

The rest of Min's story

AS TOLD BY

Aorrie Steinbacher

PROLOGUE

Prologue. Now isn't that a fancy word? My author—the person called Ruth Tenzer Feldman—would use the word "prologue" to set up the narrative arc in one of her books. I prefer cutting to the chase. Still, I suppose you need context, so here's my introduction to all this.

Characters thrive on settings. That's true for me, and for my best friend, Miriam Josefsohn. Our main setting—our home, really—is Ruth's brain, which is a delightful and sometimes frightening contraption in a Frankenstein sort of way. I watched as Ruth stuffed my best friend's life into *Blue Thread*. She hardly had space to explain the first sixteen years of her life, and then...end of story. Then Ruth had the audacity to start her next book with my best friend dead and buried. Intolerable.

A character like me is used to getting things her way, and when Ruth was in Istanbul a while back, I saw my chance. Istanbul can be very distracting. While Ruth's mind was elsewhere, I highjacked her blog. This e-book is the result. I've cleaned up a few typos and cut down on the number of illustrations—you can see all the images in the original blog posts—but essentially that's it. If Ruth had written this e-book, you would get a better story, because she'd take eons revising it. From me you get more of a ramble. Which starts now.

Florrie Steinbacher

1. I DID IT! I DID IT! I DID IT!

Praised be and halleluyah! It's amazing what a character can do when she sets her mind to it. I have totally locked Ruth out—at least for now. I get to have my say, and today is a perfect day to start. July 11th. Mim's birthday.

What year is it now? 2013? That would make Mim 117 years old today. Of course, she died long ago. I'll get to that sad part later because I outlived her, although not by much.

Foolish me, I don't mean to be starting at the end. Let me try this again.

I am here to tell you everything about Mim from 1912 through the rest of her life. Well, almost everything. There are some things I still don't know about my dear friend and never will, and other things I refuse to reveal. A lady has her principles. I am that lady. Florence Steinbacher. Call me Florrie. I'm 54 years old (Ruth never let me get any older), but I can remember Mim at 16 as if it were yesterday. You remember being 16, don't you?

Hmmm... Maybe you're not even 16 yet. My, I'll have to watch my manners. Pull up a chair. I've ordered a dry sherry; you might want a lemonade. Delighted to meet you. We'll have a divine time together. This is my favorite picture of myself. Paris 1934. Mim was with me then, when we had that unfortunate incident with her mother.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. I have so much to tell you. And I've brought along postcards and photographs and all sorts of memorabilia to show you. Have you read the part about Mim in Ruth's book, *Blue Thread*? Truth to tell, I have not.

I wouldn't dream of sneaking behind Mim's back and learning things she hadn't the inclination to tell me herself. True friends don't do that. And Miriam Josefsohn was the truest friend I ever had.

Please do come back tomorrow. (I'll blog Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. Wednesdays I take off, and during the weekends I play.) I'll tell you about those first moments when we met again at the train depot in Oakland. November 7, 1912, two days after women got the right to vote in Oregon. Mim was running away from home, poor dear. The votes for women card





Right then and there, she fished this card out of her hatbox. Yes, the card is rather plain, I know, and the one I have is faded. Mim told me that under the circumstances she could only print something on one side and with one ink. But then she always was a no-frills gal. Kind and generous. And stubborn, too. I hadn't realized how much I missed her, until I saw her on the platform.

"Come, let's grab a porter and get your trunk from the baggage room," I told her. "They must have unloaded it by now. Alexei drove me over in his EMF Roadster. Darling man. Darling car, too, but we'll need to have your trunk delivered to the house."

Mim touched my sleeve and shook her head. "I'm not planning to stay long, Florrie. There's only this valise. My parents expect me back in Portland for Thanksgiving."

"They shall have to be disappointed," I told her, and I tried to sound more certain than I was. I so desperately wanted her to stay. "I've already spoken with the director at Anna Head, and she's agreed to enroll you next week. Don't worry about the money. Aunt Helen and Uncle Edward have a mint, and they will adore you."

I grabbed her hands. "Mim, you'll have the time of your life here. Who needs stodgy old Portland? We can study together. And travel. Alexei has the most fascinating circle of friends. He's a Russian count, did I tell you? A member of the Romanov family. He fled to America after the peasant uprisings. Charming, charming, charming. You'll adore him."