

THE
ORPHAN BAND
of SPRINGDALE



ANNE NESBET

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CANDLEWICK PRESS

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*For my mother, Helen,
whom I miss as much as she missed Maine,
and
for all who love a hill or a town or a view somewhere
that made them who they are*



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What Happened in Portland

Gusta Neubronner hadn't expected to be on a bus in Maine when she lost her father. She hadn't expected to be sitting alone scrunched up next to the dark blue coat of a woman she didn't know, or to have her French horn case balanced between her ankles, or for the weight of a night's worth of not sleeping to be pulling at her eyelids and making her mind slow and stupid just at the moment when she needed to be even more alert than her usual quick-brained self.

Things never happen the way we imagine them ahead of time.

"Sit here," her father had said, hardly a moment ago. They hadn't meant to come late to the

Portland–Springdale bus, of course. But they had been riding buses all day and all night—New York to Boston, and then waiting in Boston, and then Boston to Portland, and then in the waiting room here in Portland—and the truth was they must have both nodded off, even her father. That must have been what had happened. So then there was a hurry to the bus, and other people already on board, and her father had pushed her scruffy suitcase onto the rack above her head and said, “Sit here,” so she had done so, next to this woman with the scratchy blue coat, and then he had said something else, something urgent and hard to hear, and dashed right back off the bus again—why?

He had said something, so it must have been an explanation. Had he gone to grab a cup of coffee? He was tired out—they were both so tired out—and he did like the bitter taste of coffee. But coffee wasn’t worth risking missing their bus, was it?

Gusta took a ragged breath and squinted toward the front of the bus, willing him to come bounding up the steps again. She would know him anywhere, just from the way he moved, with impatience like springs in the soles of his feet and his shoulders always tense, ready to push boulders aside if boulders appeared. *Hurry up, Papa*, she told him.

Two men did come swinging up the steps then, but neither one of them moved like her father. Their eyes looked like mysterious dark pools to Gusta. They stood at the front of the bus looking at all the tired people sitting there, waiting to be on their way to Springdale, and they said in terrible, hard voices, "*August Neubronner!*"—which was Gusta's father's name.

Then they started moving down the aisles, looking at all the men who might be August Neubronner, and as they brushed by Gusta, paying no attention to her because she was just a scrawny eleven-year-old girl tucked up next to a woman in a blue coat, she saw that the dark pools were actually dark glasses, and the men were in uniforms, and that was how she knew the thing they had been dreading and expecting all these months, even years, was actually really happening. Not in some shadowy future, but right now, for real, in 1941.

"When they come for me—" her father used to say at the dinner table in New York, and her mother would say, "Now, August," and he would say, "We've got to have a plan, always. When they come for me—"

There were things to be hidden and things to be done, and if they were in a place with a back window,

maybe Gusta's mother could even talk to them to give Gusta's father time to climb out and run, and in all of these plans, Gusta's job was to *not say anything*.

But never in any of those imaginings of the terrible moment when they would come for her father had Gusta been alone at dawn on a bus in Portland.

Every part of her started to tremble, waves of trembling that rose up from the horn case between her feet and made her stomach tight and her arms shaky.

There were grumbles from the people on the bus as the men asked for identity papers here and there in the back.

There was no August Neubronner at the back of the bus. The men from the government retreated back down the aisle.

"Sorry, folks," they said. "We've got us a fugitive to track down."

Now Gusta's *teeth* were beginning to tremble. In a moment they would be making some kind of chattering noise, and that would give her away.

The men left the bus.

Maybe her father had seen them coming? Maybe that was why he had left her so suddenly? Maybe while

those men were checking papers on this bus, her own papa had been able to slip away?

Her heart shuddered like a small creature, hiding behind her ribs.

The bus driver made a discontented sort of noise, revved the engine, and closed the door behind them.

“Portland–Springdale line,” he announced with that booming, ceremonial voice all bus drivers seemed to use.

Gusta grabbed the handle of her horn case and half stood up. Suddenly she was flooded with the urge to run off the bus while there was still time, to run after her father, to call his name, to run, to *not be left behind*—

“What’s the trouble? Aren’t you going to Springdale, dear?” said the woman next to her. “Let me see that ticket of yours.”

It turned out that Gusta was holding her bus ticket. The woman took it from her to check. Her father must have put that ticket into her hand when he had said “Sit here” just those few minutes ago.

“No, you’re fine,” said the woman kindly, patting the ticket back into Gusta’s hand. “Portland–Springdale bus. What is that thing you have there?”

She meant the horn in its case.

Gusta leaned sideways instead of answering so she could peer out through the windows past the woman in her coat, but of course there was no way to make sense of anything: the smears of blue must be the terrible men in their uniforms, the smears of gray other people outside—beyond that she couldn't see what was happening. She couldn't see.

Did they have him by now? Had they caught him? Or had he seen them coming in time and escaped, running north, north, north toward Canada, where the Americans couldn't touch him anymore, where he could join the Canadian Air Force and help fight the Nazis over in the European war?

She had no way of knowing. All she could do to help him now was to *not say anything*, which meant acting like nothing in the world had just gone wrong—which meant going on by herself.

It was the hardest thing she had ever had to do, thus far in her life, to sit back quietly while inside her skin she was shouting after her father and wanting to jump off that bus and run, run, run to find him, wherever he was headed, off to Canada or off to prison in chains. Inside her skin, there was a great struggle going on. There was a war. That's what her father said the

whole world was: *struggle*. He liked to point at quiet things, at plants, at people sitting on a bench, and whisper to Gusta, “What’s going on, do you think, in their inside? Struggle and contradictions. Even in you, my calm little thingling.”

That’s how Gusta knew it must be true about plants and other people, because it was certainly true about herself, Gusta. She was very good at being calm on the outside, but inside her there was always a struggle raging. She was all secrets, struggles, and contradictions.

For now she kept those contradictions packed away inside. She pressed her lips tightly together, so that the sounds of doubt and fear could not possibly squeeze their way out, and as the bus shook itself and roared, she fell back against that not-very-friendly seat, the seat that was moving, every minute, farther from her father.

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Almost as Good as Courage

The seats of the bus seemed half-starved, they had so little padding on them. The woman next to Gusta, wrapped up in her sturdy body and thick blue coat, wasn't so much bothered, or at least she didn't let her botheration show, but Gusta kept finding herself shifting a little thisaway, and then a little thataway, trying to keep her poor bones comfortable. The winter must have been picking at the scabs of that road for months. Every time a wheel of the bus hit a missing bit of road, every person riding that bus rattled a little, and Gusta's teeth clattered, and the French horn case between Gusta's knees flung itself from one shin to the other one, as if it couldn't decide which leg needed bruises most.

A plan, her father liked to say, *is almost as good as courage*. He believed in having plans for every possible disaster—for raids, for strikebreakers, for those bad moments when you’ve disguised yourself as an assembly-line worker to pass around leaflets and one of the bosses gets suspicious and starts walking over your way.

A plan was what would tell your feet where to go and your hands what to do when you got there.

But once the bus had lumbered into what must be Springdale, and the driver had helpfully handed down her ragged little suitcase from the upper rack, and the other passengers had hurried off so confidently toward their homes and destinations, Gusta found that for a moment her feet hardly knew how to move at all.

“Is no one coming for you, little girl?” said the woman in the blue coat, lingering for a moment. She clearly disapproved of Gusta’s being all on her own, which was a kindness on her part, maybe, or nosiness, or both.

Gusta tried to look like a person with a plan.

“I’m to go to Mrs. Hoopes’s home,” she said, and then she recited all she had of an address: “Mrs. Hoopes on Elm Street, Springdale, Maine.”

“Oh!” said the woman. “Bound for Mrs. Hoopes’s Home! Well, then! But I never heard of a state child showing up all on her own this way, and with such outlandish packages in hand.”

By “outlandish packages” she meant the French horn, apparently. Gusta bristled for a moment, out of love for that horn. Then she wondered what a state child was. It didn’t sound like a pleasant thing to be.

“And with the sky smearing in, too,” said the woman, with a click of the tongue that said she disapproved of bad weather. “Another storm coming, sure as sure.”

That made Gusta blink, because it was something her father said almost every day: *the storm is surely coming*.

But this woman meant an actual storm, not a war.

“Well, Elm Street’s across the Mousam River, over that way,” said the woman, waving forward with her hand. “Nobody with you and no instructions! Who ever heard of such a thing? Poor girl.”

“I’ve got a letter for Mrs. Hoopes,” said Gusta. “So I guess I’ll be fine.”

And to show that it had not (like some fathers)

suddenly disappeared, Gusta fetched the letter right up out of the extra-deep pocket her mother had sewn specially into her skirt, the pocket that was lumpy with all the things that must not be lost, like that letter and handkerchiefs and mittens.

“Well, then,” said the woman doubtfully, and after squinting at the address spelled out on the envelope (since Gusta’s mother was a firm believer in spelling things out), she began to head off wherever she was heading to.

The air had gotten another notch or two colder. Gusta put the letter away and fished out her mittens.

Strange! There was something tucked right into her ordinary old right-hand mitten. Gusta felt a flush of love for her always-thinking-ahead mother, because of course her first thought was that this must be the emergency quarter. It was important, her mother believed, for a child on her own to have an emergency quarter.

But this object, although round like a quarter, was bulkier than any quarter Gusta had ever met.

She began to figure it out, to tell the truth, even as she brought the thing close to her eyes to see. Her

fingers, cold as they were, recognized what it was— and then a second later, her brain finally caught up.

It was not any kind of money after all. No. It might look like an old-fashioned round pocket watch, but in fact what it was, as Gusta knew, was all that was left of a broken Wish.

The Wish from the Sea

Here's what you need to know about Gusta's mother, Gladys Hoopes Neubronner:

Gusta's mama was another one of those quiet people with contradictions rattling around inside.

She had grown up on her parents' farm in Maine. She could sew up a shirt, which is not the easiest kind of sewing, with blurry-fast hands. She could make a decent supper out of not much, and she knew all sorts of things about cows and pastures and planting and hay. She was the sort of person who liked to get things done without fussing.

She was also the fastest reader in Manhattan or maybe anywhere. She could read a whole book faster

than most people could light the lamp and pick out a story. It could be a really hard book, too: all economics, maybe. She could whip through it and then tell it all to you in her own way, which was clearer than most books.

Reading like that had gotten her all the way to college, the first of the Hoopes family to go. She had won herself a scholarship. And then at some point in the city where her college was, she had met a fiery young union organizer from Germany named after the equally fiery month of August. She typed up flyers and pamphlets for him on a typewriting machine, and he fell in love with her quick way with words.

What he didn't realize at first was that Gusta's mother liked all sorts of words, not just the kind that would eventually change the world (as Gusta's father saw things) by being so logical and true that the powers that be would hear them and tremble and fumble and eventually crumble.

Gusta's mother was omnivorous when it came to words.

She could write a pamphlet or a letter asking the Working Man to think about whether he was really being paid his due. But that was not all: Gusta's mother could tell a story—any story—like nobody's business.

According to Gusta's mother, she had learned about telling stories from her own grandfather, Captain William Griffiths, who had come far enough inland once to glimpse Gusta's great-grandmother Prudence, to fall in love quick as a shipwreck, and then settle down in the surprising place that shipwreck had left him: Springdale, Maine, so far from the sea that it would take a very good telescope and good weather up on the highest hill for a person to see even the largest sail out Portland way. It was a different Maine than the one he'd been used to.

"Our corner of Maine," said her mother. "A fine sort of place, but with cows instead of lobsters. Could be, he missed the salt in the air, but he loved my grandmother enough to keep coming back—and then, eventually, to stay. And he bounced us little ones on his knees and told us the adventures he'd had out on that ocean we mostly never saw but once a year, when we went all the way out to Old Orchard Beach."

Gusta learned about Captain Griffith's various shipwrecks from her mother, all the stories, true and more-than-true, that clung to a sea captain like barnacles to a boat, and that he could then pass down to his children and his children's children, far as they might live from salt water.

The stories came to Gusta like gleaming pieces of eight, and she stowed them safely and secretly away—because her papa didn't like them.

Some nights, Gusta's mother would sit on the edge of Gusta's cot and murmur the most incredible tales to her, fairy tales and adventures. Not just about ships and oceans, but about poor children who got lost in the woods and found gingerbread houses. Heroes hiding under the water in marshes and breathing through reeds. Kings who accidentally turned their own daughters into gold. Captain Griffiths sharing a tree with a real orangutan. Magic tablecloths that conjured up feasts for a poor man's table. She had to whisper, of course, so that Gusta's father wouldn't get mad.

He was firmly against the passing on of that nonsense. He said it was all designed to keep the people living in ignorance and the dark.

"A magic table that covers itself with food!" he said, when he caught Gusta's mother in the act of smuggling fairy tales. "You know why the rich people want you to tell that story? To keep the starving ones from asking for real wages so they can buy actual food, and not just dream food."

Gusta's contradictions inside pummeled each other when he said that, because some of her could

see how right he was (real food was unquestionably important to have, no?), and yet the wicked rest of her could not help wanting to feed itself on dream food, too.

Some stories are realer than others, though.

“Mama,” she whispered. “Tell me again about my great-grandpa, the sea captain. Was he really truly shipwrecked?”

Her mother nodded. “More than once,” she said. “But the most important wreck was the one off the coast of Madagascar. . . .”

Gusta sighed happily. *Madagascar!* There was magic in that word, but it was the name of a place that was so real you could find it on the globe on the teacher’s desk at school.

“My grandfather’s strangest story,” said her mother. “And it starts with him finding a little chest full of things he had thought at first were coins, in some harbor market, very far away—”

“Treasure!” said Gusta, imagining a pirate’s chest, the kind that hides under a nice dark X on old maps. If they had a chest filled with treasure, they could surely pay the landlord the rent they owed. (They were always having to move to new places, the Neubronners, when the rent came due.)

“So you’d think,” said her mother. “But listen: he bought them for the price of a parrot, twelve lemons, and a really good pipe from some trader on the other side of the world who claimed they weren’t actually coins, they were wishes.”

Wishes!

Gusta snuggled closer to her mother. She hadn’t known that wishes were actual things you could keep in a chest.

“Mama, were they? *Real wishes?*”

“Well, as you can imagine, I asked him that myself. And my grandfather laughed and said sure enough, he wasted a bunch of them the first day, just convincing himself of what they were. He wished for this and that—for sugar in his tea! For a really good sardine! All such foolish little cravings—and each time the wishes came true, one way or another: someone turned out to have some secret lump of sugar stashed away, and then felt moved to share it with my grandfather, for no particular reason. That sort of thing. He said that after a day or two, he suddenly realized the seriousness of the situation. These were *actual wishes*, and he was *wasting them*. He would pick up one of those odd little coin things and wish for his sardines (for example), and after that, he said, he could tell that

Wish was all used up. It didn't sparkle anymore, he said. It just looked empty."

"How can a coin be empty?"

"I don't know. That's how he described it. And of course that made him realize he couldn't keep wasting those Wishes; he needed to think it all through more carefully, make wishes that counted. And then—right that very day—something really terrible happened: the ship he was on hit a reef and sank."

"The shipwreck!"

"One of his several shipwrecks, yes. One of the worst. It sank, but my grandfather clung to a mast and lived. Only the chest with the Wishes in it was gone."

"Oh!" said Gusta. "But Mama, he should have wished for the boat to be unshipwreckable."

"Maybe he should have," said her mother. "But he didn't know ahead of time that he would be shipwrecked, did he? It's so hard to know ahead of time what danger you should be warding off. And then there was the problem of making the *right* sort of wish. In fairy tales, magic things are very clever. You have to be cleverer even than they are. Imagine: What if he had wished for his ship to be 'entirely safe from shipwrecks'? What if—oh, I don't know—what if *lightning* then struck it, and it burned to ashes right

there, bobbing on the sea. That might be worse than a shipwreck, mightn't it?"

"There might be no mast left to hang on to," said Gusta. She thought it over. "So you'd have to wish for no bad thing to happen to that boat—make the boat always absolutely safe and disaster-proof."

"And then the sailors might all get a case of fever and die, even if their boat's *absolutely safe*. That wish might not be the right one, either."

"So you have to wish for the boat to be safe and sound, *and* all the people in it to stay well, and—oh, but they could still break their legs, if they fell from up where the sails are. So no broken bones. No accidents. And then . . ."

Gusta started thinking of other things that could go wrong. Pirates, for instance. Sea monsters. And her words petered out after a moment.

"See?" said her mother. "It takes a great deal of care to make wishes properly. And anyway, it was too late for him. He washed up on a shore with his arms around that mast and only the clothes on his back. The little casket filled with Wishes? It must have sunk right to the bottom of the sea."

"Oh, no!" said Gusta. All that magic, drowned!

“Except!” said her mother. “When he reached into his trouser pocket, guess what he found?”

“A Wish?” breathed Gusta.

“A single Wish,” said her mother. “One last Wish left. He kept that Wish safe, and he brought it back home with him. And you know what? He never used it, his whole life long. That’s what he told me, anyway, and I knew him when he was very, very old.”

“So why *didn't* he use his Wish, Mama?”

It seemed to Gusta like a clear case of wasting. And usually her mama was firmly opposed to all wasting of things.

But now her mother made a funny sort of face— as if her inside contradictions were bumping against the edges so hard they were nearly beginning to show.

“Well, now, I don’t know,” she said. “Maybe making wishes gets harder the older you are. You know too much about how tangled up things are. You worry about what the right wish might be. And anyway, it’s just a story. He told such wild stories!”

“But what happened to the one last Wish in the end?” said Gusta. “What happened, what happened, what happened?”

“Settle down, Gusta. You don’t want to be

bothering your papa. Anyway, I remember my grandfather calling me over to where he was sitting in his big chair one day—oh, he was immensely old by then—and I could tell he was anxious about something. He had his old sailor’s pocket watch in his hands, the one that eventually he left to me. You know: this one.”

It was a funny old half-broken thing with two small dials that used to tell two kinds of time at once, captain’s time and “home time,” which was the time in his home port of Castine, on the rocky coast of Maine.

Gusta and her mother admired the captain’s watch for a moment together.

“He was so proud of this watch, even if half its little mechanisms no longer ticked along as they were supposed to. But that day he called me to him, he was looking at it and saying, ‘It’s gone, it’s gone, I put it away.’ I was confused, of course. The watch itself wasn’t gone; that’s why I didn’t understand at first. Then I saw he was showing me the *other* end of the watch chain, where a link was broken right off—see it here? It looks as if there used to be something there. So when he pointed that out to me, back then, of course I was trying to remember whether I’d seen something there in the past. I thought maybe there had been, sometime in the past, a medallion or something. In any

case, now he wanted it back, whatever it was. It was in a box, he said. He had put it away in a box. A box about so big.”

Gusta’s mother sketched out a little box in the air, as long ago her grandfather’s hands must have also done.

“A box on a shelf. ‘Go find it, Gladdy,’ he said. ‘Bring it here.’ So of course I looked and looked, in all possible boxes on all possible shelves. Oh, I brought him spoons and thimbles and nails and plenty of other roundish things, and every time he just shook his head and pushed it away and said, ‘No, Gladdy, in the *box*, on the *shelf*!’ But he couldn’t tell me what box on what shelf.”

“So you didn’t find it?” said Gusta.

“No,” said her mother.

“Oh!” said Gusta. “But you *think* it’s still there somewhere?”

She was sitting straight up in her cot now. The tips of her ears were tingling. The tips of her fingers were alert, too. New ideas were spilling through her blood vessels and changing her view of the world.

Her mother must have seen how trembly she had gotten, because she laughed.

“Oof. Now I’ve gone and riled you up, when what

I meant to do was settle you down. Lie back and shut your eyes now. It's time to sleep tight, Gusta."

But it gave Gusta the shivers, thinking about that unused Wish, still loose in the world somewhere. And then her thoughts turned a sharp corner, just as her mother was slipping out past the blanket wall that separated Gusta's cot from the rest of that room.

"Does Papa know? About the Wish hiding away in your family?"

Because she was thinking about all the things that were so important to her father—all the ways a Wish might come in handy. The times when workers went out on strike; the rent getting paid; the war that, like a storm, was *surely coming*. Couldn't a Wish fix all of that once and for all?

"Goodness, Gusta," said her mother, all the laughter in her vanishing at once. "You know your papa isn't the kind of foolish person who believes in wishes."

But maybe, thought Gusta secretly and guiltily and with the hint of a tingle in the tips of her ears, maybe my mother and I—or at least part of me and part of Mama—maybe we're secretly foolish in that wish-believing way. . . .

Gusta, in the Light of Trouble

A watch that was maybe all that was left of a broken Wish turned out to be no use at all to a girl trying to get herself more than a mile down Elm Street in chill weather.

Gusta had to walk with care—*gingerly* (which was a word her mother liked to use)—because her poor shins were already so bruised from the horn case. It turns out that when you're carrying a raggedy old suitcase in one hand, you can't do much to defend your legs from awkward horn case-shaped edges dangling from the other hand. Eventually her shins kind of gave up complaining, and then it was easier.

She crossed the bridge over a dark, cold smear that must have been the mill river. Vague buildings loomed along the road, holding secrets.

She counted her steps to jolly herself along: fifty more! Good! Fifty again!

And now and again, when she really couldn't stand it anymore, she put her suitcase down on one side and her horn on the other, to rest her arms, and pretended she needed to check the address on the letter her mother had sent along with her, the one she had shown to that woman in the blue coat. It still said exactly what it had said half an hour before: *Mrs. Clementine Hoopes, Elm Street, Springdale, Maine.*

Gusta rolled the envelope thoughtfully in her cold fingers a little.

It wasn't entirely Gusta's fault, what happened next. It was partly the fault of the weather: the glue had weakened, and the envelope was beginning to gape.

Her hands couldn't help themselves; they finished what the weather had begun. Gusta was staring at an open envelope, and inside, right there, was a letter.

Gusta had to hold it close to her eyes to see what that handwriting was saying.

Dear Mother, said the slightly frantic handwriting of Gusta's own mother. *We are all so grateful to you for taking in Augusta at this time. You will find her to be a faithful scholar, now in the fifth grade, and a good worker. My hours right now are long, to get us*

onto solid footing, but I have a promising job helping a professor with his books, and I have found a room in a good boardinghouse, very clean and economical, but alas they do not allow children. August will fill in the details, I am sure.

Well, now, no, he wouldn't.

Oh, where was her papa now? In a cell? On a different bus? Closing in on the Canadian border? Sitting behind bars with his head in his hands?

The world swam in Gusta's eyes for a moment. She stared at the letter blindly and only a minute later realized she was actually staring at her mother's note at the bottom of the letter: *P.S. If need arises, the horn can serve as her room and board. I guess you might find a good price for it.*

It was like the letter had turned out to be some kind of poisonous insect and had stung her.

And then she did not think. She did not plan. She simply tore off the line at the bottom of the page (surprised by her boldness even as she did it) and wadded it into a paper pill.

She stood there for a shocked moment, with that little pill's worth of paper rolling back and forth between her thumb and her fingers.

It was a wicked thing she had just done, tearing

off that tiny strip of paper, but here's the thing: Gusta loved that horn.

August, her father, had gotten that horn from his father, also named August, who had played it in an orchestra in Germany.

The August who was her father hadn't brought much with him across the wide ocean apart from that horn. But he was so busy with his work that Gusta played it more than he did these days. At first he had been amused she could get any sound out of it, despite being so young and scrawny, and then he started showing her some of the horn's secrets: how your left hand pressed the keys that remade the maze your breath ran through, and how the way you shaped your lips could change the note that came out of the bell.

Gusta loved the golden sound of the horn, the way the notes could make you ring like a bell, from your hair bow to your toes. Its music was so large and grand. Every scrap of teaching her father gave her she hoarded in her mind and her heart and her breath and her hands.

She had practiced and practiced. She was quiet by nature, but the horn was the bravest part of her—her sweet, large, secret, brassy voice.

And besides, her heart was sore: her father had

disappeared. She couldn't let the horn disappear, too, no matter what.

The air was colder now than it had been, the sky a much darker gray, especially over there, ahead. She had better move along fast if she wanted to get to where she was going before the weather got worse.

And then the sun did that thing the sun sometimes does, before the storm actually arrives. It peeked through a low gap in the clouds and made Gusta's hands and the rest of the near world glitter, a sudden and unexpected brilliance against the black backdrop of the rest of the sky.

Oh, Papa, thought Gusta. Her father had a phrase for the way the sun catches things out against the darkness of a coming storm: *the clear light of trouble*, he called it. He always smiled when he said that, too, as if it were a good thing.

"What do we do, little thingling, when the storm is coming?" he said once, when Gusta had been much younger than she was today.

"Borrow umbrellas! Button up our coats! Run inside and close the door!"

But it turned out he was being serious, despite that smile.

"Ah, yes, coats!" he said. "But that's not all. When

the storm is coming, we must quickly find out who we are: who we are *in the light of trouble.*”

“We already know who we are,” she said. “*You are Papa, and I am Gusta.*”

“Yes, certainly, true. But can you be sure you will stay *yourself*, Gusta, once the wind is howling?”

He liked to talk that way.

Even in very strong wind, I will try very hard to still be Gusta, thought Gusta, standing taller in that last burst of sunlight before the storm.

And she set off, up what she hoped must be the last piece of road, with her little suitcase in one hand and, in the other, the awkward big horn case, bumping against the bruises it had already sprinkled over her shin.