

Back to Joy

(Victoria's background in 1953)

It was the best day of my life, my father finally let me marry the love of my life, Luka. I have dreamt of that day ever since I was young. You could've heard the church bells a mile away. It was absolutely perfect even my grandmother, Josephine, enjoyed it and she never likes anything. I have never thought that my marriage would end this way but it did. We were on our way to Hamburg, Germany to visit Luka's parents.

They had a mix up on our boat we were supposed to be on first class but instead we had to go on economy. My husband quickly got sick due to the horrid conditions. He got the *typhus fever*, after one day he died. I got these strange visions which the doctors called *Delusional Disorder*, which lasted quite some time. I believe that it lasted a day before we got to shore. I was absolutely angered with the doctors for not telling me sooner, but I was so delusional to even say my name I kept calling myself "Princess Cordelia". The doctors told me I was very lucky to have survived. I got completely enraged when they said that luckily for "them" I was taught better than to say it out loud. I will never and shall never fall in love or get married to another man.

(One Month Later)

So now I live in a small apartment in the outskirts of Hamburg. I was looking around for the first time to see every single place Luka described as heaven on Earth. I couldn't stand it I broke out crying and collapsed on the floor. A woman gasped, another stared but I didn't care I'd lost the love of my life and didn't know 'till a week later. I couldn't stop all my memories came flooding both my mind and my eyes. I didn't stop crying until a little girl around the age of 6 asked me "Ma'am why are you crying in the middle of the street?" I looked up I saw her concerned and questioning face. "What's your name?" I asked her between sobs. She said quietly in a wispy voice as if she was embarrassed "Elise" "Well Elise I...I lost someone I cared very deeply about.", but

now she was crying I didn't know what to do I was so shocked from her sudden outburst. Once again people stared while others just walked by I put my arms around her. Her crying came to a stop. "My mother and father died during the war ". I asked in a calm voice trying not to sound surprised "Who's taking care of you now?" "I live in a foster home." Elise said in a soft voice. "Would you like me to take you home with me for a week"? I asked with a pitiful voice. As soon as I finished her face lit up brighter than the sun during summer. "Umm. . . .can you guide me to the foster home?" I said with a smile on my face that had been the first time I had smiled for some time.

As I signed the papers she was packing her things with one of the older girls. She practically ran out of there holding my hand. We walked to my apartment which was not too far away about 15-20 minutes. As we entered she spun in a circle as if my small apartment were a castle. For her it was she was homeless for more than half her life. I showed Elise her room I could tell she wanted to cry but was trying to stay strong. Through-out her life she has stayed strong "You could go ahead and get dressed for supper." "I don't have anything to get dressed into." My face turned blank thinking about what the front desk lady had said "We give them all they could wish for and more." Well that was obviously not true. "We'll go to the *geschäft* (German for shop) and get you some basic necessity's tomorrow." "You can go wash your hands in the washroom."

(A couple days later)

"Ring... Ring" "Hallo_(German for Hello) this is Sherole from the foster home we are calling to inform you that Elise needs to come back tomorrow" "I need to think whether or not to keep her I'll call you back later" I heard the door slowly creek as I turned I heard Elise cry "Are you going to keep me?" "Oh, sweetie of course I am." I turned to reach for her but she already sank to the floor. "You're the closest thing I have to a family" she pleaded to me. "You're the closest thing I will ever have as a daughter and I love you for that. " "So you're going to keep me?" "

I was never thinking of getting rid of you." I laughed as I wiped the tears off her cheek. "I love you so much don't you ever forget that!" And that's how we BOTH came back to joy.