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December 1938

Adam Brown

They had been married for 40 years. The man followed his wife out the door and shut it tight behind him, even though the frame itself was so loose it would likely cave in under one kick. The couple slowly walked with arms linked from the steps of their home out onto the street. They walked east along *Kaltstraße*, past the restaurant where they had eaten so many times amidst its welcoming warmth and delicate chandeliers. The husband and wife did not bother to check whether there were any free tables inside. They would not find one even if the building was empty of customers. The sign plastered on the door guaranteed that. It was the same sign that could be found outside the library, the public swimming pool, the cinema, and on some park benches. *Juden verboten!*

Their motherland had turned Fatherland, and now it had disowned its children.

The couple continued walking up and down bitter city streets, wondering if the flakes of snow would settle like the ash that once settled around their fireplace, back when they could afford the wood. They passed several more restaurants as they hobbled along the stone path. Their frost-bitten faces were momentarily illuminated by the bright lights within before hastily returning to darkness. Beginning to lean on each other with greater weight, the couple finally came to the diner at the railway station, the only restaurant left. For twenty minutes they stood waiting to be served, watching others who had arrived after them gnaw at their food. The woman saw the annoyed glances directed towards them, and hoped her husband didn't notice. When they eventually ordered, they huddled in two chairs in the station's waiting room.

The food was not great, it was not good. They both thought they should talk about the old days. They dredged up memories from the past but let them slip away unspoken, eating their meal in silence. The man placed the last few morsels in his pocket as they rose. Both knew they needed to get home soon in time for curfew. They fixed their scarves and wandered out into the cold, the sun having disappeared even though it was barely five in the afternoon. The woman commented that she would like to see the countryside again, that they should take a train the following Wednesday. But both knew it would not happen. They would have to save the train trip for later. At least they had gotten dinner.

The woman slid her arm inside her husband's as they began the long walk home. He turned to her and spoke his first words of the evening:

'Happy Anniversary, dear.'