



a novel

The

Tulip

Resistance

Hidden among the
tulips are refugees,
messages, and
hope

LYNNE ALLEN

The
Tulip
Resistance

LYNNE LEATHAM ALLEN



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chapter
ONE



April 1940

The two culprits crouched behind the splintered, weathered door, scheming against Bastiaan's know-it-all sister. Bastiaan chewed on his fingernails and spit them nervously into the air. His voice climbed to a high-pitched hysteria. "But she's my sister!"

"She'll forgive you. Sisters have to," Abram, Bastiaan's Jewish friend shot back. He peeked around the door again.

"Boy, getting up at four o'clock in the morning just to get even is downright spiteful!" Bastiaan scowled as he hunched over the chicken coop, half-scared of Abram's newest scheme.

"*Ja*, it gets you all fired up and the day seems a whole lot brighter already, doesn't it?" Abram said, peering up at Bastiaan.

"Ah, come on. You know how scared she is of that dumb cellar. We might give her a heart attack, even at her young age of fourteen."

"*Ja*," Abram retorted, his brown eyes gleaming.

"I don't know how I let you talk me into such things. Papa'll nail my hide to the wall and cuff your ears so hard they'll look like giant mushrooms on that cocky, pointed head of yours."

"Oh, he won't catch us. Besides your snitch of a sister needs some humbling. Maybe next time she won't humiliate us in front of the whole church social. Father Eisen wouldn't have known we put the alcohol in the punch if your sister

hadn't tattled on us. I wouldn't trade it for the world though. The girls screaming with their tongues hanging out, and Jen Oberlson even puked!"

"Marieka can't help it. She's a girl," Bastiaan said, feeling an upsurge of guilt as his smile dissolved into a grimace.

"*Ja*, and flakey too. If she's stupid enough to mess with us older men of sixteen, then she should know we'd get even. Are you sure she milks at 4:00 a.m.? She's late!" Abram smirked, shaking his head.

"She'll be here. She has to. Papa gets her up if she isn't up by 3:30. Besides, she loves to milk Zippora." Bastiaan rolled his eyes and coughed. "But she's so superstitious about that cellar. It absolutely scares her, like it's haunted or something. I don't know if this is such a good idea."

"What's the story about it anyway? Why's she so terrified?" Abram asked.

Bastiaan frowned and stared at him thoughtfully. Then he replied, "Don't know. It means something to Papa, but he won't talk about it and gets mad if you ask him. So of course Marieka's imagination goes wild and thinks it's full of ghosts and demons out to get her."

"Who cares?" Abram shrugged again. "She's got it coming. Now get in there, or are you scared of it too?"

"No." Bastiaan flinched, trying to hold his voice steady, but looked away so Abram couldn't see his discomfort.

"She'll be here any minute. When I give you the signal, moan a bit and rattle the door. That'll teach her. She'll screech like old lady Carlson when the mouse ran across her feet during Father Eisen's sermon. I think he was talking about Paul's account of how women aren't supposed to be heard in church." Abram laughed. "I sure had a difficult time convincing the rabbi I hadn't converted to being a Christian. I told him I just like the social aspect, the girls. He didn't like it. He told me to stay away from your church and to always wear my kippa^[1] and be proud I'm Jewish because 'Divine Presence' is always over my head." Abram liked rubbing in the "Divine Presence" part to Bastiaan. He was always reminding Bastiaan that Abram was one of the chosen people, as if he were higher up in God's eyes. But Bastiaan didn't mind. Abram had been his friend since they were three.

"You don't think it'll be too much?" Bastiaan asked with trepidation. Chestnut curls fell across his smooth, wide forehead as he ducked his six-foot frame

through the chicken coop door. Dark lashes covered salient brown eyes looking down with anguish. His flawless bronze complexion sported the bashful smile of an awkward teenager about to dishonor his sister.

Abram was several inches shorter. His semetic-shaped nose, though slightly oversized for his oval shaped face added to his handsome Jewish features. His dark eyes were alive and sparkled with mischief. His mouth curled into an impish grin. “No, a little fear never hurt anybody. It makes them humble,” he said, peering up at Bastiaan.

MARIEKA PULLED ONE strap of Bastiaan’s hand-me-down overalls over her shoulder. She was tall and slender. She kept her mahogany-brown hair in one long braid that went to the small of her back. Her eyes were the same dark color of her father’s, but her smile was the beautiful curvature and full lips of her mother’s. She yawned in the dark and then headed for the barn. She flipped the single braid of her dark hair to the back and approached the pen where the old Jersey, Zippora, and her calf were. Her feet slid inside the worn oversized boots as she walked into the frost-covered corral. She felt like an elephant on the frozen mud. It took all her concentration to keep from doing the splits or landing on her backside while herding Zippora into the barn. Every time Marieka got two steps away from the cow, she would do a “Hans Brinker” and dodge her as skillfully as the old boy himself in a tight turn on ice. She could almost hear the rotten beast laugh.

“You know, Zippora, if I thought throwing a fit would take the miserable out of you, I would scream louder than Thor, the God of Thunder, in your ear. Maybe you wouldn’t be so high and mighty then. So get into that barn before I do something you’ll regret.”

ABRAM CLAMPED A hand over his mouth to stifle his laughter as he watched Marieka through the splintered slats of the chicken coop. Bastiaan told him it would take her about twenty minutes to milk, and then she would head for the chicken coop where the old cellar neighbored the shed. According to the plan, she’d come out the side door, see the cellar door, and side step it as usual. That would be the signal for Bastiaan to groan and rattle the door, and wail and screech like the hounds of Hades had been let loose.

“Poor old Marieka won’t have anywhere to run except in place,” Abram snickered. “I can’t wait to see the snooty tattletale’s face turn several shades of pale. It serves you right.” His voice turned to a whisper. “I’ll teach you to mess with me.”

At twenty past four, Marieka stepped over the plank at the bottom of the door. She slammed the bucket of milk onto the frozen ground, sloshing it over the side, and then headed for the hay. She found the pitchfork next to the fence, stabbed it roughly into the fodder, and threw it angrily over the fence.

“It looks like she’s already mad enough to eat a bucket of nails and spit them out at the first poor misfit she sees,” Abram whispered. “Maybe it’s not such a good idea to mess with her right now.” His voice rose as his eyes darted to Bastiaan and back to Marieka. “When it comes to a woman’s temper, I’m out of here,” Abram cringed.

Abram felt queasy as he watched her use the pitchfork as a weapon of anger.

His breathing quickened as he backed away from the now too revealing door. He stepped in a pile of chicken poop scattered throughout the coop. His formerly arrogant features had entwined with panic and disgust. He balanced on one foot while vigorously shaking the other to dislodge the slimy goo. In the process he twisted his ankle and did a balancing act that teetered on the edge of humiliation.

Abram tried to steady himself by putting his hand on the first thing he could find, which was the face of fat brown hen. It flew at the defenseless trespasser with the fury of a depraved harpy. He threw up his hands to deflect the bird but lost his balance and fell into the watering pan. He cried out as he tried to pull the enraged fowl from his face with one hand while the other he placed on the floor to steady himself, in yet another pile of chicken poop.

UPON HEARING WHAT he thought was the signal, Bastiaan wailed like an ailing banshee with a bellyache. His fingers curled around the edge of the decaying door and shook it with the ferocity of a rabid beast.

MARIEKA WAS STANDING in front of the cow’s pen and jumped when she heard the unearthly commotion. She wondered what had possessed the chickens. Her breath caught in her throat; she feared the cellar had been opened somehow and

had released the demons of hell onto the unsuspecting world. Then she heard a string of explicit swear words in a voice she recognized.

“What? What’s going on?” she called.

Abram pushed the chicken coop door open and fell face-first onto the hideout’s covering. His hair was strewn with straw, splotches of poop covered his clothes, a red streak was slashed across his cheek, and it looked as if he’d wet his pants.

Bastiaan started wailing, “Let me out of here!” as if he had been buried alive. He tried to move the decayed door, but it wouldn’t budge. All the while, Abram was squealing like a baby pig with a possessed chicken attacking him.

Marieka cupped her hands over her nose and a hiccupped giggle escaped her throat. Tears rolled down her cheeks as she laughed breathlessly. She migrated toward the bumbling duo. Abram kicked the air and flailed his arms to get rid of the crazed bird while Bastiaan kept screaming to be let out of the dungeon.

“What are you two doing? Why are you out here at four o’clock in the morning?” Marieka asked, trying to control her laughter.

Abram clutched the chicken with both hands and finally propelled it through the air like a feathered cannon ball. He got on his hands and knees and crawled to the side of the barn where he stood with a puckish grin on his face. Bastiaan heaved the door, almost ripping it from its hinges, gasping for air as if he had been drowning. He climbed out of the old cellar and huddled together with Abram, with an unabashed grin. Each pointing to the other, denying their own guilt.

When Marieka realized she was supposed to be the recipient of their foul play, her laughter turned to fury, and she shrieked a few select high-pitched words. She picked up a handful of rocks and threw them at the two delinquents.

“Oh, cut it out, Marieka! Can’t you take a joke?” Bastiaan cried. “We were just going to teach you not to go blabbering to Father Eisen on us anymore.”

“It’s no joke to mess around with that old cellar,” she shouted, grabbing another handful of rocks. “You half-brained nitwits. I hope you go where you will eat hot coals for eternity and your tongues thirst forever!” She threw the rocks at their hand-covered gaunt faces.

“Wow, Marieka. We were just kidding! Calm down!” Bastiaan wailed.

“What’s going on here?” Hendrick Coevorden asked as he stepped onto the back porch, sipping a cup of tea.

“Am I ever glad to see you, Papa,” Bastiaan said, crouched behind Abram. “Marieka has gone crazy on us! Tell her to calm down.”

“Bastiaan and Abram thought it would be funny to scare the wits out of me, but they foiled their own plan, and I am just giving them what they deserve!” Marieka yelled. She bent down for another handful of dirt.

“Abram, you have business here?” Mr. Coevorden asked, looking sternly at him.

“Um, no, sir.” Abram coughed and moved away from Bastiaan.

“Then I suggest you head for home if you don’t want to be put to work.” Hendrick set the cup of tea down on the wicker table by the door and walked toward the three kids.

“Uh, yes, sir, Mr. Coevorden. I’m out-a-here.” Abram wasted no time heading down the road.

“Marieka, did you get the milking done?” Hendrick demanded with a stern look.

“Yes, Papa,” Marieka said as she picked up the bucket of milk.

“Then get the eggs gathered and get to your delivering.”

“Yes, Papa.” Marieka headed for the house.

“Bastiaan, I’ll deal with you later. Get the wood chopped. After breakfast, I want you to go into town and have Mr. Heingle fix the D-ring on the harness. It didn’t fare the winter well. Now get to work.”

Bastiaan turned away quickly so that Papa couldn’t see the smile spread across his face. *If going to see Eilsa at Mr. Heingle’s store is Papa’s idea of punishment, I’ll take it any time*, he thought.

BASTIAAN LOOKED INTO the grid glass window of the door in Heingle’s store and scanned the room for Eilsa. His eyes dropped as he opened the door and the old bell rang, announcing his presence. He caught the familiar whiff of leather and soap, stirring the wistful memories of visits here with his papa when Bastiaan was a child. *Mr. Heingle’s store never changes*, he thought as he looked at the tools above the counter. He remembered Mr. Heingle mussing his hair with his large calloused hands, then squatting down and looking him square in the eyes and asking, “Would you like to be the first to sample a piece of candy from my jars on the counter?”

Of course he did. Bastiaan smiled to himself remembering how his eyes would light up and he'd politely say, "Oh, yes, sir!" Then Mr. Heingle would let him choose any piece of candy he wanted. He always chose the red ones because they tasted like cherries.

Bastiaan approached the counter; his heart quickened when he saw Eilsa coming from the back. He looked past her at the new tools on the wall in an effort to hide his discomfort. He noticed an impish smile cross her face and disappear as she said, "Sir, what may I help you with today?"

"Uh..." Bastiaan cleared his throat, took his hat off, and twisted it in his hands. "Is your father around? I have a harness that is in urgent need of fixing."

She smiled politely. "He's in the back. I'll get him."

She disappeared through the curtains and a moment later Mr. Heingle appeared.

"Ah, young Bastiaan. What can I do for you today?"

"Papa sent me to see if you could fix this harness, sir. He said it's awfully important."

"Well, young Bastiaan, I'll get right on it. Have a seat. I'll send Eilsa to get you a soda while you wait."

"Thanks. That's very kind of you, sir," Bastiaan said and took a seat at the only table. Two farmers, Mr. Husselman and Mr. Veltman, often used the little table for playing checkers. They were known to spend their afternoons here playing with half the village watching.

Bastiaan took off his hat just as Eilsa appeared through the curtains, tray in hand, with the soda. She set a glass and the open bottle in front of him. He squirmed as the rose fragrance of her hair reached him when she leaned over the table. He cleared his throat and coughed. "Uh, thanks." Eilsa smiled, suppressing a giggle, and skirted away.

Bastiaan sighed in frustration, berating himself for his awkwardness.

The bell on the door jingled; two old farmers wearing bib overalls and faded shirts entered. They were talking loudly and seemed to be arguing as they walked over to the little table where Bastiaan was sitting. Mr. Veltman cleared his throat and frowned. Bastiaan jumped up and offered them the table. The two nodded at him without a smile and sat down.

“Johan,” Pieter Husselman said in his low, angry voice, “I hear tell that the Germans are invading other countries. I’m afraid we’re going to see war.”

“No, we won’t. We’re a neutral country.”

“I tell you, we are not safe,” Pieter argued.

“What makes you think so? I think you must be tipping the bottle too much or you’re getting a little daft.”

“Rumors of war are spreading. It has been reported in the newspapers. You ought to try reading them once in a while.” Pieter’s voice rose.

Bastiaan was listening so intently that he jumped when the bell jingled again and another couple of farmers entered.

“Agardas,” Johan called, “Pieter here says we are about to be invaded by Germany. What do you think?”

“Have you not heard?” one farmer answered. “Germany invaded Norway and Denmark yesterday. Denmark surrendered that very day but the Norwegians are trying to hold out. Do you think we’re next, Pieter? It would be a dark day for this country if such a thing were to happen.”

Mr. Heingle startled Bastiaan when he came up behind him and said, “Your harness is done.” He had been listening so intently to the conversation that he had forgotten why he was there.

“Let me know if you need any more help. Tell your Papa I’ll get with him later on the bill.”

“Oh thanks, Mr. Heingle,” Bastiaan said as he picked up the harness. He dawdled toward the door, hesitant to leave and miss the farmers’ conversation.

“Oh, Bastiaan, have a piece of candy for your journey home,” Mr. Heingle said, jar in hand.

Bastiaan’s face lit up and then he frowned. He wasn’t a boy anymore; he didn’t need candy. Besides, he didn’t want Eilsa to think he was childish by taking a piece of candy like a little kid.

“Uh... no thanks, Mr. Heingle. Got to get home,” he said, stealing a look in the direction of Eilsa.

Mr. Heingle glanced to where Bastiaan was looking and tried to hide a knowing smile behind his hand.

“Good-bye, Mr. Heingle.”

Bastiaan walked home slowly, thinking about the old farmers' conversation. It disturbed him. They had to be wrong. It had to be stories of senile old men who had nothing better to do than spread gossip.

He decided they didn't know what they were talking about and hurried home with a lighter step. He didn't know whether to repeat the wild story to his father or to keep it to himself. His father may reprove him for listening in on others' conversations and then repeating the foolish rumors. Bastiaan decided it was best to keep such things to himself.

"AH, MR. HEINGLE did a fine piece of welding on this D-ring!" Papa said. "Let's hook up the team. I'm anxious to get to work. I hope the sun has melted the frost," Papa said as he and Bastiaan harnessed Nyes and Bet. As if on signal, the horses shook their manes simultaneously to adjust their collars.

Papa frowned. "Winter was too long this year. If we don't get this field plowed, we'll be late planting and risk the chance of a late harvest and an early frost."

ANNA COEVORDEN was in the kitchen preparing breakfast. "Marieka!" she called. "Get the cream separated and put it in the churn. You're running late this morning. Tell Mrs. Berg and Miss Remi you had a mishap again and are short of milk."

"Oh, Mama, they will think I'm a half-wit."

"Can't be helped. Just tell them they'll have more in a couple of days."

"Yes, Mama."

Marieka opened the lid on the container of cream and poured it in the churn. When the yellow curds of butter appeared, she shaped them into round balls, wrapped them in cheesecloth, and then stacked the butter in the basket behind the seat on her bicycle. She filled two one-gallon metal cans with the morning's milk, dividing it evenly between Mrs. Berg and Miss Remi, and loaded it into the basket along with two dozen eggs for Mr. Buskirk. She covered the basket with a small blanket and waved to her mama. "Be back soon."

The fields, green with the first whisperings of spring and the awakening tulips, were breathtaking as Marieka pulled away from her home. She could smell the scent of the Netherlands's famous blooms while lost in thought, peddling slowly along the canal's animating sedge.

Marieka's first stop was to a paint-chipped house encircled by a picket fence in need of repair and a whitewash.

"Aren't they beautiful!" Miss Remi, the middle-age spinster, said, walking up behind her. "I dig up the bulbs and sell them to Mr. Heingle, who in turn sells them for distribution throughout the world. Papa has been selling tulip bulbs for years, but with him being down with a stroke, I have been unable to harvest as he did, so I have had to turn to selling eggs and taking in mending to help out."

"Your tulips are the most beautiful in all of Holland. I love to ride by here in the spring. Their beauty is breathtaking," Marieka said, handing the can of milk to Miss Remi.

Miss Remi, a long-time Jewish friend and neighbor of the Coevordens, smiled, her blue eyes twinkling. She thanked Marieka and reached for the milk can.

"It feels light today."

"Yes, I had an accident this morning," Marieka said. "It's half the price."

"Oh dear, I will have to be careful using it then. Thank you, Marieka. I hope there will be more next time. See you in a couple of days."

Waving good-bye to Miss Remi, Marieka headed toward Ede to make the rest of her deliveries.

Marieka leaned her bike against Mrs. Berg's picket fence and hoped she would be as good-natured as Miss Remi was about the missing milk. She walked to the front door and rang the bell.

A medium-height woman with an ample figure answered the door. "Hello, ma'am," Marieka said. She started to explain about the lost milk as she handed the gallon can to Mrs. Berg.

"Oh, the can feels lighter today. Marieka, is there a problem?"

"No, ma'am. Just an accident while milking this morning. I am sorry there isn't as much milk today."

"Oh dear," Mrs. Berg said as she jerked the milk can out of Marieka's hand. "Please, Marieka, be more careful so such accidents don't happen."

"Yes, ma'am," Marieka said. "Mama said it is half today."

"As well it should be. I hope there will be more next time."

THE RICH FRAGRANCE of bread met Marieka's nose when she walked into the bakery. Mr. Buskirk, a short, fat older man with a ring of gray hair, reminded her

of her plump, loving grandfather. She wondered if it was an unwritten law for all bakers to wear a white uniform, with aprons smeared with jam, cinnamon, and frosting. Mr. Buskirk was taking several round loaves of bread out of the oven with a large wooden paddle. "Ah, little Marieka." He smiled. "How nice to see you today. Have you some of your sweet butter for me?"

"Yes, and two dozen eggs."

"Good, good. Have a seat and enjoy one of my fresh pastries."

Marieka stared into the glass case displaying the delicious pastries.

"So many decisions," Mr. Buskirk said. "They all look so good, eh?"

"Oh, yes. Which one shall I choose?"

"May I suggest the blanketletter. It's an almond pastry. I just took it out of the oven, and it's still warm. They melt in your mouth and your taste buds beg for more even while you are eating." Mr. Buskirk chortled.

"Oh, yes. That's what I want!"

Mr. Buskirk chuckled and handed a pastry to Marieka. She sat at a small table and ate it voraciously.

"Enjoy, my little Marieka. I could not have such delicious pastries without your wonderful butter."

"Then I will always bring my butter, if you will always make such delicious pastries."

"It's a deal." Mr. Buskirk chuckled again.

Just then, the door opened and Mrs. Eman came in, her hands and arms shaking.

"Ah, Mrs. Eman. How are you this fine morning?"

"Have you not heard the German's bombed the Norwegian ports and invaded Denmark yesterday?" she asked as she handed Mr. Buskirk twenty-five duits. "We will be next. We will, I just know it."

"Now, Mrs. Eman, calm down. You are listening to the tales of prattling gossips again. Why would the Germans want our little Netherlands? We have nothing to offer them. You worry yourself for no reason." Mr. Buskirk patted her hand.

"Do you really think so, Mr. Buskirk?" she said, wiping her tears with a handkerchief.

"Do not fear. Now would you like your usual today?"

“Yes, thank you. And thank you for your kind words. I will go home feeling better. You have a gentle way.”

“Have a good day, Mrs. Eman, and stay away from the gossips,” Mr. Buskirk clucked.

Marieka finished her last bite. “Good-bye, Mr. Buskirk,” she said and hurried out the door. She wondered if it was true that Germany invaded those countries. *Would we be next? And was it true that the Netherlands had nothing to offer the Germans so they would not bother us? Why was Germany invading other countries?* Her mind spun as she hopped on her bike and headed home.

Marieka left her bike at the back door and hurried into the tiny kitchen. “Mama, did you hear? Germany invaded Denmark and the Norwegian ports yesterday. Is it true, Mama?”

“Where did you hear such things?”

“At Mr. Buskirk’s bakery. Mrs. Eman came in upset and told Mr. Buskirk. But Mr. Buskirk said it was a tale of wagging tongues and not to believe it. Oh, what if it is true, Mama?”

“Marieka, you mustn’t listen to gossip. It’s the devil’s work.”

“But, Mama, I wasn’t. There are so many who are scared and saying the same thing in the village.”

“Marieka,” her mother said, scolding. “Do not believe such tales. Now, put your bike away and get to your studies. They are waiting for you. You are late as usual.”

“Yes, Mama.”

ANNA COEVORDEN STOOD in silence after Marieka left. There were stories of the Germans invading Poland. France and Great Britain had declared war on Germany, but the Dutch government issued a declaration of neutrality. Surely, the Germans would honor such a declaration. *I need to get busy and not worry about such things*, she thought.

THE NEXT WEEK Marieka heard a broadcast on the radio while at Mr. Buskirk’s bakery saying that Germany had invaded the Netherlands on May 10, 1940, without a declaration of war. The Netherlands had surrendered five days later. “We will all become subject to the invaders now with a new government and new

imposed laws," Marieka said. Mr. Buskirk looked sad but didn't say any comforting words.

chapter
TWO



July 1940

The rainbow-colored tulip fields lay dormant, their yellowed leaves expired, as if reflecting the oppressive spirit of Holland. The spirit, like the beauty of the fields, wilted with the onslaught of the German takeover.

All was quiet at Miss Remi's. The chickens and pig were gone from the yard. Marieka parked her bike next to the fence as Miss Remi opened the door holding a cloth to her cheek.

"Miss Remi, what happened? Where are your chickens and pig?"

Miss Remi pulled Marieka inside and shut the door. "The Germans came. They said they had a right to confiscate the pig and chickens to feed their army. I protested but one of them struck me."

"Oh, Miss Remi, how awful. And your father?"

"He is all right. They didn't search the house because they were more interested in the chickens and the pig." Miss Remi's hand shook as she took the milk can from Marieka.

"Do you have enough food?" Marieka asked.

"We have enough for a few days. I don't dare go into Ede to buy food. We are Jews you know."

"So?"

"The Germans hate Jews. I've heard rumors of the mistreatment of Jews in other countries."

Marieka's face darkened, "They are only rumors."

Marieka took Miss Remi to the kitchen, rinsed the cloth with cool water, and put it on her cheek.

“Miss Remi, my mama will be by tomorrow to check on you. She has been concerned about your papa and will be very upset with what happened here today.”

“Thank you, Marieka. You are so kind. Maybe you shouldn’t go to the village today.” Miss Remi frowned.

“I have to deliver milk to Mrs. Berg and Mr. Buskirk’s butter. I’ll be okay.”

“Be careful, Marieka. There are so many Germans around.”

YES, ON THE outside the village does appear to be the same as usual, with the exception of German soldiers everywhere. Marieka thought as she hurried to Mrs. Berg’s and rang the bell. Mrs. Berg answered and seemed startled to see her. “Well, hello, Marieka. You are early today. Put the milk on the kitchen table,” she ordered curtly.

Marieka sat the milk down and heard an unfamiliar male voice: “Griet, I am waiting.”

Marieka turned around and looked wide-eyed at Mrs. Berg.

Mrs. Berg shoved her to the door and pushed her out. “It’s none of your affair, missy.”

“Yes, ma’am,” Marieka said and left.

DELICIOUS AROMAS MET Marieka when she opened the door to the bakery. Four uniformed German soldiers were at the counter giving their breakfast orders to Mr. Buskirk. After giving Mr. Buskirk their orders, they sat down at the small table at the front.

Mr. Buskirk’s hands shook as he set a teacup in front of each soldier and poured the steaming brew. The men spoke in German and ignored Mr. Buskirk as he finished and slipped quietly into the back.

Startled, Marieka stared at the soldiers for a moment and then tried to step past them. The tall, handsome blond soldier stood in front of her, blocking her path.

“Ah, what do we have here?” the handsome man said in Dutch looking down his nose at her. “A *Fräulein* has come to visit.”

Marieka let out a gasp, clutched her blouse, and tried to step past him.

“What do you have, *Fräulein*? Are you bringing supplies for the German soldiers?” His voice dripped with sarcasm.

“Lieutenant Schmidt, leave the girl be,” the older soldier barked in German.

The handsome soldier frowned and sat down, reluctant to follow the order. “You must forgive the rude behavior of my lieutenant,” the older officer said in broken Dutch. “Do you have business here, *Fräulein*?”

“Yes, sir. I am delivering eggs and butter to Mr. Buskirk.”

“Ah, that is good! So Mr. Buskirk can make more of these delicious pastries. Do not be afraid. You are free to go.”

“Thank you, sir.” Marieka headed toward the kitchen.

“Good morning, Mr. Buskirk,” she said warily, setting the butter and eggs on the workbench. Mr. Buskirk looked up, his eyes questioning if she was okay.

Marieka didn’t lift her face to his, fearing he would see the tears running down her cheeks. She didn’t linger as usual but bade him a good morning and left. She trembled as she walked past the German soldiers again. They looked up at her but said nothing.

Outside, Marieka leaned against the side of the bakery and breathed a sigh of relief.

THE LIEUTENANT RAISED his brows, tilted his head toward the colonel, and grinned. “Ah, she is a pretty little *Fräulein*, huh?”

Colonel Heinrich Boere looked at him with a stern expression. “Lieutenant Schmidt, may I remind you of our orders? We are not to harass the Dutch people. We do not interfere in their affairs and terrorize them. Is that clear?”

Lieutenant Schmidt cleared his throat, his steely-blue eyes smoldering. “Yes, sir.”

The soldiers asked for more tea and talked leisurely for half the morning. “Would you like anything else, sirs?” Mr. Buskirk asked, stammering.

Lieutenant Schmidt opened his mouth to harass the old baker but decided against it when he saw Colonel Boere’s face.

Colonel Boere nodded to the old man and said, “You are dismissed.”

A slight smile touched the corners of Mr. Buskirk’s mouth. He let out an audible sigh and quickly disappeared into the back.

Colonel Boere leaned back, his hand curled around the teacup, and listened to Corporal Muller's story of getting tricked into milking a farm animal when he was a child. ". . . they didn't tell me it was a bull."

Colonel Boere laughed. "Don't you know the difference between a bull and a heifer?"

"Yes, in the daytime when I'm sober," he said and laughed.

The Germans had finished their breakfast when they heard gunfire coming from outside. They sprang to their feet, hands on their weapons, and ran out of the bakery. An eerie mood hung in the air; everyone stood immobilized. Two old women were across the street huddled together, whimpering like scared children. A middle-aged man was in the middle of the street with his supplies scattered in front of him, while a German soldier was shooting at his feet, saying, "Dance, you Jewish pig."

"Judging from the frightened faces, that private has succeeded in scaring half the town," Colonel Boere remarked. He stiffened as he watched the soldier and then barked, "Cease this behavior! Leave the Jew be. Get back to your duties. Now!"

The private placed his weapon on his shoulder, stood at attention, saluted, and turned on his heel, leaving the Jewish man alone in the street with his scattered food.

Colonel Boere yelled at the Jew, "Leave, or I will finish what my private started!" The Jew quickly picked up his spilled supplies and ran down the street. Lieutenant Schmidt drew his pistol and aimed it at the Jew's back. "Click," he said, sneering, and then laughed as he put the gun back in the holster. The other two soldiers joined in making fun of the Jew, but Colonel Boere did not. He failed to see the humor in another man's misery.

BASTIAAN STOOD IN front of the cracked mirror in the tiny bathroom and combed his thick curly hair. He dressed in his best shirt, which had seen better days, but thought he looked rather handsome in and hoped it would catch Eilsa's attention.

Marieka walked past the open door, leaned back and whistled, "Wow, look at you! Where are you going, Mr. Spiffy?"

Bastiaan shut the door. "Never mind, Miss Nosey!"

“Oh, you’ve got a date,” Marieka said as she pushed the door back.

“I do not!”

“With Eilsa? Ooo.”

“I don’t either. If you must know, I’m going to the dance at Mr. Meijr’s barn.”

“Oh, *ja*, I remember it. Papa said I can’t go because I have to milk so early. He said next time he would milk so I could go. Is Eilsa going to be there?” Marieka taunted.

“How would I know? Mind your own business!” Bastiaan snapped.

“Aha, I hit a raw nerve.”

“You better get out of here before I cut off your braid,” Bastiaan growled as he grabbed his papa’s straight razor.

“Can’t you take a little teasing? Boy, you sure are touchy when it comes to Eilsa.”

Bastiaan headed toward Marieka with the razor. She stepped behind the door, slammed it on his hand, and ran off shrieking and giggling into the kitchen. Bastiaan ran after her.

Marieka ran behind Anna and yelled, “Mama, protect me!”

“Leave Marieka be,” Anna said, her voice rigid. “I don’t know, Bastiaan. I don’t like it. You can get into a lot of trouble at night with the Germans around.”

“Oh, Mama, you worry too much. The Germans have left us alone so far. Besides, I’m going with Abram so I won’t be alone.”

“Abram is a good boy, but he’s Jewish. That’s asking for trouble.”

“Ah, Mama. We’re just going to have fun.”

“I still don’t like it. I would rather you stay home where I know you are safe.”

Bastiaan chuckled. “Don’t worry. I’ll be fine. Be home around eleven.”

His feet flew over the dirt road faster than a lovesick bull. He could hear the music a mile away. Bastiaan imagined the couples doing the swing, with their legs stomping, skirts flying, and the old folks standing around complaining about how wicked the younger generation had become.

Outside the barn door, Bastiaan stopped to catch his breath. The Netherlands’s Dance Band provided the music with a guitar, a saxophone, a bass, and drums. In the center, several couples were doing the swing. Bastiaan swept the line of girls and then the dance floor for Eilsa. He finally spotted her dancing with Larz Leigma. Larz was a year older and bigger than Bastiaan and always enjoyed

making fun of him. Bastiaan's mood plummeted like the temperatures of an arctic breeze in the desert. He watched Eilsa's golden hair bob to the rhythm of the music, her face aglow. Her eyes didn't leave Larz's face.

Bastiaan's shoulders slumped. He turned to get lost in the crowd when his energetic friend came up behind him and poked him in the ribs. "Hey," Abram said. "I wasn't sure if you were going to make it, buddy."

Bastiaan turned, saw Abram wearing his Jewish kippa, and growled. "Hey, you promised no Jewish stuff tonight."

"Look around. Do you see any Germans?"

"Well, no, but that hat is bad news."

"Don't worry. I'll hide it if we run into any Germans." Abram laughed.

"No, get rid of it now!" Bastiaan grabbed for Abram's cap.

"Nah, it'll be fine," Abram said, adjusting his kippa. "I've worn it forever. I'd feel naked without it."

Bastiaan scowled. "I don't like it. It's asking for trouble. I just hope the Germans don't see it and sweep the floor with you in it."

"Oh, stop worrying. Let's have some fun. There's a line of girls over there that look like they're dying to dance. Let's go ask them."

"No, you go ahead. I'll just watch for a while."

"What's wrong with you?" Abram demanded and then saw Bastiaan's eyes following Eilsa on dance floor. "Oh, I get it. Larz stole your girl, huh?"

"She's not my girl!"

"And of all the boys to steal her!" Abram taunted.

"He didn't steal her. He can't steal what I don't have," Bastiaan murmured. "Besides, she looks happy."

"Ah, come on, Bastiaan. There are other girls. Don't blow our fun tonight mooning over Eilsa. Let's help those girls flip some skirts!"

Abram always had a smooth line in his hat and a smile in his pocket when it came to girls. He crossed the dance floor and approached the girls. They elbowed each other, pushing their way to the front, each wanting to be the first asked to dance.

ABRAM DANCED WITH every girl in the barn with the exception of Adrie Wasselman. Every time he tried to ask her to dance, she'd disappear behind the

stack of straw or behind the refreshment table.

Abram shrugged. "Okay, if you don't want to dance with the most handsome guy in the place and the best dancer of the century, I'll just find a girl who will."

Finally, drained and out of breath, Abram searched for Bastiaan and found him sitting on a bale of straw, sulking.

"Are you going to sit here the whole night?" Abram asked. "Why don't you take a turn with the girls over there? They're pretty, ready, and willing. I'll bet they'd love to dance with a good-looking guy like you. I can't keep them all happy." Abram grinned.

Bastiaan looked at him out of the corner of his eye and grunted. "Leave me alone."

"Okay, but you'll have more fun if you'd just get over it and dance. Hey, let's have some refreshments," Abram said, spotting the punch bowl. He returned a few moments later with a glass of pink liquid and sat next to Bastiaan. His feet tapped annoyingly to the beat of the music.

"Darn it, Abram. You're bugging me."

Abram laughed and punched Bastiaan on the arm. "Can't let good music go to waste."

"Why don't you make yourself scarce? Go ask one of those willing girls to dance again," Bastiaan said and walked off.

BASTIAAN HEADED TOWARD the refreshment table but kept his eye on Eilsa. "She looks like she's sweet on that guy." He scowled, cranking his head toward the dance floor and not watching where he was going. He stepped on Adrie Wasselman's foot.

"Um... I'm sorry," Bastiaan said, looking into the bluest eyes he'd ever seen. "Adrie? Is that you?" he asked, unable to take his eyes away. Her long dark hair framed a delicate childlike face and fell in soft curls to her waist. She wore a pink cotton summer dress that warmed her creamy, flawless complexion. Bastiaan felt like he could melt when she smiled. He sucked in his breath. *She's beautiful*, he thought.

Adrie spun around to make a hasty retreat, but Bastiaan touched her hand. "Wait, don't go. You... you... you are so... what happened to you? Uh, I mean, you are all grown up..."

Adrie blushed and turned to leave.

“Wait, don’t go.”

Adrie ducked her head, hiding the blush that crept across her cheeks. “Oh, I shouldn’t have come. I’d better go.”

“Go? Go where?”

Adrie tried to slip behind the refreshment table, but Bastiaan blocked her retreat.

“Wait. I’m not having much fun either. Would you like to go outside and sit?”

“Um... I guess it wouldn’t hurt.”

Bastiaan awkwardly wove through the crowd with Adrie right behind. “Excuse me, may we get through?” What little confidence he had disappeared when he tripped on the bale of straw holding the door open. He could feel his ears turning red as he looked at Adrie. He brushed away an imaginary piece of straw from his shirt, trying to act audacious, and croaked, “Would you like to sit down?”

“Uh, *ja*, but where?”

Bastiaan pointed to the bales of straw that neatly lined the entrance on each side of the doors and said, “A throne for a queen.” Adrie giggled softly and sat down under the lantern over the door.

Bastiaan sat next to her, fidgeting. Then he finally asked, “Where have you been? I haven’t seen you since grade school.”

“I haven’t been to school for a long time,” Adrie whispered.

“Oh? How come?”

“When Papa died, Mama needed my help with sewing orders, so she took me out of school to help. Mama says I need to get out and make friends. She thought coming to this dance would be an excellent opportunity for me.”

Alfie Whittendom walked by, frowning, the smell of cigarette smoke lingering around him.

Adrie shrank and slid away from Bastiaan. She turned her head and continued, “She tried to teach me schooling at home. I didn’t have hardly any contact with people, so I got scared to talk to anyone.”

“You’re here tonight. I think you are doing a great job talking,” Bastiaan encouraged. “You’re not hiding under the refreshment table.”

“When Mama realized her mistake, she sent me to work part-time at Mrs. Digby’s Boarding House,” Adrie said shyly.

“Did you like that?”

“Sort of. After a while, I helped with cleaning and fixing meals, but serving the guests really scared me. Now Mama thinks I need to meet boys. I told her I didn’t want to meet boys, but she kept insisting.” Adrie’s voice shook as she looked at Bastiaan out of the corner of her eye.

“What’s wrong with boys? We’re a heck of a lot of fun.”

“She says boys make wonderful friends, but they only frighten me.”

“Well, I think I’m a good friend... to Abram. We’ve been friends since we were three. Why don’t you ask Abram if I’m a good friend?”

“Oh no, I couldn’t do that. I believe you. Besides, Abram is a little too... uh... loud for me,” Adrie said, cringing.

Bastiaan laughed. “That’s a nice way of saying he is loud and obnoxious.”

Adrie nodded and laughed softly.

“Would you like another drink of punch?” Bastiaan offered. “The bugs are getting too friendly out here.”

“Oh, no thanks. I’ve had enough.”

Bastiaan looked toward the sky. “I like a full moon. It’s great when I have to sneak home at night,” he said.

“Sneak home? What are you doing out so late that you have to sneak home?”

“It’s nothing bad. I just go to the church to the youth meetings. Pastor Eisen is teaching us stuff, like loyalty to country, integrity, and faith in God. Sometimes we have a snack and visit afterward. I usually stay too long. I guess I shouldn’t have used the word sneak, but I have to go in quietly so I don’t wake Mama. With the Germans around these days, she gets worried.”

“I would too. That’s what a good mama does.”

“*Ja*, she is a good mama,” Bastiaan said thoughtfully.

Bastiaan cleared his throat and said, “I hate to break up our little talk, but would you like to dance?”

“Oh, I really don’t know how to dance. That’s why I hid every time Abram got close... well, one of the reasons anyway.”

“It’s easy. Just move your feet to the music. And if you step on a toe or two, it doesn’t matter. It’s all in fun.”

Adrie hesitated but allowed Bastiaan to lead her onto the crowded dance floor. He took her right hand in his left and put his other hand gently on her back. Adrie stiffened when Bastiaan pulled her close but began to relax as he swayed to the music.

Bastiaan looked down and smiled at her about the same time she looked up at him. She turned away quickly, trying to hide her discomfort. Bastiaan bent over and whispered in her ear, "You're a natural."

Adrie murmured shyly, "Thank you. I think. I've never danced with a boy before."

Bastiaan laughed. "Then you really do have a natural ability for dancing."

They danced in silence. Bastiaan leaned his cheek on her soft hair and inhaled the sweet lilac fragrance that made his head spin. Adrie cautiously watched her feet so she wouldn't step on his toes, but she did.

"Uh... the music has stopped, Bastiaan," Adrie said as loud chatter filled the dance floor.

"Oh, has it? I hadn't noticed," Bastiaan said with a smile. "Would you like to dance the next one?"

"Yes, thank you. But when does the last dance end and the new one begin?" Adrie laughed.

The music began again to a faster beat. Bastiaan didn't pay attention to it as he held Adrie in his arms and moved slowly.

Abram bumped into Bastiaan. "Hey, I see you are finally dancing! That's great, and with a beautiful lady at that," he said. "May I have the next dance with her?"

"You may not. She is my dance partner. Go find your own."

Abram laughed. "You're a bit stingy, aren't you?"

"Yes, and I intend to stay that way."

Abram gave a big wink and walked away, his hands shoved into his pockets.

"That's my obnoxious buddy, Abram," Bastiaan said with his jaw set.

"Yes, I know."

"He thinks he's a lady's man."

"And he's a master of his trade," Adrie said, smiling.

Bastiaan laughed, pulled her close, and spun her around.

THE MUSIC SUDDENLY stopped, and the gaiety ceased as a lone German officer entered. Couples filtered off the dance floor as he approached. "Do not stop the dance for me," the handsome blond German said. "I have come to enjoy the festivities."

The crowd stood in stunned silence for a moment. "Play, play the music," Lieutenant Schmidt ordered. "Dance and have fun. I am not here on the affairs of the Third Reich."

The music started again. Couples stood rigid and refused to dance while he moved through them. Lieutenant Schmidt walked over to the refreshment table and helped himself to a cookie and a glass of punch. He turned to survey the room. A line of girls stood along the wall, but to his disappointment, the *fräulein* was not among them.

I'm setting myself up for harsh discipline by coming here if Colonel Boere finds out, the officer mused. *But I'm far from home and missing female companionship.*

Lieutenant Schmidt smiled as he watched the couples, and then he spotted the beautiful, young blonde girl in the center of the dance floor dancing with a pubescent boy. He gulped the remainder of his punch, set the glass down, and stepped through the crowd toward her. The crowd parted as if he were the plague. He tapped the gangly boy's shoulder and in a thick German accent asked, "May I cut in?"

A buzz of hushed whispers spread throughout the barn. The gossip would probably get back to his commander, but it was a small price to pay to dance with the beauty.

The boy nodded and coughed as he stepped back, his face twisted with anger. He walked off the dance floor, his shoulders hunched as if he had been defeated in a fight for dominance with a superior male.

The young girl looked into the handsome German's face, blushed, but didn't dare refuse.

The arrogant Lieutenant Schmidt took the girl in his arms and started to move with ease. He was polite and gentle as he spun her around the room. "What is your name, Fräulein?" he asked as he swayed to the music.

"My name is Eilsa," she said. The fear in her eyes began to subside with each turn of his easy manner.

When the music stopped, Lieutenant Schmidt held her hand and asked, "May I have the next dance?"

"Uh, yes," Eilsa rasped.

The music began with a lead guitar solo, joined by the bass and the other guitar playing in harmony, until all the instruments were playing a fast-paced jazz song. Lieutenant Schmidt boldly faced Eilsa, grabbed her hand, and turned her onto the floor. His fancy footwork was impressive to the onlookers as he moved her at his will.

Eilsa glanced over at Larz, his dark eyes smoldering. Eilsa knew that look and she wondered what was going through his head.

IT SEEMED EVERYONE got into the spirit of the music, especially Abram. Bastiaan watched as his friend, still wearing his Jewish skullcap, bounced around like an overeager aborigine and backed into the German. He held his breath when Lieutenant Schmidt turned around and saw the Jewish boy. Lieutenant Schmidt dropped Eilsa's hand and grabbed Abram by his shirt collar. "Jewish scum," he snarled. "Do you think you can touch a German officer? That is a death sentence in Germany!"

The music stopped, the silence heavy.

"Please, sir, I meant no harm. It was an accident," Abram apologized.

Lieutenant Schmidt's face twisted. His fist came up and hit Abram in the nose, knocking him to the floor.

"There are no accidents, Jew!" he shouted.

The hair on the back of Bastiaan's neck rose as he watched the commotion. Blood spurted from Abram's nose, and his eyes glazed over as he fell backward. Bastiaan's fists clenched into a ball as he pushed through the crowd, Adrie right behind him. His face tightened as angry tears threatened, but he didn't dare look at the officer in fear of bringing the officer's wrath on him also. He bent stiffly down and shoved a handkerchief onto Abram's nose.

"I suggest, Jew, you get out of my sight before I change my mind and shoot you."

Bastiaan lifted Abram's head and patted his cheeks. "Are you okay, Abram?"

Abram moaned, gasped, and coughed. His eyes had the far away, unfocused look of a drunk. He slurred, "Ja, but I think I should go home."

“Do you want me to go with you?” Bastiaan asked, lowering his voice to almost a whisper.

Abram’s voice trembled and sounded a little too shrill. “No, I’ll be okay. That’s if there aren’t any more German thugs out there. I think he came alone. I’ll be fine,” he said, shaking uncontrollably. “But thanks.”

“Maybe we all better go home,” Bastiaan said, looking around warily. “Adrie, may I walk you home? It isn’t safe for you to be out alone.”

Adrie held Bastiaan’s hand in a viselike grip. Trembling, she whispered, “Thanks, Bastiaan, but I came with Mrs. Digby.”

“Then I will walk you and Mrs. Digby home.”

“That will not be necessary,” she said, looking around nervously and then back to Bastiaan. “We will be safe. Her husband is with us. Maybe you ought to go with Abram. He needs your help more than I do.”

Bastiaan said an anxious good-bye to Adrie and watched as she and Mr. and Mrs. Digby left the dance. It was early, about ten o’clock, but many began to leave. The officer ordered the band to play and bade Eilsa to dance again. Eilsa stepped back, but he stepped forward, grabbed her hand, and led her to the center of the dance floor.

“Come on, Abram. Let’s get you home,” Bastiaan said as he lifted Abram to his feet.

Abram moaned and made a series of obnoxious snorts and sniffs as they walked back to Ede. The blood soaked the hanky in a matter of minutes. Bastiaan took off his shirt and put it on Abram’s nose.

“Boy, the swelling sure set in fast,” Bastiaan said, looking at him in the moonlight. “You won’t be able to see if your eyes keep swelling like that. You look like a boxer who didn’t have the good sense to duck.” Bastiaan chuckled.

“Not funny,” Abram said through the cloth.

Abram’s home was on the opposite side of the village. Bastiaan rang the bell, and Abram’s mother answered. When she saw Abram, she screamed. “What happened? Abram, have you been fighting?”

“No, Mama. Not exactly.”

“Not exactly? What does that mean?”

“Uh... I sort of ran into a German officer. Literally.”

“A German officer, where? Let me see your face.”

“Mama, I’m okay. I just have a bloody nose. He only hit me once.”

“Only once? Only once? Who did this? I’ll file a complaint at the police department tomorrow!”

“Mama, that won’t do any good. We’re Jews, remember?”

“How did he know you were a Jew?”

“I sort of wore my kippa,” Abram muttered sheepishly.

“I’ve told you, you’re not to wear that in public! Not with so many Germans around.”

“I know, Mama. Boy, do I know.”

“I’ll get some ice. Abram, you lie down.” She began walking toward the kitchen but turned back to Bastiaan. “Thank you for bringing him home. Can I get you another shirt? Will you be okay walking home alone?”

“Thanks, Mrs. Berkovitz. *Ja*, I know a shortcut through the fields, so I won’t be spotted by any Germans. I’ll be safe. Good night, Mrs. Berkovitz.”

LARZ BLUNDERED to the edge of the dance floor. He’d looked forward to this dance for half the summer. He finally got up enough courage to ask Eilsa to the dance before that annoying Bastiaan Coevorden did and was quite proud of himself for doing so. He thought he had taken care of any and all competition for Eilsa, but then this German officer showed up. He sat down hard on a bench, his eyes smoldered like hot coals, leering at the couple on the dance floor. He propped his foot on a bucket, biting his nails and spitting them out as if they were daggers of hatred. He sat hunched while images flashed through his mind of ways he could take care of the German pig.

Finally Larz couldn’t stand watching them any longer and left. He crept to the back of the barn and stumbled over a forgotten milk bucket that clattered across the ground as if to announce his murderous scheme. He hauled off and kicked the bucket across the barnyard as if daring someone to challenge him. He found a knife in the tool shed, stuffed it in his under his shirt, and hurried into the night. After a short walk, Larz came to a downhill slope beside the road surrounded by large bushes. He slid under the bushes to wait for the German officer.

Larz fidgeted and swatted at mosquitoes with a vengeance, cursing the lateness of the hour as the time ticked by excruciatingly slow. He acted out in his head a hundred times how he would slit the officer’s throat and feel the triumph that

would follow. Every time he imagined that German enjoying himself with his girl, rage pulsed through his blood. He had to constantly control the urge to shout out and charge back to the dance to kill him.

At last couples started to leave the dance. Some headed for farms, others headed for Ede. A lone straggler appeared. The moonlight bathed the earth in a soft blue hue, his uniform, his high collar, and the eagle swastika on his hat looked almost luminescent. Larz's insides churned as the audacity ignited, and he prepared to spring.

A GENTLE EVENING breeze lightly lifted an escaped curl on Lieutenant Schmidt's forehead as he languidly strolled down the road, smoking a cigarette. His thoughts were absorbed with the young Fräulein only to be interrupted by a sound behind him. He felt a chill go up his back to the nape of his neck. He spun around, instinctively throwing out his uniformed forearm, and deflected a knife, knocking it from the grasp as a dark form attacked him from behind. The assailant reached down to pick up the knife, and the lieutenant kicked him and sent him sprawling. He saw it was the boy from the dance and that his intent was obviously to take his life. The boy rolled over quickly and got to his feet, clutching the knife.

Lieutenant Schmidt laughed. "You foolish little boy. You think you can kill a German?"

Larz bellowed as he lunged at the officer again, this time slashing the blade across his hand. A low growl resonated in Lieutenant Schmidt's throat as he flashed his opponent an amused grin. He inhaled deeply, sidestepping another swipe and spun away from the blade. Larz came at him again. Lieutenant Schmidt anticipated the move and with catlike reflexes sunk a small stiletto, which had been hidden in his boot, into his stomach. Larz's eyes widened. He let out a moan, grabbed his stomach as blood dripped from his mouth, and then collapsed.

"Stupid boy," Lieutenant Schmidt said and kicked the body.

He took out his handkerchief and wrapped it around his hand. He strode back to his quarters, pondering his alibi.

THE NEXT DAY Lieutenant Schmidt was awakened by pounding on his door. He looked at the clock. It was still early for him to report to duty. He rubbed his eyes, yawned, and moaned as he got out of bed to go to the door. He opened it to a short, scared-looking private.

“Excuse me, sir, but the colonel has ordered you to his office. The town is in a frenzy. A boy was found murdered this morning and he needs you to restore order by finding out what happened.”

“GERMAN PIGS!” were the whispers throughout the village. The Dutch constable took the corpse to the funeral parlor. The director, Mr. Meir, looked over the pale body. “Do you know who has done this to the boy?”

“I don’t know,” Constable DeKeizer replied. “And it’s best to leave it that way. If a German has done this, there is nothing anyone can do. An investigation will only cause further violence and death. Give his mother my condolences, and let this be the end of it.”

“I will, but I’m afraid it will not be the end.”

“If it is not, then there will be more bloodshed. I suggest you try to soothe it over with everyone and to let it be, for their sakes.”

“Yes, sir,” Mr. Meir said, shaking his head sadly.

“THOSE GERMANS ARE the ones who killed him!” Anna Coevorden made no effort to keep her voice down. “I told you it wasn’t safe. That could have been you, Bastiaan! You are not to go out alone at night anymore. No, you are not going out of this house anymore, period!”

“Please, Mama. Be reasonable.”

“I am. I’m your mama and that’s as reasonable as I get!”

“Papa, talk to her! I can’t be a prisoner in my own home.”

Papa looked at Bastiaan. “I agree with your mama. You are not to go out at night anymore. And if there is a need to go to the village, we will go together.”

“Oh, Papa, you too?”

“There’s a war on, son. The Nazis don’t care who they kill. We have to protect our family, our home, and ourselves.”

THE ROSY HUES of the sunrise shone through the tiny bathroom window as Lieutenant Schmidt readied for the day. Normally he would have taken a few

minutes to enjoy a morning like, this but he snorted at its beauty when he looked at the gash on his hand. He jerked open the cupboard to get the disinfectant and gauze, letting out a string of swear words. He winced as he smeared the disinfectant across his hand and wrapped it in gauze, irritated that a mere boy could get the drop on him.

Inside the Dutch police station, he found a roomful of hysterical people. Ignoring them, he walked to Colonel Boere's office, rapped on the door, drew in a deep breath, and entered to report for duty.

Colonel Boere had already heard about the boy's death. He looked at Lieutenant Schmidt's bandaged hand suspiciously and asked, "What happened to your hand, Lieutenant?"

"It was cut in a fight, sir."

"What fight and when?"

"Last night, sir. I couldn't sleep and went for a walk."

"You were out alone at night?"

"Uh, yes, sir," Lieutenant Schmidt answered, staring directly at the colonel.

"Did you know that is grounds for discipline? It is dangerous, and I can't have one of my officers disobeying orders. That is not exemplary for the men."

"Yes, sir, but it was only for a short time."

"Cease your lies!" Colonel Boere shouted. "A boy from the village was killed last night. Do you know anything about that?"

"Yes, sir, I do. It was an accident. The boy attacked me and I had to defend myself."

"Why would a young Dutch boy attack a German officer?"

"I don't know, sir, but I was inclined to defend myself."

"If the villagers find out a German did this, there will be an uprising. Did you think of that?"

"Uh... no, sir. Not at the time."

"Well, maybe you should think!" yelled the commander. "You are an officer in the Third Reich. You are expected to think!"

"Yes, sir."

"There will be no discipline, and this will not be mentioned again. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir."

“You hurt your hand cleaning your weapon, do you understand?”

“Yes, sir.”

Colonel Boere got up and walked around his desk, facing the lieutenant. “Lieutenant Schmidt, I don’t like you. You are arrogant, foolish, and undisciplined. I would just as soon send you to the front lines. If I find that you have stepped out of line again, I may shoot you myself. Is that clear?”

“Yes, sir.”

“You are dismissed.”

“Yes, sir. Heil Hitler,” Lieutenant Schmidt said without emotion. He turned and left. “One day, Colonel, I will see to your demise,” he said, sneering.

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