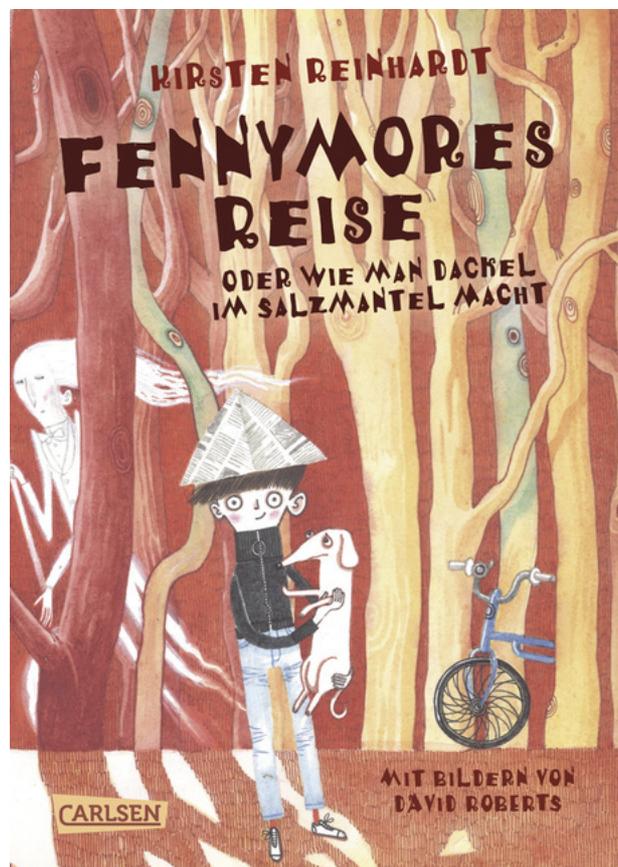


**Fennimore's Journey,
or: How to Make Sausage Dog in Salt Crust**

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CHAPTER ONE

In which Fennymore Pause, Aunt Elsie, and the best recipe for sausage dog in salt crust are introduced

Fennymore Pause was a different kind of boy. At breakfast, he ate liver sausages, for lunch he made himself a banana split, and in the evening, he munched on large stalks of celery. If he had counted properly, he would turn eleven this summer. Except that he wasn't quite sure, since no one celebrated his birthday.

It was Aunt Elsie who had made that decision, because Fennymore's parents had disappeared on his eighth birthday and never returned, and Aunt Elsie had no desire to be reminded of that day at all. So Fennymore was left to figure out his age for himself, and he wasn't all that sure.

Fennymore had a mop of brown hair. His right ear sat as close to his head as a shell clinging to a cliff and his left ear stuck out like the crook of a teacup. Fennymore was neither large nor small, neither fat nor thin. His best friend was a sky blue bicycle that thought it was a horse. It was a little rusty and its name was 'Monbijou'. That is French for "my jewel".

Fennymore and Monbijou lived in a big, old house outside the town, called Bronks. Its shutters hung at an angle and the tarpaper on the roof was old and wavy. The house was once light blue, but the rain had washed Bronks' color away. As a matter of fact, Fennymore lived in a very rainy part of the country. Everyone there carried a hat because of the rain. When it rained, they put their hats on their heads, and when the sun was out, they tied them to their necks, from which they dangled. Aunt Elsie's hats had loud floral patterns.

None of these rain hats lasted very long, since they were made of paper, and every so often, the townsfolk had to buy new ones. Consequently, the town had plenty of hat stores. Twenty-four, to be precise. Fennymore didn't have money for that, so he wore simple newspaper hats.

And it was thus, that ever since his parents disappeared, Fennymore lived alone in the big, tilted house. Well, not completely alone. Happily, Monbijou lived there, too, and Fennymore also had Aunt Elsie.

Aunt Elsie lived in town, right above the Tristesse Café, and every Sunday, at the dot of three minutes past three, she would come to see Fennymore. Together, they would eat sausage dog in salt crust and drink elderflower tea. If you've ever made sausage dog in salt crust, then you must know what a long and complicated process this is. It requires great skill and a lot of patience. To begin with, you need to find the right kind of sausage dog, or dachshund. It shouldn't be too fat, neither should it be too lean. It has to be just right. The perfect kind to eat.

Aunt Elsie's preferred hunting ground for dachshunds was downtown. The whole sweet day, the retired folks of the town would go there for walks with their dachshunds and contemplate the hat stores' windows. And all of Wednesday afternoon, Aunt Elsie would sit at the Tristesse Café, which was right in the middle of downtown, and have mocha ice cream. On these occasions, she would wear large, dark sunglasses, then wait. As soon as a senior with a sausage dog walked past, Aunt Elsie would shoot out of her chair like a hawk and sneak behind him. Aunt Elsie was amazingly agile for her age and body type. 'Body type' means that she was terribly large, but that wasn't something she liked to hear.

The seniors usually stopped at the butcher's to pick up some scraps of meat for their dachshunds. Since dogs aren't allowed in, they would tie their precious darlings outside the door, which was extremely lucky for Aunt Elsie. Fast as can be, she would untie the dachshund, tuck it under her arm as if she had a handbag with paws, and speed back home. And when the senior happily emerged with the bits of meat, his dachshund was already well on its way to becoming a sausage dog in salt crust.

Fennymore, unfortunately, couldn't sit at the Tristesse Café and have cups of mocha ice cream. His teacher, Mr. Muckenthaler, had caught him there once, with Aunt Elsie, when he should actually have been at math. Aunt Elsie felt very bad about that, for it was she who had encouraged Fennymore to skip school.

Every week was the same in Fennymore Pause's life, ever since the day that his parents had disappeared.

On Sunday, Aunt Elsie would come by, and together they would eat sausage dog in salt crust and drink elderflower tea.

On Monday and Tuesday, Fennymore always had a stomachache. On these days, he did not eat liver sausages or banana splits, but munched weakly on his stalks of celery.

Wednesday was sausage dog hunting day and he would help Aunt Elsie. Then he would stay over, and early the next morning, he would help her prepare sausage dog in salt crust.

On Friday, he bought liver sausages and ingredients for banana splits.

On Saturday, he would climb onto Bronks' roof and watch the rainbows over the neighborhood. Then he would think about his parents.

His father, Fenibald Pause, had been an inventor; his mother, a mathematician. When she met Fennymore's father, she discovered that she enjoyed inventing things much more than solving math problems. So Fennymore's parents worked together, as inventor-parents. Fennymore's mother would draw up the plans and his father would build the inventions. Fennymore's mother liked to work on the big kitchen table in Bronks and Fennymore's father loved spending the whole day tinkering in the inventor's hut. It was a very small shed that was covered with overgrown vines, far at the back of the garden, past the currant and the gooseberry bushes and the compost heap. Usually their inventions were things other people asked them to make, although sometimes they also designed things for themselves.

Fennimore's favorite was the mechanical waiter. That was what they called the toast thrower they had created. This machine had a large chrome spring and would throw fresh slices of toast straight from the toaster to their plates. Unfortunately, it had broken shortly after his parents disappeared, and Fennimore didn't know how to fix it. Instead, he just stopped having toast. The invention his parents had been working on just before they disappeared had been a secret. They never told Fennimore what it was, not even once.

Fennimore would think about all these things on Saturdays, while he sat on Bronks' roof. And then it would be Sunday again, and Aunt Elsie would come by with the baked dachshund.

CHAPTER TWO

In which our story begins because Aunt Elsie is late

The day in which our story begins was a Sunday in August. Almost three years after Fennymore's parents disappeared. Fennymore had just watered the herbs, given Monbijou something to eat, and was waiting for Aunt Elsie to arrive. Except that she didn't. Being on time was very important to her, and she always came to Bronks at exactly three minutes past three. Then, still breathing heavily, she would barge through the front door and call, "Fennymore! Time to eat!"

When it was four minutes past three and Aunt Elsie hadn't come, Fennymore thought that was a little unusual. And at seven minutes past three, when there was still no "Time to eat!" Fennymore started to worry.

"I'm sorry, Monbijou. You'll have to finish your meal later," Fennymore told his bicycle.

It was standing in the midst of piles of hay, which Fennymore had brought into the kitchen.

"We need to find Aunt Elsie."

Monbijou snorted indignantly. He was already annoyed because he had been sent to eat in the kitchen. Usually he ate in the living room. But whenever Aunt Elsie came by, he had to have his hay in the kitchen. She thought it was silly for a bike to eat hay and didn't want to see it around her.

Fennymore didn't let Monbijou's snorting bother him. He grabbed his newspaper hat and pushed the bike out the front door. It had just stopped raining. The air was still damp and the ground was a little wet. In between the celery stalks, hung little rainbows, but Fennymore hardly noticed. He climbed on Monbijou and biked once around Bronks. Maybe Aunt Elsie was in the garden somewhere. But no, she wasn't. Back at the door, Fennymore poked his head in and called, "Aunt Elsie?"

And when no answer came, he called even louder, “Sausage dog in salt crust?”

That wasn’t necessary, of course, for even if a sausage dog in salt crust had been there, it wouldn’t have been able to answer. But it was eleven minutes past three and Fennymore was quite distressed.

“Monbijou, we have to go into town,” Fennymore told his bike.

Monbijou braked firmly. He did that whenever there was something he didn’t want to do. Fennymore, too, felt a little uneasy. He had never biked into town on a Sunday.

What will I do if the town and the street that goes to the town aren’t there on Sundays, he pondered. They’re there on Wednesdays, Fennymore was sure. That was when he would ride Monbijou into town and help with the dachshund catching. And Thursdays, when he biked home after the long day making sausage dog in salt crust, they were also there. And when he bought his groceries on Fridays, they were there, too. But on Sundays?

Monbijou sniffed doubtfully. He didn’t want to move. But Fennymore Pause was a curious boy.

“If I don’t try, I’ll never know,” he told himself. With a flick of his wrist, he released Monbijou’s brakes, a trick his father had taught him a long time ago. Then off they went.

It was sunny and dry again, and Fennymore clearly saw the path before him. So it was also there on Sundays. Well, as far as he could see. First, they rode along the narrow sand path, the one that was lined with sunflowers. Then they turned into the path in the field, beside which wildflowers and herbs grew. And finally, next to a group of apple trees, they came to the main road, with the white line in the middle and the ditches beside it. Hardly anyone was on the road. Monbijou sniffed unhappily every few meters and Fennymore sang “We’re On Our Way to Madagascar” at the top of his lungs to spur him on. It was his favorite song. Aside from that, he also had a handful of hay in his pocket, and every time Monbijou slowed down, he would hand him a couple of straws.

Half an hour later, they had reached the outskirts of the town. So it was also there on Sundays. Downtown was there, with its twenty-four hat shops, the butcher's was there, and even the Tristesse Café. And there were ten or eleven retired folks sitting at the café with their dachshunds, eating mocha ice cream. So many sausage dogs! I have to tell Aunt Elsie right away, Fennymore thought.