

'Fine,' I thought, 'you'll have a long wait there.' And I made myself comfortable.

But then I heard the clattering. A clattering coming from the dustbins that had been put out all over the pavement. And I could hear the rubbish lorry and the refuse collectors carrying the bins to the lorry, emptying them and rolling them back to the houses. The closer the clattering and rolling of the dustbins sounded, the greedier the cat's grin grew. Now it had stood up. Now it was shifting excitedly from paw to paw. Now I could hear the men's voices and the rattle of the lorry. Then the first bin was carried away. The cat was standing right next to my bin, which might be picked up at any moment.

Two men came and lifted the bin. In my despair, I jumped onto one of the men's trousers and ran around his leg like a squirrel. The cat made a gigantic leap after me, clung onto the fabric of the trouser leg and tried to follow me around it. The binman dropped the bin and gave the cat a mighty kick.

'Those fleabags get cheekier every day,' he said, 'they're even attacking people now!'



The cat limped away.

I climbed cautiously down from the binman's trousers and ran home to where Wilhelm and I were living under a phone box. There I sat, with all four of my paws trembling. My heart was pounding and I thought back to how lovely it had been in the old days, in the yard with the elderberry bushes and Carlo, Isengrim and my family.



When Pierre and Wilhelm arrived, they found me all puffed up from crying.

'What's up?' asked Wilhelm.

I told them about my experience with the enormous black cat.

'Bof,' said Pierre, 'one must have a love for danger. But look,' he said, 'here, in return, are the advantages of Paris.' He had brought a big piece of camembert with him, which he now gave to me.

'Thanks. But I'd still rather live in Munich. Even if things aren't like they used to be. It's better to be cold but safe in an air vent than to be chased by the monster cats here.'

Even Wilhelm agreed that Switzerland might be no country for *moice*, but he'd rather go back there than stay here in cat-ridden Paris.



## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

We bade farewell to Pierre on a Friday evening. Pierre had put together a last opulent meal: *foie gras*, brie and marinated olives.

We sat together until late into the night, eating and drinking, and chatting about a world without cats.

Then we embraced Pierre and ran towards the Gare de l'Est. The last time we saw Pierre, he was strolling with his incomparable nonchalance down the boulevard towards our restaurant Les Trois Mousquetaires.

At the Gare de l'Est, we ran across the tracks in search of a train to Munich. We'd spent long enough at



stations to know that even a mouse should never walk across the tracks. The safest place for mice, though, is right beside the rails, where you're well out of the way, even from the hot water that sometimes gets drained out of the restaurant cars.

So we crept along the rails until, suddenly, we heard mice squeaking. Cautiously, we climbed up onto the platform. The squeaking was coming from a yellow circus caravan standing on a flat goods wagon. A man was just getting out of the caravan. The man had a splendid red moustache.

I said to Wilhelm, 'Wait there, I'll ask those mice where the train's going.'

In the circus caravan, there were several crates and cages, one of which was a large glass case with lots of white mice bustling around inside it. Right by the door there was a little cage with gilded bars. Sitting in it was a dapper white mouse.

'Does this train go to Munich?' I asked.

'Yes,' he said with a sly grin.

Why was he grinning?

Then the train gave a jolt.



'Quick!' I called to Wilhelm. 'Get on!'

Wilhelm climbed aboard, just as the train started to pull away.

'Wass all this then?' asked Wilhelm.

'This is the famous Circus Salambo,' said the white mouse in the golden cage, swaying on a little swing.

'And why aren't you in the glass box with all the other white mice?' I asked.

'Good gracious!' said the white mouse. 'With that common rabble? No, *thank you*. I'm Jack, and I work with the famous conjuror Clandestine. Those mice in the glass case just pull a chariot around the ring, which hardly requires great artistry.'

At that moment, the air shook with a hideous roar.

'Thass a right big cat!' cried Wilhelm in horror.

Jack laughed. 'No, that's Petz, a brown bear. He sleeps most of the time, and sometimes he talks in his dreams.'

'Canada,' we heard the bear mutter, 'Canada.'

'He's dreaming about his forests again,' said Jack.





'Petz is from Canada. And now he rides a scooter round the ring.'

The train stopped and the caravan was pulled off the wagon.

'Is it far to Munich?' I asked Jack.

'I should think so,' he said, grinning again.



Wilhelm and I walked over to the glass case, where the white mice were playing hide and seek. They were squeaking with pleasure.

'They're very jolly,' I said to Wilhelm. 'But I wouldn't like to live in a box like that all the time.'

'No,' said Wilhelm, 'nayther would I.'





## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Suddenly, the caravan started to sway. You can be thrown around in a railway carriage if the driver takes a corner too quickly, but this slow up-and-down movement was completely new. Wilhelm climbed onto a crate and squinted out of a little window.

'Water,' he said. 'Nothing but waa-ter.'

I climbed up and looked out. And indeed, there was green water as far as the eye could see: the sea.

'Where are we a-going?' asked Wilhelm anxiously.

'To England!' cried Jack. 'On a ferry to England!' And he roared with laughter.

Wilhelm and I started to cry. How on earth could



we ever get back across the water?

'You'll have to swim,' laughed Jack, wiping the tears of laughter from his eyes. 'Swim! That's no problem for grey mice like you. No,' he said, starting to laugh again, 'oh, it's too funny. Simply glorious.'

'He be right naughty,' said Wilhelm, 'and a gloater.'

The white mice in the glass case had stopped playing.

'Don't listen to him,' they called. 'Don't let Jack tease you. Come to us!'

We went over to the glass case.

'I'm Tissy,' said a girl-mouse. 'Where do you two come from?'

'I'm a house mouse from Munich,' I answered. 'My name's Stefan but everyone calls me Nibbles.'

'An' I'm a fieldmouse from Switzerland,' said Wilhelm.

'You know what?' said Tissy. 'If you stay with us, eventually the whole circus will go back to Germany. Climb up onto the bear's cage and then jump down into the case with us.'

'What if the bear wakes up?'



'He won't wake up.'

Wilhelm and I clambered up on two of the bars. The case was below us. Yikes, it was a long way down.

'Come on, jump!' cried the white mice, who had all lined up against the glass wall to give us enough space to land in. I jumped first, then Wilhelm. All the walls of the case were made of glass, and they were too high to climb out. It was a big glass prison. But the floor had a warm carpet of sawdust and there was an array of dishes with plenty of food.

'Right comfy,' said Wilhelm, 'but what if we hafter live in this ole box for ever? You can see everything through that glass.'

'Yes,' I said. 'I wouldn't want to live here for ever.'

'How do you stand it in this here glass box?' asked Wilhelm.

'Oh,' said Tissy, 'we were born here and so were our parents and grandparents before us. We're very happy here.'

'And what do you do in the circus?'

'Mr Salambo's famous mouse show. Twenty white mice pulling a cat around the ring on a little chariot.



Look, over there in that basket, that's the cat. Her name's Lena.'

'Ent that dangerous?' asked Wilhelm.

'A bit,' said Tissy, 'but Lena gets such a good meal before every performance that she's pretty sleepy.'

Then everyone thought about how to help us.

'We can hide you easily enough,' said one white mouse, 'in the house.' In the case there was a little house with tiny doors and windows. 'But Mr Salambo comes and picks it up at least every three days, because that's when the whole case is cleaned out.'

'All of us could pile on top of them and hide them under our bodies,' suggested another white mouse.

'Yes,' said Tissy, 'that would work as long as we're travelling. But Mr Salambo will spot them by the time of the first performance, if not before, when he takes us out of the case.'

There was a worried silence as everyone thought.

'Canada,' murmured the dreaming bear. 'Canada.'

'I've got an idea,' said Tissy. 'You know what? You need to learn some little trick so that Mr Salambo will keep you in the circus. The best thing would be if one



of you could learn to run along a tightrope. I have to do that by myself at the moment.'

Tissy climbed up a little pole. There was a thread strung between it and another pole. Tissy said she had to spend several hours a day practising. The other mice used little wooden exercise wheels for their training.

'We need to be very strong,' said the white mice, 'because Lena is a pretty fat cat.'



## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Over the next few days we, Wilhelm and I, tried to crawl along the rope. But it's a pretty unusual thing for house- and fieldmice to do. And so we hung like wet sacks from the tightrope, upon which Tissy could dance so lightly, and which she hung from so gracefully.

On the third day, Wilhelm gave up and said he'd rather practice somersaults because he was used to rolling head-over-heels down the furrows in fields.

I kept grimly on with my tightrope training though.

Every time Mr Salambo's enormous moustache appeared over the case and his hairy hand reached in to pick up the house and change the sawdust, Wilhelm and





I dived into a corner, and all the white mice piled on top of us. That meant that Mr Salambo couldn't see even a scrap of our grey fur. Everything was spotlessly white. Jack almost split his sides laughing, every time.

One day, the caravan stopped. The crates were unloaded. The bear woke up and asked, very sleepily, 'Where are we, eh?'

'In England,' said Jack. 'In Bristol.'

'What miserable weather,' said the bear. 'It keeps raining.'

But he hadn't even opened his eyes – outside, the sun was shining.

The circus people had put up the tent. It was only a small tent, and pretty shabby. There was already work being done in the ring. Mr Salambo's two boys were juggling empty beer bottles. Mr Salambo (whose real name was Gruber) cracked his whip and made the bear scoot round in circles. Every time the bear pushed off with his back paw, he muttered 'Canada, Canada.' Up above, in the big top, Mrs Salambo was swinging on a trapeze.

The only performer who wasn't a member of the

Gruber family was Clandestine the Conjuror. He was already working his black magic on a few bystanders, picking their wallets out of their jacket pockets or pinching the watches off their wrists without them even noticing.

And then came the moment we'd been fearing all that time. Mr Salambo set up a small chariot at the edge of the ring, sat the cat in it and began to pick the white mice, one by one, up out of the case and fasten them into a tiny harness. Wilhelm and I lay on the floor in the corner, feeling one white mouse after another being lifted off until Mr Salambo could see us.

'Huh, what's this?' he said. 'Grey mice. How did they sneak in here?'

His hairy hand grabbed Wilhelm, quickly and confidently.

Wilhelm squeaked anxiously, 'Oi can do roly-polies.'

But Mr Salambo couldn't understand him. He had already reached out for me with his other hand when Tissy whispered in my ear, 'Quick, show him what you can do!'

Hastily, I climbed up onto the rope and ran along

it to the middle, where I wrapped my tail around the thread and let myself fall. I was now swinging in the air by my tail, like Mrs Salambo on the trapeze.

'Wow,' said Mr Salambo.

Then he looked at Wilhelm, still held in his fist, and set him very carefully back in the glass case. Wilhelm immediately did a somersault.

'Wow!' said Mr Salambo again.

He called up to his wife on the trapeze, 'Come and look at these grey mice. We absolutely have to fit them into our routine!'

My goodness, we were overjoyed at that.

Tissy hugged us. And all the other white mice cried, 'Welcome! You're circus stars now!'



## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

We made our first appearance in the circus tent on a Saturday evening. It was all very grand. Mr Salambo's daughter rode into the ring. She was wearing a white dress embroidered with glittering crystals.

Then a clown played a little trumpet. He fell over into the sawdust covering the ring. And once he'd stood up again, he blew clouds of sawdust out of the trumpet.

'Dratted trumpet,' he said, and fell over again. He stood up and shook sawdust out of his ears. The audience laughed and clapped.

It was only once the clown was behind the curtain, taking off his make-up, that I recognised Mr Salambo.

Meanwhile, his sons ran around the ring on stilts, each balancing four raw eggs on a spoon in his mouth.

After that, Mrs Salambo did tricks on the trapeze and rode a tiny bicycle across the tightrope. The bear came on with his scooter, still muttering, 'Canada, Canada.'

And then Mr Salambo entered the ring and declared in English with a strong accent, '*Meine Damen und Herren*, ladies and gentlemen, I have ze pleasure to present to you a very famous act. An act that defies ze laws of nature, zat denies ze vork of ze famous Zir Isaac Newton. Incredible but true, vhat you are about to see. A cat pulled around ze ring by twenty mice.'

He set the chariot at the edge of the ring. Then he lifted the mice in their delicate harness from the glass case and fastened them to it. After that, he took the sleepy and very full cat from her basket and set her in the chariot. Lena was wearing a little toga and looked like an ancient Roman. And, last but not least, came Wilhelm – this was Mr Salambo's flash of inspiration – who was placed on the little driving seat directly under the cat's nose. Wilhelm had to hold the little reins in his paws.





'Oi hope that cat has ate enuff,' said Wilhelm as we parted.

Imagine the scene: twenty white mice, driven by a grey mouse and, behind them, the cat in a white toga. Quite magnificent.

Mr Salambo cracked his bear-whip and in a flash, the white mice set the chariot moving. They raced around the edge of the ring so fast that the cat had to cling onto the chariot with her paws. They did three laps like that.

The spectators clapped and Mr Salambo carried the cat back to her basket. The white mice and Wilhelm were returned to the glass case, where they immediately began eating.

Mr Salambo stepped back to the centre of the ring and said, 'Now, ladies and gentlemen, our latest attraction, a world sensation, truly. Two fearless mice at extreme height vill show you their tricks and all entirely vithout a net!'

It grew quiet in the tent.

Mr Salambo picked Tissy and me up out of the glass case. Mrs Salambo had sewn a dark blue dress for Tissy and a white suit for me. Tissy and I climbed up a long,

thin bamboo cane. When I reached the top, I looked out at the rows of spectators. The humans were packed tightly together, and hundreds of eyes were looking at us.

Then I stepped on to the thin nylon thread, and Tissy followed. The tightrope was see-through and very fine, and the spotlights were very carefully arranged so that it looked as though Tissy and I were walking on air. In the middle of the tightrope, I wrapped the tip of my tail around the thread and let myself drop. The humans screamed. But then I swung by my tail in the air, as if an invisible hand was holding me.

The difficulty with this routine was that I could only get upright again with a powerful swing. So I had to get myself swinging like a pendulum. Tissy helped by holding out her tail so that I could pull myself back onto the rope. We ran back across it. The audience went wild, cheering enthusiastically. We climbed down the bamboo cane. Mr Salambo put us carefully back in the glass case.

After us came Clandestine the Conjuror. He was dressed all in black and carrying a top hat. He threw





four metal rings up in the air, one after the other, and when he caught them again, they were linked together, yet nobody could find any way of pushing one through another.

Then he brought out his magic jug. Using just the one jug, he could pour each person a drink – whatever they wanted: tea, red wine, carrot juice, coffee, gin, or even a special liqueur that sparkled with flecks of real gold!

Next, he put the jug away and pulled a white rabbit out of his top hat.

For the grand finale, he asked a woman in the audience to pass him her handbag. He asked her if she liked mice.

‘No,’ she said, ‘definitely not.’

‘So why have you got a white mouse in your handbag then?’

And he pulled Jack out of the bag by his tail.

The people clapped and shouted, ‘Bravo!’

Wilhelm said, ‘That Jack and that Clandestine are real artists, you got to give ‘em that.’



## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

So, days and weeks passed. We travelled from one English town to another. Autumn, winter and spring came and went, and then it was summer again. We hardly even noticed the cold seasons, it was so warm in our case. There was plenty of food and no fear of cats, apart from during our appearance in the ring each evening.

Wilhelm said, ‘I’m right afeared every evenin’. Sooner or later, Lena won’t have ate enuff, or she’ll get all grumpy, an’ then, gulp, that’ll be the end o’ me.’

As for me, the more times I did my trick on the tightrope, the more scared I got: scared that one day I’d fall. It was a dangerous height.

Sometimes Wilhelm and I sat in the glass case, looking out. Then Tissy would ask, 'Why do you two look so sad?'

'Just you look out there,' said Wilhelm, 'those bootiful trees, the thick bushes, the grass and the wunnerful black soil.'

And I said, 'D'you know what, Tissy? All the holes and tunnels in a house are just the best. And so are the smells that waft through a building when someone's frying potatoes, or when there's cheese in a room.'

Tissy said, 'You're homesick again,' and she tried to get us to laugh with her.

The white mice couldn't understand our sorrows – they had never experienced life outside the glass case.

One day, we heard that the circus was to travel by ship from Britain to Iceland. Iceland is a big island quite close to the North Pole, where there are huge glaciers. It was a chilling shock to us all. Only Petz, the bear, was glad.

'Wonderful, eh,' he said. 'Iceland sounds good. *Ice-land*. Snow and ice. Glorious. Maybe there are big forests there too, eh.'



Now when he scooted around the ring in his evening performances, he was muttering: 'Iceland, Iceland.'

'What do we do now?' asked Wilhelm. 'The circus ent goin' back to Germany, that's gettin' farther away. If we land up on that old island, I don't reckon we'll see our Switzerland again.'

'We've got to escape from this glass box,' I said, 'before we get loaded on to the ship.'

But how?

All the white mice tried to help us figure out how Wilhelm and I could get out of the case. Tissy thought about it too, although she was very sad that we wanted to go. She often cried. And we were sad too. It was a very odd thing: we wanted to go and to stay at the same time.

'We won't ever get out of here. Them glass walls are so smooth an' far too high. We'll end up sittin' in here all our lives long,' said Wilhelm sadly.

But then I had an idea.

Clandestine the Conjuror was in the habit of laying his coat over our cage before his performance. The coat had a secret pocket. Just before he went on, he slipped



the little white rabbit and the arrogant white mouse, Jack, inside it. Then he walked into the ring. Every time he pulled the rabbit out of the hat or Jack out of a lady's handbag, he actually reached into the coat as quick as a flash and pulled out one of his co-stars. He was so speedy and skilful about it that everyone thought the rabbit had really been in the top hat and Jack had really been in the bag all along.

'I'll tell you what,' I said to Wilhelm, 'straight after our performance, let's creep into Clandestine's coat and, once the show's over and the coat's hanging in the wardrobe, we'll sneak away. Then we head to the port and find a ship that'll take us home.'



## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

On a Friday later that summer, the circus gave its last performance in Hull. The next morning, all the cages were to be loaded onto a ship and transported to Iceland.

'I hope Clandestine will put his coat down on our case tonight as usual,' I said.

We said goodbye to the white mice, hugged them, and everyone cried.

Then came Wilhelm's performance. He whizzed three times around the ring with the twenty mice and Lena, the cat. After that, Tissy and I climbed across the tightrope, and Mr Salambo set us back in the glass case.

Clandestine the Conjuror came and did indeed lay



the little white rabbit and the arrogant white mouse, Jack, inside it. Then he walked into the ring. Every time he pulled the rabbit out of the hat or Jack out of a lady's handbag, he actually reached into the coat as quick as a flash and pulled out one of his co-stars. He was so speedy and skilful about it that everyone thought the rabbit had really been in the top hat and Jack had really been in the bag all along.

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his heavy coat over our case as he slipped the white rabbit and Jack inside. Hastily, Wilhelm and I crawled in after them, just as the coat was picked up again. Clandestine put it on and hurried out into the ring.

We'd barely reached the secret pocket when Jack hurled himself at us, shouting, 'What are you grey vagabonds doing here? Out! Out! Out!' And he started wrestling me.

The little white rabbit sat, terrified, in the far corner of the secret pocket. While Jack and I were fighting, a hand suddenly appeared and *whoosh!* The rabbit vanished.

Then we heard Clandestine the Conjuror ask, 'Do you like mice, madam?'

A woman's voice cried, 'No, no!'

'My cue!' gasped Jack – I'd just got him in a headlock. And then it happened.

The speedy hand dived into the pocket and Wilhelm disappeared.

Clandestine the Conjuror said, 'So why do you keep a white mouse in your handbag?'

Then there were roars of laughter. The audience



were laughing and laughing. Because the great magician Clandestine was not holding a white mouse: he had a grey fieldmouse by the tail.

The hand returned and shoved Wilhelm into the pocket.

'Uh-oh,' said Wilhelm, his fur standing on end. 'That's ruined it, that have.'

The people were still laughing. Clandestine the Conjuror had walked behind the curtain, and he now pulled the coat off, reached into the secret pocket and pulled out Wilhelm and me.

'You filthy little beasts! I will not be made a laughing stock by you!'

And then he threw us to Lena the cat.

'There,' he said to Lena, 'polish them off!'

But Lena had eaten so much that she just burped and murmured a sleepy, 'Pardon me!'

Wilhelm and I ran for it. Past Mr Salambo, who gave a desperate cry of, 'Stop!'

We ran past Petz's cage. He was mumbling, 'Iceland. Sounds so good! Lovely. Almost like Canada.'

We ran out into the night and listened from a safe



distance as Mr Salambo argued with Clandestine the Conjuror. The last glimpse we had of the circus was the colourful string of lights over the Big Top.

'What now?' panted Wilhelm.

Hmm, what to do?

We needed to get to the harbour. We had to try and get a ship that would take us from Britain back to the mainland. So we crept through the night-time streets towards the sound of the ships' horns.



## CHAPTER NINETEEN

Down at the port, it smelled of fish. We carried on, being extra careful because where it smells of fish, you often get cats. Lots of cats. We walked along the quay, where the ships were berthed.

'Jus' imagine,' said Wilhelm, 'if we were to get on a ship thass a-going to America or to Africa.'

'What an awful thought!' I said. 'Although I've always wanted to meet a jumping jerboa.'

'We'd better not then,' said Wilhelm hastily.

We spent three days and three nights sitting in a hole in the harbour wall, watching the ships that came in and went out. The ships were unloaded and reloaded.



But we couldn't make up our minds which of the ships to board. How could we know where they were going?

At night, we huddled together in the hole. How warm it had been in the glass case at the circus! Now our stomachs were grumbling because we didn't dare go out. We kept seeing huge cats stroll past: mangy, feral creatures, dragging away colossal fish.

One evening, we heard two men walking right past our hiding place. One said, 'Why, it's proper dirty here.'

And the other said, 'Aye, it is an' all. Wu'll be back in Hamburg the day after themorra, though.'

They were two sailors, walking towards their ship. As I'd spent so long travelling between Hamburg and Cologne, I was able to translate their dialect for Wilhelm: 'They'll be in Hamburg in two days, and they're happy about it.'

We noticed which ship they went on and climbed aboard after them. We crept through a porthole into the hold.

What a surprise! The ship's hold was full to the brim with wheat. What a dinner!



We had just settled down and started nibbling on a grain or two when suddenly a big rat loomed over us.

'What are youse doing here?' grumbled the rat.

'We want to get to Hamburg and then on to Munich,' I said.

'Beat it, sharpish, this is our ship,' said the rat. 'It's not for youse landlubbers.'

'Landlubbers!' said Wilhelm. 'Thass a load o' old nonsense, we're moice!'

Hastily, we dived into the mountain of wheat and tunnelled our way deep inside it. There we sat as quiet



as mice. For a while, we heard the ship rat digging around in the wheat, cursing and muttering: 'Dirty beggars, blimey, blimmin' 'eck . . .'

Then it disappeared and everything went quiet. We just stayed put, sitting there in the wheat. It was warm and soft, and we were surrounded by food. It was like paradise.



## CHAPTER TWENTY

The ship suddenly began to vibrate and pitch. That was the engine. Soon we could hear the waves outside slapping against the hull. The ship swayed gently. We travelled like that for two days and a night. Then the engines stopped and the ship lay quiet.

'How are we goin' to get out of here?' asked Wilhelm.

'Wait and see,' I said.

After a while, we heard something gurgling like a whale.

'My heart alive, that right scared me!' said Wilhelm.

Cautiously, we worked our way out of the wheat and peeked out. Sticking out of the open cargo hatch





was a thick pipe, into which the wheat was vanishing with a slurp, as if it were a giant straw. Just then, we were sucked up by the airstream and dragged into the tube with the grains of wheat – we whooshed up it and then the grain elevator spat us out into a barge on the other side.

I felt quite dizzy after being shaken up like that. When the barge was full, a tug boat towed it through the port and out into a canal.

‘This is Hamburg!’ I cheered. ‘Look, over there: the tower with the round, green dome, that’s St Michael’s and there, that roof, that’s the main station.’



The barge was tied up at the quay. When night fell, we crept ashore and crossed two wide streets to the station.

It was so lovely to be at a station again. We hid beneath the edge of the platform.

In the morning, a train to Munich was announced. It was due to arrive at platform fourteen.

It was an old train, and very dirty. It reminded me of my old cross-country train on which I'd spent over a year travelling to and fro between Cologne and Hamburg. We climbed cautiously onto a carriage.

‘I hope this train really does stop in Munich,’ I said. ‘What if we ended up in Istanbul? That’s in Turkey, somewhere.’

We were almost on the point of getting off again when I remembered that Munich station is a terminus. So the train would *have* to stop in Munich.

We crept through the train. Every compartment was full. Eventually, we found one where a Greek family was sitting: a father, a mother and four children. The father and mother had spent three years working in Hamburg as a binman and a cleaner and now they were going





back to Greece. They had filled the whole compartment with crates and cartons, and there was even a basket with two clucking chickens up on the luggage rack.

Once, Wilhelm accidentally showed himself when he was picking up crumbs, but everyone laughed and the children fed us breadcrumbs. The Greek family sang and we whistled along. It was such a merry journey.

The closer we drew to Munich, the harder it was for me to contain my joy. In the end, I climbed up onto a seat and looked out of the window.

It was almost three years since my accidental departure. Fortunately, nothing had changed. The Frauenkirche cathedral was still there with its two towers and its domes that looked like half-balls of Edam. The sky was blue and the leaves were all the colours of autumn.