

One Hundred Airplanes

By Rebecca Post

Date: 6th April, 2009

Genre: Short story, historical

Age group: 3-7 years

Words: Story: ca. 800
Epilogue: 230

Theme: Immenstaad, Dornier, friendship

Contact Details: Rebecca Post
Kippenhorn 5
88090 Immenstaad
Germany

Phone: **49-7545-93 21 61

Email: rebeccapost @mac.com

One Hundred Airplanes

By Rebecca Post

Maria Miller was eight years old when her parents told her they had some important and exciting news.

“We’re moving!” said her mother. “Your father has a wonderful new job!”

“We’re going to live in a village called Immenstaad next to a beautiful lake!” explained her father. “You’ll be able to swim in the summer.”

Maria thought it was horrible news. She cried all night when she realized that she would have to leave her lovely blue bedroom, her friends at school and kind Mrs Smith from next door who always had a treat for her in her pocket. Maria cried again when she packed her toys into boxes and when she said goodbye to her friends Maisie and Laura and Sophie.

“You can visit them in the holidays,” said her mother. “And they can come and stay with you in your new home.”

When the day came to move, Maria sulked all the way in the car. She was so busy feeling miserable she didn’t notice that the new house was bigger than their apartment in the city and even had a garden. She was thinking of the very next day when she would start at her new school. *What if no one likes me?* she thought. *I know I shall hate it.*

Now Maria had been at her new school for two weeks and she still had no friends. When the bell rang for break she walked slowly over to the big tree at the far edge of the playground and sat down on the grass. She could see the other girls playing together but she pretended to ignore them. They never asked her to join in their games.

“You’re Maria the new girl.” A voice startled her out of her daydreams.

Maria looked up in surprise. A small, red headed boy was standing next to the tree, watching her curiously. She stared at him – he was younger, but had the same curly red hair and freckles as the twins Marianne and Lotta in her new class.

“I’m Oscar,” he continued. “My sisters say you talk funny and never smile.”

“I don’t talk funny,” said Maria crossly. “Everyone talks like that in Munich.”

Oscar sat on the grass next to her.

“My Dad’s got a hundred apple trees,” he said. “Or a thousand. How many has your Dad got?”

“None,” said Maria. “But he’s got one hundred airplanes.”

The little boy’s mouth dropped open and his eyes almost popped out of his head.

“Well, they’re not really his,” explained Maria quickly, wanting to be truthful. “He tests them. He’s a pilot.”

“Wow,” said Oscar. “I want to be a pilot when I grow up,” “

“My dad’s gone to Spain to get another airplane,” she said. “It’s going to land on the lake.”

“Amphibian planes can go on land or water. If it can only land on the water it’s a flying boat,” explained Oscar knowledgeably. “I’ve got 36 airplane models. Two of them are amphibians.”

The bell rang for class. Oscar walked inside with Maria before running off to his own classroom. His sisters looked at her curiously. Maria smiled shyly, but they had already gone inside and didn’t notice.

Ten days later, Maria followed her dad down to the little harbour at the edge of the lake. Bobbing gently in the water, looking out of place amongst all the boats, was a big silver plane. Three propeller engines were perched high in a row at the front of the wing, and it had a big float on each side instead of wheels.

“Would you like to come on board?” asked her father.

Maria nodded.

Looking back at the shore, she noticed the crowds of people who had come to catch a glimpse of this famous plane. She stood up tall. *My dad’s the pilot*, she thought.

Suddenly, a glimpse of vivid orange hair caught her eye. Oscar waved to her, a big grin on his face. The bright sun was glistening on the shiny metal plane, and the water sparkled like party lights, putting Maria into a festive mood. She waved back.

“Dad,” she said. “Do you think Oscar could come and see the plane too?”

“Of course,” smiled her father. “Is he a friend of yours?”

“His sisters are in my class,” said Maria. “But he’s mad about planes.”

“Then call him over. This airplane’s very special. This one and others just like it have saved over 11 000 lives, rescuing people out of the water.”

The next day at school, Oscar’s sisters came up to Maria as soon as the bell rang for break.

“Oscar really liked seeing the plane,” said Marianne.

“He didn’t stop talking about it all night,” said Lotta.

The twins looked at each other and giggled before looking back at Maria, their faces serious.

“Will you play with us?” they said, together.

Maria smiled shyly and nodded. *Maybe it’s not so bad here, after all*, she thought.

Did you know?

In 1971 a Dornier DO 24 flying boat landed on Lake Constance before being taken on land to the Dornier aircraft company situated to the east of Immenstaad. This airplane had been built in 1944 and used by the Spanish air force until the 1970's for Search and Rescue missions.

Dornier first developed the DO 24 for the Dutch navy in 1934 and it proved to be a very successful design. Due to its excellent operational characteristics even under hostile weather and sea conditions, more than 11 000 people could be rescued around England, Europe and the Mediterranean.

Iren Dornier, a grandson of the Dornier company founder Dr Claude Dornier, later modified the DO 24 that came to Immenstaad in 1971 with new engines and technology. It still flies from his home in the Philippines. As part of a world trip this same plane did a landing on Lake Constance by Friedrichshafen in 2004.

The Dornier Ltd aircraft company was located in Immenstaad for nearly 50 years, from the 1950's until about 2004. Airplanes were designed in Immenstaad then built and tested in Oberpfaffenhofen by Munich.

Since July 2009, the Dornier company history as well as world records and other feats of engineering, technology and innovation in the fields of air and space travel has been displayed in the Dornier Museum situated by the Friedrichshafen airport.

www.dorniermuseum.de