

Brandeis Madeline

Mitz and Fritz of Germany



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CHAPTER I "FOOLISH FRITZ"

Toys! Toys! Toys! All over the room – toys!

It was a big, comfortable room with a work bench in it, and shelves and a table full of paints and pots of glue.

On the window seat in a corner sat a girl, a boy, and a dog.

The girl wore a stiff white apron. Her cheeks were rosy and plump. She had a saucy look. Her big blue eyes were fixed upon the pages of a book. She was reading to the boy. The boy wore a green blouse smeared with paint. He was busily carving a wooden elephant. The dog was brown and very long. He lay asleep beside the children with his nose on the girl's lap.

These are Mitz, Fritz, and Frank. Now you have met them. And this is their father's workshop – the workshop of a German toy maker in Nuremberg (Nūřēm-bûrg), city of toys.

Mitz was really Mitzi. Fritz was really Frederic. Frank, the dog, was really Frankfurter. But the former names were their nicknames.

"So! It is finished at last," said the boy who was Fritz.

He put the wooden elephant on the window sill. He stretched his arms. He was younger than his sister, and his cheeks were not so red nor was his face so saucy. He had the look of one who dreams – a happy look.

Mitzi cocked her head on one side and examined the elephant.

"It is not so bad," she said. Then she added, "For you!"

Fritz smiled. His face seemed made for smiling.

"Now, please," he said, "read some more, Mitz."

"Good. I will," answered Mitzi. "But you must carve while I read. Father will scold if he comes home and finds you idle."

Fritz began to carve a doll and Mitzi began to read. She read about Richard Wagner (Văg'něr), who was one of the greatest musicians that ever lived.

But suddenly she stopped reading and screamed, "Fritz! Fritz! What are you doing?"

Fritz looked down at his work and, behold, he had almost cut off the head of a doll he was carving! The poor head was hanging by a splinter.

"Shame, shame! I cannot read to you if you do such things," said Mitzi. She started to close the book.

"No, please!" begged Fritz. "I promise I will not do it again. I was thinking only of Richard Wagner. I was not looking at the doll."

"Good, then," said Mitzi, "I shall read more if you will not dream again."

But before she began to read, she got up and went to a big cupboard. From the big cupboard she helped herself to a lovely, thick slice of German brown bread. Then she took out a long knife and a long sausage, which looked very much like the long dog, Frank. She cut the sausage and put pieces of it on the bread and ate it.

"Will you have some?" she asked Fritz.

But her mouth was so full of bread and sausage that her words sounded like "Will-awamwam?"

Fritz shook his head. He was trying hard to stick the doll's head back into place. Mitzi seated herself on the window sill. She gave a piece of meat to Frank, who gobbled it up and promptly fell asleep again. Then she began to read.

"One day," she read, "when Richard Wagner was a little boy, he was watching some acrobats in the market square. A band was playing and Richard listened joyfully. They were playing a selection which he liked. It was 'The Huntsman's Chorus.' Little Richard – 'Fritz!'"

Again Mitzi screamed and put down the book in horror. The poor wooden doll had fallen to the floor. The head had rolled off. But Fritz had not noticed it at all. Fritz was reaching for a violin, which lay on a chair beside him. He was beginning to play the violin.

"This," he said, "is 'The Huntsman's Chorus.' It is what Richard Wagner heard that day and loved."

Mitzi listened. She smiled at the pretty music that Fritz made. She could not help smiling.

Often Fritz was very stupid. Often he made her very angry with his clumsy, dreamy ways and the mistakes he made. His playmates called him "Foolish Fritz." He was forever losing things and forgetting things and dropping things, making Mother sigh and Father storm.

But his music! A different thing! Mitzi thought it was the sweetest music in all the world. Even Mother, who had taught him all she knew, thought it beautiful. But Father? Ah, Father hated it. Fritz must never play when Father was around. Father was very severe, and he did not love music.

To the strains of "The Huntsman's Chorus" Mitzi nodded her head in time as she chewed on her bread and sausage. Frank awoke and gazed wonderingly at the boy with the violin. Frank was a dachshund (däks'hōont) – a "badger dog," in English. At one time, Frank's kind of dog was used to hunt badgers. Maybe that is why Frank seemed interested in "The Huntsman's Chorus."

Dachshunds are close to the ground, with tiny, crooked legs, and bodies that look like frankfurter sausages. Indeed, that is why Frank's real name was Frankfurter. All at once, the little dog's body bristled. He pricked up his long ears and let out a terrific bark.

Fritz stopped playing. Mitzi stopped eating. They looked up and saw what Frank had seen. The wooden elephant had disappeared from the window sill. Outside they heard a child crying.

"Give me my toy! I want my toy!" cried the child outside.

Fritz climbed upon his knees and looked out. He saw a large boy trying to take the wooden elephant away from a small boy. The younger child was crying and pulling at the toy.

"I want it! It's mine! I took it off the window!" he screamed.

But the big boy pushed so hard that the little one fell down on the sidewalk.

"It's mine," said the bully. "And don't you try to get it away again or I'll push you harder!"

Before Mitzi knew what had happened her brother had darted out of the house. Now he was standing before the big boy.

"Give that elephant to me," said Fritz. "It is mine, and you stole it."

"It's mine now," said the boy.

He smiled at Fritz's angry face and soiled workman's blouse. He stood a head taller than Fritz.

"If you want it you'll have to take it away from me," he added. He started to turn away.

Fritz jumped upon him and with both fists beat him. Fritz pounded and hit. The big boy tried to strike back, but Fritz's arms were moving like a windmill.

Mitzi stared out of the window. On her open mouth hung neglected crumbs of bread. Her eyes popped. Never had she seen her "Foolish Fritz" act like this before. He had always been so very gentle and smiling.

Frank barked. The child who had been knocked down howled. It was quite a scene. But finally Fritz ended it all by giving the big boy one mighty push. The bully fell down with a heavy thud upon the sidewalk.

Fritz snatched the wooden elephant out of the older boy's hand. He was about to go into his house when there came a terrible scream from the little boy.

"Mine! My toy! Ow!" he screamed.

Fritz stopped. He looked at the child, who was very ragged and dirty and poor. The youngster's little shoes were torn.

"Here. Take it," said Fritz, handing the elephant to the youngster. "Go home, now," he added, "before that great clumsy one snatches it away from you again."

The delighted tot ran home. The bully limped away in the opposite direction. Fritz rubbed his cheek where the fellow had struck him. Then he started to go into the house.

But as he turned, he almost ran into a great burly figure, which had planted itself in his way. It was his father!

CHAPTER II

THE TOYMAKERS

Mitzi sat upon a high stool in the kitchen, nibbling a radish. Her mother was cooking. In the workshop was Fritz being scolded by his father.

Mitzi could hear the rumbling voice of the toy maker saying, "How often must I tell you to keep your hands off that violin in working hours? If you had not been fiddling today, this never would have happened!"

There was a moment's silence, and then Mitzi again heard the angry voice: "See! I take the violin away and I hide it! Now you cannot play it ever again!"

Mitzi jumped down from her stool. She nearly stepped upon Frank, who leaped into the air with his ears waving. She burst into the workshop.

"Father!" she cried. "Wait, please!"

The toy maker was holding the violin in his hands, and there were tears in Fritz's eyes.

"I asked you to stay out of here, Mitzi," said the toy maker.

"Oh, but, Father," said the little girl, "do not take the violin away. Let me have it. I'll keep it. I'll never again allow him to play it while he is working."

But still the toy maker held the violin.

Now he turned once more to Fritz and boomed, "Do you think one makes toys to be given away to every beggar on the streets? Each time I go out, something happens. Toys are ruined or given away or stolen! And all the time you must fiddle, fiddle, fiddle!"

"Yes, yes, Father, you are right," agreed clever Mitzi. "Fritz is a stupid little donkey! But now it is Mitz who will keep the violin. You can trust me, Father. Come! Let me have the violin."

She reached up her chubby hands, and slowly a smile spread over the toy maker's red face. The toy maker had a bristly mustache that made him look like a fierce walrus. But under all his fierceness he loved his children.

"Very well," he said. "Mitzi shall keep the violin. But," he shook his finger at Fritz, "if ever I find you playing upon it again when you should be working, I shall sell it!"

At these words, Fritz looked as if the toy maker had struck him. The violin had been sent to Fritz by his mother's brother in Mittenwald, a town of violin makers. It was the little boy's dearest possession.

When their father had left the room, Fritz said, "Oh, Mitz, you are so good!"

Mitzi decided that she was hungry again, so she began digging about in the cupboard.

She said, "You are a stupid little donkey! And I am not good to you. I am not!"

"Oh, Mitz!" said her brother.

"No, I am never good to you," said Mitzi. She had found a big pickle and was beginning to gnaw at it. "And never, never will I give you the violin. Never!"

"Oh, Mitz!" said Fritz again.

"Never!" repeated Mitzi. Then she added with a smile, "Unless there is no work to be done!" Fritz laughed.

"Come! Eat a pickle," said Mitzi.

They sat together, very happy, eating pickles. Ever since Mitzi had been a small child, she had been up to tricks and full of fun. And always, always had she been hungry!

That night when the children were in bed the toy maker and his wife talked late into the night. The toy maker was worried. He was not selling his toys. Soon there would not be money enough in the house with which to buy food. He was telling his wife that they were very poor.

"I am tired of this life, anyway," said the toy maker. "I want to go away from Nuremberg. Here people buy only modern toys that are made by machines. In big towns people do not like the old-fashioned handmade toys."

"Where would we go?" asked his wife.

The toy maker replied, "We can wander from place to place. When towns are having fairs, all the country people come to buy. We can go from one fair to the other, selling our toys in the market squares."

"But how would we travel?" asked Mrs. Toymaker.

"Ah!" Her husband raised his finger mysteriously. "I have a secret."

Now, for a long time Mr. Toymaker had been thinking of a wandering life. He was clever with his hands and had been making a wagon, which he planned to use as a home for his family and himself on their wanderings. He told his wife about it now.

"We shall travel through Germany like gypsies," he said. "There is a saying that if you cut a gypsy in ten pieces you have not killed him. You have only made ten gypsies. Theirs is a healthful life."

Mrs. Toymaker thought the plan a good one. She usually agreed with her husband. In fact, there was only one question over which the toy maker and his wife really disagreed. That was the question of Fritz and his violin. Mrs. Toymaker thought it beautiful for people to make music. Mr. Toymaker did not. He thought it a waste of time.

He said, "One cannot touch tunes nor eat them nor play with them as one can with toys. No, Fritz shall make good, solid toys as I do, not silly, flimsy tunes, which nobody will pay to hear."

But still Mrs. Toymaker did not agree. She believed that sometimes people will pay for things, even if they cannot touch them. It was Mrs. Toymaker who had given Mitz and Fritz their books about German musicians.

It was Mrs. Toymaker who had said, "In our Germany some of the world's greatest composers of music were born. Many of them played cleverly when they were little boys. Perhaps – who knows? – my Fritz may grow to be a great musician."

But she did not say this to the stubborn toy maker.

CHAPTER III

GOODBYE TO NUREMBERG

The day before the toy maker and his family were to start on their journey, Mitz and Fritz went to the market place. They walked through the quaint old streets of Nuremberg where they had lived all their lives. Frank, the dog, followed at their heels.

They stood looking up at an ancient clock on an ancient church. Under the face of the clock sat the figure of Emperor Charles the Fifth.

When the clock struck twelve, a little door at the side opened. A row of toy knights came marching out, followed by seven electors. Each figure bowed stiffly to the Emperor as it sailed past. Then it disappeared into a door at the opposite side of the clock.

Every day this performance took place. Every day Nuremberg children gathered below to watch it. Fritz sighed when it was over.

"That is the last time we shall see it," he said.

"We shall see other things," said Mitzi. "We are going to – to – oh, to every place that we have read about!"

"We shall see the homes of great musicians," said Fritz, whose face was now beaming.

The Germans like to remember their great men. Even the school children are often taken by their teachers on trips to the towns where poets and painters and musicians lived. It is no wonder, then, that Mitz and Fritz were happy and excited about what the next day was to bring.

As they turned to leave the market place, Mitzi suddenly caught sight of some people across the street. They were walking very slowly and gazing about with the air of seeing things for the first time.

"Stay here and hold Frank," said Mitzi to her brother. "I am going over to see those strangers. I am going to ask to guide them through the church."

She crossed the street and approached the people. She felt certain that they must be Americans or English, for she had watched many like them. She decided to show how well she could speak English.

"Gute day," said Mitzi.

"Why, hello, little Gretchen!" said a jolly-looking man.

"I be Mitzi," said the little girl, with a short bow. "I will show you to the church."

The people laughed.

The jolly man said, "You wish to show us to the church? Very well. I think the church will be pleased to see us."

Mitzi took the travelers through the church. She talked a great deal, and sometimes they could not understand what she said. Nevertheless when they came out they gave her some coins. Mitzi put the coins in her pocket and bowed again.

"Danke (dän'kē). Danke," she said; which means "Thanks. Thanks."

The man said, "You are a good guide, and the church seemed very glad to meet us."

"Yes, ma'am," said Mitzi.

She was trying to use all the English words she knew. Then she remembered a sentence which an English boy had once taught her. He had been a very naughty boy. He had told her that it was a most polite and respectful thing to say.

So the little German girl lifted her round face to the stranger, smiled sweetly, and said, "You – are – a – silly – goose!"

Mitzi could not understand why there was a roar of laughter from her new friends. She turned and ran across the street to where Fritz and Frank were awaiting her.

"Come. We are going home to lunch now," she said to her brother.

She pulled the coins out of her pocket and showed them to Fritz. Then she pulled something else out of her pocket and began to eat. It was a bit of sausage.

They passed funny houses with pictures painted on them, and old shops full of wonderful toys and ornaments and gingerbread. They passed toy shops and sausage stands. There are a thousand different kinds of sausages in Germany.

Germany is the children's gingerbread country. Think of all the childish delights that have come out of Germany: Christmas trees, cuckoo clocks, Hansel and Gretel, Grimms' Fairy Tales, and the Pied Piper!

And toys! When a toy is marked "made in Germany," we know that it is very fine, because Germany is the toy center of the world.

In Switzerland you would climb the Alps and eat cheese. In Ireland you would kiss the Blarney Stone and eat stew. In Italy you would see the art galleries and eat spaghetti. In China you would visit the Great Wall and eat rice. But in Germany, especially if you are a child, you would go to the toy shops and eat gingerbread.

CHAPTER IV

BAYREUTH AND A PLAN

Did you ever dream of becoming so great that a whole town would exist in your memory? That is what happened in the case of Richard Wagner, the little boy who stood in a market square and listened to "The Huntsman's Chorus."

Mitz and Fritz and their parents arrived in Bayreuth (Bīroitʹ) in time for the Wagner festival. People had come from all over the world to hear the great Wagner operas. They are performed in a beautiful theater built especially for that purpose.

During the festival, the whole town talks and thinks and remembers Richard Wagner. In every shop window are pictures of the composer. Even a newspaper is published which prints only matters concerning Richard Wagner.

Mitz and Fritz left their wagon home and began to wander through the woodland town. Fritz was so happy and excited that one would have thought it his own festival. He had read and heard much about Bayreuth.

Mitzi, too, was impressed. But this did not stop her from nibbling at a bar of chocolate and smearing her round face.

"What do all the blue and white banners mean?" asked Fritz.

"They are the colors of Bavaria," said Mitzi.

Just as we have our states, so has Germany hers. In each part of the country the people are different from those of other parts.

In the United States the southern people are different from the western cowboy. In Great Britain the Scotch are different from the Welsh. In Switzerland the Italian-Swiss are different from the French-Swiss.

In Germany the Bavarian is a jolly farmer. The German who lives by the Rhine is fun-loving and cheerful. But the Prussian is strict and very serious.

Mr. Toymaker was a Prussian. So is the former Kaiser, who ruled Germany before the World War. Now the ex-Kaiser is living quietly in Holland, and Germany is a republic like our country.

But let us go back to Mitz and Fritz. It seems that I cannot resist telling you a few things about their country as we go along. However, I am sure Mitz and Fritz would not object to that. For all Germans want to learn, even while they play.

Mr. Toymaker tried to sell his toys in the crowded market place of Bayreuth. But he was not very successful. People were thinking only of the glorious music they had come to hear.

Visitors wandered about the town. They stood beside the grave of Wagner in the garden of his home. In this grave the musician is buried with his faithful dog.

It is here that we find Mitz and Fritz and Mrs. Toymaker. Frank lay at their feet.

"Father is so disappointed," said Mrs. Toymaker. "He has sold so few toys."

"Perhaps in the next town he will sell more," said Fritz. Then he took his mother's hand. "Please," he added wistfully, "tell us something about Richard Wagner."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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