

**THE
WIND
KNOWS
MY
NAME**

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ALLENDE

TRANSLATED FROM
THE SPANISH BY
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B L O O M S B U R Y P U B L I S H I N G
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*To Lori Barra, Sarah Hillesheim,
and so many others working for a
more compassionate world*

Here is my secret. It's quite simple: One sees clearly only with the heart. Anything essential is invisible to the eyes.

— *The Little Prince*, ANTOINE DE SAINT-EXUPÉRY

There's a star where the people and the animals all live happily, and it's even better than heaven, because you don't have to die to go there.

— ANITA DÍAZ

THE ADLERS

VIENNA, NOVEMBER 1938

A sense of misfortune hung in the air. From the early morning hours, a menacing breeze had swept through the streets, whistling between the buildings, forcing its way in through the cracks under doors and windows.

“Just winter settling in,” Rudolph Adler murmured to himself in an attempt to lighten his mood. But he couldn’t blame the weather for the tightness in his chest, which he’d felt for several months now.

The stench of fear, like rust and rotting garbage, clung to his nostrils; neither his pipe tobacco nor his citrus-scented aftershave lotion could mask it. That afternoon, the stink of dread stirred up by the wind was suffocating, making him feel dizzy and nauseous. He decided to turn away the patients left in his waiting room and close up early. Surprised, his assistant asked if he was ill. She’d worked with the doctor for eleven years and had never known him to shirk his duties; he was a punctual, methodical man.

“Nothing serious, only a cold, Frau Goldberg. I’ll go home and rest,” he answered.

They tidied the office and disinfected the instruments, then said goodbye at the door as they did every evening, neither suspecting that they’d never see each other again. Frau Goldberg headed to the streetcar stop and Rudolph Adler walked the few blocks to the pharmacy at his usual brisk pace, hat in one hand and doctor’s bag in the other, his shoulders hunched. The sidewalk was damp and the sky cloudy; it had been drizzly and he predicted they’d soon see one of those autumn rainstorms that always caught him unawares, without an umbrella. He’d walked those streets a thousand times and knew them by memory, but he never stopped admiring his city, one of the prettiest places in the world with its Baroque and Art Nouveau buildings coexisting harmoniously, the majestic trees that had begun dropping their leaves, the equestrian statue in the neighborhood square, the bakery’s window display with its spread of delicate pastries, and the antiques shop crammed with curiosities. But that afternoon he barely raised his eyes from the pavement. He had the weight of the world on his shoulders.

THE TROUBLING RUMORS HAD begun that morning with news of an assault in Paris: a German diplomat shot five times and killed by a young man, a Polish Jew. Spokespersons for the Third Reich called for revenge.

Since that March, when Germany had annexed Austria and the Nazi Wehrmacht paraded its military pomp and circumstance through the heart of Vienna to a cheering, jubilant crowd, Rudolph Adler had been plagued with fear. His worries had begun a few years prior and only worsened as Nazi power was consolidated through increased financing and a growing stockpile of weapons. Hitler used terror as a political tactic, taking advantage of discontent over economic woes

after the humiliating defeat in the Great War and the Great Depression in 1929. In 1934, Austrian chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss was assassinated in a failed government coup, and since then eight hundred others had been killed in various attacks. The Nazis intimidated their detractors, provoked disturbance, and pushed Austria to the brink of civil war. At the start of 1938, internal violence was so untenable that Germany, from the other side of the border, exerted pressure to annex the troubled country as one of its provinces. Despite the concessions that the Austrian government had made to German demands, Hitler ordered an invasion. The Nazi party had laid the groundwork for the invading force to be met with open arms by the majority of the population. The Austrian government surrendered and two days later Hitler himself entered Vienna, triumphant. The Nazis quickly seized total control. Opposition was declared illegal. German laws and SS and Gestapo oppression, as well as antisemitic policies, went into immediate effect.

Rudolph's wife, Rachel, who had always been rational and practical, without the slightest tendency toward catastrophic thinking, was now almost paralyzed with anxiety and only functioned with the help of medication. They both tried to keep their son, Samuel, in the dark about what was happening, to protect his innocence, but the boy, who was about to turn six, had the maturity of an adult; he observed, listened, and understood without asking questions. Rudolph had initially prescribed his wife the tranquilizers he used to treat anxious patients, but when they seemed to have no effect, he turned to other, more powerful drops, which he obtained in opaque unmarked bottles. He could've used the sedatives as much as his wife, but he would not risk jeopardizing his professional acumen.