London, UK

October 3, 1945

Dearest Arabella,

I am writing in hopes that you will somehow get this letter. I do not know what became of you, but I pray you are still alive, as I am; that you somehow survived the horrible nightmare called the Holocaust. I think of you often and remember how we grew up in Hamburg next door to one another, the way we played street games and had tea parties with our dolls as our mothers visited over a cup of coffee. It was such a happy time, until my tenth birthday, Jan. 30th 1933. You’ll remember that was the day Hitler rose to power in our beloved country and our childhood joy turned instantly into misery and finally into despair. We enjoyed school so much before that day but soon, many of the interesting subjects we were learning were suddenly replaced by teachings about how we should love Hitler. How could we love a man that wanted only to see us dead? I cried every day before going to school, but for a while Momma did not know how awful it really was, so she told me to be strong and to never forget that I was a good person no matter what my teacher was saying about me, and you, and all of the other Jewish children. It broke my heart when you moved away the next year. I know your family was trying to get papers to leave Germany, but I never heard what became of you. Did you make it to America safely?

We were as fine as we could be for a few years after you left. My family had to be careful about what we said in public, but Papa still had his clothing store and life was somewhat normal until 1938 and the horror of Kristallnacht. When we woke up that dreadful morning I did not know that it was the last time I would ever see my poor Papa. His business was burned to the ground in the violent uprising and when he tried to complain, the Nazi soldiers arrested him right on the spot. They took him to the Buchenwald camp. We prayed for many months for his release, but finally heard that he had been killed. Momma and I nearly fell to pieces. We lost everything in the fire and had only a small amount of money in savings. Momma said she loved me too much to allow me to stay in Hamburg, as she was worried sick that we would not have enough money for both of us, or worse yet that the Nazis would come for us. I begged her not to send me away but she wouldn’t listen to me. She heard about a secret organization called Kindertransport that was sneaking children out of Germany to safety in other countries, so late in the fall of 1938 I left Germany and went to the UK where I lived in a boarding house with many other Jewish children. I was old enough to work so I helped farm some land and learned how to grow food for the war effort. But oh how I missed Momma. Not a day went by that I did not cry from loneliness. The people who looked after all of us were so kind and I had what I needed to get by, but my heart ached so much to see Momma again.

Now, the war has ended, and I am twenty-two already. Much of Europe has been destroyed and it will take a long time for things to return to normal, whatever that might be. The good news is that although Momma was sent to Auschwitz, she was still alive when the allied soldiers liberated the camp. I received word that she is very sick in a hospital in Poland, and I am leaving in a few days to go there. I am hoping that I have suffered enough in my young life and that when I finally get to see Momma she will be gaining her strength back and that in a short time we can put this tragic part of our lives behind us and live the rest of our days together in peace. If this letter finds its way into your hands, please know I would be so happy if we could find a way to meet again. I think Mama and I will make our way back to Hamburg, as it is the only home we know. Please look for me there. I will be watching for you, my dearest cherished friend.

Love to you and your family,

Ava