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D O N W U L F F S O N

Sanctuary

Elena Novak was the heavyset old lady's name. Her hair was dyed jet black; her small blue eyes, which seemed lost in her large, fleshy face, were intelligent and perceptive.

The town we were in, Klatovy, Czechoslovakia, she told us, had long been in German hands. Her son Gunter had been the mayor. When the Germans had taken over Klatovy in 1939, Gunter had tried to please everybody. He had tried to keep the townspeople happy. At the same time, he had to do the Germans' bidding and enforce their policies. A portion of all crops and factory products had to go to the German war effort; citizens had to provide free labor when asked to do so; open their homes as garrisons for German troops, and do so "in a friendly manner and with generous spirit."

There had been no serious problems . . . at first. But then Gunter, as mayor, had been ordered to identify all the Jewish residents of the town. The reason, according to a

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German colonel: "We are trying to put a stop to the anti-Semitic conduct of some of our troops." At first, not knowing why the Nazis really wanted the information, he had complied. Shortly, on the orders of the Nazi high command, troops began rounding up Jewish people, confiscating all their possessions and then taking them away by train in cattle cars. News had trickled back about concentration camps and death camps. Gunter, sick with guilt over what he had inadvertently done, refused to continue helping the Nazis. For defying them, he was shot.

Mrs. Novak had once been a wealthy woman. But the Nazis had destroyed her life. After killing her son, they had taken most of her money and possessions, leaving her with only her strange little car and large house, which had been used as headquarters for officers. In fact, they had been there until only two days before we had arrived, when word had come down that the Russians were preparing an offensive to drive the Germans out of Czechoslovakia. German troops from Klatovy and from all the nearby towns had been sent to counterattack. The last large force from Klatovy had left the night before, and it was these troops—this convoy of men and weapons—that Tamara and I had seen the previous night.

Despite what they had done to her, Elena Novak did not hate the Germans—or anybody. She hated only the war. "I refuse to believe that all Germans are like the ones who killed my Gunter. I am of German ancestry myself,

and so was my former husband and my son." She shook her head. "So tell me, how can I hate all Germans—when I am one myself?"

Mrs. Novak told us these things piecemeal and over a period of several days. Before learning her name or anything about her, I told her how ill Tamara was and how badly she needed a doctor.

"Elena will take care of everything!" she sang out in a confident, happy tone of voice as she headed off through a wood-paneled foyer toward a stairway. "But first we must get you cleaned up," she warbled. "Follow me upstairs, dears." I liked and trusted Elena right from the start, and so did Tamara. As we followed the seemingly irrepressibly happy old lady up the stairs, I smiled vacantly, feeling as though I had wandered into a strange, magical sanctuary.

In those days a bathroom was exactly that: a room to take a bath in, nothing else. Tamara went in first. I sat down on a little chair outside, waiting for her. I must have dozed off or drifted off into another world—because the next thing I remember I was in the bathroom, alone and taking off my filthy clothes.

The bath was so wonderful I almost drowned. Sitting in the warm, soapy water, I dozed off again—and woke up sputtering and gasping: I had fallen sound asleep and my head had slipped underwater.

A fluffy, baby-blue towel and fancy silk pajamas had been left on a stool for me. As I dried myself, I looked in a full-length mirror. An emaciated stranger looked back at

me. I was extremely thin and covered with deep bruises and scratches, and my forehead, belly, and knee were scarred from wounds. My hair was long, and the stubble on my chin and cheeks had filled out and become a sparse, goatee-like beard. It was a face I had never seen before. Especially the eyes; they did not look like mine at all. They had a tiredly alert, hardened look, and seemed as though they belonged to someone much older. They were the eyes of a man, not a boy.

I put on the pajamas, and emerging from the bathroom, I looked through a half-open door into a bedroom. In the bed, sound asleep on her back, lay a beautiful young woman—Tamara—her long, dark hair framing her ivory face.

Footsteps clomped up the stairs.

"This was Gunter's room," said Mrs. Novak as she guided me across the hallway into a bedroom as large as our entire apartment back in Vilsburg.

I sat down on the edge of an enormous, canopied bed. As though I were a child, Mrs. Novak held a cup of warmed juice for me. She began feeding me pieces of buttered toast cut into little slivers. I felt silly. I wanted to protest and to tell her I could feed myself, but I didn't have the energy.

"You're handsome!" said Mrs. Novak happily. "As handsome as my Gunter—almost!"

"Thank you."

"You get some rest now."

"Tamara is very ill, Mrs. Novak. And—"

"I have an old friend in town who is a doctor. I will send for him." She smiled, patted my arm, and bustled away. "You just leave everything to Elena!"

Drowsily wondering at my good fortune, wondering why Mrs. Novak was so happy and being so good to us, I crawled under satiny covers and all but passed out. Never in my life—before or since—have I had such a wonderful sleep. I felt as though I was adrift in space in some sort of deep, luxurious stupor, now and then rolling over in complete contentment.

I slept nearly two days straight. From time to time, food was brought to me. I nibbled at it, then plunged back into a state of blissful unconsciousness. I only roused myself when the doctor arrived—an old man with graying red hair and a huge, lumpy-looking nose. He had already taken care of Tamara, and had given her penicillin for her fever and cough. Her numerous cuts and abrasions were painted with antiseptics then bandaged, and I was given the same treatment.

I gradually emerged from my torpor, as did Tamara. A very large, old-fashioned wardrobe was opened up to me; Mrs. Novak gave me the pick of all her son's clothing—suits, shirts, slacks—all of which were too large and hung on me as though I were a scarecrow. As for Tamara, all that could be found was the uniform of a former maid. But it fit her perfectly, and she looked very cute in it.

In the days that followed, Mrs. Novak doted on us. We had, it seemed, filled an empty space in her life. She treated me as though I were the son she had lost and Tamara as the daughter she had never had. I told her everything about the two of us, including the battle at Tarnapol, about ending up in the schoolhouse-hospital in Alreni, and how Tamara and I had worked together. I told her about the fighting that had erupted in Alreni while we were trying to evacuate, and about our long trek through Russia, the Ukraine, and Czechoslovakia.

"You must be very careful," Mrs. Novak warned me. "You could be shot as a deserter or a spy, and probably would have been already if you had arrived in Klatovy a few days earlier, before the German troops abandoned the town and headed east to try to stop the Russians."

To say the least, it was difficult for Mrs. Novak and Tamara to talk to each other. Mrs. Novak knew only a little Russian, and Tamara knew only the smattering of German I had taught her. I found myself serving as a translator, usually a pretty inept one. In Czechoslovakia, three languages were spoken—Slovak, Czech, and German. And the German spoken by Czechoslovakians was different in many ways from what I was used to back home. Often, Mrs. Novak and I ended up laughing as we struggled to communicate, and Tamara would join in, hardly understanding what it was we found so amusing, which made the whole situation even funnier.

In every way, those were happy times, great times—

some of the best of my life. It was as though all of us were in a private cocoon. For us, the war did not exist. Nothing existed outside the walls of that house. There was no one to bother us. No one to give us orders. There was no ugliness—or pain, or fear, or death.

Tamara steadily improved. Only a trace of her cough remained. My own strength returned. My knee bothered me, but other than that I felt fine. Food was in short supply, but there was enough to get by.

We knew, of course, that we could not stay in this cocoon from the world—in Elena Novak's house—forever. But after all we had been through, it was so tempting to make no move, and just stay there, letting the days slip pleasantly by. August faded, changed imperceptibly to September.

The house had been damaged by the troops and officers previously garrisoned there. Much of the furniture was stained and broken; carpeting was soiled; plaster walls were chipped and cracked where maps had been nailed. The gas, electricity, and phone no longer worked. Still, it was easy to see that it once had been a very beautiful home.

Tamara and I explored the place. It was so large and so different from the homes we had grown up in. One room became our favorite. At the end of a long, tiled corridor, it had been built in a grand manner, high-ceilinged and airy with a massive fireplace and French windows opening onto a large, unkempt garden. Mostly we stayed inside,

content to sit on a sofa in that warm, sunlit room and gaze out at the garden and at the town of Klatovy in the valley below. At the base of a sweep of low foothills, dominated by a tall church, the town was beautiful; it looked like a picture postcard.

I will never forget that room. In there, Tamara and I, using one of the maps the Germans had left behind, plotted the course we would someday take to Switzerland, and eventually by ship to America. In there, we wrote letters to family and friends, not knowing when—or *if*—we would ever be able to send them, or even if those to whom we were writing were still alive. In there, we talked hour after hour, about anything and everything. About each other. And about the war, once having sort of a contest to see who could remember the most clichés—the largest number of tired aphorisms about the stupidity of war: “War is hell”; “There is never a good war”; “War is murder, with the blessings of the government.”

I felt the last of these most strongly. “In peacetime, for killing someone, we’re hung,” I told Tamara. “But for killing during wartime, at the bidding of the same stupid government, they hang medals on us. It makes a great deal of sense!” I said sarcastically.

I went to a window, gazing at the world beyond the glass but not really seeing it. From behind, Tamara put her hands on my shoulders, then she rested her head against my back.

I turned. I ran a hand through her long, soft hair. Her

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arms went around my neck. And as I pulled her closer, our mouths met. We kissed, softly at first, tenderly. For a moment, we stopped. I held her beautiful face with my hands, looking into her eyes, not sure I even believed what was happening.

Overrun

There is something dark and tangled in all of us—in all our souls; certainly, this is true of me. I understand it, but still I am ashamed of it. When Hals had died at Tarnapol, I had cried—but not just for him. I cried for myself, for my loss, and because I was ashamed: Deep down, I was glad it was he who had died and not I.

First in German, then in Russian, I confessed this late one evening, sitting in the parlor with Tamara and Elena.

“I feel so guilty,” I said.

“You are not the first to do so,” said Elena. She began talking about her son Gunter. He had been so plagued with guilt that, upon learning he was to be shot, he had not only accepted it with equanimity, but had expressed the feeling that he deserved to die. Elena continued on about the subject, about guilt, but was stopped midsentence. From far off came faint explosions. They continued for some time, then ceased.

“It’s coming,” said Elena. She turned to me. “I think the war has followed you.”

We went to bed worried that night. The Germans had probably come face-to-face with the Russians and were now trying to stop their westward drive. The fighting sounded far off, but it was hard to tell exactly where it might be.

Little did we know that it was right around the corner—and would reach us before the night was through.

“Where are my hands?”

I never saw the German soldier who cried these words. But to this day I can still hear his voice. I can still hear the sound of trucks and other vehicles.

“Where are my hands?”

My eyes flipped open. It was near morning, but still pitch-black out. I was in Gunter’s canopied bed. For a moment I lay there, staring groggily—and thinking of Willi, who had lost a hand at Tarnapol.

“Somebody shut him up!” yelled another voice in German.

I hurried to French doors opening onto a small balcony. Shivering in the dark chill before dawn, I stood in my bare feet on the cold tile of the balcony, watching a grotesque parade of German trucks and other vehicles. They were crowded with wounded soldiers, many crying in pain. I backed away, closing the doors on the sound.

“The Germans have been overrun by the Russians. They’re retreating—in this direction! We must leave immediately!” Elena, Tamara on her heels, had burst into the room, a kerosene lamp in her hands lighting her face eerily. “Gather up what you can,” she ordered. “Just the necessities, just what can fit in my car. Hurry!”

By the time we had dressed and were loading Elena’s odd little car, Klatovy was coming under a barrage of Russian rocket and artillery fire. At first came long-range Soviet Seventeen-Twos; then “Stalin’s Organs,” multiple rocket-launchers, joined the bombardment. No shells or rockets were landing in our immediate vicinity, near Mrs. Novak’s house on the hill overlooking the town. But we were trapped between the Russian rocket and artillery emplacements, somewhere to the rear, and the town, on which the shells and rockets were raining.

“Why are they doing this?” Elena cried.

The three of us could only stand and watch as the picturesque town was torn apart. The church steeple crumbled, its bell clanging dully as the sky popped open with blossoms of color and flying debris. Telegraph poles did splintering cartwheels and came crashing down in sparkling tangles of their own wires. Buildings ruptured from within, spewing bricks and shattered window glass into the street.

“Stop it!”

Over the terrible din, Elena shouted the same words over and over, her pudgy hands covering her ears, tears of

rage and disbelief coursing down her pink-powdered cheeks.

To this day, I wonder what the Russians thought they were accomplishing by shelling Klatovy. The Germans were not firing back. In fact, there were no German troops there, at least none that I could see. The trucks carrying German wounded had already passed through. The only people in the town were civilians.

The bombardment tapered off, then ended. From below came the sounds of weakened walls collapsing, debris settling, and the hiss and crackle of countless fires.

"We have to go! Now is the time to go!" I told Tamara and Elena. "After the artillery comes the infantry," I said, parroting the words of Dobelmann. "They'll be coming—the Russians will. We have to get going—now!"

Elena just looked at me.

"Believe me, I know what I'm talking about!"

"I am not going," Elena said flatly.

In a desperate staccato of words, I told Tamara in Russian what Elena had said, and begged her to help convince her to change her mind.

By gesture, then by taking Elena by the arm and pulling, Tamara conveyed her feelings.

Elena kissed Tamara, then ruefully smiled at me. "I was born here," she said in German. "My life was here, and still is. I am an old woman." She turned and gazed briefly at the burning, battered town, then looked back at her house. "My home, by the grace of God, is still stand-

ing." She shrugged, a half-smile on her face. "The Russians will come and probably use my house and slop it all up. But the Russians can't be any worse than the Germans!"

"But anything could happen, Mrs. Novak," I exclaimed. "Please, you've got to come."

"*Pazhalusta!*" Tamara pleaded in Russian.

Elena shook her head, then removed a suitcase filled with her belongings from the car. "Now, you children go," she said. "Take the car."

"I can't drive," I told her.

"*Shto?*" Tamara asked what was happening and being said.

I explained about Elena's offer.

"I can drive," said Tamara. "My father used to let me drive a tractor."

I translated for Elena. Her big, loving arms went around us both. "You two, go. Quickly, now!"

We thanked her and kissed her good-bye.

"Hurry!" She waved us away.

After stalling out several times, Tamara finally got the car going. We all but did a free fall down the long, steep road leading to Klatovy, with Tamara riding squealing brakes the whole way. Reaching the bottom of the hill, we began weaving our way through the ravaged town, the streets an obstacle course of debris and craters. A riderless horse galloped on ahead, having an easier time of it than us. I saw several dead lying in the rubble, but miracu-

lously, scores of people were emerging everywhere from cellars and the battered remains of buildings. A hand reached out toward the car. Tamara brought it to a lurching stop as a woman pulled the door open, then climbed into the back seat amidst food, clothing, and other items packed in there.

"Wait for my husband!"

As we started moving, a man crawled in through a window.

"*Danke!*" he muttered.

We left the town behind and were gaining speed on the open road. We began to pass small clusters of refugees. Most were on foot, some pushing baby buggies or pulling wagons piled with belongings. Angry, envious glances were cast our way, and we felt guilty: They were walking as we drove in relative luxury. "Rich scum!" I remember one man yelling at us.

Now and then we heard occasional rifle fire coming from a wooded area to our left.

We began passing horse-drawn carts filled with refugees and their belongings, and there was a solitary tractor. A bald man was sitting high in the driver's seat and a woman and child were clinging to the sides as it lumbered along.

The woman in the backseat began jabbering in German. "The next town is Grdnov. The railway runs through it. And we should be safe," she said, her tone upbeat. An instant later her mood darkened. "I don't think we have

enough gasoline to make it that far," she said, looking over the seat at the instrument panel.

"No, we'll be fine, dear," said her husband, twisted up like a pretzel in the overfilled backseat.

Ahead, intersecting with the road we were on, was another road, this one clogged with people on foot and in vehicles of every sort, both military and civilian. We had almost reached the other road, and Tamara was slowing the car, when two men suddenly stumbled out from the woods. One, wearing a torn suit, was limping badly, using a rifle for support and dragging his bloody foot. The other, much younger, had a pistol.

"Halt!" he yelled in high-pitched German, the pistol aimed at the windshield.

The car crackled to a stop.

"Get out! All of you! Now!"

All of us scrambled out. A moment later the car was pattering away, the leg of the injured man sticking out a window.

Soon we had joined the other refugees headed toward Grdnov. We passed by a burning farmhouse, and in the distance, fields of rye and wheat crawled with flames. Behind a screen of smoke, the sun blazed, turning all the world a shadowy but oddly brilliant shade of blue. Blue hills. Blue trees. Even our arms and faces—and those of the other refugees—were blue.

As we plodded along, it quickly became apparent that, for the Germans, there had been disaster. Everywhere,

they were in retreat. Trucks and armored vehicles began passing us. Bruised and bloodied soldiers rode, sitting desolately, their eyes remote, vacant. Other soldiers walked, singly and in groups—defeated and silent, nursing wounds, paying little or no attention to the civilians.

Now and then there were bodies beside the road, and abandoned vehicles. One was all too familiar: Elena's strange little car.

"It probably ran out of gas," I said.

Tamara nodded without looking at me. We continued walking.

Grdnov

A pall of dust hung over Grdnov. The town was choked with traffic of every sort. The depot, a large, dome-shaped structure, was in chaos. Soldiers and civilians were mixed together, cursing and yelling in anger, some weeping bitterly. A train was pulling out, with soldiers crowding every car, every compartment, and clinging to the sides like leeches.

"When is the next train?"

The question was being asked by countless voices in several languages, over and over—so many times it began to sound like a chant.

We would not wait for a train, Tamara and I decided. As did many others, we continued on through town, through streets teeming with people and vehicles, all moving in the same direction. Over the shuffle of feet and other noises came the rumble of a battle being fought somewhere to the north.

"Get out of the way or I'll shoot every one of you!"

People stood back as a German officer yelled and bullied his way through the crowd, waving a machine pistol. In his wake, from a heavy cart, came stretcher bearers with wounded soldiers. They made their way through the main door of what appeared to be a government building. From within came the cries of men in pain.

"We need doctors!" shouted the officer. He had entered the building only to reappear momentarily. He again waved his machine pistol and shouted to the crowd. "We need help, please. *Können Sie uns bitte helfen?*"

A few people glanced his way, then hurried on.

"Any kind of help! My men are dying!"

Tamara and I exchanged glances. She did not understand the officer's words, but it was obvious what he was asking. She grimaced as a horribly burned young soldier was trundled inside, then looked at me and nodded.

I touched the officer's sleeve. "We can help," I told him. "We were with a medical unit. We are not doctors, but we can be of use."

For a moment the officer seemed confused, as though he had not understood what I had said. Then his hard features softened. "Thank you!" Startling me, he put an arm around my shoulders. "And you tell them that Captain Gebhardt said you are to be fed!"

"Thank you, sir," I said, and then Tamara and I made our way inside.

We were in a triage area, where doctors were sorting out the wounded, deciding who could be saved and who

could not, and who should be treated first. Much of the large room was filled with men on stretchers. Other wounded sat on the floor, mostly along the walls and aisles. Small, naked light bulbs hung from the ceiling over tables where doctors were operating.

"Why are you two just standing there? Get to work!"

A medic wearing rubber gloves, boots, and a blood-smeared rubber apron was glowering at us. Furious, he stormed off, then returned and shoved gloves and smocks into our hands. We put them on over our clothes; then we plunged into the work, washing and bandaging wounds, applying pressure bandages and tourniquets, splinting broken arms and legs.

We worked nonstop until about four-thirty, when food was brought in for the medics and orderlies. We were wolfing down potato soup and bread when I noticed a familiar figure striding toward us—Captain Gebhardt.

"Ah, my two volunteers!" he exclaimed in German, standing over us where we sat on the floor with our soup and bread.

I found myself looking at his knee-length black boots, then up at him, in his soiled gray uniform and visored cap with its edelweiss insignia. My chest tightened with fear: In reality, I was a deserter; Tamara a Russian, the enemy. For these reasons, both of us could be taken out and shot.

But Gebhardt was smiling benevolently. "I thank you again for helping."

"We are glad to do it, sir."

"Is the food at least edible?" He was looking at Tamara, asking her the question in German.

She smiled at him, trying to conceal her lack of understanding.

"She speaks only Slovak," I blurted, hoping the lie sounded convincing. "Tamara was a Czech volunteer with our unit."

Gebhardt was not listening, or even looking at us. He was gazing around at the sea of wounded men and boys. A change had come over him; he seemed lost in thought, and had a strange look in his eyes.

"How did this happen?" There was anger and great sadness in his voice. "The finest army in the world—reduced to this! And we have lost the war! How could we have lost?"

"I do not know, Captain."

He slammed a fist into his hand. "How?" Fury in his eyes, shaking his head, he wandered off.

Gebhardt was half out of his mind, I decided. Just as Mr. Long-Underwear and the other German soldiers in the bunker so many months before had been. The war had driven them crazy with rage, bitterness, and confusion. The Germans—especially the veteran soldiers—had been certain they would conquer the world. They had been led to believe—as I had—that nothing else was possible. But then the impossible had happened: They were losing, being driven back on all fronts. The British and Americans were attacking them from the west; the Russians were

coming at them from the east, slaughtering them and driving them back to Germany.

Across the way, Captain Gebhardt was going from one wounded soldier to the next, patting each on the back and otherwise offering up encouragement. Most of the soldiers were very young. Words spoken long ago came to mind: "All the men are dead. Now they are sending us boys."

In the west, an oversize orange sun was dying as two other boys and I began digging in a sandy lot behind the government building. We were on burial detail. The bodies were brought out in children's wagons. We quickly dug shallow graves in the soft, almost sandy, soil, and then filled them in, leaving mounds.

To the north and east of Grdnov, heavy fighting was going on.

Headed into battle, troops of young German soldiers tramped past across the lot where we were working. I suddenly found myself staring. One of the leaders had a face that had been rendered easily recognizable by disfigurement. Dobelmann. As he trudged past leading his troops, like a teacher leading his students, Dobelmann's eyes met mine.

I do not know if he recognized me or not. He seemed to. But he just kept going.

Suddenly I thought of a friend. "Jakob!" I yelled.

My yell caused several heads to turn my way, briefly. But then they looked forward and continued on. One face kept looking back over a shoulder at me. There seemed to be a strange, enigmatic smile on the ruined, twisted mouth.

A train would be arriving soon.

Word spread quickly through the makeshift hospital; almost immediately we began transporting the patients to the domed depot, which was about a hundred meters distant and on the same side of the street. Stretchers, wheelchairs, gurneys, and carts—we used whatever was on hand to get the wounded to the train station.

There we waited. Day turned to night. Civilians, mostly Czechs and Ukrainians, milled about on the platform outside the depot anxiously gazing down the tracks, hoping at any moment to see the train. The tracks remained empty. From the north came the throaty grumble of battle.

By midnight the train had still not arrived. A misty rain began to fall. A few grimy, sopping-wet German soldiers straggled into the depot, directly from the front lines, it seemed. Their bodies stank; they were hollow-eyed, ragged, and radiated blood and death—and defeat. They began arriving in ever-increasing numbers. The hammering of automatic weapons fire erupted somewhere near the outskirts of Grdnov, and there was the occasional boom of artillery being fired, from within the town toward the ad-

vancing enemy. Now and then, to the northeast, came popping noises followed by *wooshing* hisses as parachute flares rose diagonally into the sky, paused for a moment, then slowly fluttered earthward, swinging like pendulums, lighting up the darkness with rocking white light.

The din of battle grew closer. Over it came another sound—the mournful shriek of a whistle. The sound was unmistakable. A train came into view, backing into the terminal. Crewmen, hanging from steel ladders on the cars carried lanterns, which cast yellow shadows all around. On top of each car were German guards with automatic weapons. Built for transporting cattle and other livestock, the sides of most of the cars were of wooden slats set far apart; wind and rain could stream in. The trip west would be a cold one. We didn't care. All we wanted to do was to get out of there before the fighting engulfed the town.

The depot came alive with activity. All medical personnel, including Tamara and I, went to work getting the wounded aboard. To the horror of the mass of civilians, German soldiers began herding them back, away from the train.

“They are just going to leave us!” a gap-toothed peasant woman cried shrilly.

An angry murmuring erupted from the crowd, and the people began pressing forward against the soldiers.

A single gunshot was fired into the air, silencing the crowd. “There will be room for everyone,” said a German lieutenant in a loud but calm voice, a Luger pistol in hand.

"Be calm. You will be boarding soon. But as I am sure you can understand, the wounded must go first."

The crowd on the depot platform relaxed. They had the reassurance they needed. From a few of them came words to the effect that they could see the logic and fairness of what the officer had told them: Surely, the wounded had to be taken care of first. Some sounded ashamed of themselves for having been so selfish and untrusting.

We put most of the wounded on straw mattresses in the cars. Some of the soldiers arriving from the front helped us with the patients; however, most just climbed into the cars and found a comfortable place for themselves. Many immediately fell asleep; the rest sat staring into space, motionless as statues. Among the latter was a boy whose left leg was badly cut, and who suddenly went into convulsions. Tamara and I crawled into the car to try to help the doctor there. The convulsions ceased; the boy lost consciousness. By fluttering light in the car, I sprinkled sulfa powder on the wound, then watched as Tamara and the doctor stitched up the boy's flayed leg. I heard a commotion outside, on the depot platform. More soldiers climbed into our car, and into cars all up and down the line; at the same time, I heard the chug of the locomotive. The train rocked forward.

"They *are* going to leave them," I muttered aloud.

From outside, a German soldier rolled the heavy door of our car closed with a bang.

Through the slatted sides of the car I could see the

civilians on the depot platform, and caught a glimpse of more soldiers scrambling into cars. Other soldiers, with fixed bayonets, were herding the civilians back, away from the train as they yelled and begged to be let on board.

"You can't do this!"

They began to press forward.

"You're leaving us to die, you lying pigs!"

Overhead, from the roofs of the train cars, there were bursts of automatic-weapons fire, over the civilians' heads. Depot windows shattered and dusty plumes of stucco popped from walls. In a panic, the crowd retreated into the terminal building. As they did, the remaining soldiers raced for the train and jumped aboard.

Slowly it gathered momentum, leaving the depot and the civilians behind. Tamara and I looked at each other. Both of us were sickened by what had just happened. But there was nothing we could say, nothing we could do.

"Give me a hand."

We picked our way through the car to where the doctor was kneeling over a soldier with a badly infected foot. Tamara held up a flickering kerosene lamp. I pulled the boot and sock off. The doctor went to work.