

Excerpt from AGAIN, by Marc Kuhn

Katherina Richter was a sturdy, intimidating lady in her late 40s, to be addressed only as “Mrs. Richter.” You could tell right away she could be a formidable opponent, certainly one not to challenge or burden. The kitchen obviously served as her headquarters as she ruled over the four tenants who occupied space within her immaculately maintained rooming house. It was in the kitchen where she spent most of her time—time not wasted, Isaac would later learn, based on her incredible culinary skills.

The kitchen was cramped with just barely enough room for a table and chairs. Everything was strategically placed and functional to whatever role it played in the cooking and eating process. Cleanliness was not an issue. The old, warped oak-slab floor gleamed with fresh varnish and every crevice in the room was dust-free, every surface scrubbed and shiny.

But as impressive as the kitchen was, make no mistake about it, the most imposing item in the room at all times was Mrs. Richter. She stood several inches taller than Isaac, and wider too. She reminded him of the women working the beer halls back home, the ones who could sling four or more tankards of ale on each arm while they flexed their hips to collect tips in their apron pockets. Her tightly braided hair was neatly stacked atop her head, defying gravity as she moved swiftly about the kitchen. A *juggernaut* of a woman, thought Isaac.