
One Family in Berlin



The Katz Family*

Isaac Katz and his wife Rachel live a comfortable life in the heart of Berlin. Isaac is a doctor who combines state service and a side private practice while Rachel is a school teacher at a nearby state-run preparatory academy. Though the couple's own child—Paul, age twenty—is away attending Friedrich-Wilhelm University, they live happily as an extended family with Rachel's widowed sister Itta and her two children, Klaus, seven, and Rebekah, eleven. Itta takes care of her children and writes short fiction and a regular column for a local paper. Before the death of her husband, she was a well-known journalist with a major Berlin daily paper.

Isaac and Rachel are a socially active couple. In their mid-forties and without children at home to care for daily, they've built up a lively circle and joined many clubs. While not active at temple, they regularly go to the theater, auto club meets because of Isaac's passion for cars, especially his Alfa Romeo coupe, and they enjoy going to the beach and pools to satisfy Rachel's love of being near the water.

All five live in a decent-sized, extended-lease apartment with Itta's children now in what was once Paul's room. Their home is decorated and maintained—including maid service—in a way that fits their social and financial standing. Isaac wears only tailored suits and Rachel and



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Itta are seldom seen without a fashionable fur in the colder months of the year or jewelry at any season. They have long collected art and the addition of Itta's and her late husband's collection to the walls has only made the family home look even more grand.

In the evenings, sometimes before a movie or play for Isaac and Rachel, the family, often including Paul when he has the time to take public transit home from the university, enjoys taking walks in the park and lounging at the benches as the children play with their many local friends. Later on, all three adults are known to while away the night listening to radio plays in their drawing room while Isaac smokes his pipe. Paul occasionally spends these evenings with Itta and his parents along with his long-time girlfriend, Magda.



Klaus and Rebekah are bright students who have adjusted well since the tragic loss of their father to a heart attack some years ago. They enjoy school and outings with their youth and synagogue groups—Itta, Klaus, and Rebekah are more observant than Isaac, Rachel, and Paul who is dating a non-Jewish woman he met at college. Itta's children also have a pet cat named Socks and a loving, playful German Shepard named Brutus.



Everyone in the family has a passport, though they lack strong connections outside Germany and they have never considered emigration. Though their incomes are considerable, like many people they haven't saved a great deal of money. Their thoughts for the future have always relied on the security that comes with their talents and degrees. A life insurance policy payout to Itta constitutes the largest amount of available cash in the bank for by any member of the family. She's always viewed this as the education fund for her young children.



* The Katz family did not actually exist. This story is a composite of average middle-class German-Jewish lives and experiences in the years just before the Second World War and the Holocaust.