



Chapter 11

Nietzsche

In the morning Quality woke before Ernst and got quietly out of bed. She went to the bathroom and gazed at her face in the mirror. Her nose was swollen and her eye was black, but those things would pass. Her experience in Gurs had prepared her for this; Ernst did not know that she had been struck before. She had been caught giving some of her food to a woman who was being deprived because she had objected to the amatory suggestion of a guard. Quality had learned from observation how to react. Absolute fear and subservience was the way to survive, and since the proprietors did have power, it was no deceit to acknowledge it. The situation with the interrogating officer had been similar; he had had to be appeased, and Ernst had done what he had to. She had even turned her head so that his hand struck the center of her face instead of the side as he had intended, because she had known that no token slap would do.

And in the aftermath of that episode, horrified by the damage he had done without intending, Ernst had finally spoken his heart. *Oh my love!* It had come unconsciously, and been blanked from his own awareness, but not hers. She had tried not to be seductive, and to uphold the appropriate standards of decorum, but had seen that he was interested despite his honorable resolve. At night she had imagined that he was holding her for love rather than warmth, and almost it had seemed it was true. With her returning health had come renewed interest in romantic companionship, and with her solidifying love for Ernst had come the desire to possess him. She had wanted to tell him, and to offer him whatever he might want with her. But she knew that he made no commitment lightly, and that his code was such that the woman he indulged himself with would be the one he intended to marry. That had been too much to ask of him, when he could have a licit marriage and good life with his girlfriend Krista.

Until those words had shown the pointlessness of further pretense. Ernst had lost his fight to remain true to Krista, which relationship it seemed had never been wholehearted on his part. Quality had been freed to declare her own love. She had done so, and had proceeded to the denouement of which she had dreamed: the complete realization of his love. What a joy the night had been, despite her pain of the face.

But now it was the morning after. Had she done right? She wasn't sure. The intrusion of the SS officer, the threat to her limited security here, the necessary brutality, and Ernst's revelation of his love had been in the end exhilarating, and she had done what her heightened emotion urged. She did not regret their night of love at all, for herself, but was in doubt about its appropriateness for him. She had now denied him his chance for a normal German life.

She completed her business in the bathroom, and returned to the main room to dress. Ernst was stirring. He opened his eyes and looked at her.

"Ach, your face!" he said. "I should never have done that!" He considered briefly. "And then, in your confusion, I--how could I have--"

She moved to him, and cut him off with a kiss. "I did it, Ernst," she reminded him. "I asked thee to be with me, because I love thee and desire thee."

"I, too, with you," he said. "But still, to take advantage--"

And he felt guilty for his desire! She abandoned her own second thoughts. "I seduced thee last



ight. If thee argues, I shall do it again."

"I must argue, because you are captive, and--"

She kissed him a second time, putting fervor into it. She felt gay and reckless, glorying in her newfound freedom of expression. "I gave thee fair warning!" She drew back enough to draw off her nightgown. Then she lay against him, on top, spreading her legs to fall down outside his. It was fun being wanton. All her dreams were coming true.

"Oh Quality, Quality, how I love thee!" he whispered, hugging her. Then his passion met hers, and they were in the throes of it, without the hesitation of the night.

"I love thee, I love thee!" she breathed as it took them. "Now at last I can tell thee!"

"If I had known before--" he gasped.

"Pay attention to thy business," she said teasingly.

"I am! My business is loving thee."

She cut off further dialogue with more kisses. Every time he tried to talk, she kissed him again. Finally he gave up, and simply accepted her love.

However, he insisted on one thing. "I must marry thee, but I have no ring to give thee. I beg thee to accept instead, as a token of this union, my most precious possession."

"I need no token," she protested.

"But I need for you to have it. It will protect thee from harm." And he brought out his swastika, silver on a silver chain.

Quality had severely mixed feelings. To her, the swastika was an abomination, standing for everything that was evil. Yet she loved Ernst, and had to accept his gift.

She decided that the silver artifact was in this case not a symbol of Nazism, but of Ernst's love. As such, it was appropriate for her to wear. She put the chain over her head and let the swastika fall to her bosom. "I thank thee, Ernst. I will wear it always."

"I wish I could marry thee now. But--"

"It is the way of Friends to marry by declaring themselves before a Meeting, which is a gathering of Friends. We have perhaps a Meeting of two. We can imagine a silent Meeting to hear our vows."

He was uncertain. "I do not know the form of such a ceremony."

"The form is as simple as we wish. I take thee, Ernst Best, to be my husband, and I will be with thee as long as we both shall live."

"I take thee, Quality Smith, to be my wife, and I will be with thee as long as we both shall live."



She kissed him. "Normally it is a longer ceremony, but it will do."

"It will do," he echoed.

But it was morning, and he had to go to work. His work consisted of assorted technical investigations and reports for Admiral Canaris, who ran Abwehr. But there was something else, about which he did not tell her, yet she knew. Something he had to do which he did not like. Their love had been realized, but the rest of the world remained grim. She was still a virtual prisoner in his room, and he was bound by his duty. No one knew what would come of all this, so they could only enjoy the moment.

Meanwhile she continued to recover, gaining weight and strength. She suspected that love had as much to do with it as food, but she abetted it by doing whatever exercises she could manage without making too much noise. She adjusted her clothing to fit her better, and brushed her hair out, encouraging it to grow. She spent much time reading, and gazed out into the pleasant park.

Her face healed. She was almost sorry to see it happen, because she associated her black eye with Ernst's love. But she knew he had no joy in that, so for his sake she was glad to recover her beauty.

Toward the end of January Ernst brought an older officer home with him. Quality could tell by his manner that Ernst was not at ease, but had not been able to avoid this. The other man was tall and impressive, and evidently of very high status. Quality was immediately afraid of him.

The man's small restless eyes immediately focused on her. She knew Ernst had had to tell him about her, and was helpless to prevent what this man might do. But the man did not seem hostile, merely interested. He spoke rapidly in German. Quality had been learning German, slowly, but this was way too much for her. She caught only the word "Fräulein," meaning a young woman.

Ernst responded, introducing her. "This is Quality Smith, who speaks no German." Because he spoke carefully, for her benefit, she could understand. "Quality, this is Reinhard Heydrich."

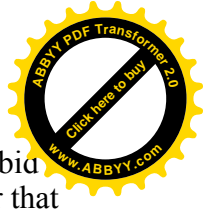
Quality felt a shiver of apprehension. She knew that name! He was the feared head of the Nazi intelligence network. Stories about him had been rife in Spain and in Gurs. He was said to be a predatory animal, capable of acting swiftly and ruthlessly, called by some the blond beast and by others Mister Suspicion, and by others a criminal of the stature of the devil himself. He was the Third Reich's evil god of death, the man with the iron heart. He was also a pathological womanizer. Of all the people she did not want to encounter, Heydrich was close to the top of the list.

"I see you know of me," Heydrich said in English. "Come now, I am not as bad as all that."

"I did not speak of you to her," Ernst said, alarmed. "I told her nothing."

Heydrich ignored him. He concentrated on Quality, to her discomfort, seeming to take in every aspect of her. "And you wear the swastika! That is good; it will protect you, as it protected him." He paused. "The bruise," he said sharply. "Who hit you?"

She felt mesmerized. She knew that even had she been one to lie, it would have been useless to try to fool this man. She wished that the last vestige of the bruise had faded, or that she had thought to cover it up with powder. "Ernst hit me. Before he gave me the swastika."



Heydrich turned a sharp glance on Ernst. "This is not the conduct of an officer of the SS! I forbid it! You must treat this pretty young woman with the utmost courtesy at all times. Can you remember that without a memo?"

"Ja," Ernst said, abashed.

"After all, in love and in revenge woman is more barbarous than man. You do not wish her to seek your downfall." He glanced again at Quality. "Do you not agree, *Liebling*?"

"Nietzsche had no respect for women," she replied.

His brow lifted. "You recognize my quote from Nietzsche? Why do you condemn him?"

"I don't condemn him. I just don't regard him as any authority on women. He said that man thinks woman is profound, because he can never fathom her depths, but that she is not even shallow. If he had ever come to know a woman who wasn't syphilitic, he would have had a better opinion."

Ernst turned his face away, perhaps horrified by her impertinence to his superior, but Quality had already realized that Heydrich respected mind more than subservience. If he had come to take her back to an awful camp, at least he would know she had a mind.

Heydrich smiled. "Now I see why Ernst selected you. And what do you think of Wagner?"

"The composer? I love his work, but I have not heard a lot of it."

"You must listen to more. The Führer approves." His eyes flicked around the room again. Then he switched back to his staccato German, addressing Ernst, who answered reluctantly. Their dialogue continued.

Quality, evidently dismissed, retreated to a corner and sat, waiting for the conclusion. What was Heydrich's purpose here? Was he going to take her away, or was she incidental? She had the unmistakable impression that his interest in her was not casual. That chilled her, but she knew she was helpless.

Then, abruptly, Heydrich was departing. "We shall meet again, *Liebling*, when we have more time for Nietzsche." He was gone.

Quality felt the tension draining from her. "What does he want?" she demanded.

"He wants the truth about Admiral Canaris," he said heavily. "And I have given it to him."

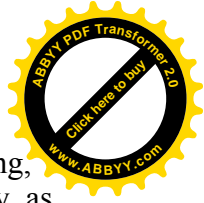
"But I thought thee worked for Canaris."

"I do. But my real job is with Heydrich. I fear I have gotten Canaris in trouble."

"Trouble? How?"

"I have learned that Canaris is employing a full Jewish agent in Tangier."

"Heydrich hates Jews?"



"No, he helped a Jewish fencing instructor to emigrate to America. He was proficient in fencing, so has respect for it. He simply regards Jews as faceless objects that must be removed from Germany, as Hitler wills. But the fact that Canaris is using Jews in his operation means that Canaris is suspect. I believe he is loyal, but this counts against him."

"Thee is a spy for Heydrich, against Canaris?"

"Yes. I wish I were not."

"So Heydrich is not going to take me away?"

"Oh, no, Quality! He doesn't care about you."

"Yes he does. But I don't know how."

"I fear I do know. I hope I am wrong."

"Then what is it, Ernst? Can I avoid it?"

"It is his way to blackmail his most important subordinates. He believes he can not trust any man completely unless he knows something about that man that must not be revealed. Now he has that hold on me. Perhaps I should feel privileged, that I am important enough to him to rate this treatment." He smiled without pleasure.

"What hold?" she asked, perplexed.

"I prefer not to say." He was obviously distressed.

"Thee must tell me, Ernst, if it concerns me."

He closed his eyes in pain. "It is my love for you. I must obey him absolutely, because if I do not, he will destroy you, and therefore me."

"Oh, my," she said, horrified.

"I think he knew all along. He was the one who sent me to Barcelona to investigate the Quaker relief effort there. He knew of you from my personnel record. He has an uncanny memory for key details. He must have known I would try to protect you, once I knew you were in Spain. I invoked his name when I took you from Gurs. I thought they did not check, but now I suspect they did, and he gave you clearance to go with me. It is the way he works."

"But he could not know we would fall in love!" she protested.

"It is exactly the kind of thing he *does* know. He is a genius in the manipulation of people and power. He wanted this hold on me, and now he has it."

"Oh, Ernst!" she cried, chagrined. "What have I done to thee!"

"No, my love, no, I would not have it otherwise! I wish only that he had not known."



"There must be truth," she said, pained. "If it is to thy commander I owe my rescue from Gurs, and my stay with thee, and the love we share, then I must thank him, though his motive be unkind. I owe him my life and love."

"Can good come of an ill motive?" Ernst inquired bleakly.

"It can, and ill can come of a good motive. We do not comprehend the ways of God."

"Certainly I do not!"

She smiled, cheering him, understanding his confusion. He had never professed the kind of faith she had, yet he was as good a man as any who had faith.

Still she was sorry that her presence placed him in this peril. She knew that there was intrigue among German officers, with each striving to get ahead at the expense of others, and she was chagrined to be the mechanism by which Ernst had become vulnerable.

A few days later there was a peremptory knock on the door. It was during the day, while Ernst was at work. She did not answer, as was her policy; Ernst had stressed that no one who lacked a key should be admitted during his absence.

"Liebling! It is Reinhard."

Quality suffered a siege of panic. That was Heydrich, Ernst's terrible superior! What could have brought him here?

"Do not fear," Heydrich called. "I have brought you something. Open the door."

She could not deny this man, for his anger could cost Ernst terribly. With dread, she unlocked the door.

The Nazi officer stood there holding a box. He was in civilian clothing, as he had been before, which meant he was not advertising his presence here. He stepped into the room. He carried the box to the table and set it down. "Lock the door again, Liebling," he said without looking at her.

Quality's hands were shaking as she did so. It was obvious that the man had timed his appearance for Ernst's absence. What dreadful thing did he have in mind? She knew she was helpless to prevent it, because he could readily arrange to have her killed.

Heydrich brought out a knife as he turned to face her. Quality felt a thrill of horror. He was going to kill her right here, if she even screamed!

"Fräulein, what do you expect of me?" Heydrich asked, looking surprised.

Pleading would be useless; this was a completely cynical man. She could save only her dignity, for what little it was worth. So she gave him a direct answer. "I expect you to rape me, and to kill me if I protest."

He laughed. "You misjudge me, Liebling. I am merely opening the box." He proceeded to use the knife to cut the string and cardboard. "While it is true that I like women, I do not impose on those



ommitted to other men, and I am distressed that you suppose I would deplore your being hit by Ernst while intending violence on you myself. I assure you that this is not my way. Certainly not when a lovely woman is protected by her swastika."

She was not completely reassured. "Then what is your intent?"

"Only to charm you." He had the box open, and put away the knife.

"I am not to be charmed into what I do not wish to do."

He glanced at her again, smiling. "Then you have nothing to fear from me."

"But Ernst has!" she said boldly.

"Ah, he has told you of my way."

"It's a terrible way!"

"It is a practical way. It obviates deceit. In my profession this is necessary. Now I can truly trust Ernst, and so there will never be any problem. As Nietzsche says, what is good is all that heightens the feeling of power."

"And what is bad is all the proceeds from weakness," she agreed. "Therefore I am bad."

He laughed again. "I am not so sure of that, Liebling. You have the power of your faith. It shines through you, making you the envy of all women. I am a connoisseur in such matters. Now take away the box as I lift it out."

Hesitantly she took hold of the box, and pulled it free of what he held. She set it down, then looked at the thing on the table. "A Victrola!" she exclaimed, surprised.

"And a record," he agreed. "Wagner. Power is good, and music is power, and Richard Wagner is the true prince of music. You appreciate Wagner, therefore you are also good."

"This is for me?" she asked, stunned.

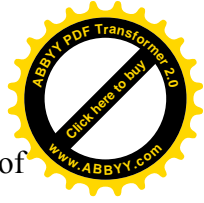
"And for Ernst, while the two of you are here. Have no fear: Adolf Hitler endorses Wagner. You may listen with impunity." He brought out a record. "Only his shorter pieces are here, I regret. The *Ring* is too much for a mere machine."

"But why?" Quality asked.

"I do not wish you to know me only by hearsay, which is not kind. I prefer you to know me for what I am."

"But what do you care about my opinion? I am nothing."

"Ernst has good taste. He has given up a remarkably beautiful, obliging, and well pedigreed woman, for you. I suspect you are a woman among women, when you show your nature. I shall fathom that nature."



She focused on one part of what he said. "He gave up Krista?" Somehow she had not thought of this, of the insistent girlfriend she had displaced.

"He is an honorable man. When he loved you, he broke with her. She was most annoyed."

"He said nothing to me about this!" Yet of course Ernst would have done it.

"And he said nothing to her about you. He merely told her that he felt it was better that they no longer associate. She remains suspicious of his motive."

"I never intended this!" Quality cried, though another part of her recognized it as inevitable. How could she have married Ernst, even symbolically, and expected him to continue dating another woman? Such deceit might be required for appearances, but not when that woman loved him.

Heydrich was watching her, as if he could read her thoughts in the manner of ripples across her surface. "You love him, of course."

"Yes. But--"

"As Nietzsche clarifies, love is a disguised desire for possession. The will to power."

"But I would not think of--"

"And humility is protective coloration for the will to power."

"No! I do not want to harm anyone."

"The strong woman defines her own morality."

Everything he said was quoted from Nietzsche. She gave him a direct stare. "Distrust all in whom the impulse to punish is powerful," she said, quoting another maxim of Nietzsche.

He laughed. "Ah! She fights back at last! She is not quite the pacifist she pretends!"

"There is no virtue in silence; all unuttered truths become poisonous." That was more Nietzsche. "Punishment tames man, but does not make him better." But Heydrich was right; he had made her oppose him, to fight fire with fire. She was indeed not truly pacifist, in words, and had never been so. She realized that now.

"Now listen to your music. I will see you again, if you are amenable." Heydrich walked to the door and waited until she came to use her key to let him out. He departed without ceremony.

She locked the door behind him, feeling weak. She had never anticipated such a visit! Yet the man seemed sincere. He did have her in his power, and knew it, yet he had chosen to bring her a gift instead of shame.

She told Ernst of the visit, when he came back. "He is an educated and sensitive man," he said. "But also a will like steel. He is letting us know how completely we are in his power."

"But the music is nice," she said. There were several records, and the pieces were indeed pretty,



with the power to move the heart and spirit.

In February came disaster for Ernst's nominal superior, Admiral Canaris. Ernst tersely explained to her what had happened: Himmler had received the word that Ernst had relayed to Heydrich about the Jew Canaris employed in Tangier. Himmler had gone to Hitler and accused Canaris of favoring Jews. Hitler, outraged, had summoned Keitel, who was the Chief-of-Staff of the German armed Forces, and ordered him to dismiss Canaris. Keitel had done so. Canaris was replaced by a Vice-Admiral within Abwehr. Thus had Ernst effectively served Heydrich, to the Admiral's cost. But he was saddened and disgusted. "It is true, there is a Jew--but he is an effective operative, working loyally for Germany. Canaris is merely trying to do the best job he can, using the best people. He is not disloyal or incompetent, and he does not deserve to be so callously cast aside."

In the following days Canaris fought back. He went to Keitel, who refused to intercede on his behalf. Finally he went directly to Hitler, and in that interview was able to get himself reinstated. But the experience nearly destroyed him.

"He is despondent and morose," Ernst reported as the situation unfolded. "He no longer pays attention to detail. He seeks solace in Roman Catholic mysticism. He visits Spanish churches. He speaks of retiring and buying a coffee shop in some little Spanish town."

"But that is a nice dream," Quality said. "Spain is a nice country, when it isn't torn by war."

"Unfortunately a dream isn't enough, right now. Heydrich is using the Admiral's weakness to coerce concessions from him. If only I had not served Heydrich so well!"

Quality was silent, knowing that Ernst had no choice. *She* was the price of his loyalty to Heydrich, whatever else he might wish politically.

However, the other officers of Abwehr acted quickly to repair the damage done to their power base. Ernst had no part in it, to their frustration, but they drafted a counterproposal which retracted nearly all of the Admiral's concessions.

Late in February Heydrich appeared once more at the room. Quality let him in, concerned about what might be on his mind. "Have no fear, Liebling," he said as he entered. "I admit I am furious because of the Admiral's bad faith, and I refuse to associate with him. But no fault attaches to Ernst, or to you. Let us relax." He opened what Quality had taken to be a small suitcase and brought out a violin. "I will play Wagner's 'Ride of the Valkyries,' and we shall forget the sordid things of this bleak world."

Amazed, Quality watched and listened as Heydrich did just that. He played his violin with exquisite skill, producing the most moving rendition of "Ride" Quality could remember hearing. This despite having only his single instrument for a piece intended for an orchestra. Quality saw with further surprise that his eyes were closed, and that tears flowed from them. He was truly feeling the music.

He finished the brief piece, and took down the violin. "Oh, please play more!" Quality begged. "It is so lovely."

"How can I refuse?" he inquired, smiling sadly. "There is such greatness in Wagner, it is an honor merely to echo it in whatever way we can."

He played for an hour, and Quality was entranced. "You said you would charm me," she said as



e finally put away the instrument. "You have succeeded."

He nodded, then departed, leaving her bemused. This savagely practical man, who held her hostage against Ernst's possible independence, who schemed to topple competing officers, yet had such a wonderful side. How could she assimilate this?

Of course she told Ernst, later. "Heydrich is a remarkable man," he agreed. "He was a champion athlete, and proficient in fencing and horsemanship. But he is also a power-hungry cynic, and I wish we were far from him."

Quality agreed, yet she could not forget the beauty of the man's violin playing. Surely such a man could not be wholly evil.

In March Heydrich came again. "Come, Liebling, it is a nice day out," he said. "Walk with me in the park. In happier days I rode horseback there with Admiral Canaris."

"But I can't go outside!" she protested. "I have no papers!" For Ernst had been unable to arrange this.

"I think you can, Liebling. Here is a pass for you." He handed her a bit of paper.

Amazed, she accepted it. It was indeed an identification for Frau Smith that would probably give her freedom of the streets. "But why?" she asked.

"A bird is better free than in the cage. Ernst trusts you; can I do less?"

So it was that she left the room and the hotel for the first time in three months. They walked through the Tiergarten in the brisk but pleasant air, and they discussed Nietzsche. She had read and reread all the books Ernst had been able to bring her, in the long hours of her confinement, and struggled with the concepts, and her familiarity enabled her to hold her own in this dialogue.

"But do you not agree that mankind is led by the nose with morality?" he asked. "That this is merely the arrogance of the elect, posing as modesty? That Christianity is a fateful kind of megalomania, laying claim to the concepts of God, Truth, Light, Spirit, Love, Wisdom and Life itself?"

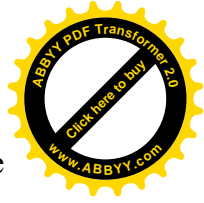
"I am a Christian, a Quaker Christian," she replied. "I lay claim to no such things, only my wish to be guided by my inner light. However imperfect I may be, the end is noble."

"You have read Nietzsche, yet you still believe in religion, in God?"

"Reading Nietzsche is like walking barefoot through the pitfalls of Hell," she confessed. "But with care and humility they can be navigated. One must at least try."

"And what of the Übermensch, the Overman? Is he not Godlike? Are we not right to cultivate him?"

"You interpret the Overman as a racially pure Nordic," she retorted. "That is not what Nietzsche said. It is hardness of the will, not of the flesh, that distinguishes the ideal man. By Nietzsche's definition, a strong-willed and consistent Jew is as much an Overman as any Nazi."



"Ach, the Führer must not hear you!" But he did not seem upset by the comparison. Rather, he was delighting in the discussion.

Heydrich returned her safely to her room, and departed, once more having been a perfect gentleman.

Ernst shook his head when she told him. "It seems that he wants your respect, nothing else. But that pass--I don't know how that was possible, but he has given you your freedom. If there were a way to take you out of Germany--"

"I would not go without thee, Ernst."

In May Admiral Canaris joined Heydrich at his new base in Prague. All of the intelligence operations were being gathered together under that umbrella. Heydrich's power was still increasing. Then early in June he was assassinated.

Quality received the news with shock. "But how could he be dead? He was too clever for that!"

"He was a top target," Ernst said. "The allies wanted very much to be rid of him."

"Perhaps he had his evil side, but I shall grieve for him," she said. Indeed, she felt the tears. "He was always kind to me."

"Yet his death has freed you as a hostage. No other man has that hold on me. Indeed, now I can forget that aspect of my career, and work truly for Admiral Canaris!"

"I am pleased for thee." Yet she knew that every time she listened to a record on the Victrola she would think of Heydrich, and whenever she went outside, protected by the papers he had arranged. Whatever the man's motive, he had done her incalculable good. Whatever his evil, he deserved that measure of her respect.

Indeed, it was a time of relief for them both. Ernst continued with his work, which sometimes took him to Spain and elsewhere, but the pass Heydrich had given Quality remained magical in its authority, and she was now able to go out and shop on her own. The hotel personnel knew her and accepted her. She was learning German, and developing facility in conversing with others.

When Ernst was home, they made love often. They listened to records on the Victrola; Ernst bought more when he found them, including other pieces by Richard Wagner. There was an emotional intensity to Wagner's music that made it an excellent background for sexual expression.

When Ernst was away, for a day or for several days, Quality read. She was no longer restricted to English or French books; a few were in Spanish, and she was practicing on German ones too, with the help of a dictionary. She was alone much of the time, but she did not feel lonely; rather she felt that she was in a period of learning, as she prepared to be a part of German society. For she knew that her future lay with Ernst, and therefore Germany, whatever the outcome of the war.

The war itself now seemed far away. They shut it out, not speaking of it. Their world was the room, and the park, and the few stores in range. They did not read the newspaper. In this they seemed to



e like other Berliners, who for their own reasons preferred to ignore the world beyond Germany.

They celebrated the Christmas season together, quietly. Ernst brought her a gift of a pretty wool sweater, the best he could afford. They spoke of their dreams for "after": a nice cottage in some mountain glade, with a forest nearby, where wild animals could be seen. They drew outlines of floor plans for such a structure, and looked at a map to find a suitable location. Perhaps by a mountain lake, where they could watch the water birds. It was idyllic. If it was unrealistic, they did not care; it was their shared fantasy.

In January came the new year, 1943, and disaster. A man with an ironically similar given name, Dr. Ernst Kaltenbrunner, replaced Heydrich as head of the broad network of intelligence services known as RHSA. Quality never met this man, but she felt his impact immediately. Kaltenbrunner was heir to Heydrich's most private information, including the fact that Ernst Best was an SS operative who had infiltrated the Abwehr. He did not know about Quality, so did not have that special hold on Ernst, but what he did know was enough.

For Kaltenbrunner did not like Heydrich. In fact, he had nothing but contempt and hatred for rear echelon intellectuals, and despised anyone associated with them. He could not do anything to the dead man, but he could still make the living ones suffer. Ernst was one of these.

"He is transferring me to an assignment guaranteed to get me dirty," Ernst said morosely. "He doesn't need any more reports on the Admiral. I am to work with the Einsatzgruppen --the SS forces charged with racial operations."

Quality felt a chill as of death. She had heard about that organization, the worst of the SS. There was even a battalion composed entirely of convicted criminals. "Oh, Ernst!"

"I am to leave the Abwehr tomorrow. They are not revealing my true mission there, because they do not want to admit that they have been spying on their own organizations. So there is another pretext. Lieutenant Osterecht will disappear from those records, and I will revert to my true identity. But I will not be in Berlin."

"I will wait for thy return," she said, with grim humor. She could do nothing else. "Perhaps I should give thee back thy charmed swastika."

"No. You must be protected more than me."

She did not argue. She valued the swastika as the token of his love, and it did indeed seem to be protecting her. Heydrich had noticed it immediately, and thereafter treated her with courtesy and kindness.

They made hasty arrangements. Ernst used the rest of his money to pay for the room ahead and to provide her with enough for groceries. "I will come back whenever I can," he promised.

"I know thee will." Neither spoke of the horror lurking behind the assignment: he might be killed on that ugly front.

Quality pretended to herself that Ernst's absence was temporary, and that in another day or two



ne would hear his familiar step in the hall. She did not like deception, even of herself, but it was necessary for her emotional survival.

Then there was an unfamiliar knock. Quality's presence here was no longer secret; the hotel staff and the members of Abwehr knew of her. But none of them had told the SS authorities, being loyal to a friend though they had guessed the reason for his departure. Who, then, could this be?

She opened the door. There stood a robustly attractive young woman. "So it is true!" the woman exclaimed angrily in German. "A kept woman!"

Was this a moralistic neighbor? "Who are you?" Quality asked in German.

"I am Krista."

Astonished, Quality backed away, tacitly inviting her in. Krista was the girlfriend Ernst had broken with a year ago. Actually, it had been incomplete; he had tried to, but reported that Krista had refused to disengage completely without better reason. So they had maintained a "just friends" relationship, with no promise of marriage, and Ernst had had meals with her every month or so. Krista had seemed to accept this change, and she was good company, he had said. He hoped she was in the process of finding another boyfriend.

Now it was clear that Krista had by no means given up on Ernst. She had merely bided her time, waiting for whatever problem he had to pass. Now he was gone, and she was checking out his room-- and verifying her suspicion.

"I am sorry," Quality said carefully in German. "I did not mean to hurt your life."

Krista studied her closely. Her eyes fixed on Quality's bosom. "Ach, the game is lost," she murmured.

Quality glanced down. There lay Ernst's swastika. Krista evidently understood its significance. "He gave it to me in lieu of a ring," she explained.

Krista shook her head. "I came prepared to hate you. But I see he loves you, and I cannot hate what he loves. How did it come about?"

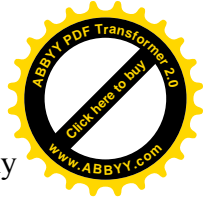
"We met in America. I was the fiancée of his friend there. I went to work in Spain, but was--" Here she did not know the German word, so had to say it in English. "Arrested."

"*Verhaftet*," Krista said. Then, in English: "I know some English, if you speak slow."

Quality elected to piece it out in German. "Arrested in Vichy France. He tried to help me, for the sake of his friend, but when America joined the war, he had to take me out of the camp. We were together, here, and it happened."

"You must be a remarkable woman, to win his love. He has such discipline he cannot be tempted unless he wills it."

"He slept embracing me naked, to keep me warm, and did not touch me," Quality agreed.



"Ja, that is Ernst!" Krista shook her head. "I will keep your secret. I would not hurt Ernst in any way, though I have lost him." She turned to go.

"Krista--must we be enemies? I am without him too, now, for I fear he will not--not return." She felt the sudden tears in her eyes.

"How can we be otherwise?" Krista asked. She walked to the door.

Quality followed her. "Please, I have injured you without ever wanting to. If there is any possible way for me to make amends--"

"Where is there another man like Ernst?" Krista asked sharply. There were tears in her eyes too.

Quality was unable to answer. She watched Krista depart, then locked the door after her. Then she went to the bed, flung herself down on it, and wept.

But two days later Krista returned. Her eyes were somewhat swollen despite a careful job of makeup. Quality knew her own were the same. "I accept what must be," Krista said. "I fear it was destined; your gray eyes match his. I am a practical woman. But it is not easy to give up a dream."

Quality welcomed her. "I am not German," she said. "I am a prisoner Ernst has been protecting. If anything happens, I will be gone. Then--"

"I would not do that!"

"Of course not. I mean that there are many ways in which my future is uncertain. Any member of the hotel staff could turn me in. Then I will be out of the picture. So you have not necessarily lost Ernst."

Krista shook her head. "I have lost him. If you were gone, he would not return to me. He would morn you."

Quality could not argue the case. "Let me share some food with you. I do not have much variety, but there is bread and jam."

"It will do."

Quality fixed it, and they each had a slice.

"Now we have eaten together," Krista said. "We can not be enemies."

"I never wished to be."

"Ernst was never truly mine. I threw myself at him, I tried to seduce him, because I wanted a secure situation. It was not love, it was opportunity. He understood that. He is more romantic. He wanted love. This is what you gave him."

"Yes."



"I am as I am. There is a shadow on my ancestry. First I must secure my position. Then love can come. I would have loved him after we married. But I could not risk love before it."

"But you said you tried to seduce him."

"Sex is not love. If there had been sex, he would have married me, and then there could have been love. But with you, the love came first."

"Yes. There just seemed to be something between us."

"It is goodness between you. I saw it in him, and I see it in you. You are both beautiful inside as well as outside."

"I make no claim to that! My soul is sullied."

"Surely only because you were forced to choose between evils." Krista shrugged. "But you loved another man before Ernst."

"Yes. Lane Dowling, an American. A fine man. I dread our next meeting, if it occurs."

"You have had no contact with Herr Dowling, so he does not know you have left him."

"He does not know," Quality agreed sadly. "I have wronged him, too. Yet as with you and Ernst, I now see that we were not quite right for each other."

"You would not love an inferior man."

"I don't know how you mean that. I am not concerned with pedigree or status, but with personality. Lane was special. But Ernst--"

"Herr Dowling--what does he care about ancestry?"

"He doesn't care at all about ancestry! No more than I do. In fact he seeks unusual people. That's why he befriended Ernst, who was a foreigner in America. How I wish that friendship had not led to--" Quality spread her hands. What an irony, that Lane had introduced his friend to his fiancée, and so had lost his fiancée.

"Ja. So Herr Dowling is a good man, and he will be disappointed when he meets you again. At that point he will need another woman."

"I fear he will," Quality agreed.

"Would he consider a German?"

Quality stared at her. "You can't mean--?"

"I need security. I need a good man. One who does not care about pedigree. Herr Dowling well need a good woman. I can be a very good woman, for the right man." She inhaled.

Amazed, Quality assessed the prospect. "Lane does like--he would be interested in a body like



ours. I was surprised when he became interested in me, because I am not--" She shrugged.

"Your body is slender. Your face is beautiful. You are a lovely woman, overall. But perhaps it was something else he saw in you."

"My religion," Quality agreed. "I am a practicing Quaker. A pacifist. I--some of us use a variant of the language, at times. He was intrigued."

"He is a pacifist?"

Quality laughed. "Not at all! That was part of--of what was going wrong between us. He became a fighter pilot. He was fighting in the Battle over France, shooting down German bombers, when I last heard from him. Surely in the Battle over Britain, too, later. But then I was arrested, and our correspondence was lost."

"I am a Nazi. But I would change. However I needed to. For a secure position. For a good man. The kind of man whom you could once have loved, for I respect your judgment. Does this disturb you?"

Quality shook her head. "I have learned to be practical, in the past four years. Every person must do what she has to, to accomplish what she has to."

"You would introduce me to Herr Dowling?"

"If I meet him again, and if you are there. Yes, that much I would do. But Lane--he is not one to be reeled in like a fish, any more than Ernst is. He would not reject you because of your nationality, but he would not necessarily accept you. And for all I know, he has already given up on me and found another woman. He may believe I am dead. So this is purely speculative."

"A dream," Krista agreed. "But I need a dream, now. I fear Germany is--the war is turning--the Russians are fighting back--there will not be much security in Germany. So if Herr Dowling comes, perhaps he is for me."

"Perhaps," Quality agreed, beginning to believe. "His hair is the same color as Ernst's, and his blue eyes do match yours."

"Ah! That is ideal! The hair, the eyes--perhaps it is fated. If you will tell me about him, it will help."

"Gladly." Quality remained bemused by this development, but she was wickedly tempted by the notion. If she could in effect give Krista a man to replace Ernst, and give Lane a woman to replace herself--what a precious solution! It was preposterous, yet a worthy fantasy.

So she told Krista about Lane Dowling, practicing her German, and Krista responded, practicing her English, and suddenly the day was fading and Krista had to go.

But she came again when she had time, and they talked further. Krista was insatiably interested in everything about Lane, and Quality was glad to tell it, in this way expiating some of her associated guilt.

The following month, Krista had another surprising proposal. "It is hard living alone. The expense gets worse, and it is lonely. You are also alone. I could share with you."



Quality had been refusing to think about what would happen when her diminishing supply of Deutschmarks ran out, and the rent would be due on the room. Ernst had been away a month now, and if he did not return soon, her situation would become dire. Krista had proved to be a pleasant companion during their dialogues.

So it was that Krista moved in with her, and paid the rent, and bought the groceries. They were not sharing; Krista was covering it all. Quality had no choice but to accept.

Krista was away in the days, at her employment. Quality did the shopping and housekeeping. It worked much as it had with Ernst, even to the sharing of warmth in the cold nights. But it wasn't the same.

Early in March Quality got sick. She felt bloated, and she vomited, but it didn't help. As the day progressed, she improved. But the following day it happened again.

"We can't take you to a doctor," Krista said. "He would report you. They are required to."

"It's mild," Quality said. "It must be minor."

But it continued. Every morning she suffered, and every evening she was all right.

Then Krista stared at her. "*Gott in Himmel!* That is morning sickness!"

Quality was appalled. "It can't be! I am too thin. My periods have not returned. Only very irregularly."

Krista shook her head. "You are not thin anymore. You are a beautiful figure of a woman, slender but full. Your periods are gone because you are with child."

"No!" But her protests were in vain. She was pregnant.

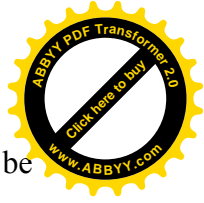
Late in March Ernst reappeared. Quality was alone, with Krista away at work. He swept her into his embrace. "I have missed you so!" he exclaimed. "I knew there wasn't enough money. I must pay off your debts."

"Oh, Ernst, I have so much to tell thee," she said.

By the time Krista returned, they had made love and she had told him. She wasn't certain whether he was stunned more by Krista's involvement or the news of the baby.

The meeting between Ernst and Krista was somewhat strained, with neither knowing quite how to proceed. Quality had to take the initiative. "We are all friends. We knew each other well. We have no secrets from each other. Ernst was with one of us and now is with the other. We shall eat, and listen to records, and sleep."

"Sleep," Ernst repeated, looking warily at the bed.



She hadn't thought of that. The bed held two, but was too small for three, however they might be arranged.

"I will sleep on the floor," Krista said. There was some debate, but that did turn out to make the best sense.

Ernst had to go next day. He gave them money, enough to pay for the room for two more months and to reimburse Krista. "This thing that you are doing," he said to Krista. "I have no way to thank you."

"Just remember that had things been otherwise, I would have been good for you."

"Better than I knew," he agreed.

Then he was gone. Krista turned away, in tears. Quality felt the burgeoning guilt again. However brave a face the woman put on it, she had loved Ernst, and the loss of him hurt her in more than a practical sense.

They agreed that Ernst had seemed reticent about his activity on the Eastern Front. They knew that the fighting there was savage. They concluded that they were probably better off not knowing the details.

Two months later Ernst came again, with more money to sustain them. Quality was now five months pregnant.

"It is difficult," Ernst said. "I can not be sure when I will return. Quality must go to a *Liebensborn* home where they will take care of her and the baby. Then it will be all right."

Quality did not dare ask why he was in such doubt about returning.

"We will wait here two more months," Krista decided. "If you have not returned by then, I will take her there. You will be able to find me, here or at home. I will tell you where she is, then."

He nodded, looking pained.

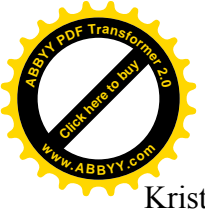
Then he was gone, and they settled in for the duration. He did not reappear in two months, and the money was running out again because of the extra food Quality had to eat.

Krista explained the nature of the Liebensborn Foundation, literally "Well of Life." "It is to foster a higher birth rate for Aryan children. There are several maternity homes for the mothers of SS children, married or unmarried, to use at little cost. They provide care before and after birth. It is the best possible place to have a--" She hesitated, evidently not wanting to speak of an illegitimate baby.

"We are married before God," Quality said, touching the swastika. "In my religion the marriage consists of a simple declaration by each party, in the presence of the Friends Meeting. We exchanged vows."

"And he gave you his most precious possession. I understand. But the state does not recognize it."

"True." Quality sighed. "It would have been better not to have a baby. Yet how can I protest, when it is his?"



"When it is his," Krista echoed, turning away. Quality was chagrined; she had forgotten how Krista herself would have wanted to have Ernst's baby.

Now it was time. "We must do it," Krista said. "We must take you to the Lebensborn home. Now, while it is safe for you to travel."

"But I am a foreigner," Quality protested weakly. "I am not German."

"You are a fine Nordic specimen, and so is he. You have papers. That is the kind of baby they want. They will take care of you."

"But what of you, here alone?"

"I think my job in Berlin is almost over. The war goes badly. I think it is time for me to go home. But I will visit you as often as I can, until he returns."

Quality hated to leave the room where she had loved Ernst. But Krista was correct: for the sake of their finances and the baby, she had to do it. They would leave the name of the home with the hotel manager, so that Ernst would be able to find her without having to search out Krista.

Yet she had a dire foreboding that he was not going to find her. Because he might be in more trouble than she was.

Go to [Next Chapter](#).

Return to [Table of Contents](#).