



Let Me Tell You a Story: A Memoir of a Wartime Childhood

Renata Calverley

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September, 1939. Przemysl, Poland. No one has explained to three-year-old Renatka what *war* is. She knows her Tatus, a doctor, is away with the Polish Army, that her beautiful Mamusia is no longer allowed to work at the university, and that their frequent visitors?among them Great Aunt Zuzia and Uncle Julek with their gifts of melon and clothes?have stopped appearing. One morning Mamusia comes home with little yellow six-pointed stars for them to wear. Renatka thinks they will keep her family safe.

In June of 1942, soldiers in gray-green uniforms take Renata, Mamusia, and grandmother Babcia to the Ghetto where they are crammed into one room with other frightened families. The adults are forced to work long hours at the factory and to survive on next to no food. One day Mamusia and Babcia do not return from their shifts.

Six years old and utterly alone, Renata is passed from place to place and survives through the willingness of ordinary people to take the most deadly risks. Her unlikely blonde hair and blue eyes and other twists of fate save her life but stories become her salvation. Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales transport her to an enchanted world; *David Copperfield* helps her cope on her own; and she longs for the family in *Swallows and Amazons*.

A chronicle of the horrors of war, *Let Me Tell You a Story* is a powerful and moving memoir of growing up in a disturbing world, and of the magical discovery of books.



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