulandry, where little farms dotted the landscape and a small church stood quietly. Among these farms, one in particular caught David's eye.

Owned by Mr. and Mme. Martin, the farm had two rooms, a silo next to which the cows were kept, a shack where the farm helper, George, lived, a spacious barn, and a chicken coop. Atop the coop lay dried pumpkin seeds, gleaming in the sunlight, while nearby, horses roamed in a field.

It did not take long for Mr. Martin to warm up to David's presence. David would complete chores around the farm and assist with household tasks. In return, Mr. Martin would provide David with food, which he would then send back to Rosette and Bronia.



One day, David and Mr. Martin were talking about how much their country had changed, once welcoming and beautiful. David, with a heavy heart, expressed his deep concern for Rosette, who was nearing her fourth birthday. Such great dangers crept in the streets of Paris, and even with the protection certificate David had received, there was no guarantee of Rosette's safety. Summoning his courage, David asked Mr. Martin if he could hide Rosette.

Mr. Martin understood the weight of David's request. Hiding Jewish people was against the law and came with great risk. With three daughters of his own, Mr. Martin couldn't bear the thought of any harm coming to them. Under the veil of night, he and Mme. Martin deliberated over David's plea. As the first rays of dawn appeared over the horizon, a decision was made.

"We have three daughters, we'll have four," Mr. Martin declared. David was overwhelmed with relief. A weight had been lifted off his shoulders. He thanked Mr. Martin sincerely and joyfully shared the good news with Bronia.

Rosette's mother couldn't accompany her to the farm, the star pinned to her clothing and her distinct accent would make the journey too dangerous. However, the same benevolent neighbor who had offered Bronia a job also had a husband, Mr. Rafa, who kindly agreed to bring Rosette. Instructed to remain silent throughout the journey, Rosette was prepared for the possibility of interrogation. In such a situation, she was to say that Mr. Rafa was her father.

As Rosette embarked on her journey to the farm, her innocent eyes saw the soldiers stationed outside the trains, their rifles poised. Even at her tender age, she understood that their presence was not a mere accident; they were there for her. They were there to take her away.





By the time they arrived at the farm, dusk had already settled, and David stood waiting with obvious anticipation. Seeing her father, Rosette's heart leapt with joy. Having been separated from him for so long, she had yearned for his presence dearly.

That night, under the blanket of stars, Rosette, David, Mr. Rafa, and the Martins gathered around the dinner table, cider dancing in their glasses. For once, it felt as though life was inching towards a brighter future.

The day's journey had taken its toll on Rosette, leaving her weary beyond measure. The sweet cider lulled her into a deep, restful slumber, as she drifted off to sleep, surrounded by the love and protection of her company.

As Rosette stirred from her slumber the next morning, she was met once more with the harshness of reality. Her father was no longer there, Mr. Rafa had already left, and she found herself amidst unfamiliar faces in an unfamiliar place.

Throughout her stay, Rosette longed deeply for her mother's comforting embrace. Yet, the Martin family proved to be exceptionally kind to her, embracing her as one of their own.

The difference between Rosette and the Martins was unmistakable. With their blue eyes and blonde hair contrasting sharply with Rosette's brown eyes and locks, Rosette was restricted from going to school or venturing out on her own. Despite this, the Martins included her in every aspect of their lives.



As the Martin family had no toys, Rosette found happiness in playing with pumpkin seeds atop the chicken coop, even learning to count with them. The Martin family involved Rosette in daily activities, teaching her how to gather eggs, which she absolutely adored, taking her shopping, and bringing her to the church. However, they never tried to change Rosette's religion, so she realized that there was something different.

“The word ‘Jew,’ I did not understand,” Rosette told Lopsy, Tottie, Mousse, and the cat. “But even at that young age, I knew that because of this word, I had to hide, I had to be hunted.”



Mr. Martin had generously given David a bicycle to ease his trips to Vaulandry. Every evening, as the sun dipped below the horizon, David would pedal his way to the farm, the melody of a French tune escaping his lips. Hearing the tune, Rosette would eagerly await his arrival at the end of the winding path, her heart dancing with excitement.

Together, the father and daughter would while away the hours, immersed in the simple joys of life. They would gather eggs, their laughter mingling with the fading light of day, as they reminisced about days gone by. She wished for him to stay the night, every time, but it would've been simply too great of a risk.

In these fleeting moments, amidst the tranquility of the countryside, they found comfort and strength, creating bonds that transcended the trials of their reality.



One day, Bronia arrived at the farm, yet the details of her journey remained shrouded in mystery, as she refused to speak about it. That night, David chose to stay at the farm.

As the sun began to appear, David departed once more, leaving behind a sense of unease. Moments later, harsh knocks echoed through the Martin household, announcing the arrival of the French police and Nazi soldiers. Their unwelcome presence cast a shadow over the serenity of the farm, their grim faces foreboding.

With threat consuming their tones, they told the Martins, “If he is not back in one hour, we are taking all of you.” Faced with such danger, Mr. Martin mounted his horse in haste to find David.

Amidst the chaos, Rosette’s mother vanished without a trace, slipping away on her journey back to Paris without so much as a farewell to her daughter. When Mr. Martin returned with David, the authorities delivered perhaps the least cruel punishment, stripping Rosette and David of their French citizenships.

After that incident, life seemed to return to its usual routine, with Rosette faithfully awaiting her father's return at the end of the familiar path each evening. However, one fateful evening, as twilight descended and shadows lengthened, Rosette waited and waited at the end of the path, but she was only met with eerie silence. The melodic strains of her father's cherished French tune failed to reach her ears, and his bicycle never appeared.

Instead, a carriage hurled towards her, driven with urgency and panic. It was Mr. Martin, his face etched with distress. With trembling words, he delivered the devastating news: "They were taken."



In that moment, everything seemed to stop as silence enveloped Rosette's world, her heart heavy with the weight of unbearable truth. The cruelty of fate had never been more apparent, leaving her shattered in its presence.

Earlier that day, as the sun rose over Camp Beauregard, casting its golden glow upon the land, fear loomed over the men as they gathered. They watched as trucks arrived to whisk them away, their fate sealed within the clutches of steel carriages bound for Drancy.

Whispers of escape fluttered through the air. Perhaps, some dared to dream, they could outrun the grasp of their captors, fleeing into the unknown with hope as their only guide. But such thoughts were swiftly abandoned, for the weight of responsibility bore down upon them.

To flee would be to risk the lives of all who shared the same fear, a burden too heavy to bear. And so, with heads bowed low, they resigned themselves to their fate, their silent acceptance echoing through the cold, unforgiving air.

In the chill of December 1943, David and his companions from Beaugard found themselves confined within the bleak borders of Drancy for two weeks, with frigid winds whistling through the airless corridors. With barely any information offered, they were herded onto a journey shrouded in uncertainty, given only a meager portion of bread and cheese.

During this painful journey, David was swept into convoy number 64, bound for the dreaded Auschwitz. Amidst the chaos of arrival, he and a select few were chosen for labor and shipped to Monowitz, a grim subcamp of Auschwitz. There, among the clamor of machinery, David was instructed to wield locksmith tools, finding a brief pardon from the horrors of the camp.





One day, David's friend Albert was taken to the infirmary, consumed by illness, Sensing the incoming doom, David managed to get Albert out of the infirmary, for he knew all too well the fate that awaited those trapped within its walls.

From Monowitz, David was transferred to Gross-Rosen before being sent to Langenstein-Zwieberge, a desolate subcamp of Buchenwald in Germany. Tasked with carving into the mountain to build a factory for aircraft parts, David and his comrades worked tirelessly, their bodies ravaged by the relentless attack of dust and toxins.

Like many, Rosette's father succumbed to illness amid the hard labor. On April 6th of 1945, just five days before the camp's liberation, David closed his eyes to the world, as deep sleep embraced him in a realm untouched by the cruelty of reality.

In the tranquility of the Martin household, life for Rosette continued in its usual rhythm, until one afternoon, the ominous rumble of a big green truck pierced the serenity. “Madame Martin, they are here!” Rosette exclaimed in alarm.

Mme. Martin whisked Rosette away to the bedroom. There, in a moment of urgency, she gently placed Rosette face-down on the spring side of the bed, ensuring she could still breathe, before carefully lowering the mattress back into place, concealing Rosette from prying eyes.

With each heavy footstep of the Nazi soldiers echoing through the room, Rosette’s heart quickened its pace, fear reverberating within her chest. She held her breath, imagining she was invisible. Yet, the Nazis never lifted the mattress; they failed to find her. Frustrated and empty-handed, they departed, their presence leaving a lingering chill in the air, but Rosette remained safe, sheltered by the Martin family.



On another gloomy day, Rosette found herself in the field with Odile, the youngest of the Martin daughters. As the dreaded green truck loomed into view once again, a shiver of apprehension ran down their spines. Sensing the imminent danger, Odile sprang into action, seizing Rosette's hand and leading her swiftly to the ladder that reached the top of the silo. With the farm cat as their silent companion, they climbed the ladder to safety, their hearts pounding in unison.



And once more, the Nazi soldiers scoured the farm, their search relentless. Yet, despite their efforts, Rosette remained elusive, hidden from their sight by the silo. As they left, frustrated once again, a sense of wonder swept over Rosette. She could not shake the feeling that something greater was at play, that perhaps, in this moment of peril, she had been spared by some divine plan fate had in mind for her. She clung to the belief that there was a purpose to her survival, a reason why she had remained concealed from the grasp of doom.

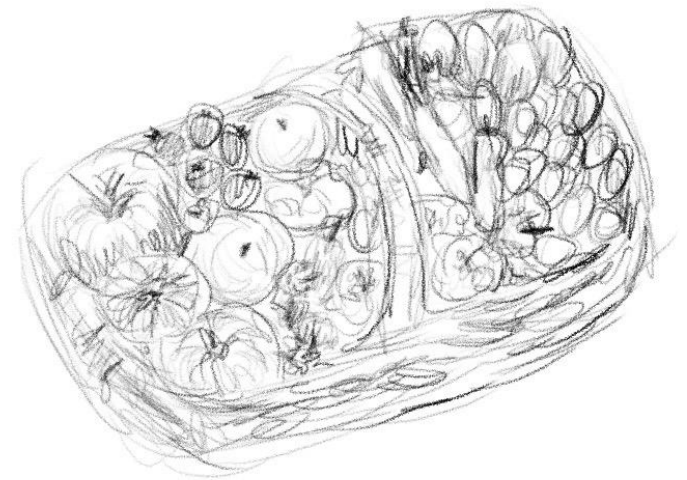
In 1944, as the Allied powers arrived in France, hope glimmered on the horizon, promising an end to the tumult of war. In the darkness of night, Rosette watched as bombs descended from the sky, their thunderous echoes shaking the farm. With everyone seeking safety amidst the fields, George, the farm's helper, would summon resilience and laughter with the strains of the French national anthem, his accordion weaving melodies that danced on the wind.



Following the end of the war, Bronia embarked on a journey through the woods and came to the farm, her swollen legs a proof of the difficult path she had trodden. A group of kind gypsies she had met along the way had placed her in a cart, pushing her all the way to the farm.

At the farm, everyone gathered baskets laden with fruits and goods to give the American soldiers. In return, they received chocolate and canned rations, evoking delight, particularly from young Rosette, whose eyes sparkled at the sight of the sweet treat.

A Yiddish-speaking American soldier approached Rosette, eager to show her the tank. Yet, upon glimpsing his uniform, Rosette quivered with fear, her mind haunted by the past. In her innocence, she associated all military attire with the distressing memories of Nazi soldiers.



Finally reunited with her daughter, Bronia wanted to bring Rosette back to Paris, the city they once called home. Together, they ventured back hitchhiking, their hopes pinned on the kindness of strangers. Soon, they found themselves crammed into a small jeep, sitting among American soldiers and another family, their presence offering the comforting thought of security in the chaos of post-war Europe.

As they traversed the road back to Paris, Rosette felt a flicker of safety, a rare feeling considering all that she had experienced. However, upon their arrival, the city revealed itself to be filled with devastation. Collapsed buildings, tattered signs, and a blanket of dust and debris covered the once vibrant cobblestone streets. Paris, once a symbol of beauty and elegance, now stood as a somber representation of the ruins of war.





When they returned home, Rosette's mother faced the harsh reality of their circumstances. With limited resources, Rosette's tender age, and Paris in disarray, she grappled with the realization that she couldn't provide the attention and care her daughter deserved. With a heavy heart, she decided to send Rosette to Château dans le Bois in Barbizon, France, a refuge for Jewish children who had survived the war. There, Rosette began her journey of self-discovery, learning about the beauty of her religion.

"I am sure that in every religion there is beauty, if only you don't try and change it," Rosette reflected, recounting her experiences to Lopsy, Tottie, Mousse, and the cat.

For six months, Rosette immersed herself in the teachings and traditions of Judaism. Yet, after those six months, the institution began sending parentless children to Israel, and since Rosette still had her mother, she was sent back to Paris.



With Rosette back under her care, Bronia found herself at a loss, torn between the demands of work and her daughter's needs. Their differing perspectives on Jewish traditions often sparked quarrels between them, intensifying the strain in their relationship. Faced with the challenge of balancing her responsibilities and Rosette's newfound identity, Bronia decided to send her daughter to a convent.

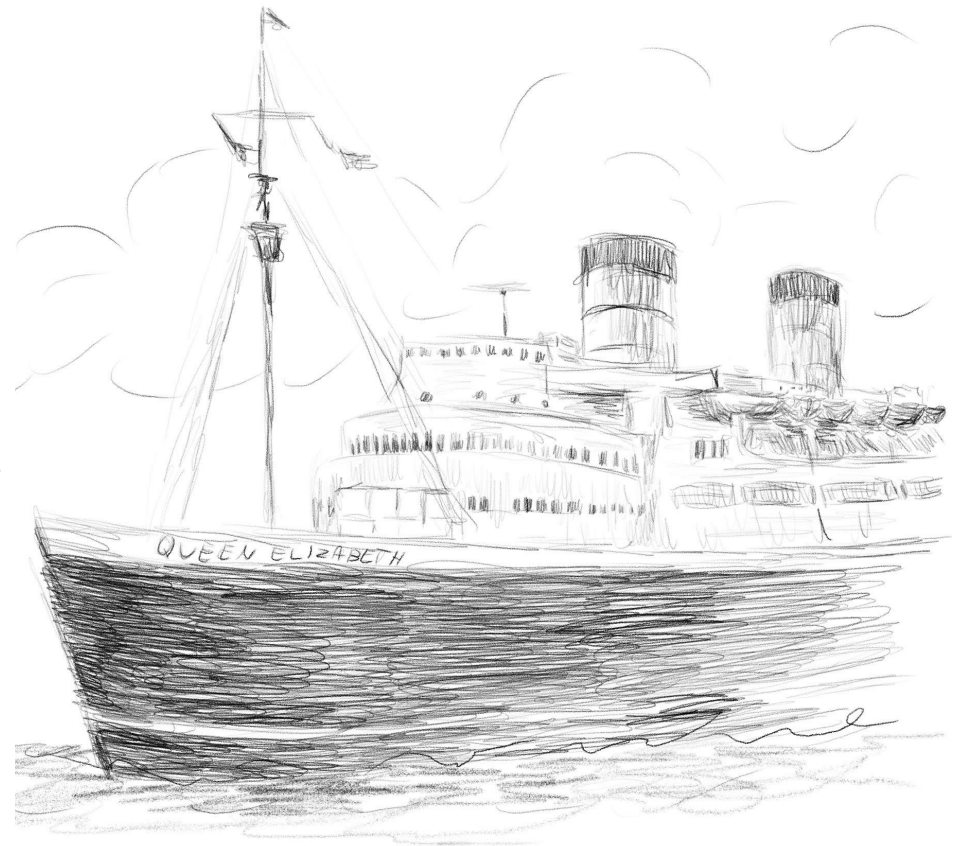
However, Rosette's time at the convent proved to be filled with hardship. Stricken with illness and met with the nuns' disapproving glances, she was left in an environment lacking warmth and understanding. The nuns asked Rosette to be taken back, leaving Bronia no choice but to bring Rosette home, thoughts of concern for her child occupying her mind.

Bronia then thought it would be a good idea for Rosette to go to Brittany, France, where a family with older children offered to provide temporary care. Yet, this promise soon gave way to anguish as Rosette found herself subjected to the cruelty of the older kids. Distressed by her daughter's situation, Bronia turned once again to the Martin family, whose unwavering love and support offered a light of hope in all of this chaos.

Amidst the constant relocation, Rosette couldn't shake the feeling of abandonment that gnawed at her soul. Like a fragile parcel tossed from one destination to another, she grappled with the painful realization that her mother's actions left her feeling adrift and alone. Unable to understand the depths of her mother's sacrifice, Rosette harbored a sense of resentment and confusion, yearning for the warmth of her mother's embrace and questioning why she was constantly cast aside. Unknown to her tender heart, every separation inflicted as much pain upon her mother as it did upon her, with each sacrifice made in the name of Rosette's well-being.

At the age of ten, Rosette's life took yet another turn as her aunt Sofia, who had managed to enter New York from Cuba, extended an invitation for the family to reunite with her. With hope for a brighter future, Bronia sent Rosette to the United States on a visitor's visa.

Beginning a journey fraught with uncertainty, Rosette boarded a train bound for the Cherbourg Port, where the majestic RMS Queen Elizabeth awaited to carry her across the Atlantic Ocean. Upon arrival in New York; however, Rosette's passage was momentarily stalled as security personnel scoured her papers, unable to locate her vaccination record. Thus, Rosette found herself the last to disembark the ship, as she had to receive the necessary vaccinations before joining her family ashore.



Settling into her new life in America, Rosette was greeted with a directive that echoed in her ears long after the ship's horn had faded into the distance: "It happened, you survived, now move on with your life. Just forget about it and don't talk about it."

Yet, how could Rosette simply erase the deep marks left by the traumas of her past? Being forced to bury her memories, her pain, her fear, Rosette grappled with the weight of silence, carrying the burden of her experiences deep within her soul.

The following week, Sofia enrolled Rosette in school. Despite her limited grasp of English, the students welcomed Rosette warmly.

"In the United States, I did not see or hear antisemitism," Rosette explained to Lopsy, Tottie, Mousse, and the cat, "but I could feel that it was there, hiding in the background."

Curious and eager to learn, Mousse hesitantly asked, "What is Anti-semitism?"

Rosette, recognizing the importance of the question, welcomed the opportunity to shed light on the matter. "Anti-semitism," she explained gently, "is when people unfairly dislike or discriminate against others who are Jewish." Lopsy struggled to understand such prejudice; she couldn't fathom why anyone would harbor such hostility towards another based on something as arbitrary as religion.

Like many other child survivors, Rosette found herself under the care of a company that owned a chain of department stores. The company arranged for Rosette to attend Camp Poyntelle after school, providing her with an immersive environment to learn English. By the time she returned home, Rosette had mastered the language, but she yearned for more. Rosette longed to be an American, shedding her French accent in pursuit of her newfound identity.

When Rosette turned thirteen, a long-awaited reunion was on the horizon as Bronia, hindered by the constraints of the Polish quota, finally made her way to New York. However, Rosette's visitor's visa had expired, prompting the company to intervene again, facilitating her reentry into the United States from Canada. Furthermore, they extended their support to Bronia, helping her in finding a job.



With her mother finally by her side, Rosette grappled with the myriad of conflicting emotions. Despite her burning desire to confront Bronia about the series of separations, she hesitated, fearing the consequences of her questions. Rosette's heart trembled at the thought of inflicting further pain upon her mother, weighed down by the burden of unspoken questions and fears.



“It took me a long time to come to terms with the fact that my mother had never truly abandoned me,” Rosette explained, her voice tinged with a mix of sorrow and understanding. “Though an invisible wall of the past stood between us, I realized that her actions were rooted in love.”

“It wasn’t until 1985, after visiting my father’s grave in Langenstein, that I fully grasped my identity as a Holocaust survivor,” Rosette continued, her gaze drifting out the window. “In that moment, I understood the weight of my responsibility—to honor the memory of those who couldn’t escape the horrors of the past. I firmly believe that I had survived for a reason, and it was my job to share their stories and keep history from repeating itself.”

“As survivors, it became our duty to remind the world that despite our differences and beliefs, we are all human beings, just like regardless of your differences, you are all animals,” Rosette concluded, her eyes meeting the astonished yet appreciative expressions of Lopsy, Tottie, Mousse, and the cat. In that shared moment of understanding, they recognized the power of empathy and the importance of embracing diversity, knowing it was through unity and compassion that true healing and understanding could be achieved.

Lola

By the time Rosette had finished telling her story, the sky had transformed into a breathtaking canvas of red, purple, and blue hues as the sun had begun its slumber and the stars winked from the sky, down at Lopsy, Tottie, Mousse, and the cat, who now understood how wrong she had been to misjudge the trio.

“I’m sorry,” she expressed earnestly, her voice softened with sincerity. “I didn’t realize the impact of my words and actions on you all. It was unfair of me to judge you without giving you a chance, without truly knowing any of you,” with guilt in her eyes, she continued, “I would love to start over, if you’ll have me,” she offered, her heart brimming with hope for reconciliation and forgiveness.

Mousse’s gentle smile radiated warmth as she extended a hand of friendship towards the cat. “I’m Mousse, and these are my friends, Lopsy and Tottie,” she began again with genuine kindness, “What’s your name?”

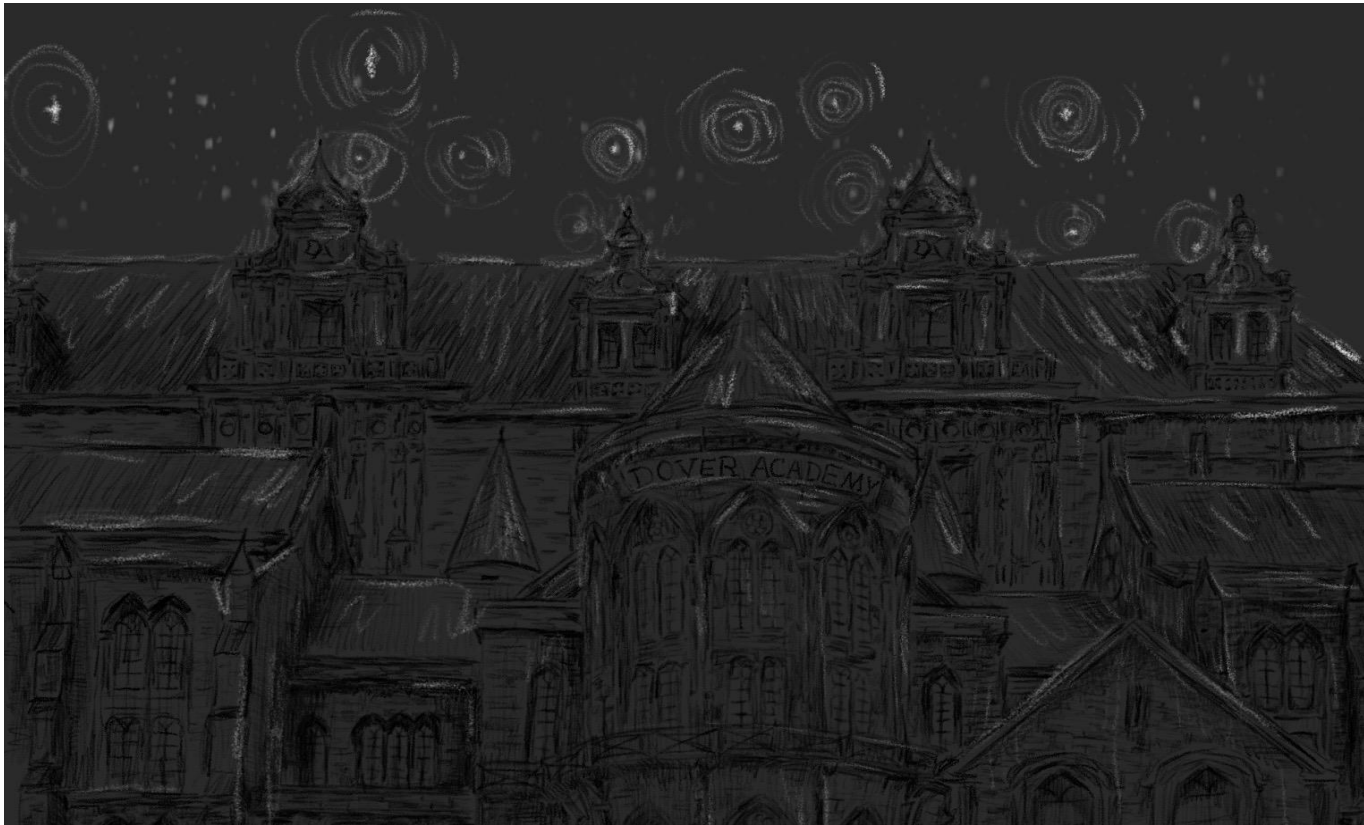
The cat was overjoyed with the second chance she had been granted. “I’m Lola,” she responded, her voice full of excitement. “It’s a pleasure to meet you, and if it is sunny again tomorrow, I would love for you to join our game.”

As the evening descended into darkness, Rosette's heart swelled with happiness at the sight of newfound harmony among the group. "It's getting late now," she gently remarked, her voice filled with kindness. "You should start heading back before anyone starts to worry about your whereabouts."

Rosette carefully packed some pieces of baklava into a container, offering it to Lopsy as a token of their time together. Walking them to the door, she bid them farewell, "Thank you for sharing this evening with me. Please do come and visit again sometime," she invited warmly.



With gratitude for Rosette's hospitality, Lopsy Tottie, Mousse, and Lola made their way back to the door that had opened to Rosette's enchanting garden. Following the winding path of the labyrinth, they soon found themselves back in the courtyard of the Dover Academy. Standing beneath the blanket of stars, the majestic silhouette of the Academy seemed to shimmer in the moonlight, every detail outlined in radiant silver. As they reflected on the evening's events, a sense of peace and unity enveloped them, for they realized that amidst the differences and misunderstandings, friendship and understanding had blossomed.







Rosette with her father



Rosette as a baby (1938)

SOCIETE DES MINES DE LENS

Société Anonyme au Capital de 225.000.000 de Francs  
Siège Social A LILLE: 30, rue Thiers  
R.C. Lille N° 706

Service des Achats de Bois  
Des Mines  
Du Nord & Du Pas-De-Calais

Paris le 2 Octobre 1942

éphone { N° 420 a 424 Lens  
( N° 302.32 par LILLE

Télégrammes: MINES.LENS

N° .....

éro et référence à rappelés  
dans la réponse.

GROUPEMENT D'ACHAT DES BOIS DE MINES  
DU NORD ET DU PAS DE CALAIS  
35, rue Saint-Dominique, 35  
PARIS VII°  
Téléphone INVALIDES 74-30 - POSTE 132

C E R T I F I C A T

Je soussigné, R. GERNEZ, Directeur des Services de Paris du  
Groupement d'Achat des Bois de Mines du Nord et du Pas-de-Calais  
certifie que:

Monsieur ADLER David  
né le 12 Novembre 1911 à LODZ (Pologne)

est employé comme bucheron au chantier N° 1607 de Clefs (Maine & Loire)  
mis à la disposition de la Société des Mines de Lens par le Commissaire  
-riat à l'Équipement National pour la production de bois de Mines.

Les Autorités d'occupation ont reconnu à cette production de  
bois de mines un ordre de priorité absolue en raison des besoins de  
l'économie Allemande et ont délivré à la Société des Mines de Lens  
pour cet objet, un certificat VA-Betrieb.

Vu seulement pour certification  
matérielle de la signature  
de M..... GERNEZ  
apposée ci-dessus

Paris, le 7 Octobre 1942  
Le Commissaire de Police

Die Richtigkeit wird bestätigt  
Angers, den 24.10.1942  
Forstmeister

PAPER GIVEN TO MY FATHER TO PROTECT MY MOM AND ME IF  
HE AGREED TO WORK AS A LUMBERJACK IN CAMP  
BEAUREGARD - 1942

David Adler's work permit and protection  
certificate (1942)





Rosette with Mr. and Mme. Martin



Rosette with Odile



Rosette with the Martin family (1943)

Top row, from left to right: a cousin, Mme Juliette Martin, Mr. Albert Martin, George,  
Odile, and Denise

Bottom row: Simone, and Rosette Adler





David Adler in French army uniform (1936)



Lumberjacks in Camp Beaugard, David can be seen kneeling on the left



Camp Beauregard



## Acknowledgments

I am incredibly grateful for the privilege of recounting the experiences and memories of Rosette Goldstein in this book. Her vulnerability, honesty, courage, and resilience have inspired me beyond measure, and I consider it an honor to share her story with those who will listen. Rosette's unwavering passion for her mission, tirelessly working to raise awareness in a world where the lessons of the past are gradually fading, is nothing short of remarkable.

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