



## Chapter 7

### France

"Ernst!" Quality said. She was as surprised as he. She had never imagined that the snooping German could be anyone she knew.

"You know each other?" the director asked, surprised in turn.

Ernst evidently realized that this could complicate things. "Only in passing," he said. "Think nothing of it. Find another person."

A sudden, bold, foolish notion came to her. "No, I will ride with you," Quality said. Though they were speaking in English, she was not using the Quaker plain talk. "I am surplus, at the moment."

Ernst spread his hands. "As you wish. It is a matter of indifference to me." Actually that was surely a simplification. He knew her, which might help, but she had not treated him kindly in America. Perhaps he felt alienated--or possibly he was protecting her from the stigma of being too close to a Nazi. He knew she would not lie about her work, or anything else, so he was willing to work with her.

"We do have a friend in common," she said. "I am ready to join you now."

She went with him to his car, and he put it in motion. "Had I known it was you, I would not have embarrassed you by such a request," he said. "I want neither a quarrel nor a complication for you."

"If it were another person making this inspection, I might find it more awkward," Quality said. "But though our politics are diametrically opposed, I do respect your integrity, Ernst. I know I can safely ride with you."

"On that much we can agree," he said tightly.

She cocked her head, almost quizzically. "We have one other thing in common."

He was momentarily blank. Then he remembered. "Guernica! We each lost friends there."

"Must this inspection be conducted on site, or will you accept my answers to your questions? We have nothing to hide."

"I fear you would not care to answer all my questions."

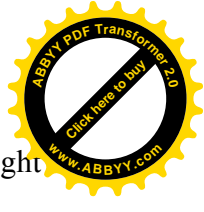
"If we played a game of truth?"

He glanced at her. "I prefer not to discuss politics with you again."

"I have a truly odd idea. Could we drive to Guernica, to see what happened there?"

"But that may be three hundred kilometers by road! We could not get there today, let alone return by nightfall."

"I do trust you, Ernst, and I want very much to see it. This may be my only chance, because the



moment my truck is fixed I will resume my route. I think you could safely go there, as I otherwise might not."

His surprise was growing. "You would spend the night with me?"

"I think it does not matter what others may think. You know that this is not a social encounter." That was certain!

He considered. "I would like to visit Guernica, and I could accept your answers. They are likely to be more informative than those of others I might question."

"Then go back to the office. I will notify them, and pack some things for a two day trip."

He drove her back, and waited in the car. Still surprised at her sudden audacity in proposing this excursion, she went to explain things to the director. She found it hard to believe that she was serious, but she was doing it regardless. She had never anticipated either encountering Ernst here, or traveling with him.

She collected necessary things in a small suitcase and returned to the car. They started off. He followed her directions to get efficiently out of the city and onto a suitable road going west. The farther they drove, the more the signs of the recent war manifested. There were bombed out buildings and burned areas, and every so often a detour where the road was in rubble. But she knew the best route through, and they made good progress.

"I must confess something," she said. "Though we were not friends in America, we did know each other, and it has been some time since I have seen a familiar face from my past. You remind me of America, ironically."

"So do you," he replied. "How is it you came to be here? I thought you were in college there."

"When I saw Lane off to the air training in Canada, I found I just couldn't return to my prior life. So I joined the relief effort here. We are doing what we can to feed the children, who have suffered grievously from a war they did not make."

"War is not pretty," he agreed.

"I soon discovered how ugly it is. I had never expected to find myself in such a thing, but this is where the need was, and where the need remains. Unfortunately the Nationalist government is becoming increasingly uncooperative. The American Friends Service Committee left Spain at the end of 1939, and our British Friends Service Council is under increasing pressure."

"I respect the master you serve. I will do what I can to facilitate the acquisition of the parts you need."

"We appreciate that. Can you tell me anything of your activities?"

He hesitated, and she realized that he could be engaged in secret work. Because she had recognized him, she could give away his original identity and interfere with his mission. "I must ask a favor of you."

"You are in secret work?"



"Yes. If you tell others my true identity, my life could be in danger."

This was more serious than she had thought. "I suspected something like that. I asked the director not to talk to others of our encounter."

He glanced at her. "Is this not deception? You do not practice such."

"I have learned to compromise. I am not proud of it, but now I do practice deception when it seems necessary." That was an unfortunate understatement.

"Then I ask you to speak of me to others only as I was introduced to you, and not to mention our prior acquaintance, for the person I am supposed to be has not been to America."

"Agreed."

"I am with the SS, doing internal investigation."

"Then you have not been involved in killing or sabotage," she said, relieved.

"You exonerate me too readily. I have not personally killed or sabotaged, but I have helped formulate plans which involve these things. Poland, Norway, France--I am guilty."

"I should not have asked. Have you heard from Lane?"

"Nothing. I have not tried to write to him. I think such a correspondence would bring only suspicion and perhaps discredit on us both."

"Yes, that must be true. I have maintained correspondence. He joined the RAF, and was in France. When the German invasion came. He--he surely has killed--has downed enemy airplanes. German airplanes." She tried to mask her emotion.

"It is a thing he must do. He fights for his side, as I must fight for mine. I can only support him in that." Then he seemed to realize that he had misread the thrust of her comment. "But you--this is against your religion."

She was silent. He glanced at her, and surely saw that her face was wet with tears. She had been unable to stop them.

"I can not comfort you," he said awkwardly. "I am of the other side, in this respect also."

"Yes, you are the enemy," she murmured, oddly comforted despite this.

They drove on in silence.

But later he spoke again. "I must urge you to do something, for no stated reason. Return to America."

"But there is still so much work to do here!" she protested.

"Still I think it would be better for you to get out of Spain."



That meant that the Germans might invade Spain! He might be an advance spy for that. "I appreciate the nature of your warning, but I can not. Not while the children remain hungry."

"It was the answer I expected. Perhaps it will be all right."

"Perhaps," she agreed. "But I thank thee for thy concern."

It took her a moment to realize that she was now using the plain talk. Her attitude toward him had changed, though it was not clear to herself in quite what manner.

It was not safe to drive after dark. They came to a suitable town and sought lodging in a hotel. "I have money," Ernst said. "I will obtain a separate room for you. But--"

"I know," she said. "It will be safer if we are together. Take one room, in thy name. They will not question it."

So it was done. They found themselves sharing a somewhat spare chamber on the second floor. There was no hot water, and there were roaches under the single bed, and the bathroom was down the hall, to be shared by all the rooms, but it would do.

They went to a restaurant to eat. Quality ordered water to go with her meal. Here they discovered that water was more expensive than beer. But Quality would not touch alcohol in any form other than externally medical.

"You could have milk," he said. "I will pay--"

"No. Milk is for children. I would feel guilty."

So Ernst paid the price for water, for them both.

"I apologize for embarrassing you," she said in Spanish. They had agreed to speak only Spanish when in public, so as not to attract attention. Her plain talk did not manifest in this language. "I did not think of this beforehand."

"Please, no discussion," he said. "It is all right."

But after the meal, when they were on their way back to the hotel, she brought it up again. "I'm afraid I acted too much on impulse. I did not think through the complications. Had I done so--"

"May I speak plainly?"

She was taken aback. "Of course, Ernst."

"I treat you with diffidence because you evinced objection to me in America. You are correct in this, because I am what you take me to be. I am carrying a gun. But this is not my impression of you. I have no objection to what you are. Rather, I respect it, the more so now that I have discovered that you are actively implementing your beliefs by putting yourself at risk to help others. I regard you as a fine woman who need never apologize for her consistency or behavior. I did not know that I would encounter you here, or that you would choose to travel with me, but I am extremely pleased that both occurred."



She was silent for a moment, her feelings in disarray. "That was a bit more candor than I anticipated."

He smiled. "I believe in the truth. Yet I live a life of deceit. I have no need to practice deceit with you."

"A life of deceit," she echoed. "I hate myself for ever deceiving another person, yet at times it seems I have to. I feel degraded, yet I alone am responsible."

"I am sure Lane feels similarly about killing. He does not like it, but circumstances compel him."

"My understanding is growing. But not my ease of conscience."

"War is not kind to conscience."

They were at the hotel. They went to the room. Ernst checked the closet and found extra blankets there. He laid these on the floor, and set his bag on them. "I will accompany you to the bathroom and check it before you enter," he said. "Then I will wait outside it until you are done, and see you back to the room. I will lock you in, and then use the bathroom myself."

"Yes." She understood why. In this war-devastated region it was necessary to be extremely cautious. There could be a man hiding in the bathroom, or ready to jump out on a single woman passing in the hall, or to enter her room while her man was away.

When he returned and unlocked the door, she was already in the bed. He turned out the light and she heard him get into his blanket-bed on the floor, and heard him set the gun beside his head. He settled down to sleep.

"I thank thee, Ernst."

"Welcome, Quality."

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Next morning Quality surprised herself again. "Thy gun--I have not seen one. Only the damage they do."

He was surprised. "I mentioned this only in passing, not to cause you distress."

"I am embarrassed to confess this, but the knowledge that thee has it makes me feel safer. May I see it?"

"If you wish." He brought it out. "This is a Walther P-38, the HP model--Heeres Pistol. One of the finest service pistols available in Germany. It has an eight round magazine and automatic reloading."

She stared at the thing. It seemed huge and menacing, like the German army. "May I--?"

He reversed it, holding it by the muzzle and extending the butt to her. She took it, and was impressed by its weight; it was over two pounds. What a terrible instrument!



She quickly gave it back. "I hope the day comes when no things like this exist, anywhere in the world."

"I have never used it in action," he said. "Only in target practice. But I can not claim innocence, because I would use it if the need arose."

They said no more about it, but the matter remained in her mind. She felt as if she had done something forbidden, yet she was not penitent. What was in her mind?

They reached the town of Guernica. Most of the bomb damage had been cleaned up, and it was now much like any other town. But not in their eyes.

"I have made a certain study of this situation," Ernst said as they drove, seeking the address of Quality's former friend. "In America it was represented as an innocent hamlet with no strategic or military value. They said it was obliterated during a market day when it was swollen with country people. That it was an experiment in terror bombing by the Kondor Legion."

"Yes, I saw those reports," she agreed tightly.

"But in fact the Basques were rugged fighters. They gave ground grudgingly. It required a lot of force to make them retreat. So air power was necessary, to avoid unnecessary sacrifice of lives." He glanced at Quality. "I am speaking tactically, not morally."

"I understand."

"By late April, 1937, the main Basque defensive line had been turned. Guernica was one of the two principal routes of retreat for the Basque forces. It was a communications center. There were three military barracks and four small arms factories there. So it was a legitimate target. That particular raid was given no special importance by the units involved. The primary objectives were a nearby bridge, and any transportation and communications facilities. The town itself was bombed as well, to block any possible retreat of Basque troops."

"And some outlying residences."

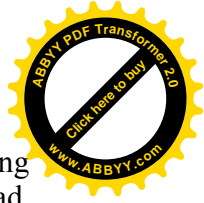
"The assault was carried out by three Italian medium bombers, that dropped approximately two tons of explosives, and twenty one German bombers, eighteen of which were obsolescent JU 52's, which dropped thirty tons of explosives. The German contingent amounted to only a third of the Kondor Legion's force, and only one bombing pass was made. It was not fully effective; they failed to take out the bridge. But many bombs struck the town, where fires spread rapidly because of wooden construction, narrow streets, loss of water pressure and the lack of fire fighting equipment."

"But what of the human cost!" she exclaimed.

"It was just one small, routine action. It is coincidental that we know some of that human cost. I do not think my friend was even listed among the casualties; I learned of it through mutual friends. The cost was great, to us, but small in terms of military matters."

"And that human cost is echoed all over the world," she said bitterly. "Wherever there is war."

"Wherever there is man," he said.



They searched, but could not find where her friend had lived. There were several similar outlying residences, deserted; some were in rubble. There was no sign of the downed airplane; the remnants had probably been scavenged for other uses.

They started back. "I can't even say I am disappointed," Quality said. "I just wanted to see whether there was anything to see. To pay my respects to my friend, in my fashion."

"I, too, to mine."

"It is so hard to believe that this is God's will."

"According to Nietzsche, the Christian conception of God is corrupt."

She glanced sharply at him. "Nietzsche?"

"Friedrich Nietzsche, a German who lived from 1844 to 1900, but was said to be insane in 1889 until his death."

"I should think so!"

He smiled. "No, he was an able philosopher, and is held in high regard in my country. I understand that his writings influenced the Führer."

"I rest my case."

"Perhaps you should read him. It is said that it is impossible for a person to read him carefully and remain a Christian."

"Then why should I want to read him?"

"Perhaps merely to test your faith. Perhaps to ascertain whether the God you serve truly exists. If he does not, then you have your answer: this destruction is not God's will."

"Why is he so certain that God does not exist?"

"He shows how the Christian God has been adapted from the Jewish God, but refined to make man feel sinful even when he has done nothing wrong, and to give man hope for an afterlife where justice shall be done. Thus man both needs the priest, and has no chance of fulfillment in this life. His hope in the beneficence of the afterlife is vain. Thus it is hope which is the evil of evils--the one thing left in Pandora's box."

"Hope is evil? And what of love?"

"God was made a person so that it would be possible to love Him. The saints were made as handsome young men or beautiful young women, to appeal to the romanticism of the worshipers of either sex. Love is the state in which man suffers great illusions, seeing things as they are not. Thus when man loves God, he deludes himself, and tolerates much more evil than otherwise." He paused. "Or so Nietzsche says."

"Does thee believe that, Ernst?"



"I got in trouble for declining to abandon the Church! But I must say that was because I did not like having my faith or lack of faith dictated to me. I have encountered people of faith who are good. People like you. I do not know what my belief may be, other than my faith in the power of my swastika."

"Thy swastika!" she exclaimed, appalled. She had forgotten that he wore it as a silver icon, his most cherished possession. No matter how nice he seemed, he remained a Nazi.

"For me it is an object of veneration. It has helped me, perhaps as your faith helps you."

"What a parallel!"

He shrugged, not arguing, and she felt ashamed for her narrowness. She might disagree with him, but she had no right to disparage his faith. "Now we must go to Madrid."

"Madrid?"

"Where I can seek a contact, and facilitate the shipment of your parts."

"But I haven't even answered thy questions about what we are doing here!" she protested.

"Surely you will, before we return."

So it turned out. They drove to Madrid, where she waited in the car while he saw some people and shopped for some fruit to eat along the way. In due course he brought her back to Barcelona, and the shipment of the necessary parts was being facilitated.

"If I may, I will give you this," he said, handing her a small package.

Quality was surprised. "I have not asked anything from thee, Ernst, or given thee anything. I don't--"

"About that I differ. You have given me the pleasure of your company and your trust. But this is merely a book I found in Madrid. It is in French, which I can not read, but I know what it says. I fear you will not like it--"

"A French book? I can read it, of course. But why would thee assume I wouldn't like it?"

"It is Nietzsche. One of the last he wrote before his madness overcame him. But his logic is persuasive. You do not have to agree with him, and surely you will not, but you should understand what he says."

Quality was touched. She accepted the book. "Thank thee, Ernst. Thee is right: I must not condemn without understanding. I will read it."

He smiled. "I doubt we shall meet again, but if we do, we can argue Nietzsche's case."

"I say this with a certain bemusement," Quality said as they separated. "But I rather enjoyed our trip together."

"I, too."





Then he drove away, leaving her by the front of the office. She waved to him with the book.

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"I have good news and bad news," the director told her. "The good news is that we have received word that the parts for the truck are on the way, just when we had almost given up on them. The bad news is that we need someone to go to Vichy France. A trainload of refugees is supposed to be crossing into Spain, and arrangements have to be made in Spain and in France. Since you speak French--"

"Yes, of course," she said. She was surprised and glad that Ernst's word had been so immediately effective; her trip with him had justified itself, though that had not been her reason for it. But to go to Vichy France--that was distinctly nervous business. France had fallen only last month, and the horror of the German advance remained fresh. It had seemed as if the panzer divisions were never going to stop, and that they might plunge right through the mountains to Spain. Fortunately they had stopped, and then the Vichy regime had been set up, and things had stabilized for the time being.

So it was that she found herself using her repaired truck not to go out on a route, but for driving alone to France. She had to go to Paris to make the arrangements, and the state of transportation was such that it was best to drive across the border and to Toulouse in France, where she could catch a passenger train. There were risks, such as possible confiscation of the truck by the French, but there were risks in any other course of action too.

The thing was that she had to take along a considerable amount of money in both French and German denominations, because it was a reality of warfare and of travel that nothing could be done without local currency, but no money was allowed to cross international boundaries. So it had to be smuggled across. She had not been involved in this aspect before, and had for some time been naive about it, but she had learned. Her pangs of conscience had settled down to low-grade distress; there just wasn't any other way to function here. The truck's spare tire was stuffed with the money. With luck the border inspection would not be thorough enough to expose it.

The truck had been fixed, but it remained balky on hills, tending to overheat. The road to the border was mostly uphill, because the border ran along the heights of the Pyrenees. She had to drive slowly, and stop frequently to let the motor cool. She was used to it. While she waited, she thought about what she was getting into, for France was now more dubious territory than Spain.

Apparently the swiftness of the German panzer advance was deceptive: the Germans lacked the personnel to occupy the whole of France directly. Probably they were still digesting Poland, and preparing for the invasion of England. There were rumors that they were preparing to mount a phenomenal air attack on the island, to bomb it into submission so that there would be no effective resistance to occupation by troops. This might explain why they were to let roughly the southern half of France be administrated by a French puppet government whose capital was at a spa town named Vichy.

The Vichy regime had come into existence on June 16, 1940, under the leadership of Marshal Philippe Petain. He was eighty four years old, and venerated by the French population as a hero of the War--now being termed the First World War, the current one assuming the status of The Second World War. He sometimes pretended to be senile as a political ploy, but he was in excellent health and in full command of his faculties. France had not yet surrendered, but the French had evidently concluded that it was better to have one of their own in charge, than to have the Germans do it. Even spread thin, the Nazis would be vicious.

Petaim was given to simple statements of the obvious, such as "The family is good. Alcoholism is



ad." His first act as leader was to declare his intent to negotiate an armistice with the Germans. The French troops of the region began laying down their arms immediately. General de Gaulle made a radio broadcast from London, vowing to continue the battle against Germany, but he received almost no support. The predominant mood in France was that German victory in Europe was inevitable, and the Vichy regime was attempting to solidify a favorable position for France in the new order.

Public opinion had turned against England, because England had abandoned France when the Germans invaded. All England had seemed to care about was getting its own forces to safety, in the hasty Dunkirk evacuation. Had they stayed to fight--well, who could say? The English were lucky, the French said, to have a built-in antitank ditch. In three weeks time England's neck would be wrung like that of a chicken. So the disenchanted French had said as their own country was lost.

This anti-British attitude was aggravated on July 3 when Britain seized all French ships in British ports. At the same time the British launched a pre-emptive strike against the French fleet in the Mediterranean, based at Mers el-Kebir in Algeria. They had issued an ultimatum: either join the British war effort, sail to a British port with reduced crews, or be disarmed and possibly handed over to the Americans. The French Admiral made a conciliatory counterproposal, but it was too late; the British opened fire. Nearly 1300 French sailors were killed in the assault. In response the French launched a rather timid air assault against Gibraltar. Thus instead of unifying against the Germans, the British and French were fighting each other.

Quality shook her head, watching the steam pressure in her radiator subside in much the way of the French resistance. The follies of war were eternal. When would men ever choose a better way to settle differences?

The Germans did not seem to be too brutal, so far. They had declared the historic French provinces of Alsace and Lorraine, which were along the border, to be part of Germany. Anyone the Germans deemed to be undesirable was simply being expelled to France. It seemed that a lot of people were going to be moved. This was certainly inconvenient for them, but mild compared to what the Germans could have done.

Meanwhile the Germans seemed happy to have the cooperation of the French administrative machine in the Vichy regime. They seemed to be relying heavily on it to manage day to day activities. Quality understood that the Germans had only ten thousand police of various types available, while the French had over a hundred thousand. Already the German troops were settling down, and truckloads of food were following them in. The folk in the Vichy regime had very little resentment about that!

Quality shook her head as she resumed driving. Was she becoming favorably inclined to the Germans, because of her recent trip with Ernst? It was not her place to take sides, and she tried to maintain an inner as well as outer attitude of neutrality. But there was no question that Germany was the aggressor here, and Germany had sent the warplanes that had done much of the bombing in Spain. She had no brief for Germany! Yet she could not condemn Ernst, who was a good man. When she had been with him, it had been easy to forget his nationality. Lane was right: her error had been in judging Ernst harshly, without knowing him.

In due course she achieved the border, which was between the Spanish town of Puigcerda and the small French town of Bourg Madame, in a lovely high valley. Not far from here, she knew, was the tiny nation of Andorra. There was a river, and both the Spanish and the French had posts on the bridge, on either side.

The guards recognized the Quaker truck, for similar trucks had passed this way before. Normally



Travelers and their vehicles were searched, but in this case they were content to verify Quality's identification, take a quick look in the back of the truck, which was empty, and pass her through.

She felt a familiar twinge of guilt. She had lied again, by omission. Legally, she should have declared the money in the tire. But then she would not have been able to complete her mission, rendering the whole trip pointless. How would it have been to have a trainload of refugees denied, because of her conscience? She had been forced, once again, to choose the lesser of evils. But she felt unclean.

She was in France. It did not look like a conquered land. But what would she find when she left Vichy France and entered the German-occupied section, where Paris was?

Now her progress was faster, being downhill. She had no trouble reaching Toulouse by nightfall. She paid for several day's parking in a garage, and got a hotel room for the night. So far she had had no trouble.

Once settled in, she returned to the truck and carefully transferred the money from the tire to a handbag. From here on it would remain close to her.

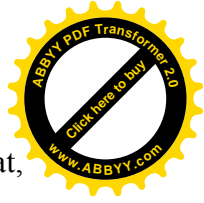
As she lay on the bed to sleep, she thought of the trip with Ernst again. She tried to picture him lying on the floor across the room. She had felt so *safe* with him there! She did not approve of handguns any more than cannon, but the nearness of that strong man with his gun had been very reassuring. She was almost ashamed of the sentiment.

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In the morning she went to the station. The train was late, of course, and she had to wait two hours for it to arrive. Then it required another hour to board. Perhaps it was just her impression, but the French seemed horribly inefficient, as if everything had to be reconsidered at every juncture.

Quality was glad she had taken the precaution to bring along a book. It was the one Ernst had given her, *The Anti-Christ*, by Friedrich Nietzsche. She was not a proficient reader in French, and this was her chance to improve. Time was one thing she had, right now. It was a small book, hardly a hundred pages. So she read slowly, and took pains to be sure she understood it. She learned from the introduction that the man had suffered from syphilis and been ill for some time before succumbing completely and becoming a child, mentally. He had been unknown, until in an irony of coincidence, his notoriety suddenly soared during his final decade of life, when his incapacity prevented him from knowing it. Now he was more famous than ever, in Germany, Quality realized, because Adolf Hitler and the Nazis liked him and were encouraging the dissemination of his views. That might account for the presence of a French translation in Spain. She saw that it was a used book, however, so probably it was from someone's liquidated collection. New books of any type were hard to come by in Spain, after the devastation of the war.

The train moved slowly, and stopped frequently. Quality was mostly oblivious. Her feelings were profoundly mixed. She had sympathy for the author's illness, but not for the manner of it: no prudent man should have indulged himself in such a manner as to acquire such a devastating venereal disease. She was tempted to dismiss his views as madness, but they were not; they were a marvel of clarity. Nietzsche had had a fine mind and a clarity of expression which came through even in translation. His Foreword was touching: "This book is for extremely few□.□.□. . The reader must be intellectually honest to survive my passion□.□.□. . He must desire unconditional freedom□.□.□. . He must be a superior man in his soul." How could she argue with that? Yet his thesis was anathema: that Christianity and all its works were an abomination. Therefore it had to be flawed, and she would have to work to discover the exact nature of that flaw.



It was best, she knew, to be able to state the opposition's case. Only when a person could do that, could he successfully refute it. But what discipline this required of her! All of her training and belief inveighed against it. Yet what horrified her most was the sheer persuasiveness of the insidious logic. *It was not hard to argue Nietzsche's case.* Was she being corrupted by it? It was as if she stood before Satan--the Antichrist, literally--and found herself tempted by his deceptively fair-seeming words. His concept of the *Übermensch*, or superman, was not at all the racist doctrine that Hitler espoused; rather it was the universal human cultural goal, toward which all men should strive, the Germans among them.

The more she read, the more she was satisfied that Nietzsche was not the man that many others claimed. His original views were well worthy of consideration. Her task was not to try to refute him, but simply to refine her thinking to the precision necessary to benefit from his logic. Nietzsche, like Ernst, was perhaps an acquired taste.

It took a day, and a change of trains, to travel the one hundred and sixty miles from Toulouse to Vichy, but she hardly noticed. The book held her attention throughout.

But when she got to Vichy, she was informed that they knew nothing about the refugees. The matter was being handled in Paris, almost two hundred miles further north. There was nothing to do but catch another train. Somehow she wasn't surprised. Perhaps Nietzsche's savage commentary on the human condition had prepared her for such complications.

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Paris really did not look much changed, except for the presence of German soldiers throughout, in their gray-green uniforms. When she passed close to one, she saw that his belt-buckle had the words "Gott mit uns." She realized that that meant "God with Us." She hoped not! This was no longer Vichy France, but France Proper--under full occupation. The German officials and soldiers rode public transportation free, and seemed to be having a good time. Not that it made much difference to her; she was here on business, and would retreat to Spain as soon as she had accomplished her purpose.

The SS headquarters was in the Hotel de Louvre. Quality braced herself, then went to the SS office to inquire. The sight of the black uniformed men gave her a chill. The regular German soldiers were bad enough, but the SS was worse. She was glad that Ernst had been in civilian clothes; that had allowed her to put his business at arm's length, mentally. Now there was no euphemism possible: she was dealing with the Nazis.

"*Ja, Fräulein,*" the officer said in German.

"I'm sorry, I don't speak German," she said in French.

"Then I will speak French," he said in that language. "But I think you are not French."

"No. I am American. I am here on behalf of the British Friends Service Council, in connection with a trainload of refugees bound for Spain."

"Jews?" he asked sharply.

"They may be," she said evenly. "The Spanish officials in Madrid did not inform us."

He checked through some papers. "Jews. From the Palatinate area of Germany. A train will take them from Frankfurt to Paris, but there will be a delay until we can commandeer a train to the Spanish



order. We will provide the train, but there are costs of transport."

"They need to be fed," Quality agreed. "I am here to buy food for them to eat along the way."

"You have the money?"

"I have French money. I hope it is enough."

His eyes narrowed. "You smuggled it across the border, of course."

"It was the only way. The Spanish will not let any currency leave the country."

"Let me have it."

"But it is for food!" she protested.

"It is for costs of transport. We will see that it is well spent."

Quality realized that she would have to turn over the money, though she distrusted this. "You will give me a receipt for it?"

"Of course."

She brought out the packet of francs. The officer counted it and wrote her a receipt. "This should suffice. However, there are also the costs of the Frankfurt train. You have German money?"

It was apparent that the SS knew what it was doing, at least with respect to squeezing the sponge dry. She brought out her packet of marks, and got a similar receipt for it.

"You will remain in Paris until the transaction occurs," the officer said. "Here is a reservation for a suitable hotel. Check here with us daily."

She wanted to protest, but realized that it would be futile. She would have to wait on their convenience. "Thank you."

He smiled. "We can not do too much for a devotee of Nietzsche."

He had noticed the book she carried! How would he have treated her if she had not had it? The Nazis were in control here; they could have had her strip-searched or worse, and could have taken the money without giving any receipts. It was possible that Ernst had done her more of a favor than he realized, by giving her the book.

She turned and left the office, conscious of the officer's eyes on her. As she emerged to the street she experienced a great easing of her muscles. Only now did she realize how tense she had been.

But her job was hardly over. She had to hope that it would not take too long for the trains to be arranged, and that the money she had brought would indeed be spent properly. This business was already more complicated than she had anticipated.

She had some personal money in her purse, as the officer had surely known. Would it be enough to



keep her at the hotel as long as she was required to stay? She simply had to hope so. There would also be the expense of food for herself, and the train tickets back to Spain.

"God will provide," she told herself. Nevertheless, she took the precaution of stopping at a store and buying some bread and cheese. It was cheap, and it would hold her for some time. Then she had to hurry, because there was a curfew here. Already the streets were clearing of all but Germans, and the main sound was that of their boots as they went on foot patrols. Some had leashed Alsatian dogs who evidently understood only German commands. Some of the men, she saw, were on bicycles, cruising silently along the streets; those would be even more dangerous to anyone in violation of the curfew, because they were silent.

The hotel, to her surprise, was both reasonably priced and of reasonable quality. It seemed that the Nazis had pre-empted the best for themselves, and she was the beneficiary. The room was small, but it had its own bathroom and a competent lock on the door. Both were important. There was a cart in the hall with a pile of used books; it seemed that in this time of privation, reading had become quite popular. She appreciated that. She sorted through the pile and took a novel that she hoped would be diverting. She had had enough of Nietzsche for the time being.

There was even a radio. She turned it on and listened to the news in French as she chewed on the bread and cheese. Then she allowed herself the luxury of a warm bath. After that she washed her underclothing, because she had only one change. What was supposed to have been a three day trip was being indefinitely extended

The city remained quiet at night. But now she heard the noise of rats inside the walls. She shuddered, closed her eyes, and pulled the covers up over her head.

In the morning she went to the SS office and inquired. A different officer was there, but he had the information. "The train from Frankfurt is available. The connecting train here in Paris is not, but progress is being made."

That was a relief. "I will inquire again tomorrow," she said.

"As you wish, Mädchen."

She did not respond to the somewhat derogatory implication. She just departed before the man could think of anything else. The longer she stayed in Paris, the more nervous she would be. It was not just a matter of running out of money.

Meanwhile, she had a day to herself in Paris. At least she should see the sights. That much was free. That was good, because she discovered to her dismay that inflation was ravenous here; her francs bought less food than they had the day before.

Armed with a little tour booklet, she set out afoot. The Louvre was close, but it was probably closed. She had heard that even when it was open, the art treasures had been replaced by plaster replicas, including the Venus de Milo. So she would save that for another time, if time offered. The Grand Opera House was also close, but she wasn't sure how she felt about opera, and she let that also go for now. So she started with the Tuileries gardens. Perhaps they would be in ruins, but there might be something worth seeing.

The flowers were beautiful. There were more types than she could identify, and they transformed the region. She could almost forget, for the moment, that this was a cruelly war-torn country. There were





iso many impressive statues.

At the end of the gardens was a section called *Place De La Concorde*, where Marie Antoinette was beheaded by the guillotine. Quality sat there for a time among the flowers and contemplated the events that had taken place on this historical spot. It was a unique experience, and it made her shiver in the warm day. She deplored violence and killing, though she had to recognize their significance in the history of mankind. Yet how lovely this place was now!

Then she walked on to the Seine River, where there were many bookstalls open to browsers, but this was not her purpose at the moment. She turned left on the *Qual Des Tuileres* and proceeded about half a mile to the Hotel De Ville, and right across a branch of the river to the *Place de la Citié*; where she could see the *Notre Dame Cathedral*. It seemed that all the churches were kept open by the Germans, though their philosophy hardly supported religion. This was another wonderful step back in time. She could almost feel the burden of the world's history enmeshed within its heavy atmosphere. She was struck by the mystical gloom of the sanctuary. She wished she could turn on a light, because she could hardly make out the altar and the statues of saints.

There was no service here now, because she was here at the wrong time, but that was just as well, because she was not Catholic. Nevertheless, she went to kneel where ancient kings and queens had knelt, and found it easy to imagine that some ampere of their energy lingered there, softly vibrating in the shadows. Now she found the darkness to be an asset, because it allowed her to picture the historical figures there.

She emerged from the Cathedral and blinked in the bright sunlight. This was like man's struggle to overcome his medieval ignorance and achieve the light of modern civilization! She felt not scorn but great sympathy. Man was not to be blamed for his ignorance; it came with his existence. The effort was at times excruciatingly hard, as the present occupation by the Nazis showed.

Quality walked back across the river, retracing her route to the *Place De La Concorde*. Then she went to the *Alexandre Bridge* and crossed the *Seine* again. She went straight until she reached *Les Invalides*. She went around to the back of the building to find a church. Housed within it was *Napoleon's Tomb*, in a crypt. The tomb was several feet below, but she could stand above it on a viewing platform and get an excellent view simply by looking down. She couldn't help wondering what his remains might look like, after all this time. Then she chided herself for her morbidity.

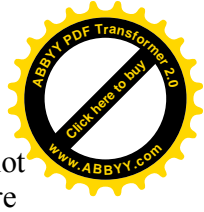
She went back to the river and turned left before crossing the bridge. This street was the *Quai D'Orsay*. She followed it until she reached the *Le Tour Eiffel* on the left. Now this was something she had dreamed of as a girl: seeing the Eiffel Tower up close!

Then she crossed the river and visited the *Chaillot Palace*. From there she followed the *Avenue D'Iena* to the *Etoile* where she saw in the distance *Napoleon's Arch of Triumph*. And where was he, by the end of his life? But she should not begrudge him his monument.

It was enough for the day. She walked straight up the avenue *Des Champs Elysees* until it intersected the *Place De La Concorde*, which was now familiar, and followed it back to her hotel. She had walked only about three miles in all, but it seemed like centuries on another level. She was surfeit. There was just no city in the world like Paris!

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On the third day the news changed. "The Paris train is now available," the officer said. "However,



ve have received word from General Franco's administration that he has changed his mind and will not permit the Jews to cross the Pyrenees. Therefore other arrangements will have to be made, and you are free to go home."

"But the money," she said. "I must take the money back."

"I have no authority to release funds to anyone. Appropriate application must be made and approved."

Quality felt the sinking of her heart. "How long will that take?"

"It is hard to say. Perhaps only a week."

And perhaps never. She knew what she had to do. "Then I must make the application. Do you have the proper forms?"

He rummaged in the desk. "It seems not. But you may write it out on a separate sheet. We are not such sticklers as the French for such things."

She wrote out a request, knowing that the format hardly mattered. They were now entering a different phase of the game. She gave it to him. "Is it all right to inquire tomorrow, just in case there is a quicker approval?"

"Of course, Mädchen."

And tomorrow, or the day after, as her personal money ran out and she became increasingly desperate, the officer would suggest that the approval might be expedited if certain conditions were met. In this manner, without violence or even open coercion, she would become an officer's mistress. She had been warned of the way of such things in Spain. Enlisted soldiers raped, but officers had higher class methods.

She packed and went immediately to the train station. There was a train to Nantes, near the coast. That wasn't where she wanted to go, but she took it anyway. She had to be out of Paris and far away before anyone thought to check on her. That was why she had written out the application: to gain a day's time. Otherwise she could have found it impossible to leave Paris. That, too, was the way of it.

She breathed a silent sigh of relief as the train departed without challenge. She was on a legitimate mission, until someone thought to make a unilateral cancellation of it. If she cleared Nantes before tomorrow morning, she should be too difficult to trace, and they would not bother.

At Nantes she caught a train to Bordeaux, and thence to Toulouse, exhausting her money. She was hungry, being unable to buy anything more, but would survive.

But when she went to get her truck from the garage, there was another problem: she had paid for only three days, and it was now a week. She owed for four, and she had no money.

"There is a way," the garage proprietor said, understanding her plight, which it seemed was not uncommon.

"No!" she said. She did not know what she was going to do. She couldn't *walk* across the Pyrenees,





ven if well fed, which she was not. It was just too far.

"You misunderstand," he said. "Look at me; I am an old man. I have daughters your age. But your Quaker truck will not be challenged, no?"

"Normally not," she agreed guardedly. "But smuggling isn't--"

"It is a man. A Jew. The Boche trumped up something against him, and took his house. He barely escaped the warrant for his arrest. He must escape the country."

Now she understood. "You will let my truck go?"

"With a tank full of petrol. And I will give you a good meal. If you will get him across. You can do it, when another could not."

She realized that it was a good offer. It wasn't as if she hadn't done this sort of thing before. "Very well."

"Thank you, thank you," he exclaimed, and she realized how tense he had been. The Jew must be a friend, but it was dangerous to help anyone the authorities were after. Across the border, the Jew could make his own way. At least he would have a chance.

The garage man's stout wife gave her good hot soup, a baked potato, and some wine. She had to refuse the wine, with apology, because she did not drink. She knew it was well intended; in France everyone drank wine, and it was safer than water.

Then the man caught on. "Quaker!" he said. "I had forgotten. They do not drink. You really are one."

"I really am one," she agreed. But not as good a one as she had been before she came to Europe. Now she was well compromised around the edges.

She was given blankets on the floor of the warm kitchen, and spent her most relaxed night in a week. Early in the morning, refreshed by a breakfast of porridge, she went to the truck. "Where is the--?" she asked.

"It is better that you do not see him. I hid him in the back last night."

She was alarmed. "No drugs. No smuggling."

"I promise, no. Only an old man like me. You will never know he is there, if you do not look."

That did seem best. The garage man could have hidden the Jew without telling her, but that would have been risky, because he needed the cooperation of the driver to get across the border. Had she looked inside and found him, she might have thought he was trying to steal the truck.

She drove out of Toulouse toward the border. There was no sound from the back. But the truck overheated slightly more rapidly than before, indicating that it was carrying a bit more. She was attuned to it, and could tell.



She came to Bourg Madame. She suffered a chill of apprehension as she saw that there was now a German guard at the border, in addition to the French one. The Germans were extending their hold on the country.

"Have you any contraband?" the German barked in French.

"No," she said, her mouth dry. She hated both the risk and the lie.

"It is a Quaker truck," the French guard explained. "We let them through."

"No exceptions," the German said. "Get out, woman; we shall inspect your truck."

Quality's heart seemed to shake in her chest. But there was nothing she could do. She got out of the truck and walked around to the back.

"Open it!"

With a feeling of dread, she opened the back panel. As the light spilled in, she saw with relief that there was only a pile of old blankets there. Maybe the Jew had lost his nerve and gotten out while she waited for the motor to cool.

The German reached in and grabbed a corner of a blanket. He yanked it toward him.

There, huddled beneath, was a man.

"So the word was right," the German said. "The Jew did try to cross the border." He drew his pistol. "Out, Jew! You are under arrest." Then he turned to Quality. "And your truck is impounded, and you are also under arrest."

There it was. The worst disaster had struck. Quality had the sick feeling that this was God's rebuke for her misdeeds. She had lied, and been caught, and now she would pay the penalty.

**Go to [Next Chapter](#).**

**Return to [Table of Contents](#).**