THE BROTHER AND SISTER SCHOLL

FOREWORD AND DEDICATION

To the bravery of Hans and Sophie Scholl, two young students who were executed for anti-Nazi activities on 22 February 1943 in Munich.

To all those who combated in any way one of the vilest tyrannies in history.

Thou shalt act as if
On thee and on thy deed
Depended the fate of all Germany
And thou alone must answer for it

Johann Gottlieb Fichte

When the Nazis came for the Communists
I was silent
I wasn't a Communist
When the Nazis came for the Social Democrats
I was silent
I wasn't a Social Democrat
When the Nazis came for the Trade Unionists
I was silent
I wasn't a Trade Unionist
When the Nazis came for the Jews
I was silent
I wasn't a Jew
When the Nazis came for me
There was no one left
To protest

Reverend Martin Niemöller (imprisoned 1937 - released 1945)

CHAPTER 1 October 1971

After an interminable, exhausting train journey across Belgium and Germany I finally arrived in Frankenheim at about eleven on a Tuesday morning. I had spent a sleepless night with my girlfriend Emma in the cavernous buffet on Cologne railway station where we waited for our six a.m. connection to the south. Emma was still recovering from a gut-wrenching ferry crossing the previous evening to Ostende through which I had, much to her disgust, steadily carried on drinking Jupiter 5s with a Brummie, placing bets on who would rush out and puke next. On one of her many returns from the stinking latrines below she had actually seized my bottle and

thrown it overboard!
Now she had slept a little and she woke with a little more colour in her pretty, peachy cheeks. She had begun to pick thoughtfully, a beguiling though ultimately irritating habit of hers, at the ends of those side curtains of glossy brown hair, which framed her lovely open face. She said nothing and I could tell she was worried as the minute hand jerked, in the sudden heel-clicking manner which German station clocks have, towards the departure time of our final train.
At the table next to ours an elderly couple were tucking into an early breakfast of cold sausage, bread and - now much to my queasy astonishment - beer. The woman was round and as wide as she was tall, and the man had a very red face, reminding me of an angry gnome in an Enid Blyton book. *And* he was wearing a green hat with a feather in it. The woman had only one thing in mind. Her breakfast. But he kept glancing at a newspaper headline, cursing and shaking his head. At last he opened it out and I could see the front page. There was a picture of a young man with long dark hair and beard, and next to him an intense young woman, not very attractive, with short, fair, wispy hair. Above them screamed a headline - TERRORISTEN! The gnome saw me glancing at it, glowered, muttered darkly, as if to put a spell on me, laid the paper flat and went back to his Wurst and beer.
Emma began to weep quietly at the strangeness of everything.
"You'll be fine," I said. But I sensed the same desolate feelings in her which were making my empty stomach pitch and roll like the ferry boat. "Remember, we'll only be fifty miles away from each other."
We had looked at the map on the bed back in my tiny student flat in Manchester. A letter to the Central Bureau for Exchanges in which I had lied about us being engaged had secured this proximity, although we had hoped for two schools together in the same city. Preferably in Munich. Now we were on our way to these two places we had never heard of.

We finally parted in Augsburg. In a panic I had scribbled the name and address of my school for her. With that carefree insouciance of youth we had not even thought about such a vital detail. My train finally pulled away. I waved to her frantically. She looked like a waif, an evacuee, tiny and vulnerable with her two huge cases on the long, empty, retreating platform. Suddenly a tunnel swallowed me. The poignant seconds and scenes of parting were gone forever.
A sentimental voice had whispered "You may never see Emma again." In the darkness of the long tunnel I felt dreadful. I trusted the unknown town she was travelling to would take precious care of her.As the light returned, a middle-aged passenger, a woman with a small case, walking past my empty compartment, saw me, stopped and came in. To my surprise she sat opposite. Out of politeness, as is the custom on English trains of course, I studiously avoided looking at her, but to my consternation every time I happened to glance across she was favouring me with a smile. Finally she offered me a magazine to read which I gratefully accepted. Even so whenever I looked up as I turned a page she was still fixing me with her cool smile. And all the short stories seemed to be romances I realised with a degree or two more of discomfort.

The next I knew I was waking. The compartment was empty and the magazine lay on the floor. The train was slowing and pulling into Frankenheim. I struggled with my luggage across the bridge to the ticket hall. Herr Breitner, as prearranged, was waiting for me. He decided to welcome me in German. I managed to pick out most of what he said (my German was good) but was surprised, shocked almost, to hear the precise, klipp-und-klar language of my schooling delivered in his comic, gobble-gobble, Bill and Ben accent. (The best way to convey the

difference between Standard German (Hochdeutsch) and its Bavarian variant is to compare Oxford English with its Highland counterpart.)

I actually giggled and then immediately thought I must have insulted him because he was silently studying me with one raised eyebrow.

"I'm sorry," I said in German. "Might we speak English, just for today? I'm very tired."

"But of course, Mr Newman. Follow me to the car." He picked up one suitcase and I the other. The unexpected weight made him wince. He drove a Renault. It had a strange gear-change, a handle with a metal grip which poked out just below the dashboard. Of course, I had gone round to the wrong side. This made him laugh so much that I thought he was going to be sick. We drove off.

"Hev you hed any fudd?"

"I'm sorry?"

"Hev you eaten yet?"

"A little, thank you. Eine Kleinigkeit."

He smiled. "You hev a good, clear accent." (Did he mean my English or my German?) "Herr Wagner will be plissed. The last assistant, Mr Thickbroom, was from Newcastle – you say a Geordie? – Yes? – Well, he was so…difficult…and so…bad…"

"Thickbroom? *Dichtbesen*?"

Breitner laughed loud. "We all thought this but never said it. The children, nevertheless, did so…and now you say it! Very good!"

Breitner was in fact a lovely, jolly man. He wore rimless spectacles and had a thin beard like a chin-strap of soft brown suede. He taught English and History at the school.

"Well, Mr Dichtbesen – ah-ah! - was rather an immoral young man…"

I thought he had perhaps chosen the wrong word so I checked.

"Unsittlich?"

"Yes, immoral. I'm afraid to say it, but he was. He drank a lot of beer."

I thought this over. How immoral would he think me?

"He knew the GIs from the airforce base at Sternbach. We almost hed a scendal."

"A scandal? Really?"

"Yes I'm afraid so."

We were waiting for the lights to change. Frankenheim seemed a nice, busy little town. The buildings were very tall and elegant and painted in pastel colours as is the southern German tradition. Some bore murals and verses in Gothic script. I liked the feel of the place.

"Wie alt sind diese Gebäude?" I asked, feeling I ought to say something in German about them.

"Oh, they aren't so old. This part of Frankenheim is not so pretty. I'm afraid your Royal Airforce smashed down the nice, old buildings here towards the end of the war."

"Oh," I managed, rather guiltily.

"In a moment you see the school. In the Sekretariat – how do you say this?"

"Office?"

"Yes, of course. In the office I must get the address of your flet. I forgot this morning. Then I drive you to there so you cen hev a rest. Then tomorrow, et work! Seven fifty sharp!"

He laughed at his impersonation of a martinet. We turned into a large square and I saw for the first time an extensive and imposing yellow building with an astonishingly steep, high red roof, the grammar school where I would be working for the next nine months. Between the two interminable rows of square white windows I read Paul-von-Hindenburg-Gymnasium.

But on the left hand side of the large portal, on the mustard coloured rendering was scrawled the

legend in red paint Geschwister Scholl G. A man in blue overalls was on a stepladder, viciously scrubbing at the final G. The paint had already spread and now he was descending and rinsing his brush in a bucket.
“Sie haben ein Problem mit Graffiti hier, Herr Breitner?“
Breitner laughed, nervously this time.
“We hev just a little local problem. Here alone. But it is better not to say so much about this.”
I followed him upstairs and down a long, wide, white corridor of classrooms. There came the low chatter of pupils and raised mellow voices of teachers as we passed each door. The atmosphere was one of disinfected calm. We reached a door marked SEKRETARIAT and entered. Two women, one graceful and thin, one jolly and squat sat clacking loudly at typewriters.
“Herr Newman, darf ich vorstellen, Frau Schelling und Fräulein Mayer. Herr Newman ist der neue Assistent für Englisch – der neue Mann!“ This witty pun on my name delighted everyone. The thin one, Frau Schelling, asked me if I had had a good journey. I hesitated then simply said yes. The truth was too tedious to utter.
My eyes wondered from their wide, dolly smiles to a door which had the name-plate **Anton Huber Schuldirektor**. Breitner gave the door two tiny knocks and eventually a very portly man with thin strands of grey up-and-over hair and thick black glasses emerged. He wore one of those intriguing green collarless jackets, a sort of costume for men, which I had noticed becoming more prevalent as we had travelled further south into Bavaria. His lips were smiling but he had cold, steely eyes. He bade me good day in decent English and shook my hand fiercely, wishing me a good stay at the school and in Frankenheim.
“I apologise already for zer…wall-writing…We too, like you English, hev, how do you say?..some rowdies…”
“Nein, *football* rowdies” muttered Breitner, who seemed embarrassed to have to correct his boss. But his comment caused me to get the wrong end of the stick. Could Geschwister Scholl possibly be footballers? A football team of siblings?
“Sind die Geschwister Scholl Fussballer??“ I asked with my tongue half in my cheek and an ingenuous smile. But this attempt at a light-hearted comment fell flat. The two men looked at each other and shook their heads. The secretaries switched off their smiles and, grateful to have their work to stare at, carried on clacking. We exchanged a few more pleasantries and then left with the address of my accommodation. The caretaker had begun on the double L of Scholl although the G had left an unsightly pink stain. Breitner drove off, humming the notes of a classical piece I thought I recognised. I looked back over my shoulder at the graffiti.
“This is a problem in the town at the moment. I tell you later,” he said.
A few streets away from the school we stopped again by a row of white-washed houses which all had a window in the roof. I looked out at Number 23. The garret up there was to be my home for the next nine months.

My German was decent. By next June it would be perfect. When I had announced , a boy of thirteen, that I would be opting for German, my father, a veteran of El Alamein, and my grandfather, a veteran of the Somme, had not exactly rejoiced and encouraged me. In my teens it had struck me how lucky I was to be alive, considering what dangers my ancestral genes had been exposed to. Now, in my twenties, a freakish, totally unwitting association with Bader and Meinhoff - those misguided students pictured in that early edition of the Bildzeitung - and an admiration for the heroic brother and sister Scholl, dead for nearly thirty years, were about to

very nearly cost me my life, and ultimately change it for good.

My landlady, Frau Ertl, was so delighted to meet me that at first I thought she was insane. I was virtually dragged into the living room to meet her Mutti, a rather large lady twice the daughter's size, who sat in a tall wide armchair in front of the television. She could only smile and cackle.
"She has had a stroke," she whispered. "Three years ago. But she is happy. Very happy. Never complains."
She sat me down and left me with her Mutti while she fetched some coffee. I told Mutti, as if announcing it to an empty room, who I was, where I came from and what I was doing there. Each new piece of information brought the same smile and incoherent salvo of happy babble.
The daughter returned with a tray. The coffee was fragrant and delicious. Her apple cake was moist and tasted of cinnamon. I ate it so hungrily that she soon fetched in some more. She was like an apple-rosy-cheeked character from a fairy tale turned middle-aged with her two plaited pigtails of blond hair on either side of her head. She began to tell me exuberantly what were her terms and expectations in such a manner as to suggest she thought that no reasonable person could object to them. The rent would be eighty Marks, payable on the first of each month. I quickly calculated that this would leave me a fortune of 170 DM a month to live on and indulge myself with. Beer, I knew, from working the previous summer on the Rhine in a hotel in the washing-up kitchen, cost one mark a half-litre.
She kept mentioning a Herr Zickbrum and I thought for a while she had another lodger of hers in mind. But I could not understand why she kept shaking her head and saying dark things about him. What business was he of mine?
"He did not stay beyond March. The police came around and arrested him."
Suddenly the penny dropped. This was of course my sinister predecessor Thickbroom.
"You do not take drugs, Herr Neumann," she assured me. "You do not drink too much and take in bad girls…" She ran through a list of my virtues as if she could divine them from looking at my face - or had received a glowing testimonial from my parents. A little embarrassed I kept glancing at her mother.
"Oh don't worry, Mutti only understands a little." And to confirm this she babbled again when she heard her name.
"Herr Zickbrum looked like" - and here she lowered her voice to almost a mime "Andreas Bader" – "with his long, wild, untidy, black hair and his beard. Not like you…very smart…lovely face…clean, blonde, very nice. Such a beautiful coat……. More coffee?"

Musing on my list of virtues which I had to uphold – sobriety, punctuality, silence, celibacy and neat-and-tidiness I climbed the steep stairs around four corners after my Rapunzel (as I nicknamed her for my own private amusement), she carrying my heavier case as if it was empty, and gabbling away, me dragging the other, until we reached the door at the top of the house. I had two rooms and a bathroom on the landing. She opened the door and told me proudly I had two single beds, a table, a small cooker and, in the next tiny room another single bed, all of which I could see perfectly well for myself. She pointed to the window and told me I had a window as well. She showed me how the chest of drawers worked, pulling them out one by one and counting one to five. For each feature I managed to be ever more grateful and delighted. I must have made such a good impression on her because suddenly she embraced me bestowed a sloppy kiss on my cheek.
"I will be your Mutti Herr Neumann and take care of you. But now you must sleep!" She left me

with a big smile and I did as I was told.

When I woke the daylight had halved. The afternoon sun had deserted my tiny share of the sky. I could hear a violin. Was Mrs Ertl serenading me outside? I opened the door onto my tiny landing and realised the strains of music were coming from the neighbouring house. I looked at my watch. It was gone six. I was hungry and thirsty. I knocked politely at the door downstairs. It was at once seized and flung open. Mrs Ertl seemed to do everything at twice the tempo, with twice the force as the rest of the world. She was so excited to be able to present me to her husband Ernst who had not long come in from work. Had I expected a frantic male version of her I would not have been more mistaken. He sat grey and watchful in his chair, lugubriously smoking, well away from his mother-in-law.
"Ernst has just returned from work," she told me breathlessly and added proudly, "He is a foreman at the chemical works."
Now he nodded, tendered his hand and said a few quiet words of welcome while she scurried into the kitchen. She returned in triumph with a glass of albino tea, from which a string attached to a label reading Teefix was dangling. (Emma had joked that it reminded her of a tampon and she made up her mind to always drink the coffee.)
"A milk tea for the Englishman," she ecstatically announced.
"Lovely!" I lied as I sipped it.
"Are you hungry?"
Now I took the initiative and told them I had come down for directions into town.
"I fancy a little look round my new home and then find somewhere decent to eat."
I refused ever so politely her entreaties of me to dine that first evening at their table and just as it seemed I had no option but to give in to her and discover exactly what that pungent smell emanating from the kitchen was, Ernst came unexpectedly to my rescue.
"But, woman, of course the young gentleman would like to have a look round!"
His grey face winked at me conspiratorially. "He wants to drink our good German beer, eat a good Schweinehaxe mit Sauerkraut and look at our pretty German girls!"
Rapunzel threw her red hands to her red face in mock embarrassment and she pretended to scold him. Mutti cackled too. Ernst gave me directions to the Edler Hirsch (the Noble Stag) on the second corner after the school. The best and cheapest food in town was to be had there.
"The landlord has…" and he paused to reflect "..er…something on his hands but it is very good value." Did this mean he didn't wash thoroughly or had a guilty conscience, I wondered.

Realising that I liked my hosts very much, I was soon on my way out into the cool, fresh October air. This was the Birkenstrasse, and, true to its name every twenty or so metres, the trunks of its silver birches stood like wide fluorescent strips in the dimming light. Their tiny leaves were turning into golden coins. Soon, on my right, the school loomed into view. I turned into the square to get a close look. Geschwister Scholl G was now a horrible dark pink blur. I stood back and looked up. The building intimidated me. I felt almost overwhelmed by its self-esteem and the confidence it appeared to have in its own academic excellence and erudition. How would my tiny intellect fit in there? Into which window would I slot? I turned my back on it and looked the other way. I had not noticed it until now. Facing me was a beautiful park with tall trees swaying gracefully in a top breeze while at ground level everything stood still. I walked in through the sturdy gates (everything seemed sturdier here than in my own country) and kicked through the fallen scarlet hands of maple and great golden tongues of horse chestnut. Red chestnuts, shiny

and contoured like tiny drawer knobs lay ignored and scattered beside their green pods whose waxy white interiors were glowing in the fading light. I gathered some up and began mentally to prepare a talk on English conker battles for a lesson perhaps with the younger pupils sometime that week. I could get some string from the office, and maybe a pair of compasses to do the piercing, and organize a conker tournament. The kids could write a set of instructions for preparing and playing! Hey, I could practise the imperative! Here was my first lesson, and feeling much better, with confident swishes I ran through the piles of leaves. This would be my first contribution to the English department and I conjured up a Herr Wagner and bestowed him with an impressed look of gratitude. I walked on through the lovely dusky park. The sky had turned a stony white and top branches were like long charcoals scrawling against it. The still air smelled of the sweet decay of autumn. The pebbly avenue opened out into a wide expanse of lawn dotted with mole hills. Beneath a large glass globe, now lit up, sitting on a bench were three teenagers, about eighteen years of age. They were laughing uproariously and passing a gigantic bottle of dark wine between them. One threw a cigarette end onto the pebbles. Only then did I notice just beyond them, screaming in a strangled apoplexy - as if he was doing an impression of Adolf Hitler - an elderly gentleman waving his stick in their direction. He was dressed in one of those peculiar jackets like the headmaster's. Here I noticed for the first time that the garment had no vent at the back, just a central dart below the shoulders from which a hidden fold, like a pair of wings, danced open as he thrust forward, like a pantomime villain, in his rage. I could not understand the detail of what he was yelling but he kept repeating "Ihr Schweine!" To which the youngsters were responding with such cries as
"You shitty old Nazi!"
"Piss off!"
"Mind your own business, you old dung beetle!" (I had learned the useful word for a dung beetle, Mistkrätzer, the previous summer when a drunken pan-washer in the hotel kitchen had gotten into a furious fight with an even drunker waiter.)
I was fascinated. I could not help myself. I was drawn in closer and closer. The old man had danced in closer to the youths as well and was stubbing out the cigarette end with the end of his stick.
"You vile pig-dogs! What gratitude! Filthy little reds! Be ashamed of yourselves, Bader-Meinhoff-swine!"
They cheered and laughed and swigged on. Now the man was off in stick-swinging disgust.
"Nazi petty-bourgois dung beetle!" shouted one to his disappearing back.
This insult came from a slim blonde girl wedged between the two long-haired boys. One, dark-haired and Bohemian-looking wore the Star of David on his green jacket. The other, blonde, wore a CND logo and the word PEACE below it in red stitching. I guessed that the blonde girl and boy were brother and sister. As I approached they fell silent. I could see them eyeing me up. I smiled as I passed. The dark-haired boy proffered me the bottle of wine and let out a resounding belch which made the others laugh. I shook my head and walked on.
"Good evening!" shouted the girl after me in clear, unaccented English.
I couldn't help but turn. "How do you know I'm English?"
Now they clapped and congratulated themselves. They were pretty drunk.
"You are really English? Not fucking Ami?"
I took a pace forward and told them in my best, sleep-refreshed German that I was an English student from Liverpool.
"Was? Sie sprechen Deutsch???" This was delivered not in the local gobble-gobble but in clear,

crystal High German. The blonde boy with thick, bottle-end glasses who had spoken was obviously not a local bumpkin.
“Excuse me please,” I said in German and then went to walk on.
“One moment!” he shouted back in English. “Can you explain something to us which we do not understand. There is an American song we like but one line in it is too difficult.” And he sang, with the others quickly joining in ”Don’t Bogart that joint, my friend, pass it over to me!”
I had heard this song somewhere at a party last year. Was it by The Eagles?
I frowned. Bogart a joint? They stared at me in expectation.
“Well. Bogart is probably Humphrey Bogart, an American actor.”
“Ah! I know him. Die Afrikanische Königin! African Queen!“
In quick German the blonde boy reminded the other two rapidly of the plot of the film. Now they looked back at me for the whole solution. What could I say? I thought it over and pictured the craggy-faced Bogart. Don’t Bogart that joint my friend. Suddenly I had a flash of inspiration. I told them slowly in German that Bogart had been a chain-smoker and had, I seemed to recall, died of lung cancer.
“Was ist Lungenkrebs in Englisch?“ asked the pretty blonde with such wide, curious blue eyes. I could see now that she was rather playing the part of a hippy, was about sixteen and was just about perfect. I told her it was lung cancer, of which she made a whispered internal memo.
“But what has lung cancer to do with the song?” she asked in bewilderment.
“Hold on!” I said, now warming to my thesis. “Bogart had a habit – it was his trade-mark - to smoke cigarettes without taking them out of his mouth. Men and women copied him.”
I paused and looked from one gaping, admiring face to the other. The beautiful girl looked as if she had fallen in love with me.
“So…I think, if you “Bogart a joint” you keep it in your mouth and behave selfishly and don’t pass it on….OR you make the end of it wet with your spit!”
To watch this information slowly sink in was so delicious to me that I knew there and then that I would have to become a teacher.
“Himmiherrgott!” shouted the darker boy.” Wait until we tell the others! Rudiger will be so jealous. He asked his stupid GI friend and he told him – the great donkey – that it meant to throw it away. What nonsense!”
“Thank you,” said the girl.
“Nichts zu danken!” I waved away their gratitude and to a chorus of goodbyes left them to the growing green darkness.
I was absolutely ravenous. I gave the lamp-lit town a cursory look (it was surprisingly deserted) and came back the way I had gone through the park. The illuminated golden school building rose above the black trees. As I walked back down amongst them however the stunning vision took on a traumatic quality, as if the civilized world was now sinking back there steadily into the forests of the primitive. I made my way past the bench but the youths had gone, leaving their empty bottle of Lambrusco underneath. I picked it up and put it into a bin. I walked out of the eerie, whispering park and turned left past the school square which was called, not surprisingly, Der Hindenburg-Platz. After one more corner I could see the Gasthaus shining out on the next like a lantern in the darkness. When I walked in I had to stop and look behind me to make sure that I had not been followed in by a camel or a goat or something else, equally unexpected. The whole place, some twenty tables, mostly occupied, had come to a total standstill to stare at me. Hands were frozen in mid-gesture, forks full of meat had stopped dead by wide open mouths and steins of beer were stuck in half-tip mode. Like a fairy-tale prince I released them from their

spell by a general Guten Abend, at which some nodded and others muttered. I sat down self-consciously to one side but I was still being stared at, one gentleman actually twisting his neck to gaze at me over his left shoulder. I did not know whether to feel annoyed or amused. To my left there was a mirror. I felt a surge of pleasure to see myself at my handsome best – if I say so myself – my fair hair centrally parted, as was the fashion back then, and nestling on my ears. My blue eyes were sparkling and I could sense mischief coming on. Now a bowing and scraping little man, like Frankenstein's servant, who had just delivered two huge square plates to a nearby couple was making his way over to me. He wore an apron and he was wringing his hands, perhaps as if, I thought, to hide whatever he had on them.
"Guten Abend. Sind Sie Amerikaner?" he asked quietly and very apologetically. Something about the tone of the question told me that the answer to it had better be NO.
"Nein, Herr Wirt. Ich komme aus England."
The room broke out in whispers at this and I heard the word "Engländer" echo quietly around. This news seemed to bolster and straighten him up and he fetched me a menu. I ordered a wheat beer and heart in butter sauce with dumplings. Both proved so delicious that I was soon sipping at my second wheat beer, which tasted like vanilla, and had plucked up the courage to ask for a third dumpling. Not only did I get another dumpling but an extra helping of thick golden brown sauce. Other customers saw and admired this. The man who had nearly broken his neck to gawp at me twisted around again and ventured in English "Tastes it to you, my Sir, the Bavarian kitchen?"
"Very good, thank you!"
After eating and now sipping at my third beer – a Pils- which the grateful landlord had noted on my beer-mat with another stroke of his pen I took my copy of Sons and Lovers from a deep pocket. I had, to be frank, grown a little weary (and a little guilty to have wearied of such a great classic) by Lawrence's self-obsession and familial introspection. I longed with every turning page for there to be a window opened and for a blast of fresh air from without, perhaps some attack on the vile mine owners and some radical sympathy for the poor, downtrodden miners. But there never was. Yet still I ploughed on, making sure that whoever looking my way could read the cover. The door opened. In walked someone I thought I recognised. Had I seen the face at the station? At the school? He waved to me and, shockingly, came over to my table. I racked my tired brains.
"Ah! I see you found the Lokal! Have you eaten well?"
It was Mr Ertl, my landlord! Delighted to have recognized him in the nick of time (and slightly tipsy) I went into the kind of raptures which I suspected drove him half-mad at home. He lit a cigarette and offered me one, a HB. I took one. It tasted strong but good. I was an occasional smoker (on those occasions when I was offered one.) We chatted about this and that. I noticed, with delight, my German taking on the hues of the local gobble-gobble. I was a natural mimic and had been a lot in demand at school with my impressions of Harry Worth, Norman Wisdom et alia. I could tell Herr Ertl had something at the back of his mind which he wanted to air with me. It turned out to be, as I had half suspected, Herr Dickbrum. It transpired that he had defaulted on two months rent and had brought shame on them, so much so that the Ertls had thought very hard as to whether to have another lodger.
"Before him – never any trouble. We have had many student teachers but he was the first English assistant."
I could see where his speech was leading so I took his hand and assured him with about as sincere a stare as I could muster that I would be no bother. This familiarity surprised him at first

but then he threw back his head in relief, no doubt delighted not to have to spell it all out to me. He tapped my emptying glass, swivelled around and cried
“Siggy! Zwei Bier noch!”
Siggy brought the beers over and went to mark my beer-mat but Ernst insisted that the two strokes of the pen should go on his. The cigarette and the beers had made my brains float around a little, so I asked him straight out what else Thickbroom had done to bring shame on them. At first he shook his head but in the obvious absence of other topics of conversation he began to tell me.
“Girls in his room – some very young….he gave…English lessons” (here he winked slyly and emphasized the word “lessons”)…..”One complained that he had put his hand on her leg. Her father came round shouting at him, threatening him with the police….. Then after Christmas he comes back from England in a bad mood. He just lies in his bed and won’t go to school. The director sends someone round to see if he is ill…..Maria is so ashamed and upset…”
There was worse to come, I could tell, as he squashed his cigarette slowly out in the ashtray.
“Why was he arrested?”
“I cannot say.”
I wondered what on earth he could have done worse than touch a pupil’s leg. Had he perhaps raped or threatened to murder one?

Now another man had come in and joined us. I puzzled and thought I recognized him too. He was in navy overalls. Ernst introduced him to me but I had already placed him. The school caretaker! His name was Wolfgang. He wore a hat with a feather in the band and like Ernst was in his early fifties, I thought. I shook his proffered hand and finding an obvious tag I sympathized with him about the tedious task he had had to perform that morning.
“You saw this?” he said, all astonishment.” Schweine!”he muttered. “Verdammte Kommunisten!“
His vehemence took me aback. He smelt strongly of old sweat.Ernst only laughed and slapped his back. Thirsty Wolfgang had soon drained his first drink and bought a round for three under very weak protests from me. Why it is called Dutch courage I don’t know but I had acquired quite a measure of it by now and so I asked him straight out about the Geschwister Scholl. A head or two turned.My tipsy voice was of course louder than I imagined.
“Ernst, it would be better if we spoke about something else….”
My landlord nodded. The caretaker looked at me and asked me where I was from. I told him Liverpool. His eyes lit up. Who was my favourite Beatle? Did I support Everton or Liverpool?
“Liverpool!” I replied proudly. ”Is it all Bayern München in these parts?”
“Not quite. We are on the border between Franconia and Bavaria. Many here support FC Nürnberg. Me too.”
When Wolfgang had gone off to the toilet Ernst whispered to me that the graffiti had been written up by young left-wing hooligans who hated Hindenburg and wanted the name of the school changed.
“To Geschwister Scholl?”
“Yes but it makes a lot of trouble.”
“Why?” I asked. But Wolfgang was already back.
“So, you are a red, Herr Neumann?”
His comment was totally unexpected and had me flummoxed. I hesitated and then finally stammered.

“Well… I do vote for the socialists and help out a little at election time… but I’m no Commie…
Wolfgang’s eyes nearly fell out of his skull, he threw back his head and roared with laughter at this answer.
“No! I did not mean your politics. That would be rude! I meant your support for the reds, FC Liverpool!”
We all guffawed at my daft mistake. My face must have turned very red itself to utter such a foolish answer, as if anyone would be so crass to ask a perfect stranger, albeit a young one, about his political leanings. In a bid not to appear so ridiculous my beer-brain took over, and thinking I knew exactly what to say in order to impress my listeners I said sententiously
“Writing slogans on walls never persuades anybody. The opposite in fact! The commies try such tactics in Britain too…” If I thought my nostrum would be hailed as a true gem of wisdom and insight then I was disappointed to see it welcomed by a conspicuous silence and only the slightest nod of the head. And in my own head I heard the laughing cry of HYPOCRITE! as I suddenly remembered our drunken rabble going around altering the first E of BETTER to an I in the slogan VOTE CONSERVATIVE FOR A BETTER BRITAIN below the long, infuriating, grinning teeth of Edward Heath. This had been in a prosperous suburb of Manchester. The Tory candidate had swept in with an increased majority. To our relief Wolfgang changed the subject.
“So tomorrow you meet the famous Kapitän! He is a good man. Not like some of the snobs who work at the school. He always says hello. Some of them walk past you with their stupid noses in the air as if you are a bad smell!”
The Captain. He surely must mean the school director, but he hadn’t struck me as a friendly sort of man.
“Actually I met Herr Huber already this morning.”
Wolfgang barked a laugh, almost a sneer.
“No, not him…I mean Herr Wagner. Der Kapitän! A great character! But watch out at his grog parties!”
“Grog?” (Was that rum and something?)
“Oh yes. Wagner was a U-Boot captain.”
“But not for long!” laughed Ernst into his beer. “Komm, wir trinken ein Bier noch!” And before I could say NO (this would be my sixth!) they were already being poured.
“Did he sink?” I said, all innocence. This made them both explode with laughter.
“Did he sink? Did he sink? Oh, we have never heard this joke before. We must remember!”
“No,” stammered Ernst” He …went…the…wrong…way…!” Now they were breathless and hurting with laughing. Many nearby had joined in without knowing why.
“Was it the grog?” I asked again, this time not so innocently. This was too much. Ernst was holding his ribs in agony and choking. (So much for the Germans lacking a sense of humour, I thought) Wolfgang was pleading “Nein…nein…Mr Newman….nichts mehr……”
Eventually they both subsided into exhausted sighing and wiped away their tears.
“Let me tell him, Ernst. The captain was the first prisoner of war of World War II…His submarine went aground on sandbanks off the east coast of Canada in November 1939. Some wicked tongues say he did this on purpose because….” he lowered his voice “He couldn’t stand Adolf Hitler. He spent the whole war there with his crew…While I and thousands of others were freezing their arses off in Mother Russia he sat catching salmon….”
He was laughing again but this time it seemed to border on weeping. We paid our bills and stumbled home. The downstairs was all in darkness. Ernst bid me good night and told me I was a good lad, the best. The staircase seemed to climb for an eternity but with little more ado I

climbed into bed. It was nearly eleven.

Chapter 2

The next time I looked it was ten past eight. A voice was shouting in German – "Are you still in the nest, Herr Neumann?"

A shaft of sun was cleaving my eyes like a spear as I scrabbled for my watch. I was so dry. My mouth was foul.

"School has already started Herr Neumann! Breakfast time! Cooey!"

Who was it? Mrs Rapunzel. Oh no! I sat up in horror. I was already twenty minutes late on my first day. I was Dickbrum the Second! I staggered up and wobbled around as if I was still on the ferry. I went through my early routines as quickly as my throbbing head would allow and it was gone nine when I finally got to school. I could not believe how quiet a building containing over seven hundred people could be. Had it been evacuated? I went into the Sekretariat and the two secretaries immediately switched on their big smiles. The head's door was open but there was no-one at whose feet I could fling myself in abject apology.

"I'm looking for Herr Wagner, please…"

"Try the staffroom, the corridor on the left at the end of this one…"

I found a wide green door on which was written LEHRERZIMMER. I went to knock but someone had seen my hesitation and already brushed past me, smilingly holding the door open for me to follow.It was a huge room. Timetables like inscrutable blueprints for some secret weapon covered the walls. Posters announced meetings and conferences. Here and there isolated heads were balancing over exercise books. The large round clock on the wall clicked as the minute hand jerked downwards past the two, as if in reproach. A white bearded face in the corner looked up at me and smiled. He was wearing a navy blue blazer and puffing at a pipe. The only item the Captain needed to complete the image of himself was a sailor's hat. I moved towards him and stumbled over a large brown satchel, causing some amusement amongst his little flock of students.

"Ah Mr Newman," he said in beautiful North American English. "Welcome. I won't ask you if you enjoyed your trip because you clearly didn't!"

The blonde, curly-haired woman to his left caught the joke first. She wore glasses and her blue magnified eyes studied me kindly.

"May I introduce you to Mrs Heidi Dettmar on my left, and to Misters Karl Glockner, Bertholt Schulz and Dieter Lenz - our student teachers with us until Easter. We call them Referendare."

I stuttered a weak apology about my lateness. I explained that my journey had been long and I had overslept.

"Wolfgang the caretaker told me you had quite a late night, too!" He winked roguishly. "Don't worry, I understand!"

He smiled. I stared back at him in silence, utterly lost for a reply.

"Sit down, sit down please. This is our usual Wednesday tutorial and, of course, we always conduct them in English. These four geniuses went to a lecture yesterday at the university about various pedagogical approaches to tense differentiation. Dieter here was just saying that it was like old wine in new bottles – *alter Wein in neuen Flaschen* – but we would be so glad to have the insights and opinions on such matters from a native speaker…"

The sparkle in his clear blue eyes had intensified. He could surely see I was hung-over. Why was he playing some cruel game with me.

My head began to pound to a faster, louder drum beat. I was about to be interrogated by a German Brains Trust. Dieter, an earnest young man in that odd Bavarian jacket, only a grey version this time, turned and gave me a curt nod. He had oiled, swept-back hair and was trying hard to look twice his age, which was about twenty-five I thought. He reminded me of Roy Orbison, but without that huge black surf-wave above the forehead. I saw instantly that he thought he out-gunned the others in brain-power and that the others knew he thought it too, and scornfully resented it. He smiled again and bowled me the first delivery - a horrid googly.
"Good morning, Mr Newman. Welcome to our little meeting. First a question about the difference in usage between the present simple and the present progressive. Could you perhaps give us some guidelines on this? I mean, I, and I am sure my dear, respected colleagues share the same view, it is vital to know and to inculcate in our charges what is actually said at street level and not, as it were, dreamt up by German writers of English text books - what people actually say in the pub, at the market and at home in their dining rooms, and not what we think they ought to say. Wouldn't you agree?"
Did I agree? I thought in panic of the incomprehensible, useless drivel we spoke on a Friday night at The Cattle Market pub back home. I pictured those bewilderingly many windows I had studied on the facade of the school at first sight, and had the dreadful conviction that, found intellectually wanting, I would be returned, like Thickbroom, to England in ignominy. Dieter's neighbour Bertholt, prematurely balding with a great egg-head thrust up between two cygnet wings of fluffy brown hair, sat studiously surveying the ceiling during all of this. I glanced up, hoping he has spotted a great crack appearing which would force us all to withdraw to a place of safety. Did I agree? I managed to squeak yes and shifted nervously on my mock-leather chair. This made a horribly realistic fart sound. Caught between hilarity and despair I bit my lip. Dieter came unexpectedly to my rescue.
"For instance, if someone says goodbye is it natural to say "I go now" or "I'm going now"?"
I was relieved and delighted that the googly had untwisted so tamely. I decided to hit it for six.
"I'm going now." I replied with firm assurance.
"But why? I might stand outside a restaurant and aver that "I sometimes eat there" NOT "I am eating there". "I'm sitting here" NOT "I sit here". Can you outline a rule for this, when is it -ING and when is it not –ING?"
Suddenly my new-found confidence evaporated. My head was spinning. Or did my head spin?
"Mmm…interesting point, Dieter. Let me think about it…" I muttered.
Jolly Heidi came to my rescue.
"Surely if I say "I ride a bike" it means I hev a bike in my basement and when zer weather is clement I may decide to ride upon it. If, on zer uzzer hand I say, "I em riding a bike" I shout zis as I go along (or I em going along?). Hello, everybody! Look, I em riding a bike!"
The amused Captain interjected that this might be perfectly grammatically correct and good English but, slyly looking at the rest, doubted if anyone in their right mind would go down the street shouting this. Heidi sat back rather crestfallen and, a little revived, I saw an immediate opportunity to come to her aid (and pay the sarcastic captain and his pompous boatswain back at the same time)
"Well, imagine someone who had gone off their legs –"
"Forgive me, Mr Newman," interjected Dieter "I thought that this idiomatic verb "to go off" meant "to…lose affection for", as one might say, for example "Unfortunately I have gone off my girlfriend". Can one honestly go off one's legs? What uzzer – sorry, what other legs, does one have left to love better?"

“Or do you mean,” said Bertholt suddenly in a perfect American drawl and looking pointedly at Dieter “ “To go off” like a piece of meat goes off?”
The captain’s merry blue eyes were on me, and so was everyone else’s; yet they contained not a trace of mirth. I tried hard not to snigger but could not quite manage it.
“Excuse me, Mr Newman. What is so funny?” asked the fat man Karl, genuinely perplexed, in a ridiculously quiet, high choirboy voice. His face reminded me of soft putty into which a modeller might have once stuck a couple of fingers and a thumb, before losing interest and turning his attention to more promising material. I could detect he was a beer-drinker. What was funny? Do you know, I lost count of the number of times I was asked to explain the joke that year. Many Germans do seem to have a complex about not getting the gist of silly English humour.
“Funny? Nothing. Nothing really. If I go off my legs it means I lose the use of them.”
Dieter greedily scribbled down this nugget under the loathing glare of Bertholt.
“Good, thank you, Mr Newman,” rejoined Dieter. “And simultaneously if I lose the use of my arms I can say “Goodness! Oh dear me, I have gone off my arms! Or I am going of my feet!”
I could no longer help it. I laughed out loud. Karl and Bertholt seemed to appreciate the joke or just found it amusing that I was laughing at Dieter because they joined in. But not Dieter. With a mild and apparently calm reproach to them he said, “No, no, revered colleagues, this is serious and shows us why it is so…urgent…to have a native speaker in our midst, to clear off such matters of usage…”
The maliciously smiling Captain nodded and added, “Quite right Mr Spring, - (he was translating, for his own amusement, Lenz, Dieter’s surname, the old German word for spring (hence Lent) – Let us clear this matter ***up***. But off course you know you can go off your head as well, do you not?”
Dieter looked abashed for the first time. He obviously did not know this idiom. I took this as my cue to exact some revenge.
“Yes! If you go off your legs, it can make you go off your head or go bananas, go mad, go nuts, go crackers, go doolally.”
I thought I saw the Captain wink at me. Now Heidi brought her notepad crashing down in mock fury onto her knees.
“ZIS BLOODY ENGLISH! I think I now go off my head myself!”
“No!” I shouted above the hubbub of laughter.” You have to say “I’m goING off my head” because it’s a PROCESS HAPPENING NOW! That’s the rule. Like riding a bike. Easy.”
Dieter was back. “Good, Mr Newman” he said slowly as if to convey the impression that he was talking to an idiot. “But why did you say “going off your legs” in the first place?” His calm voice could not disguise that he was inwardly seething. “You confuse us.”
“No,” whispered Karl. “He IS confusING us, Dieter.”
Dieter looked as if nothing would give him greater pleasure than to stick his sharp pencil into Karl’s tired, tiny eye.
“No, listen everyone!” I exclaimed. ”What I meant to say was that if you had been unable to walk or ride a bike because of a temporary loss of your legs and then one day you found yourself able to get on and ride about again then you might shout in delight LOOK EVERYBODY! I AM RIDING A BIKE AGAIN!”
The impact of this long-delayed punch-line was not what I expected. Instead of enlightened and congratulatory nods there was a baffled silence.Everyone expected Dieter to break it and they were not disappointed.
“But how often would such a situation come to pass? How can one teach I AM RIDING A BIKE

with such a quaint example?"
He had me stumped. I shook my head, realising that someone riding around on a bike was such a patently obvious event to all onlookers that no-one would feel the need to comment on it in English, German or any other language for that matter - unless there was a blind person present asking for a commentary on what was happening. I explained my limping train of thought to them and was met by a scoff and the remark that it would be difficult to persuade pupils to learn a construction just in case they were ever in the company of a blind Englishman. "Who might have gone off his legs and head as well" added Bertholt with a barking laugh.
The Captain tapped out the cinders from his pipe and cleared his throat. What mischief was he up to now?
"But if I say about a restaurant "I eat there" does it not mean that this is where I normally prefer to eat?"
I concurred enthusiastically but wondered where he was going with this.
"So when might one say "I am eating in this or that restaurant"?"
Alerted, Dieter had his pencil at the ready, determined to pin down his rule.
They were all looking at me. Here we go again, I thought.
"You never would."
Dieter gasped in utter frustration. "But then why does this phrase exist if it is never said?"
I was speechless. Here began my first lesson in understanding Germans. There must always be a rule. Karl, whom I had underestimated, now came back with an absolute blinder.
"Excuse me Dieter. I can say, can I not, I am eating some Martian marshmallows? Even though they do not exist and I will never eat one!"
While Dieter thought this one over Heidi again tried to be helpful.
"But would not one hev to be inside zer restaurant, actually eating, in order to say zis?"
"Y-e-e-es" I said, "But…."
"But we are back to riding a bike again!" shouted Bertholt. "It's just a crazy thing to say, like, - Hello folks, I'm using a knife and fork, I'm swallowing my food, the fish is just entering my stomick…"
I looked in amazement at him and wondered if he had an American parent. (It turned out he had a beautiful Californian wife called Karen.)
Dieter was nothing if not persistent. "So, of course, you have to be DOING it to say it! This is the rule! Now, let us think of some SENSIBLE examples!"
Groans.
"On the telephone!" I said, suddenly inspired.
"Telephone?" queried Dieter.
"Yes. Someone phones and asks you what you're doing…I'm watching telly-"
"Telly?"
"- watching TV right now. I'm feeling good, I'm feeling sick, I'm sitting on the sofa."
"I'm drinking a cup of tea!" cried lovely Heidi while Dieter scribbled.
Then the spiteful imp in me came up with "I'm NOT eating in that restaurant!"
Captain Wagner's eyes were twinkling again, as if he was about to come up with something similar.
"But you have to be INSIDE, DOING IT to say present continuous, do you not?" asked Karl.
"Aha! But in this case" I said "You have to be OUTSIDE, not doing it. You REFUSE to go in!"
"IMPOSSIBLE!" bellowed Dieter. "How can we explain these nonsenses to the children?"
Now I was properly on the ball, realising that Dieter might sound impressive and scary but that

he was in fact rather narrow-minded and unimaginative. I had a sudden brainwave.
"I think that this structure, with a negative, should be considered as an idiomatic and possibly metaphorical feature of language. "I'm not eating there" conveys the principle that I WON'T eat there, as you might say…Ich habe keine Lust, dort zu essen…."
Wagner was grinning at me. And I knew I had passed.
"Good. Excellent, Mr Newman. We have made real, if rather difficult progress today, but progress nevertheless. By the by, did you bring any magazines, newspapers and pamphlets with you?"
I thought of my groaningly heavy suitcase and nodded.
"Great! By the way, if you ever have any ideas for lessons at these meetings which everyone could try out, please do not hesitate to say."
Should I blurt it all out now about my conkers idea? I looked at Dieter's thunderous red face and thought that I would leave it for the time being. I told them a little about my background and before long the bell had sounded for the next lesson. My headache had evaporated. The students bade me farewell and went off to teach. Karl took my address and said he would be round some time to take me to his favourite eatery. Dieter clicked his briefcase shut and gave me a curt nod.

Over a strong and reviving coffee I sat with the Captain and he sketched out a timetable for me. Luckily I would only have one 7:50 start and no classes on Saturday. School was all finished at 1:10, apart from sport clubs. I would have mainly conversation classes of about eight people at a time in the post sixteen age group. The one exception, he told me with a mysterious smile, would be his 11b, a lovely group of 16 year-olds. Instantly I recalled my job-description from the Central Bureau which stipulated that under no circumstances was any assistant to be put in front of a whole class.
"How many are there in 11b?"
"Oh, only around thirty, but I will usually be sitting at the back. I thought it might be a good chance for you to see if you enjoy teaching whole classes, teaching under fairly normal conditions, I mean."
This sounded so reasonable and considerate, and he was such a likeable man, that I saw no way to object. I had 11b first thing Monday and last on Thursday. He drew up another timetable, for observation, which I would follow for the rest of the day and the week so that I could, as he put it, get the hang of the place. I would begin teaching proper on Monday. Finally he gave me a slender green paperback with a large jumping red salmon on the front entitled Canadian Short Stories. He had just bought a set and wanted me to trial them for him.
"Try the first story with 11b on Monday morning, get them to read around the class, correct their horrid Bavarian pronunciation, think of some questions, set a few words to explain, get them to translate sections, you know, that kind of thing….They will just love to hear a genuine English voice."

As I walked around corridors on the tour he gave me, where we occasionally put our heads into the classrooms of his closest allies, it dawned on me that this was an all boys school.
I sat in on one class of boys of about fourteen, I think. I found their behaviour surprisingly childish. Many made attempts to impress me with their bravura, sticking out a tongue when the teacher turned to the board, smuggling out comics onto their knees, that kind of thing. I was just past my twenty-first birthday, not quite a teacher, but certainly not in their camp. I stole over to the nearest boy at the back and, without any fuss, took the comic out of his hands to his

consternation and surprise. Herr Strunz noticed this and halted the lesson.
“Ah, thank you Mr Newman. Now you see what silly babies we have to work with…..Hebbel, Klaus! Du kriegst einen Verweis, du Trottel” he thundered, making a note in his record book.
A Verweis (all German nouns are capitalized) was a black mark. A Trottel was a moron, I later discovered, when a clumsy waiter would pour liver gravy over Heidi’s blouse. On the stairs a grateful Mr Strunz was looking at my observation timetable and directing me on to my next lesson when the two boys from the park came up. They stopped in wonder and delight.
“Are you the new English assistant?” asked the dark-haired boy, who turned out to be called Beppo.
“I am. Jamie Newman. I’ll see you in class no doubt. Be good!”

On my walk home after school Breitner pulled up behind me and opened the passenger door. Had I got a lunch appointment? No, I was free.
“I’ll take you for a tour of the town and then I’ll buy you a nice meal in my favourite restaurant.”
I told him about the meeting with Wagner and said I thought he was a really nice man. To my surprise he made absolutely no comment on this, as if he had not even heard me, or heard of him.
The town turned out to be more extensive than I had thought. There was a large industrial zone for a start, and Frankenheim was really Frankenheim-Walding, two communities straddling the river Danube. Frankenheim, where the school was situated, was the business end and had the station, the main post office and a lot of the banks. We crossed the bridge over to Walding which was the swisher residential area surrounding a mediaeval huddle of half-timbered houses, little squares, fountains, a church and quaint restaurants and book shops. This part had been spared in the war as it had no strategic value, Breitner informed me. Frankenheim had had a factory which produced tracks for tanks. One had to be quite wealthy to live in Walding. “Schick” he said, a word stolen from the French. He meant posh.
He led me into quite an exclusive-looking restaurant and I ordered, intrigued, and on his recommendation, carp. It turned out to be disappointing – rather muddy and bony. The previous night’s cheap gutsy fare had been far better. We drank a few glasses of Frankenwein, a very dry wine from Franconia in the north. I began to get the taste for it and Schuster clearly already had it.
“Now I’ll tell you something about our little problem.”
It had begun, he told me, due to the nature of the town, or rather towns. The amalgamation of the two, administratively driven by Munich in the 50s, had never been popular, particularly in little old Walding, but as long as the CSU – (Christian Social Union) the very right-leaning Conservatives peculiar to Bavaria – held the reins of power on the council then the respectable and prosperous Waldingers were mollified. The SPD, the Social Democrats, the nearest beings to socialists in those parts, had always managed to win two more seats overall than the CSU but were kept out of power by the FDP, the Free Democrats or Liberals, whose three councillors were in perpetual coalition with the CSU. Red Frankenheim reluctantly put up with this. Business was good and there was no unemployment.
“But in the spring this year all this changed. One of the Free Democrats was involved in a sex-scandal and his voters switched to the SPD. One of the others, after the election, decided to join the SPD because he liked Willy Brandt’s Ostpolitik”
“Ah, I see, so the council had a left-wing majority” I said.
“Exactly. Soon there was more money to spend in Frankenheim and less in Walding. The youth club was renovated, the open air pool extended, the sports facilities improved and some of the

untidier areas made nicer. One of the older men from Walding complained that this was unfair to his voters.
“Well, tell them to cross over the bridge and come and see us!” shouted his sworn enemy from Frankenheim. But there was much worse to come. In the summer, one of the younger, more left-wing councillors suddenly proposed that the name of the grammar school should be changed from Hindenburg, the old soldier and president of Germany. He had heard of this happening in a school in the north of Germany, in Nordrhein-Westfalen.”
“To Geschwister Scholl!” I exclaimed.
“Yes.”
“But who were they?”
“What? You have never heard of the White Rose?"
Breitner’s voice must have grown a little loud under the influence of wine and surprise because now a head with a neck of puckered skin like a bulldog’s was turning towards him and glaring with menace.
“Was erzählen Sie da, mein Lieber? Weisse Rose? Sie meinen sicher die Rote Rose? Verdammte Kommunisten!”
Schuster closed his eyes in pain and embarrassment. Now in English he continued. “You see how this causes trouble. He thinks they should be called the Red Rose.”
Breitner took a deep breath and carried on quietly in English.
“The White Rose was an organization, mainly of young people, who campaigned against the Nazis in 1942 and 43 in the Munich area. Sophie and Hans Scholl were very active. One day they were caught putting out leaflets at the university and were subsequently executed.”
I looked at him in some astonishment. I had heard of army plots against Hitler and about the bomb planted in his forest redoubt which had only blown his trousers off; I knew the plotters had been hanged slowly on piano wire; that, as a fellow traveller of theirs, Rommel had been cordially invited to shoot his own brains out by the SS, and had complied in order to protect his family and reputation; but I never knew that there had been something like a civil German resistance movement. Like most of my compatriots I had been filled with the black imagery of adoring supporters, swooning, surging women in their hundreds of thousands at his rallies, and endless lines of torch-bearing militia-men offering homage and pledging allegiance. I told him as much and he shook his head sadly.
“You were not aware that he was much despised in the north? That in the last proper election in 32 his NSAPD only recorded 33% of all votes cast? That Berlin stood and watched in silence as troops left to invade Poland? And there were many plots and attempts on his life….”
“But….why did no-one protest?”
“For the same reason that I lower my voice and speak to you in English now, because of this brutal fascist over here. Too timid. Too embarrassed. The Scholls and their friends were different. Very brave.”
“But if the council wishes to change the name what is there to stop them?”
In response he put his hands to his face and shook his head at my ignorance and naivety. He began to explain, stopped, started again and finally gave up.
“I’ll tell you more another time. It’s very complicated and I’m tired. I need my afternoon snooze.”
Breitner paid the bill and we left. As we went out I stared the bulldog in the face until he lowered his gaze. We drove back across the river. A pleasure steamer and a long black barge were crossing each other.

“Tell me about old Thickbroom then!” I said. He laughed and the car swerved over slightly.
“My landlord wouldn’t tell me why he was arrested. It must have been very bad….”
“No. Not so bad…One night he went drinking with two GIs. There are only a few bars where they are allowed…”
I recalled seeing a sign in English - OFF LIMITS TO US PERSONNEL - in the window of the pub near the restaurant where we had eaten, and asked him why they were not allowed in.
“Because they get drunk and start saying insulting things about the Germans and wreck the furniture…It’s bad for business and bad for local relations. The Amis are here to protect us against the Soviets after all! Most locals avoid all contact with the GIs and they don’t come into town much anymore. They have all they need on their base at Sternbach, even their own TV programmes. They stay there and smoke pot all day….If the Russians ever invaded it would be a walkover, I tell you!”
“But what did Thickbroom do?”
“Ah! The GIs left a pack of cigarettes and a lighter on the table and told him to stay for two minutes and then follow them out to the toilet. When he did they had already gone, so he ran away too! They left a bill of over twenty Marks unpaid. Sadly for Thickbroom, the brother of the landlord, a father of one of our pupils, was in the bar and he knew who he was. So the police came to get him. Two days later he was gone. To stay would mean prosecution so he was invited to leave. The headmaster and Herr Wagner were very pleased. He was so lazy and would hardly speak to the pupils. Just gave out magazines to read….”
As we neared the school Breitner remembered a set of books he needed to mark. He turned onto the square.
“Ach du lieber Gott!” he shouted as we rounded the final corner. He braked sharply.
There over the pink stain someone had scrawled in black tar

NAZI-GYM

That evening I had been listening again to the violin next door and wondering about the player. I had just finished a bowl of soup when I heard a buzzer. I went outside my door and looked at the button on the wall. It lit up and buzzed again, long and like an angry wasp. Intrigued, I pressed it. Far below I heard the outside door click open. So this was what it was for! How clever. Now I heard my visitor clomping up the stairs and the sound of heavy breathing.
It was Heidi.
“Ah, Mr Newman – Jamie – do I disturb you?”
My heart missed a beat. Her great greedy eyes told why she had come. The book she had brought me about Frankenheim was thrown onto the table as she virtually wrestled me and herself out of our clothes. I kept mouthing protests of no and wait but I could not resist. The rubbery smell of her reddened breasts – I had never seen such a huge pair – as she whipped off her bra should have killed all desire but it had the remarkable effect of slowing me down and delaying me. Without any foreplay she had clamped me to herself like some sex-aid and mechanically I went through the motions while she breathed faster and faster. She smelt of sauerkraut which delayed me even more. At last she opened her mouth and shouted “Mir kommt’s, mir kommt’s….I come! I come!”
No, I thought, you’re comING. Have you learnt nothing from this morning? She was shouting so loud that I thought Rapunzel would hear. I muffled her cries with my mouth. Afterwards she dressed rapidly and said “Welcome to Germany.” Heidi was lovely but now I felt as guilty as

hell as I pictured my slender darling Emma waving madly on that platform.
“You are a very good reader, Jamie. Read this book and every Wednesday I bring you a new one, yes?”
And with a cheery wave Heidi, my librarian, was gone. She told me one Wednesday that she was married to a baker in Ulm and only went home at weekends.

Chapter 3

On Thursday morning I was on time but first lesson had been delayed. Boys were milling about in the corridor and around the entrance, wondering what the matter was. I came into the staffroom and Heidi gave me a little wave from the far side. The room was full. There were over thirty teachers in there, a strange mixture of modern, casually dressed people and those traditional Bavarian types, some in white lab coats, some sitting, some standing. A meeting was beginning. Or rather an address. A stern, sombre Mr Huber was already speaking.
“For the third time in five days, revered colleagues, graffiti has appeared on the front wall of our beloved school. This may of course be the work of political activists – and may I take the opportunity of hoping that those politicians who began all this nonsense are really proud of themselves – or it may be the work of local drunken hooligans but, equally possible, it may be the doing of some of our own boys. I hold in my hand a statement. In mail slots there are copies for every one of you. I shall pin this copy to the main notice board in the entrance. Now I’ll read it to you:

“The director of the Paul-von-Hindenburg Gymnasium, Anton Huber, wishes every pupil of this esteemed school to know that if any of them are found writing any slogan on any wall in this building, or if any witness gives convincing evidence that they have done so, then such boys will be expelled from the school that very day.”

A rumble of voices – some in approval, some in consternation – greeted this.
“Silence, dear colleagues! I require that each of you, whatever your personal feelings and stance on the political question underlying this, read this statement to his or her first class, now, this morning. This has nothing to do with ideas or ideals. This is criminal damage and vandalism and there can be no excuses for that. We must demonstrate a united, collegiate response to such damage and provocation. This measure has the official backing and approval of Wittlinger, first secretary to the Culture Minister. This statement will be sent by post to every parent of the school this morning and will appear as a notice in tomorrow’s local paper. Any questions?”
A thin woman, in her late twenties, wearing a ludicrously baggy green jumper and bright pink trousers had her hand raised.
“And what if one refuses to read this to the class?” she asked with a pout.
He frowned. “I was hoping that I could rely on the professionalism of all my colleagues, Fräulein Wirz, including yours.”
“I am Fräulein Vogelsang, Herr Direktor. I have only worked here three years!“ This drew sarcastic laughter from some quarters, which Huber pretended he had not heard.
“I shall be most perturbed to discover that anyone here has ignored a direct instruction from the Kultusministerium. Nothing else? (Could you come and see me now in my office, Fräulein Vogelsang?) Would you please take your copies and go to your classes now colleagues. I wish you a successful day.”
Steadily they trooped out. Some of them and not only younger ones made a show of crumpling

their papers and throwing them in the bin. Others voiced their disapproval of this. I heard brief angry exchanges around the door.
“Obedience will get you everywhere,” sneered one
“Don’t talk such childish nonsense,” snapped another.
“Why can’t the fat so-and-so go around and read it out himself?” muttered Breitner.
“He needs the exercise” joked another.
“Then why can’t you go and tell the Herr Director this to his face?” complained an older stalwart in costume. The room gradually emptied until there was just a scattering of us left, including the four Referendare who had, it seemed, like me, a free first lesson. Dieter was pleased, I wasn’t surprised to hear, that Huber had taken these steps. But I was surprised to hear Bertholt agree with him. Karl sat with his eyes closed, meditating or recuperating from the night before. Heidi was angry.
“How can he blame the boys, even if they are the culprits? This whole row was started by adults.”
“I agree Heidi, but they must learn personal responsibility. Wrong is wrong even if you are rather young. It is like a soldier saying it is OK to do this because Hitler says I should.”
“What nonsense you talk, Dieter!” she retorted. “You cannot compare what young boys do and soldiers in the war!”
Bertholt said “I agree, but how young are we talking? I bet you that it’s those Bader-Meinhoff layabouts in year 14. Why, Peter Breitner told me just yesterday that he’s virtually given up having discussions in history lessons with 14a because Steiner and Ott are always jumping up and shouting their Marxist-Leninist interpretations of historical events. I bet the young swine haven’t even read das Kapital.”
An elegant, middle-aged woman who had been listening said
“Steiner has read just about everything about political philosophy. He’s the cleverest boy I’ve ever taught!”
Now Karl spoke very quietly. “You know, this is not a very clever measure. Firstly, it draws more attention to a matter which, if ignored, will probably go away. Secondly, it will encourage boys to get together and swear they saw some other boy or boys writing graffiti.”
“But surely,” I said, not wanting to be left out, “If the name was changed, as the council wishes, that would be the end of it, wouldn’t it?”
The reaction to this was laughter and howls of derision. Dieter now helped himself to spoonfuls of revenge for the previous day.
“Mr Newman, you do not understand. Only half of the council ever wanted this. It has even split the SPD faction and one of their FDP colleagues is threatening to resign from the coalition…..The CSU councillors refuse even to speak to Grabsch and Papst whose idea this all was….If the name was changed to Scholl then overnight the whole school would be covered with swastikas! The head doesn’t want it, perhaps only a third of the staff want it and not many parents. Frankenheim does, Walding doesn’t. It is a dreadful mess. The CSU government in Munich is threatening the Frankenheim council with the Constitutional Court if they go ahead, because who does the school belong to, Frankenheim or the Kultusministerium? That threat made some of the SPD waverers come round and agree with the name change. It’s an impossible muddle!”
“But if it remains the Hindenburg school that will be no better!” countered Heidi.
From a TV series about the rise of the Nazis I seemed to recall Hindenburg as a shambling, ancient man, hero of the first war.

“Wasn’t Hindenburg the commander-in-chief of the German army?”
“Yes,” snorted Heidi “Then he became president. In 1933 the senile fool offered Hitler the chancellorship.”
“What a crass oversimplification!” shouted Dieter. “You know perfectly well he hated Hitler but was put under so much pressure, and with good reason, by the army, by that little schemer von Papen and by the bankers and industrialists to bring Hitler into the respectable fold!”
“With good reason?” wondered Karl aloud.
“You know what I mean, Herr Glockner,” he shouted even louder.” Don’t you please try and colour my words with meanings they do not have!”
Heidi had wondered off, tired of Dieter, I suspected, towards the letter racks.
“Ah! Mr Newman!” she exclaimed. ”You have post!”
I had a pigeon-hole. I had a letter. The envelope had those tiny pink and white squares which I knew so well.
“Ah!” teased Heidi, drawing it under her nostrils, “I think it is from Mr Newman’s girlfriend!”
(Mr Newman? Had she really seduced me last night?)
The envelope was handed over to me with a dramatic flourish. To see Emma’s letter in Heidi’s hand made me feel terribly guilty. She gave me a grin and a wink and flounced off. I sat in a corner and read. I was so moved by the sweet and innocent sentiments the letter contained that a tear started down my cheek. She wrote that she would arrive on the 10:17 train on Saturday morning. I had about fifteen minutes before my next observation lesson. I found some paper and wrote her an urgent reply. I had a room with three beds. I would ask my landlady if she could stay. I foresaw no problem. I adored her. I missed her. I cadged an envelope and a stamp from the Sekretariat and went out to post it.
Outside, Wolfgang was trying his best to shift the tarry writing. He saw me, leant back from the ladder and threw down a cloth. He shook his head and snarled, “This whole section of the wall will need repainting, the rotten pig-dogs.”

When I let myself back in after lunch Mrs Ertl more or less dragged me into her front room.
“Look,” she said excited, pointing at the television “The Mainzelmännchen!”
I was at a loss as to what to say. These turned out to be cartoon characters, akin to Smurfs, who punctuated the commercials (in those days they were only permitted between programmes.) At each of their antics - not in the least amusing - she laughed like a child and Mutti joined in.
“You had a visit from a very nice lady colleague!” she said.
(Oh God, I thought, surely Heidi hadn’t already called round again with another book?) Then I realized that she was merely stating the obvious, akin to “you were riding a bike.”
“She seemed a nice lady, a very nice lady!”
I was certain she had a naughty, knowing twinkle in her little eyes.
“Yes, Mrs Ertl, she came to bring me a book about Frankenheim.”
For some reason, she found this information absolutely hilarious. I judged this to be the right time to raise the question of Emma’s stay.
“Mrs Ertl, you know I have a spare room….”
“But of course I know this!”
“Well, my fiancée” - (the German for this was Braut (bride). In Germany women and men remain a bride or a bridegroom (Bräutigam) for all the months and years of their engagement until the day they marry) –“my bride, Emma, is working in Bayreuth. Would it be alright if she stayed in that room at weekends?”

This made her twirl around and clap her hands, and she reminded me of an E.T.A. Hoffmann automaton doll.
"You have a BRIDE!" she exclaimed. "Mutti, Herr Neumann has a bride!"
Mutti did her hurdy-gurdy cackle.
"But of course she can stay in …your….spare….room!" And she nudged me so hard in the ribs that I thought she had cracked one.
(Thickbroom's women must have been very rough indeed, I thought.)
"Now I have some interesting news for you, Herr Neumann. My new neighbour has a daughter called Ursula. She is seventeen. You may have heard her practising her violin."
"Yes, she plays beautifully."
"Well, she knows, of course, that you are an Englishman and would like conversation lessons. She offers five Marks an hour. She is a lovely girl. Very sweet. What should I tell her?"
I was lost for words. My heart was quickening. Something was stirring. I felt guiltier then ever. Tell her NO!
"Tell her to come round this evening, at about seven. I'll have a chat with her."
"Should I tell her to bring her books?"
This innocent question made my face glow, I felt certain, the same ruddy colour as hers. I studied her eyes for any trace of irony. I realized after a few seconds that I was staring dangerously deep into them. I heard a tell-tale catch in her breathing and hurriedly took my leave.

I simmered some soup and waited for the violin to strike up next door. I listened in rapture, picturing - I couldn't help it - the slender, smooth limbs and the long hair of some angel bowing and inclining her head as she released these notes like blown kisses on the air. A loftier voice in my mind told me to stop it. I resolved to make myself unappealing, to stop shaving between Sunday night and Saturday morning, to take less good care of myself and dress slovenly. Being a handsome devil was one thing; being handsome and English might be, it was dawning on me, a fatal combination here in Frankenheim, or Frankenstein as I beginning to think of it.

When Ursula finally arrived my higher mind was relieved to find her rather short and pimply.. Her hair was mousy and lank and she smelt faintly of antiseptic. Her saving graces were a pair of unusually grey eyes. I soon realised, however, that she was a lovely, intelligent girl with a gentle sense of self-deprecating humour without a trace of concern for her image. She smiled mysteriously and said in halting English that she had been watching me come and go from her bedroom window. Her accent was not at all bad but she kept making catastrophic errors of vocabulary and grammar. Whenever I corrected her she responded gravely, "…but my English teacher says it like that…"
Mmm. A problem. Should I undermine a teacher at her school? I noted down her teacher's name and resolved to contact her. After about half-an-hour there came a light tap on the door. It was my Rapunzel with a tray of biscuits and coffee. The cunning old bird was checking up and making sure I hadn't got my mitts all over Ursula – possibly at the behest of her mother! After she had departed, in obvious delight to have such a virtuous lodger and to have found such an innocent scene of industriousness, Ursula looked over at the tea bags I had brought with me from England, and, working out her next sentence and taking down a deep breath, she said
"Mr Newman. I do not like coffee so much. May I become a cup of your English tea?"
I laughed. She had made one of the commoner errors which German speakers of English make. ("Bekommen" in German means to get, to acquire, to have, and never to become.)

“What is so humourful?” she asked, giggling at my giggles.
“No, Ursula, we say funny or humourous. And I am not a magician, Ursula. I cannot make you become a cup of tea – hard on the outside and warm and wet on the inside – but I can certainly GET you one.”
She stared at me and thought this over for a while I boiled a kettle.
Suddenly she understood what a nonsense she had said for all at once she said a great *OH!* - put her face in her hands and laughed helplessly. For the next ten minutes, whenever she stopped, I would start tittering and set her off again. Then suddenly I saw my brother in my mind’s eye, saying
“You know, if you want to get a girl’s knickers off, make her laugh first.”
I sensed danger. Her grey eyes were definitely growing larger and looking at me for far longer than they had at her shy beginning. I was alarmed to feel a shivering in my spine every time she scribbled a word down, with her face strangely almost touching the page as her pencil moved quickly across, the same shivering I had always felt when my fragrant cousin Julia had cut my hair. Once, when I pointed out a spelling error she had made, her finger brushed mine and a tingle rippled up my arm. I moved a few inches away from her. After the hilarity of the tea she had grown pensive and quiet, listening to me in silence and occasionally opening and closing her eye-lids. We had around ten minutes left. I realized that I had just about run out of things to say. I just smiled at her, about to praise her and tell her that she had done well in her first lesson when she interrupted me.
“Mr Newman, how should I pay you?”
“Well, Mrs Ertl said five Marks.”
“No you do not understand me. HOW shall I pay you, not how much?”
Thinking that she was thinking that she had made a bad mistake I began to tell her that HOW in this context would, in deed, imply what method of payment, cheque or cash, but that what she had said was understandable.
“No. I meant method. Cash, cheque……. or WHAT?”
I couldn’t believe she had this. Had I misunderstood her? But no. I saw that enigmatic smile light up her face again. My higher mind was in a state of alarm.
“But, Ursula, you’re a schoolgirl and I –“
“Oh come, I am eighteen in December.”
I am ashamed to say that allof my mind, lower and higher, found this an irrefutable argument and the fact that she was already stepping out of her dowdy dress, revealing those clean limbs I had imagined, clinched matters completely. I was afraid that she might be too tight for me and that I would perhaps hurt her, or go off too quickly, but to my surprise as things progressed everything relaxed. Her faint antiseptic aura and the thought of Heidi’s sauerkrauty breath made me hold back until she was making such lovely, soft sighs like her violin.
“You have a nice pen-iss,” she whispered afterwards.” I looked the word up in the dictionary.”
“No, pee-nis.”
“Not so long but very nice and bright.”
(Nice and bright? How many had she seen? The whole brass section in the local orchestra??)
“No, Ursula. Breit means wide in English. You really mean thick.”
“And you are a magician, Mr Newman.”
“No, call me Jamie. Why am I a magician?”
“You make a nice cup of tea of me…wet and warm inside…”
I shook my head, utterly shocked and, yes, embarrassed. She made me take the five Mark note

which had a picture of the pretty angel of Augsburg on it, a wunderkind who had died at a tragically early age.
"If Mutti or Vati find it they might wonder…"
"OK. Till next Thursday, seven o'clock."
"Shall I do some preparation?"
"No. Come as you are."
Five minutes later she was next door playing a dazzling piece of music on her violin, just for me it seemed.

Chapter 4

"Oh!" cried Emma. "That was so….brilliant! The best ever…Who have you been practising on?" I looked away to hide my shame. We lay in bed all Saturday afternoon and went, when night fell, through the swaying park to The Postei where a television in the bar was showing to our delight and amazement an old black and white film, starring Charlie Drake. To hear that little man with the daft, high-pitched voice chortling away in low, guttural German was the funniest thing about the film (which was about a villain, played by him, who could crack any safe.) We ate egg and chips. As the evening wore on I sensed more and more what was on Emma's mind so we left early and made love until we could stay awake no longer.
On Sunday morning we had a German quiz in bed. Whoever could not think of the German word had to pay a forfeit. But we never paid them because to do so meant depriving the other. By mid-afternoon that flat feeling of imminent parting, so redolent of sad old Sundays anywhere, was upon us and soon we were walking to the station. This time it was my turn to stand and shrink on the cold platform as her train trundled quickly away. All the way home I snivelled, thinking of her lovely warm body. I managed to disperse the fog of guilt at the back of my mind. She had had, and I had had a wonderful weekend. I thought of Heidi as a training session, a rehearsal and of Ursula as my good deed for the week. They were temporary. Lovely Emma was for ever. And I imagined, congratulating myself, that it would be only late in the week before her thoughts would turn again to passion. As I entered the Birkenstrasse it suddenly dawned on me. Damn! I had Wagner's 11b first thing in the morning. I had not prepared a thing. Instead of walking around to The Noble Stag I hurried home.
"Oh, your bride had gone," said Mrs Ertl sadly. "Did you have a nice time in your little nest?" I was learning from her, from Ursula and from others my second lesson here; that absolute, clanging candour was a virtue in Germany. I searched in my flat and eventually turned up that slim green book with the thrashing salmon on the cover which the Captain had given me. I skimmed the first story. It was a nice length for a lesson, a story of about four pages called the The Lamp.

When Red pushed his way out of the cabin the blizzard had stopped. It had draped great sheets of snow over the conifers and through the branches the weakest of suns glowed. It was a quarter of eleven (make note to explain the difference in standard English – quarter to*) and Red hurried to strap on his snow shoes. He lit the lamp on his door so that in the white blankness of the day or in the glowing gloom of the twilight he would be able to find his way back home. In those woods it was not unknown for a trapper, even one who had lived there for years, to get lost in its winter monotony and freeze to death. Red inspected his traps and with a quick blow of his club put the marten, the mink or the snow fox out of its misery, if any were still scrabbling in their*

slow dance of death.

I jotted down: *To kill a thing out of kindness =*
….and I went hunting for other expressions to put in my synonyms exercise. (Would they understand "out of kindness"?) Anyway, after about an hour, to the strains of Ursula's yearning violin I had my lesson planned and all my activities worked out. Of course, Red, half snow-blind, had followed the setting sun rather than his lamp and had wondered off to into the uncharted depths of the forest. It was quite a nice, poignant story I thought, as I drank a few beers in The Stag later on as a nightcap. Satisfied and replete in every way I turned out my table light and soon slipped off into a deep sleep. When I dreamt, it was of a forest, of course. I was pursuing a lantern held by a disappearing girl in a long cape. When I eventually caught up with her I knew it would be Emma. But to my horror it was the blonde girl on the park bench. She turned and gave me such a melting smile that I woke up in an erotic kind of panic well before dawn.

At seven fifty I walked into Class 11b with a relaxed Mr Wagner. I was rather nervous. All stood as we entered. He introduced me and to my surprise each boy rapped his table with his knuckles in greeting. He asked me to say a little about myself. I told them that I supported Liverpool and there were cries of Bayern München! and FC Nürnberg! Wagner hushed them good-humouredly and they fell back into respectful silence. They seemed a really pleasant bunch, as Wagner had said. He handed out the green readers and asked me to begin. I cleared my throat and intoned
"The Lamp"
Instantly there was uproar. Wagner laughed.
"Mr Newman! Should it not rather be The Lemp?"
"I'm sorry Mr Wagner, my Oxford English is not so good. I speak Scouse!"
"But Mr Newman, could you please demonstrate how Queen Elizabeth might say this? I tell the boys, never say lamp, camp or ramp but lemp, cemp, remp…and now you say "lamp!" The boys laughed again but upon the signal of his finger being raised they instantly subsided. This was all so good-natured. How could I possibly refuse? I instantly buried my leftist objections to standards imposed by the upper classes on the lower and put on my poshest accent. As I said, I am a good mimic, and managed to sound more like Prince Charles than the man himself. This had them so spell-bound that this decided me. From that point on I would play the role of the English toff.

The lesson had gone well and Wagner was delighted. Everybody felt sorry for poor old snow-blind Red, apart from one difficult, surly boy who pointed out that he should just have followed his own footsteps back home. This provoked a debate about how snow-blind you would have to be before you could not see your own prints. Wagner smiled that enigmatic smile of his throughout all this and slyly asked me my opinion. I shrugged my shoulders and said that perhaps it had snowed again and covered them all up. This seemed to satisfy everyone and they got on with my little exercises until the bell went. Wagner wondered if I would like to mark their books and give them a grade from 1 to 6. How could I say no? At the end, spontaneously, they rapped their tables again and I glowed with pleasure and pride. Afterwards he took me to my first conversation class with some pupils who had been extracted from 14a. There sat the two boys from the park. Well in fact they were more than boys, being nineteen or even twenty, I found out, as they all introduced themselves. As I had half-suspected the blonde boy was the Steiner I had heard praised and criticized in the staffroom.

“My name is Markus Steiner and my father is a visiting professor of Physics at Harvard University” he announced, when it fell to him to speak. (Should I tell them that my father was a bus driver and that my auntie was for ever visiting my uncle at Strangeways prison?)
“Weren’t you able to go out there with him?” I enquired. I saw at once with a pang of regret that the question had embarrassed him.
“My mother and my sister preferred to remain in Bavaria. My mother is American but does not like American culture and my sister has started an Abitur course – you say A-level? – in ancient Greek, French and English at the girls’ Gymnasium.”
“And you?”
“I did not wish to leave them.”
His resentment of the intrusiveness of my interrogation had been overcome by his desire to show off his English. I could see that there would not be much to teach him. We chatted about this and that and then I let them look at some of the newspapers I had brought.
“If you find an article you like, you can read it out and we can discuss it,” I said.
After five or so minutes I could sense that Steiner had something on his mind. Finally he could contain his impatience no longer.
“Could you tell us what you think already about our school and the problem of the graffiti?”
“Steiner” muttered a spotlessly clean, rotund youth behind him “We should not speak about this.”
I misunderstood his use of the verb “should” as meaning his personal opinion and I immediately ran up the banner of Free Speech.
“As far as I’m concerned we can speak about anything you like, lads.”
Now his friend Beppo had the floor. “I think that we should change the name of the school. Hindenburg was not a very bad man but he is part of zer old Germany, military Germany. It is time to change.”
“But Goethe is part of old Germany” I replied to be provocative. Steiner gave me a pitying look.
“But Goethe was a great writer, like your Shakespeare. You cannot compare him to that fascist Hindenburg.”
This annoyed the fat boy and many others groaned.
“My grandfather fought in the first war under Hindenburg. For Germany. Is he a fascist too?”
“I cannot tell, Keller. I have never met him.”
“Neither did you meet Hindenburg, Steiner.”
“But I know *of* him! I never met Adolf Hitler either! Nor Attila the Hun”
The discussion was warming up. Some of the others wanted their say.
“What do you think of the head’s announcement about boys being expelled for graffiti?” I asked.
“Huber ist ein Schwarzer - a Black – how you say this?”
I looked in astonishment at the young man who had shouted this.
“A black? A negro?”
At this they all burst out laughing. Steiner came to my rescue. “He means Conservative, one of the CSU party. They are nicknamed the Blacks because they are so extreme. Huber is a councillor in Ingolstadt. That is why his views on not changing the name are not honest. The CSU means Christian Social Union. But my father says that they are not Christian, not Social and they hate the unions!”
Many of the youths laughed at this excellent joke but a few were protesting.
One of them said “I know who Steiner likes. If he would be old enough, when he can leave zer school he will become an urban terrorist like his hero Andreas Bader.” Steiner laughed this off

and shouted back at him “Du verdammter Schwarzer, Klaus! When do you learn to think for yourself?”
Beppo came back in. “My cousin went to a CSU rally in Hof and Franz Josef Strauss, zer leader of the blecks speaks. Jochen, my cousin, asks him a question about what he did in zer war and you know what he shouts beck? (Markus – wie sagt man “Bier vertragen” in Englisch?“
„Take your beer,“ said Steiner.
“Yes! Strauss says - Young man! If you cannot take your beer, don’t drink it! - And five minutes later he was grabbed from behind, taken out and beaten up. This is true!”
“Whoa!” I shouted as the discussion threatened to get out of hand again.
“Tell me about the Geschwister Scholl!”
Strangely they fell silent, even Steiner.
“Weren’t they a brother and sister in Munich who campaigned against the Nazis?” I prompted.
They looked at each other to see who might speak first.
“Steiner” growled Klaus “You know everything. You probably wrote zeir names up on zer wall. You –“
But Steiner already was up in a furious rage trying to grab Klaus. I am quite a big bloke and I managed to catch the slight Steiner before he could land a blow. I carried him back to his chair and told him in German to calm down.
“Can we not have a discussion without shouting, insulting and attacking one another?” I pleaded.
“Zer truth is, Mr Newman” said Beppo “We know little about Germany in the war. We do not study this much at school.”

After the bell had gone I returned to the staffroom. My heart sank when I found myself virtually alone with Dieter Lenz. He was looking up at me and smiling. I must have looked upset because he asked me, very kindly, if anything was the matter. When I told him, reluctantly, what had happened with 14a he looked very grave indeed. I expected a lecture but instead he went and tapped a notice pinned to the notice board. It read:

It is officially forbidden to discuss any change of name to this school or to advance party political views in the classroom. Anyone disobeying this instruction will be suspended from duty.

Wittlinger, Robert
Kultusministerium, Munich 17 October 1971

“Oh God!” I said “I didn’t see this. I went straight into a class with Herr Wagner!”
“Don’t worry, Jamie. Huber won’t find out. Just be careful from now on. By the way, what have you got planned for this afternoon?”
As I desperately tried to think up a lie he went to point to another notice.

NÜRNBERG UNIVERSITY
MONDAY 17 OCTOBER STUDENT THEATRE 15:00

A discussion of Willy Brandt’s Ostpolitik
with Georg Leitner CSU and Martin Emmerich SPD

Organised by SPD-Studentenfaktion, Nürnberg

“I think Jamie, you should really go to meetings like this because your understanding of German politics is so insufficient. You would find this really interesting – how do you say, an eye-opener?”
He looked at my timetable and grinned. After twelve we were both free. We could be there in an hour and have lunch in the student refectory, which was good and cheap. He was a member of the university and he could get me in.

In actual fact Dieter Lenz turned out to be rather good company. On his recommendation we ate liver and onions with mashed potatoes. It was really delicious and we needed three beers to make sure that it went down properly. Whenever I made an error in my German he corrected me patiently without a hint of condescension. I could tell that he was a conscientious and committed teacher and he began to earn my respect.
“I’m afraid that you have noticed that I do not see eye to eye with or get on well with the three others, particularly Bertholt.”
I really did not know what to say to this but the alcohol in me was trying to find something in mitigation, something emollient to say. But he carried on without waiting.
“As you can see I am rather of a slight conservative frame of mind. I cannot help that. Bertholt however, is a Republican. His wife Karen, when you meet her will astonish you. She says nigger, wap, Jew-boy, things like that. This is too extreme. Berthy thinks it funny but I said something about it one day. Since then we are unfortunately not on friendly terms. And watch out for Karl. He can say hurtful, sarcastic things. And he drinks too much.”
“And Heidi?”
“Heidi is not very clever, but she means well. Her husband is a big, stupid baker. She might find it hard to pass the course because her English is not so hot and she makes a lot of errors.”
I thought it was my turn to do a character study and I began to wax lyrical about the Captain. Like Breitner before him he did not reply. Then leaning in close to me he said “Be very careful. He is not what he seems. He takes advantage and may let you down. We have to put up with him because he is our tutor and will ultimately pass or fail us. But he is not called the Captain just because of his naval experience – or lack of it rather! – he likes to be in charge and he likes his own way. Ask Breitner about him when you know him better. He has a few tales to tell.”

After the shambles of my morning class I was quite looking forward to a cool, rational debate about Ostpolitik. I did know, contrary to Dieter’s assumption, a little about this. Willy Brandt was the Kennedy of Germany, a man with a new vision - I had read about him in a Guardian leader - "*A peacemaker keen to establish a sandbank on which the two Germanys can co-exist within the uneasy ebb and flow of relations between the USA and the USSR".*
Something pseudy like that. The theatre was very full. There were not only students present but, seemingly, ordinary members of the public. On the stage was a long table and behind it, stood an imposing lady chairman (within ten years, of course, all chairmen and chairwomen would be chairpersons). The speakers sat to either side of her. I got them entirely wrong. The greying, rather owlish gentleman to her right was an advocate of the SPD cause. His young, dynamic, restless opponent in a black suit and white shirt, reminding me of a very tall, jumpy penguin, was from the CSU. The SPD man, Emmerich, had the floor first. He had not been talking long about new opportunities, new links to forge, new roles for Germany in the European and world theatre when his droning voice became increasingly difficult to listen to. My eyes began to wonder

around the auditorium until they found an absolutely stunning young woman with long fiery red hair to feast themselves upon. My thoughts began to dwell on various images not of the higher mind. Many faces were splitting wide open in great yawns and suddenly I felt something prodding me. I opened my eyes and saw Dieter. He was amused. I muttered something about how warm it was and how full I felt.

To a rush of applause Emmerich was bowing and easing himself back onto his chair. Now the Conservative Leitner was on his feet and bouncing around. I really had a job to follow him. I looked quizzically at Dieter and whispered, "Is he speaking German?" He giggled and whispered back that he was from the Austrian border and was rather difficult, even for him. (He was from Hannover.) For the first time there was heckling, from a student behind us who had long curly brown hair and wore John Lennon spectacles. At this point the chair-lady, as I shall call her, rose to her full, bean-cane height and sharply rapped the table with her knuckles. She reminded everyone of what import, of what national – and, yes, international - significance such debates, taking place the length and breadth of Germany, were, and how vital it was for all to hear the arguments. There would be an opportunity for questions, through the chair, afterwards. The meeting congratulated itself on its own sensible behaviour and her confident handling of the rude interruption with a storm of applause and the grateful Leitner continued. He was, albeit very politely, calling the political judgment of Emmerich and Brandt into question and I recognized phrases such as "wisdom and timing", "quid pro quo", "solid negotiating positions", "peace with justice" and "consultation with our allies." He sat down to just a scattering of applause and a few boos and shouts. A middle-aged man had stood up and was addressing the chair in a loud clear voice. He had a question for Emmerich. Was not the recognition of the DDR and its regime, as Herr Brandt proposed, tantamount to abandoning seventeen million brother and sister Germans to a communist fate which they had not chosen? How could the BRD, a true, legal democracy recognize a false one, a democracy in name only? Was not Herr Brandt, no matter how well-meaning, in fact misguided, a dupe, a traitor to the cause of reunification? This was so calmly and cogently put that I wondered how on Earth Emmerich would answer. He began to drone on and the meeting grew restless. A woman from the other side of the room had sprung up and, ignoring the stage completely began to round on the gentleman who had spoken. The rapping of the chair–lady was drowned out. Emmerich, seemingly relieved, plonked himself back down.

"How would the gentleman on my right propose to reunite the two Germanies?" said the woman. "By blood and steel as Bismarck did in 1871? Should there be an Anschluss with the DDR as there had been with Austria in 1938? Isn't this the year 1971?"

The penguin had shot to his feet, pre-empting the chair-lady who now seemed distinctly bemused.

"Reunification is a long-term solemn principle for us all. No-one is saying in our CDU-CSU coalition that reunification might or should happen next year, in ten years or in fifty years. Of course not! But to grant the German Democratic Republic a legitimacy which it does not deserve and has not earned, would be to preserve the division between us in stone and postpone that day of unity by a thousand years if not for ever!"

Equal measures of cheers and shouts of Quatsch! (Nonsense!) rang round. Lots of people were now standing, anxious to have their say. A little middle-aged lady at the front was invited up to the table to use the microphone. She struggled up the stairs. The crowd hushed itself to hear her. Even with the microphone her voice did not carry well.

"I am 53. I have not seen my elder brother in Zwickau since 1958. My grandparents, my parents, my aunts and all but one uncle died and I could not go and mourn at their graves nor ever lay a

flower at their headstones."
The meeting fell into a deeply moved silence at her eloquence, on the edge of which, seemingly, despair and anger quivered. She gulped and carried on.
"My question to you, Herr Leitner, is a very simple one and has nothing to do with great political concepts…..Will you tell me why I should not be able to go and see my beloved brother, who has terminal cancer, one final time in the east, as Herr Brandt's proposals would allow?"
There was a total silence until this sunk in and then a great roar, a storm of clapping and foot-stamping which left Breitner studying his notes and rooted to his chair. Encouraged, as the noise died down, she carried on. The anger in her now broke like a wave and swept into her every limb so that she shook. She addressed the chair.
"Mrs Lady, presiding of the meeting, what do I and millions like me care for these pig-politics! What do we care about the theories of this –ism or that- ism? Herr Breitner, I spit upon your "solemn principle", you POMPOUS ARSE!" (*Loud, wild cheers*)
Now, seeing an opportunity to cash in his chips Emmerich had gotten to his feet.
"The gracious lady is of course absolutely right and speaks for millions of us. Willy Brandt recognizes this. He is at once is a sensible, pragmatic man and an idealist who desires to bring the BRD and the DDR closer together through exchanges, visits and dialogue. This may be the way – the only true, peaceful way to unite us again!"
Breitner: " Exchanges? Visits? Off course, Mr Emmerich neglects to tell us that only poor pensioners will be allowed to come across to see us. The DDR would be only too pleased if they stay here so that they could avoid paying their pensions - (*Boos*) – while the gracious lady and all the rest of us take billions of Deutschmarks in our wallets to spend over there!" (Shouts of *Yes! and Very True*!)
Emmerich: "You are too full of prejudice and hatred to see a simple Truth. You are stuck in 1945. Hitler did a terrible thing to Germany and the Germans did terrible things to themselves and other people and peoples. And, yes, we must expect to go on being punished for such crimes… (Shouts of *Quatsch! and Why*?)….until the world forgets or moves on BUT WE, THE GERMANS OF 1971 CAN HELP OURSELVES BY SPEAKING TO ONE ANOTHER …."
The rest was drowned out by a chorus of whistles, boos and cheers. An old man was up and shouting until he managed to make himself heard.
"We are punished only because we lost the damned war! - (*Very True! Hear Hear*!) – That brandy-swilling swine Churchill did terrible things to Hamburg, to Berlin and to Dresden….Stalin was a much bigger monster than Hitler! - (*Of course he was*!) - You speak of guilt? I lost my daughter who never harmed anyone because she was only FIVE YEARS OLD!" (*Loud cheers and boos*) …"Listen to me! Why should the German people pay, and their children and grandchildren pay and be punished because of a criminal gang of Nazis which the rich industrialists, Krupp, Schnitzler, Basch and the Generals supported and the ignorant, stupid masses acclaimed? WHY?"
I wondered where this speaker fitted into the political spectrum. He had begun like a Nazi and finished like a Communist. Perhaps others were equally confused because there were only a few isolated boos and cheers and he carried on.
"We should look forward to and build a new Germany for peace and reconciliation. Let us replace the military names on our streets and buildings with Bonhoffer, Stauffenberg, Galen and Scholl to show the world we mean what we say! Pension off the old Nazis skulking in the administration of our towns and cities and in the boardrooms! Give the US and NATO notice to withdraw! Dismantle the bases and landing strips for their weapons which will destroy us all!

Let all work for détente between the Germanys and be a shining example to the Kremlin and the White House…."
"NAÏVE OLD FOOL!"
"The Russians would swallow us whole like an oyster!"
Someone else at the back yelled "Who pays the wages and expenses of Andreas Bader and Ulrike Meinhoff and Co? Who wishes to destabilise our democracy and make us look like a Police State in the eyes of the world? WHO?"
"GO ON,THEN! YOU HAVE THE FLOOR? WHO?" he yelled back.
"MOSCOW OF COURSE!" (*Laughter and jeers*)
"You are PARANOID! The Soviets can barely keep the Poles and Czechs in order! Swallow us like an oyster? Eighty million Germans? They would soon spit us all out again!"
"FOOL! MOSCOW STOOGE!"
"WARMONGER. WASHINGTON PARASITE!"
Now something was thrown. Chairs overturned as people scrambled to get away from the glowing crucible of the row. An umbrella came crashing down on a hippy head. The chair-lady rapped noiselessly but the meeting had ended itself and everyone was leaving.

On the Autobahn Dieter finally said that he hoped that I now had a better idea of how things stood in Germany. I looked at him for a trace of humour but he held the steering wheel grimly and looked silently ahead. I simply thanked him and added that it had truly been an eye-opener, (though I was more confused than before.)

Chapter 4
On Thursday the Captain met me in the staffroom and told me that Herr Huber had requested to see me. He rubbed his chin and asked me about my Monday class with 14a. I felt a pang of apprehension. I told him truthfully about the exchanges and he closed his eyes.
"So, Steiner asked you about the Scholl business first. You did not raise it yourself?"
"No."
"OK. Let me do the talking. He is in a terrible mood. Somebody has been chalking "Up with Scholl" - in English - all over blackboards."

We walked in and sat down at his sturdy table. He was studying a document, a stapled sheaf of some four pages, rapidly turning them over and back again. I recognized with horror the logo of The Central Bureau for Exchanges. He was reviewing me. He would not speak. I could not breathe. I noticed that his temples were pulsing rapidly. His eyes looked like two cold, hard, grey stones. Finally Wagner decided to break the dreadful silence.
"I have spoken to Herr Newman, Herr Direktor. It would appear to be a simple misunderstanding. Herr Newman was mislead into thinking that it was acceptable to speak about political matters in class. One of the boys asked him about his thoughts on the Scholl issue."
"And did Mr Newman tell him his own opinion?"
I began to clear my throat but felt Wagner's restraining hand on my arm.
"No Sir. He acted rather correctly; he asked the boys to give their views – this was after all an opportunity for them to practise their oral skills – and made absolutely no comment on them, only to correct their mispronunciation and other mistakes…"
Huber did not reply. He picked up a letter and scanned down it until he found the sentence he wanted.

“Herr Wagner, I read here aloud from a letter written by Herr Keller, father of Keller, Jürgen in Klasse 14a, the following lines….”*My son told the teacher that they should not discuss this matter but he ignored him*.”…. Would Mr Newman care to comment on that?”
Wagner informed him that I had taken this to be the very personal view of young Keller and not at all the policy of the school and the Bundesministerium in Munich. Therein lay the error. He should also take the blame upon himself as he had taken me into his 11b without showing me the notice on the staffroom notice board. It had not occurred to him to do so, as this was to be the exciting first lesson for the English assistant – a lesson which, he might add, had been truly of the highest quality for one so young and unqualified. I felt myself blushing. Still Huber said nothing. He tucked the letter back into his envelope and began to clean his glasses. Without them he reminded me of those eyeless busts you see in museums of Roman statuary.
“And which boy was it who asked Mr Newman the question?”
Without hesitation Wagner replied “Steiner, Markus.” Huber wrote this down with a peculiar smile on his face, lips sort of inside out, put the top back onto his fountain pen and stabbed it into the breast pocket of his curious jacket. Now with a condescending grin he addressed me.
“Mr Newman. I am pleased to hear Herr Wagner say that you are an excellent young man. I can understand now why this mistake happened. I am certain that his will be the first, the only and the last time that we need to speak about this. There must truly be a thousand wonderful themes which you can discuss with the Oberstufe; how to make tea, how to play cricket, the sites of London….. the English weather!! (at this he and Wagner threw back their heads and laughed)…..”I shall, of course, now write to Herr Keller that this was a genuine mistake which will NEVER happen again.”
As he said “never” his smile switched itself off and he was honestly terrifying, like a stock Gestapo officer in a black and white WWII film.
“Perhaps Herr Wagner would like to tell you in the staffroom of the problems we had with your predecessor and how difficult it was for me to persuade the fathers of the school" - (he meant the governors) - "to agree to invite another assistant from England. Good day.”
And we were out.

Back in the staff room I told Wagner I already knew all about Herr Zickbrum. He smiled, lit his pipe and told me to watch the older boys. They were not trustworthy. Steiner was a Radical. Keller’s father was a CSU Councillor here in Frankenheim-Walding. Both boys were insufferable.
“You’ll be alright. *Now* you know. See you in 11b this afternoon.”
I thanked him and he went off. But then he turned and, remembering something he wanted to say, he came back and said low “And watch who you have for private tuition.”
Had I blushed again? He winked and went. Bertholt and Karl had been listening.
“What’s up, Doc?” asked Berthold in a fair imitation of Bugs Bunny.
I told them everything and Karl whistled.
“That shit Steiner again. Well, I hope he gets his just desserts this time,” said Bertholt.
“But it’s not so simple. If the boys find out that Jamie told Huber the name of a boy – do you say ”peach” on somebody?”
“No. That’s American English. We say “grass”. I’m a grass. Or rather the Captain is. He told him the name. I was going to say that I couldn’t remember who but he jumped in first.”
I hadn’t noticed Peter Breitner in the corner marking books. He looked up and swore.
“Wagner told Huber it was Steiner? Der Scheisskerl! It is pure revenge!”

I was shocked to hear my placid guardian angel call a colleague a "shit-fellow". Karl too seemed taken aback. He asked Peter what he meant but, as if realising he had already said too much he ignored him and went back to his books. He meant the matter to be closed. There was an awkward silence. Bertholt pulled a worried face.
“Say, Jamie,” he said at last, “Me and Karl are going out to Sternbach to eat lunch after last lesson. My wife Karen is in Admin. on the base. So we can get you in there, too. Do you wanna come?”
I told him I would love to.

When they had gone, Peter called me over and asked me again about the interview with Huber. Had he made threats? I told him how he had barely been able to look me in the eye and had referred obliquely to Thickbroom. But that Wagner had stuck up for me.
“But he had a hidden reason, I think Jamie” he whispered. "Steiner reported Wagner last year for coming late to lessons and going early. Wagner is getting his revenge and at the same time is making sure he doesn’t lose you. He would look very silly. He went to the fathers of the school with Huber to ask them to change their minds about a new assistant, after Thickbroom.”
“But I still feel grateful to him,” I said, feeling increasingly exasperated with the petty politics I seemed to keep finding myself embroiled in.
My last lesson of the day with 11b was not a success. Under Wagner’s presiding eye I had given out the exercise books which I had marked and graded and had started to go over the answers. After a while Wagner went to the door and pointed dramatically at his watch, as if to say he had to go out for a moment. As the time slowly passed it became increasingly obvious first to them and then to me that he wasn’t coming back.
“The Captain must smoke a pipe,” said the surly boy and not under his breath. Others laughed. I should have clamped down then, I realized in retrospect but I chose to carry on as if I had not heard. The chuntering (now in German) continued and began to spread until I could turn a deaf ear no longer.
“Excuse me, please” I said as smoothly and calmly as Prince Charles “Would you mind not speaking while I am speaking and if you have anything you would like to ask me, would you kindly raise your hand.”
Several of the surly boy’s entourage (he was called Bauer (= Farmer – and he had rather agricultural manners, as I would tell him one day soon)) shrugged and shouted *WAS*?? - as if they had found me impossible to decipher. This brought another round of jeers and sneers. Other lads were silent and watchful. What would I do? So I translated Prince Charles into German and was met with the same mock-bewildered response. Now a hand was up from within the same corner of dissent. This boy wanted to know – in German – why he had been given a miserable Grade 3 for his work while his stupid friend who had copied all his answers in class had been given a Grade 2. His “stupid friend” grabbed him around the neck and to shouts of laughter they had a play fight. I felt like going in all guns blazing and sorting the little bastards out. I shouted and they subsided. Now other hands were up, requesting a justification of my grading and an explanation of my mark-scheme. Of course there was none. I had forgotten all about their exercises the night before and only remembered to rush through them when Heidi had gone. There was now almost chaos. I told them to read the next Canadian short story (called The Desperate Salmon) in silence while I went around explaining. But this story was harder and longer (and also extremely silly, being the thoughts of a salmon jumping up waterfalls past clawing grizzly bears only to die in a shallow spawning pool) and before long most of them had

given it up and the books lay discarded, some on the floor, while they wrestled around and yelled at each other, as if I had vanished in a cloud of smoke - which I rather wished I could have done. I looked at my watch. Six minutes. And not for the last time in my career I metaphorically held tight to the table and waited for the bell. I blocked the door and made them pick up all the books and place them on the teacher's table neatly. Many did this with exaggerated and obsessive care before smiling at me sarcastically on their way out.

On the way to Sternbach in Bertholt's VW Camper I recounted my unhappy experience to them. They both laughed and said that was nothing. Karl told me that the other day a boy had crept under his table and tied his shoe laces together while he was snoozing. Bertholt screamed with laughter. Somebody had kept farting in a class on Tuesday and he couldn't find out who it was until he realized that they were passing a whoopee cushion around the room.
"You say Wagner went out and didn't come back?" asked Karl.
"They say he has a mistress somewhere on the Hindenburg-Platz" said Bertholt.
"That's why he always has that smile on his face! But seriously, Jamie, he shouldn't ask you to take a whole class and leave you. That is wrong. Even we are observed for the first three weeks. Tell him, for Chrissake!"
I said I would if he did it again but I felt grateful to him for his support with the director.
"So ist der Mann!"commented Karl. "He is always looking to do you a favour and then exploit it. He tried it with Heidi. Had a private chat in her flat with her about her accent and other things and then tried to seduce her."
"She told you that?" shouted Bertholt above the chugging engine. He shook his head first in disgust and then giggled. "Well, good luck to him! Dorsch – you know, that pig-headed Chem student with the twirly moustache - he got drunk at Breitner's party and told me he had tried to bed old Heidi and she had told him to FUCK OFF. (Dorsch said he thought he stood a better chance with his wife on a Sunday morning!)"
I almost spoke but wisely kept my mouth shut.

Sternbach turned out to be one of the most depressing tableaux I had ever observed. Everyone there seemed to move around in a smoky dimension which required a quarter of the speed of the rest of the world. Tall, gangly soldiers sauntered around in baseball caps and T-shirts, smoking slowly and speaking unintelligibly. The self-service restaurant employees were German and spoke an automated English without smiling and scarcely looking at the customers who failed also to acknowledge them. Tannoys outside crackled without enthusiasm and fell silent again. We sat eating hamburgers and fries and, for the first time ever, I had coleslaw, which I rather liked although I had not expected to. Bertholt pointed out how the "niggers" and the whites sat separately and how groups passed by each other as if they were not there. Out of one window I watched as two housewives from the barrack houses, thin-legged and in curlers and bathrobes stood leaning away from each other, cigarettes held high over their shoulders in conversation. I thought about what Breitner had said about an invasion and realized he had not been joking. Everybody seemed utterly bored and spaced out. Berthy kept saying "nigger" so I asked him if that wasn't a bit offensive. He laughed that careless, tossing laugh of his and asked me what I meant. I told him that in GB such talk was classed as racialist.
"Oh really? Well, even the niggers here call themselves niggers and classify the whites as white trash. No-one really minds"
"So there isn't that much tension? They just take no notice of each other?"

“Oh sure! Saturday night is always a bad scene. Guys get stabbed. One died in the summer!”
I looked at them all and wondered how they ever summoned up enough energy to start a brawl.
A lovely, silver blonde woman danced in, put her hands over Berthy’s eyes and kissed him on his great dome.
“Karen, this is Jamie. He’s new in school. Helps with English.”
I spoke to her in my best Prince Charles. She said WOW and asked me if I knew the Queen. I laughed and told her in mild Scouse how the Captain had made me change my accent.
“Oh my gawd. Now you sound just like John Lennon.”
I lied and told her that my cousin Julia had gone to school with him and that it was her who he had sung about on the White Album.
“Oh my gawd! That’s scary! It’s my favourite track!”
I told her (truthfully) that I had once lived near Penny Lane and (untruthfully) that I used the barber’s who (and I began to sing the song) “shaves another customer!” ”

On the way back Berthy told me that his wife really liked me. Next week was old movie night in Frankenheim and that they were all going – some old British comedy film, in English with German titles, about gangsters who take over an old lady’s house. I was welcome to come. Then he suddenly stopped speaking, lifted himself high from the leather seat and farted exceptionally loudly. Karl tutted and wound down his window. But it didn’t smell. I waited until Berthy had stopped screaming with laughter and told him that that was an FBI.
“FBI? Whassat?”
“Forte But Innocuous. Better than an SBD”
“SPD? (in those parts letter P regularly came out as a B) What in God’s name is an SPD?”
Berthy hated the SPD and so when I told him it meant Silent But Deadly he laughed so much that we swerved over and nearly hit a lorry coming the other way.

The next morning the staff room was in foment. Colleagues were gesticulating and some were almost jabbing fingers into each other’s chest. Voices were rapid and breathless with anger and although the bell had sounded for first lesson nobody seemed in a hurry to depart. Breitner sat alone (he invariably did) and was now beckoning me over.
“Was gibt’s?” I asked.
“It seems your friend Wagner has gotten Markus Steiner suspended for a week while Huber investigates allegations of illicit political activity in the school. But more than that it appears someone has supplied his name as the graffiti artist.”
“But that’s nonsense!” And I recounted how furious he had been when one of the other boys had accused him of it.
“Well, Wagner looks well pleased with himself. Now I must go to my lesson.”
But the Steiner matter turned out to be less of a controversial issue than the report in the morning paper. A banner headline announced

VANDALISM OF WAR MEMORIAL

There was a photo. Below the legend FALLEN FOR THE FATHERLAND
at the end of about forty names of soldiers someone had neatly added the names

HANS SCHOLL

SOPHIE SCHOLL

in black letters.

An elderly teacher I had said hello to on a couple of occasions was literally shaking with rage. He threw a copy of that newspaper on the table and stormed out. Someone said, after he had gone, that his elder brother's name, a victim of the eastern front, was recorded there.

I suddenly had a brainwave. During my time here I was expected to write a project about a local event, custom, geographical or industrial feature. I decided there and then that the Scholl controversy would be ideal. I borrowed the newspaper and began to collect clippings and photos to illustrate it. I still have the yellowing letters in my possession which poured into the editor after this incident and I have just been going through them again. They make interesting reading (although I shall not over-try your patience, dear reader). There were all sorts of theories expounded, some persuasive, some outlandish (one blamed the Bader-Meinhoff gang). One I found quite convincing, and subsequent developments seemed to confirm it. This conjectured that the names had been added by right-wingers, neo-Nazis even, in order to discredit the advocates of the change of the name and the local SPD.
"After all" the correspondent concluded "Such tactics were not unknown on the extreme Right. The Reichstag fire of 1933, purported to be an act of sabotage by a Dutch communist lunatic, was in fact started by the S.A. on Hitler's orders, as a pretext to ban the Communist party."
Another letter did not quite go that far but wondered aloud which camp, the pro-Scholl or the pro-Hindenburg, would stand to gain most from such a provocative act of criminal vandalism. This drew such vituperative exchanges, with accusations of gullibility, opportunism, treachery and a lack of respect for the silent war-dead that the editor, in the next issue, pronounced the correspondence on this matter closed. Well, whether this was all to do with the silly self-defeating propaganda of the Left, or the wily machinations of the sinister Right, no-one could prove. But the snow that began to fall in November and lingered, topped up now and then, all through December, seemed to put the Scholl issue into hibernation.
Perhaps the suspension of Steiner, and the warning to others, had something to do with any further absence of grafitti. He returned after a week and I was relieved to see that he had not thought of me as the source of information. He would tell me one day in the spring, before he was so severely beaten up, that he had suspected his fat classmate. To this I would tactfully make no reply.

Chapter 5

My experience with 11b went from bad to worse before it got better. I had gotten my head around The Desperate Salmon after Emma's departure and a sudden inspiration came to me. If this was the life-cycle of the salmon, would it not be a brilliant idea if they could prepare an account of the significant events in their own miserable lives in the Past Simple (*I was born…I went to school…I had my first dog….*) ? I decided to prepare an account of my own short existence to date as a preliminary listening exercise. This, with a few questions on the salmon text etc, etc, would see me comfortably through two lessons, especially as I would expect them, or even draw lots to decide, to come out to the front and speak about themselves. Another brainwave! They could pretend to be other beasts if they were so inclined!
Determined to stamp my authority on them I strode into 11b's room dead on time and gave out the little green books. There were a few groans as I had anticipated but I was ready for them this

time.
“SILENCE!!” I yelled, sounding more like Prince Philip than Prince Charles. It did the trick. I took the register and Bauer was missing.
“Have you seen Bauer?” I asked. One or two started to say something about skiving but I was ready again. “YES OR NO?” I screamed.
Of course the Captain did not come (nor did he ever again as far as I can recall.) One of the more innocent boys had volunteered to read the first paragraph of the story and was making a lamentable hash of it.
“I tried again and again to yump the vaterfall but I fell beck in ex-exhose-ti-on.”
It was so bad that I had to intervene.“No, Mr Probst, the word is “jump”, not yump and the last word is “exhaustion.”
Suddenly the door burst open and in blustered a Bauer so red that I thought he would pass out. I cut the predictable outcry short with another “SILENCE!” and waited patiently over a panting Bauer until his chest began to subside.
“Well, Mr Bauer,” I finally said with my hands behind my back, as if on some official, royal visit. “Would you mind explaining your late arrival?”
As he began to try on his shrug routine again I shouted “ LATE! WHY?” and told him in German that even a person with his limited understanding and rural manners should be able to provide a perfectly reasonable explanation. He countered with a rapid Bill and Ben gobble, way beyond me, in which only the words “verflixter Zug” (damned train) were clear. He had obviously smuggled in something insulting or pejorative because now the class rocked with laughter. Oh no. Now where did I go? Bauer’s presence seemed to be the signal for other naughty boys to start. I managed somehow to steer the class back to the Desperate Salmon and decided now to play a trump-card. I began to tell them about my life-cycle idea. Many were finding it difficult to understand me and many who could were pulling very underwhelmed faces. I was walking around, as Berthy had advised me, to keep them on their toes, when behind me at the front, and spreading backwards, raucous laughter broke out. I turned. Bauer was eating a sandwich. I had not foreseen a pupil eating their breakfast in class as one of the likelier instances of bad behaviour I would be likely to encounter. Instinctively I reached for it and chucked it straight in the bin from about ten yards. This was met with laughter and cheers of *Tor!* (goal) from the class but with a brutish snort from Bauer. I thought he was about to hit me. He was broader and nearly as tall as me. Instead, he got up, took his sandwich out of the empty bin, wiped it and finished it off. When he reached for his second one the laughter reached a crescendo. Then the door swung open again and Huber appeared as if to make an unexpected midnight arrest. I had never heard any noise stop so suddenly - (not even when St John scored from twenty yards at Old Trafford, instantly silencing those gobshites in the Stretford End.)
“Could you explain Mr Newman what is loose here?” he asked in English. What could I say? I could drop Wagner in it. I could drop Bauer in it. I could drop myself in it.
In slow German, so that everyone could understand, I presently said “I’m sorry if the class was noisy, Herr Direktor, but Bauer here was feeling a little ill because he came in late and had eaten no breakfast. I told him, if he could eat the second one in twenty seconds he would not get a Verweis. The class was encouraging him.”
To my surprise Huber laughed and said “Sehr gut! Wunderbar!” and left us. There was utter silence. Then, to my relief, all began to rap their knuckles on the table. Subsequently we got on fine. I always told them a filthy joke at the end of each lesson and they looked forward to that.

Later Bauer became a good friend. His English was, in fact, the best in the class. One day after I had been back in England a couple of years he turned up out of the blue on my doorstep in Liverpool one July with a jolly, plump girlfriend called Inge and they pitched their tent on our back garden. We still write to one other over thirty years later.

The vintage night at the cinema arrived. To my absolute delight it turned out to be a film I had seen last in the 1950s, on my Granddad's tall double-doored TV set (which also played his 78 records, I think, on a turntable on the top). I had only seen it once but I remembered it instantly: The Ladykillers with Alec Guinness, Peter Sellars and Herbert Lom. The German audience loved it and I felt proud to belong to a culture which could produce such a wonderful film. When the little old lady (Mrs Lop-sided) was told she could keep the thousands of stolen pounds, which the kindly policeman believed she must be imagining, the whole place broke out in rapturous applause. I and Karen, who sat next to me, appreciated every last little irony of course. She had never seen the film before and giggled all the way through, often gripping my arm. My lower mind began to misconstrue this but afterwards in the pub I realized that she had been behaving as just a lovely friend towards me, and my higher mind instantly dismissed such unworthy thoughts out of hand. She obviously adored Berthi.
The co nversation inevitably went on to school matters - whereto it always tends when two or three teachers meet together. Berthy was still annoyed about Wagner leaving me with 11b but when I told them about my stroke of genius at Huber's entrance they were impressed.
"So what are you doing with them?" asked Karl.
When I told them Canadian short stories they began to hoot. Him and his beloved Canada!
"Why don't you say Canadan?" asked Karl with a very passable imitation of Dieter. "After all, dear colleagues, we would refer to other natives of that continent – and I have a wonderful example, do I not, of the female species, here on my right – as Americans!"
Karen loved this. "Pompous ass!" she said. "He just brought the very worst out in me at Breitner's party."
"Dieter Lenz thinks you're the worst goddamn bigot he ever heard" laughed Berthy.
"Well I had to get rid of him somehow!"
I said that Dieter had been very kind to me and told them all about our Nürnberg adventure.
"Oh my gawd - don't get Karl and Berthy arguing about Ostpolitik! Once they kept Karl's landlady awake all night."
Something was puzzling me. About Breitner.
"You say he gives parties. But he seems such a loner. Does he keep to friends outside school?"
I had obviously raised a thorny issue. Berthy suppressed a giggle and Karl looked rather serious, nervous even.
"Komm, Berthy! Peter ist ein *Kollege*." he warned him. Yes, Peter was a colleague, but Berthy had no head for alcohol. It made him dafter than normal and a thought which had obviously just entered his head made him snigger.
"If you drop a pencil near him, just be careful how you pick it up. Don't turn your back on him over long!"
In spite of himself Karl was doing that breathless snorting laugh which I came to find so infectious. In mock anger, giggling herself, and covering her face with her hand, Karen began to swipe the howling, choking Berthy on the back.
"Breitner? A *bum*-bandido? You're joking!" I said. At this expression Berthy absolutely exploded and kept repeating it.

“No, he’s choking.” said Karen which made him even worse.
Whenever I think of Berthy I laugh out loud. Everything sent him into hysterics. He was one of the most amusing characters I ever met. I had said to him once, in my best Prince Charles mode, straight after he had managed to stop laughing at a very silly joke - just in the nick of time before a seizure would surely have taken him, he was glowing so red -
“Berthy! That reminds me. What’s red and hairy and sticks out of your pyjamas?”
“Wh-a-a –ah-ah-ah-ah-ah!!- what? What?” he had howled.
“Your head.”
He collapsed on the floor, helpless.
“And what’s red and wrinkly and hangs out granddad’s underpants?”
He shook his head in silent agony.
“Grandma.”
All very silly now, but it was such a pleasure then to sit back and watch my German friends - *with no sense of humour* - laugh out so loud. The Ladykillers night was one of our most memorable times together in Frankenheim. Karen and Berthy were just wonderful. We still exchange Christmas cards. They eventually left Germany to live in Florida.

Chapter 6
November wore on. One Friday Peter asked me to come round to listen to his classical recordings. I had made the mistake of praising a piece which was playing – by Mozart I think – on his car radio one afternoon during one of our sporadic outings. Yet the very last thing I wanted to do, him being so nice a man, was to offend him by pausing to think, obviously, of some lying excuse. So I readily and enthusiastically agreed.
“I’ll cook us some real hamburgers and make my own recipe tomato ketchup!”
“Great!”
I liked Peter. He had always been so selflessly kind to me, in contrast to the Captain who, I had realised, was a bit of a user. If Peter was queer (I don’t think anyone said “gay” in 1971, did they?) it was no problem for me. He knew Emma came over every weekend and he had even met her briefly one Saturday.

Nothing however could have prepared me for the uncomfortable, ultimately very embarrassing evening I was about to experience. When I arrived I could tell straight away that he had been on the old Frankenwein already. Before I had hardly sat down, he asked me to admire his new oriental rug. I studied it. It certainly was a brilliant kaleidoscope of rich colours. All at once my eyes stopped on one quadrant in which I saw crude but clear swastikas. He knew I had seen them and I suspected later that was the reason I had been invited to admire it.
“Ah, I see you have found the swastikas! You are wondering whether old Breitner is really a Nazi!”
I did not know how to respond to this.
“Don’t worry!” he continued patting me on the back. “The swastika is a very old Aryan symbol which Hitler stole. He turned it back to front however and made it spin on its corners. Some superstitious comrades said it would bring bad luck. And it did! To everybody!”
He invited me formally then to go onto what the Germans call the Du-und-Du, meaning substituting the formal Sie form of “you” for the familiar Du form, (exactly as in French “vous” and “tu”). Of course, I readily agreed but his tipsiness, the slap on the back and the sudden urgency of this invitation unsettled me a little and in my mind I saw him dropping a pencil and

Berthy throwing his head back in laughter.
The hamburgers, fries and relish were really delicious. And he had prepared a great salad with a mouth-watering dressing which only the Germans and Austrians know how to do. He kept filling our glasses and changing his tapes. The music was lovely, but my youthful ear was not then as tuned as it is today to the wonders of Mozart, Schubert, Beethoven and Mendelssohn.
"And this" he announced, now a little wobbly "Is K622, his clarinet concerto in A, one of the last things, the greatest thing, he wrote before he died. At just 35 in 1791."
But that great music became just a blur (at least it did back then) because the memory of Breitner blubbering over it wiped every note out in my memory. His eyes were not just filling with tears. They were running down his cheeks and dripping from his beard. His face was contorted as if in grief. I pretended not to notice but I was so relieved when he at last got up and switched the music off. The silence as he gradually recomposed himself was one of the most embarrassing I ever experienced.
"I am so sorry" he gasped at last when he regained control of his voice and sat polishing his spectacles furiously, "So sorry. I should have known better. This sublime music always makes me cry. Especially when I am drunk. I begin to think of his fate – a genius, an angel, the greatest man Austria ever produced – who died at such an early age…."
Then he stiffened and continued "And then I think about that beast, that evil genius, the shame of Austria for all time, as long as she exists, born with more lives than a cat…which nothing could kill and in the end required his own hand….Did you know, Jamie, that he was a trench messenger in the first war? A damned trench messenger?"
"You mean Hitler? Was he an Austrian?"
"Of course! You did not know this? Who else might the genius be? Mozart? How many bullets must have whistled around the bastard's head as he ran from post to post in those trenches? He was a cat, I say! There were six bombs planted alone in 1943."
"Six??" (I knew only of the Stauffenberg bomb plot, in the bunker)
"Six. A time bomb on his plane did not go off. And there was a man called Elser, an ordinary working man, a joiner from Würtemburg, who fashioned even in 1939 his very own bomb and it actually went off right on time, in the Munich beer hall where he had planted it. At exactly the right second! Only, Hitler, the lucky bastard was not there. His plane was delayed because of bad weather! I tell you Jamie, I sometimes picture a great black Angel watching over him, a rival to God Almighty, even more powerful than He, protecting him as he lays waste the world and brings shame on the German people."
I felt uneasy again. He was speaking with an intensity which I had never encountered before.
"Even when tried for treason after the failure of the November putsch in Munich he managed to turn the dock into a soap-box with the indulgence of a sympathetic judge. He managed to reach out to a national audience, claiming that the Court of History would judge him a hero. So instead of being sentenced to death by firing squad, as he deserved, he only got five years and was out in a few months. Thus, a fiasco in which he had run away (the very next man to him, would you believe was shot and killed) turned into a heroic failure. He literally had the luck of the devil - No! He was the son of the Devil!"

(I wrote to Breitner via the school in 1998 and reminded him of that night, asking him for what he had said, words mostly obscured by much wine and many, many intervening years. For weeks I heard nothing and thought he had died, moved on, couldn't remember or didn't want to remember. But then he replied with four A4 sides of neat closely written notes in German. He

said we ought to meet up again. He would soon retire and would try to get over. (He is still trying))

Breitner taught English but his first love was history. Now he really was in full flow.
"Jamie! I will tell you about The Will of The World Spirit".
(Oh good)
"This is the term which Hegel, the philosopher invented in 1832. But the idea was not really new. Then there was Schopenhauer, Hegel, Wagner and Nietzsche – all preaching this doctrine of the Power of the Will, the role of the Hero, the Great Individual who is born – the child of the World Spirit – to fashion history!"
"You mean like Napoleon?"
"Exactly! And your Oliver Cromwell. Such men rise above the common herd and by logical extension transcend the common law and morality, and discover a new Higher Law which allows them to cut off a king's head or murder millions! Adolf Hitler was the Dark Messiah of those German Elijahs and Isaiahs - born to release the German people from the shackles of the Treaty of Versailles and from paying tribute in war reparations to the French – in the same way that Christ came to free the Jews from the Romans! Of course, had he not been so blinded by his own delusions, had not provoked the USA and had not invaded Mother Russia he would have triumphed! If not a thousand years the Reich would have lasted long, very long….But it was not he, but Germany which was crucified – again! By his own hand the coward escaped his tormentors like one of the thieves freed by Pilate! There is still such turmoil in the German psyche, such an agony of unrequited yearning which Hitler released. Especially in the older generation. It simmers on as a bitterness just beneath the surface. It is still in people's eyes. It seems to threaten to erupt at any moment."
I thought of the young Steiners, Beppo and the old man in the park and told him of it. He nodded vigorously and poured yet more wine.
"Only when the old soldiers are dead will a new youthful spirit – the spirit of those two Scholls! – be able to proclaim a new idealistic Germany which the world will trust!"
"But if young people remain in the dark about the past, how can that spirit…."
Before I could finish his mouth fell open. I took my hand and shook it until I thought he was going to wrench it from the end of my arm!
"Jamie! You are beginning to see the problem! Those old German thinkers have made an Epic Story–SUCH ROMANTIC NONSENSE! - out of History, as if it is all heading toward some great DENOUEMENT, dreamt up by the World Spirit to be enacted by the, the Übermensch, the Superhuman. Here lies the great error of the German people! We see ourselves chosen to be the Herrenvolk, the Master Race, to conquer the world to realise that denouement. Many here still think we star in that great historical drama and that we may yet emerge in triumph!"
He drank his wine glass empty and poured another. I confessed that I was still rather bewildered by all this. I wondered aloud how such an obvious clown as Adolf, such a greasy, nasty, little man, with none of the attributes of a Superman, could be hailed as the Messiah? He rebuked me almost angrily and told me that I was making the crass mistake of seeing history through a modern pair of eyes.
"If Richard Wagner the great composer could touch the raw nerve of nationalistic passion through his music so Hitler as orator could bring his audiences stamping and cheering to their feet; he put their smouldering anger, their dull resentment and vaporous aspirations into inflammatory words; he was the Poet of the dispossessed who read their hearts and minds and

gave them back their grumbles and complaints as rousing verses."
Then he sprang up and almost fell onto his tape player.
"Close your eyes…NO CLOSE THEM…Now listen to this! It is Richard Wagner's overture to Tannhäuser."
The music began softly but by stages began to build and build thrillingly and relentlessly, with an interplay of lamenting strings and heroic, triumphant brass, finally to a despair-shattering crescendo. I sat for the first time ever in my life literally transfixed by a piece of music, feeling that even had I tried to, I would not be able to get out of my seat. (The wine played no little part in this too.)
"Can you hear it?" he shouted, as the music swelled, "No! keep those eyes closed! Can you hear the surging aspiration? This self-assertion? The sheer will to triumph? Now, imagine you are an ordinary but sensitive man. You have no job. No money. You are cold. You are hungry. No hope. Then He, the Saviour of German pride, the Great Provider arrives. Imagine this music blaring out at a truly great rally! Imagine thousands of burning torches, like a new hope lighted in your breast. Hear the deafening acclaim of the Leader, the acclaim of one Voice made of hundreds of thousands of despairing little voices like yours, shouting at exactly the same time. Do you remain silent, Jamie? Or do you shout too? Imagine an Anfield but many, many times bigger! Do you shout, Jamie? Are you looking up at a mere mortal or at a Superman? Aren't you shouting now Sieg Heil with all the rest? I think, at the very least, I might! Am I not in the presence of a Man of Destiny, whom Providence has fashioned to lead the German People to a Promised Land in the east?"
My heart was pounding and my ears ringing with blood.
"Can you now begin to understand, Jamie? Wagner happened to be there at precisely the right time to thrill audiences with mythical portrayals of the very kindling of the Nordic tribal flame! In 1871 Bismarck gave that longing for tribal unity, identity and a new destiny political fulfilment. Within forty years that restored nation grew into a great industrial, military and imperial power to rival France and Great Britain. Hitler's Austria had been excluded. He enlisted to fight for Germany in 1914. Imagine the blow to those nationalist aspirations and the crushing disappointment of 1918. Millions of Germans could never accept the shame of surrender or the defeat; they blamed the Jewish conspirators of the Left, the Republicans, the shirkers at home for the famous "stab in the back." They loathed the Weimar Republic which followed the abdication of the Kaiser. In Bavaria Hitler witnessed at first hand the fall of the thousand years old Wittelsbach dynasty - have you heard of Mad King Ludwig and his Neuschwanstein castle - the "Disney castle"?? The Wittlesbachs were replaced by a Soviet Committee led by a Jew called Eisner. For Hitler and many demobbed soldiers the army had been betrayed, not defeated, and the desire for vengeance on their enemies at home and abroad, made worse by crippling war reparations, loss of territory and other indignities made another war almost inevitable. The tragedy for Germany was that, apart perhaps from Stresemann who died suddenly, no-one of stature, of wisdom and foresight emerged to stop Hitler, unite the nation and steer it to calmer waters; and abroad no-one emerged to warn that our dangerous cauldron, so poisoned and stirred up by the vindictive French, would one day boil over."

The music had moved onto a quieter theme. He stood up and came back with a book. He showed me a black and white photograph. Underneath it read "Shipyard Hamburg 1936". It showed a large group of men, perhaps two hundred strong present at the launch of a ship. There was a forest of Hitler salutes. I studied it, nodded and handed it back.

“NO! LOOK PROPERLY! You have not spotted him!”
God! Who? Hitler? Where was he? Or did he mean a relative of his? His father? His grandfather? I realised now how Emma had felt when my tipsy granddad, in foolish, sentimental mode, had asked her to pick out his late wife (“the most beautiful woman in the WORLD!”) from a group photo of about forty women. (Of course she had chosen the wrong one and he had fallen out with her.)
“Peter, I’m sorry I don’t know who I’m looking for. Someone like you?”
Was he trying to prove his point by demonstrating that a clever ancestor of his had also been swept away, like a cork on the tempestuous seas of those days? He filled my glass again. He told me with a cheerful, enigmatic smile that I would find him if I kept looking. I was just about to quit when I did find him. Standing towards the back stood a man in overalls with his arms firmly folded. Blatantly not saluting.
“You see? There is the real hope. I hope I would rather have been like him. Like the joiner who made the bomb. But imagine the agony of not being able to believe and having to keep one’s thoughts bottled up, like Galileo before the Inquisition!”
“Who was he?”
“GALILEO???”
“NO! the man in the photograph!”
“No-one has the faintest idea. No-one has ever claimed him. No-one knows what happened to him. But was he not truly the great man? The Non-Believer! And there were many, many, many more”.
“But how could they all keep so quiet, for so long?”
He shook his head again then looked up at me slyly.
“Would you shout out “Manchester United” alone in your Spion Kop?”
He laughed, filled his glass and drank from it copiously.
“Many did protest. Many teenagers would not join the Hitler Youth. Wore their own fashions – like your teddy boys, your mods and rockers - to show they did not belong. There were the Edelweiss Pirates in the Ruhr towns of Cologne, Düsseldorf and Essen who scrawled anti-Hitler graffiti in underground passages. Here is a picture of seven of them – teenagers – about to be hanged in Cologne 1944. There was also the Swing Youth who organized wild jazz parties – up to six thousand kids at a time - in defiance of the party line. They loved Louis Armstrong and other American artists. Of course, the history syllabus allows no mention of all this. Those bloody Blacks in Munich make sure, for many of them have fouled hands.”
“Are there any ex-Nazis in the Gymnasium?”
He laughed a long humourless laugh at this and refilled my glass. The wine was beginning to taste like I imagined turpentine might.
“Oh Jamie, your naivety is priceless. There are more Nazis there than anything. And in most schools. The oldest teachers there were soldiers, in the SS, in the police, in the Civil Service. Almost all teachers then - their fathers - were in the Nazi party. That is why it cannot be discussed. What would Steiner say? *And what did you do in the war, Sir*? Huber himself was the worst!”
“Honestly?”
“Yes, of course! Rub a CSU man and you find a brown shirt! He worked with Werner von Braun.”
“Who?”
“Jamie, your ignorance about German history, no, American history is dreadful! Without von

Braun there would have been no man on the moon. After the war the US took him back with them to develop their rockets. Huber helped with the aero-dynamics on the V2 weapons. He helped to kill thousands of Londoners, the swine!"
I thought about raising the dilemmas of the scientist as explored so brilliantly in Dürrenmatt's play Die Physiker - *The Physicists* - to show I was not quite the dumb-cluck he held me for, but I could see he was in no mood to have his diatribe interrupted. I slyly looked at my watch. He had sunk his head onto his chest. He was rotten drunk. Had he passed out? No.
"Hitler believed….very…. solemnly in his own destiny. And like a God from antiquity his dark Guardian Spirit appeared to watch over him, arranging events and the deeds – or misdeeds – or non-deeds! – of other statesmen so that his evil Will might triumph. Simple Force or the threat of force, his most basic instinct in foreign affairs, pagan and primordial, was too pungent for the civilised and sophisticated men who stood in his way – your Stanley Baldwin and then in 1938 the sanguine Mr Chamberlain –"
" Ah! The great appeaser!" I shouted, glad to be able to contribute.
"Don't blame him! Chamberlain was a lovely man! By the time he arrived in Munich it was far too late! The vile dye of Fate was cast! Those guys were simply no match for him and he routed them! Thank God for that great bully Churchill!"
"My other granddad hated him! He was wounded at Gallipoli!"
"Churchill saved the world from a terrible Dark Age! *He* was the Man of Destiny! Don't you remember his speech about sunlit pastures? Germany was returning to a pre-Christian era. There was Wagner and his grotesque, mythological opera; and that madman Himmler sent out archeologists to try and find Thule, a legendary, lost Germanic homeland in Celtic times, a gothic Atlantis; and more and more there were pageants in which bare-breasted women warriors paraded around on horseback. And you know what the main response of the church authorities - with some honourable exceptions - to all this was?"
"No. What?"
"They said – just leave us alone, to huddle together and worship our God and we will not interfere with you, or criticise you, in the worship of your idols!"
Now I made a catastrophic error. I wondered aloud if Wagner was a closet anti-Nazi as his beaching of the U-Boot suggested. Peter's head shot up.
"Wagner is the WORST!" he screamed. "He pretends to be your friend"
He began to brood on something so I tried to take the opportunity to beat a retreat. But he begged me to stay and finish off the new bottle he had just opened. (How many more bottles did he have?) He was now saying, between belches,that wanted to tell me something very private.
"It is quite well known that I have no girlfriend."
I cringed to hear this. Where was this leading? I stiffened. He seemed to see this.
"It is OK, OK, Jamie. I do not practise."
Practise? What? Oh God!
"Two years ago there was a very clever, very intellectual boy at the school. He was in the final class. He had a growing love of Richard Wagner and Goethe. We would talk and he began to come around in the afternoon to listen to music and discuss things. He, like me, was a lonely person, a very sensitive young man……." Here he stopped to compose himself again.
"One day I am summoned to see Huber. A colleague has told him about our friendship. It was unusual, it was not ethical, it must stop or I would be investigated by the Ministerium. Of course I could no longer see this boy. As I said, he was a very sensitive young man. Someone had spread it around the sixth form about his…tastes. Finally he did not come any more to school.

Some weeks later he threw himself from an Autobahn bridge."
Now he was weeping again. Rather more moved than embarrassed, I hotched over nearer to him on the sofa and put my arm around him.
"And you think it was Wagner?"
He nodded. "I know this. One late night I had seen him in a dark street with a girl who was hardly more than a schoolgirl. He came to me and said the next day it was his niece visiting from Bayreuth. Then the next day Huber sees me about my friendship for that boy. Wagner was trying to get rid of me – or warn me."
Feeling my cheeks burning I tried to stand up and go to the toilet but I collapsed. As I staggered to my feet I felt very sick. The room was spinning and the resumed stirring notes at the end of the Wagner overture music were churning in my guts. The colourful geometric patterns of the rug seemed to be marching around in their sectors and the primitive swastikas were in cart-wheeling procession. He asked me if I was "fighting with my stomach." This graphic phrase finished me and in response the whole lot came up on his lovely rug; the wine, the burger, the salad and the sauce.

Chapter 7

I was middling the whole of Saturday and Emma was less than delighted. November was slowly drifting – literally, with ever more dustings of snow – into December. Then the Bader-Meinhoff gang, who had ever been in the back of my thoughts, and, I suspected, at the back of most others, struck one cold day when no-one expected. At least the bank raid, somewhere in the Ruhr I think, had all the hallmarks of one of their attacks, involving five or six young, long-haired men. The radio spoke with a sterner intensity. Newscasters, always grim on German television, seemed even grimmer. Posters went up around the town with a central square of about twenty-five tiny squares, passport-size photographs of young men and some women, long-haired and very serious.
(Now I recall a tale told by Manny Bauer, of how he had to get a new snap taken of himself because he had a slight smile on his face; and of how he had had to shave his beard off before the Czechs would let him over the border because on his passport he did not have one).
Anyway, one freezing day Berthy stopped and pointed to one of the squares and said,
"Jamie! This guy looks like you! Hey, Karl! Jamie's a terrorist!"
This "guy" did have a squarish face, staring eyes and centrally parted blonde hair, much longer then mine. He bore a faint resemblance to me but his features were pudgier. I found another square, a face with dark hair and glasses.
"If he shaves his skull he'll look like you, Berthy."

The pubs had acquired a snugger, warmer feel. Trimmings had gone up (and would not come down again until Ash Wednesday, I discovered. "Fasching" began in December and ended with a huge carnival and blow-out on Shrove Tuesday. I was asked what happened in Britain.
"We toss pancakes."
"Is that all? You goddamn English are nuts!"

On the second last Wednesday of term, when Heidi swapped books, she brought one that demanded my immediate attention but I did not get much beyond opening it and having a quick skim-through. The Brother and Sister Scholl. This book would soon change the course of events of my year abroad, and in many ways, my whole life. I would fall in love with Sophie Scholl and

to this day she is rarely far from my thoughts. (I still have that precious book for I never saw Heidi, my big, jolly librarian again on a Wednesday. I will explain why later).

In those few carefree days before the Christmas holidays my mind had turned to other things more exciting than reading; to Christmas presents, to mugs of special dark Christmas beer and relishing the two or three weeks back in Liverpool with everyone and everything I had missed. In a large department store I found, with Emma's guidance, some thick-stemmed Frankenwein glasses for my parents and decorative Christmas candles for other relatives. We were counting the days to home.

On that final Saturday the Captain was having his customary grog evening in a private room at the Hirsch. All the Referendare, not just the English ones, as well as his closest colleagues would be there. I had told Emma how much fun it would be and what an interesting fellow Wagner was. "If you get blind drunk it will be no fun for me at all!" she had said. So I had solemnly promised to remain sober and she had agreed to come over to Frankenheim as usual.

We got there at about eight o'clock. I could hear Berthy laughing before we even got through the door. He and Karl usually went home at the weekend and Emma had never met them. To my great relief Heidi was not there.

"Her husband has to bake all weekend" whispered Berthy. "And she has to be there to make sure his sour-dough keeps rising"

Karen and Emma got on really well. Karl's wife, Gisela, stout and stumpy like him, was rather shy and seemed to prefer to stay in the background. The last I can really remember of the party however was Emma being cornered first by Dieter, and then by Wagner, (who had a surprisingly young glamourous escort for one who, albeit handsome and very distinguished, had to be nearly sixty.) Karen had managed to escape back to Berthy. Emma told me subsequently that Dieter had bored her rotten about Bayreuth – as if she knew nothing about it! – and that Wagner had just chatted her up. The very, very last thing I can recall was the Captain making a new batch of grog. Grog tastes really of nothing, like hot, sweetened, golden water. Perhaps I do it a disservice; perhaps I have forgotten how delicious it is, not having touched the bloody stuff for thirty-four years and with no plan ever to do so again. Various glasses in their metal holders had been deposited by various people in various hidey-holes to their discrete abandonment and before this, for me, final batch, I had gone around sipping here and sipping there. Having been brought up on a bus driver's salary we were for ever being told "waste not want not, lads!" This well-meaning proverb proved nearly to be my downfall. Emma said later that I had gone from being a perfectly rational creature to a staggering, drunken fool in a matter of minutes.

They had picked me off the floor in the main dining room where I had been singing "You'll Never Walk Alone" and insisting that all those "bastard Evertonians" had all better join in before I lost my "fucking rag".

Emma had shaken me in the night, thinking I had stopped breathing altogether. When I woke again I was spinning around on the floor. Emma was whizzing around asleep in the other bed (having climbed out of mine when I had produced a great golden gush on her and the sheets.)

I can honestly say never before and since have I felt so dreadfully ill. It hurt to open my eyes.

I finally woke properly in the gloom of late Sunday afternoon to find Emma gone. I tried to get off the floor but it was till spinning like a kiddies' roundabout and I could not budge. I slept and slept.

On Monday morning, at seven o'clock, when I woke again, my head was just throbbing badly.

Somehow I had clambered up into the clean bed. I got up and promptly fell over. After two or three false starts I managed to start sorting myself out. I drank about four cups of tea. I had no milk to put in it so it reminded me of the grog and I threw it all up. At gone seven thirty I set out and skidded my way to school on the fresh snow. At least five times I went arse over head. Wagner was just beginning the lesson with 11b because of my failure to turn up. As soon as I poked my head around the door there was uproar.
Wagner laughed as loud as the rest. He pulled me into the room and turned me to face the little wall-mirror by the sink at the front. I barely recognized me. There I saw a pale ghost with a bright green scar trickling from one corner of its floppy mouth.
“Toothpaste!” he whispered. While I washed it off he announced that I had been trying some of his famous grog. I stood up straight and tried to speak. No-one would ever forget, according to Manny Bauer, how a totally inebriated Prince Charles might sound. Wagner sent me to have a sit in the staffroom. When Breitner saw me he told me I clearly had the flu. I was to go straight home. He would sort out my timetable. As far as I can remember I slept for the rest of that day and it was only on about Tuesday lunchtime that I felt anything like alright. So for me that had been the end of term. By Thursday we were both on the long journey home. I met Emma in Augsburg. After a few hours of frostiness she seemed to forgive me and told me what a git Wagner was, with his paws all over her. She never wanted to meet him again. Nor that "boring bastard" Dieter.

Chapter 8

Christmas came and went. After all the expectation it was rather a disappointment. I had a couple of boozy reunions with my old mates and my brother. My mother, who had left home when I had gone to university, tired of my father’s bibulous tendencies, came back for Christmas Day. But they finished up having a row. I went to see the Pool on Boxing Day but it was rather a tedious match. I can’t even remember who they were playing although I’m sure they won. Time began to drag. To my annoyance, when I rummaged through my stuff for it, I realised I had left Heidi’s book on my bedside table in Frankenheim.
At New Year I went down to see Emma in Burton-on-Trent. This was also a rather dismal event. She had a touch of flu and was in low spirits. Her mother got her down, I knew. Her parents – I had met them once the previous summer – did not exactly go a bundle on me. He was a manager of some building society and she kept a florist shop. She was a starchy woman, a leading light in the local Conservative Party. In no quarter did I feel particularly welcome. It would be touch and go, her mother was announcing in the kitchen on New Years Day, whether her Emma would be fit enough to return to Germany. Later, upstairs, I heard her whispering to Emma about getting a doctor’s note for the University, explaining that she wasn’t fit to go back. I was due back on the eighth, Emma on the seventh. We had tickets for the fifth.
“Why do you have to go back to that dreadful place at all?” I heard her mother conclude. I didn’t catch what Emma had said back. Later I heard her father trying to mimic my accent (badly) to his wife when they thought I was out of earshot. By the 2nd , relieved in every way, I was on my way home having got a grim assurance from Emma that she would definitely be returning.
Her situation in Bayreuth had not been as fortunate as mine. She had made hardly any friends, apart from a fat spinster called Fräulein Wahlesch who, whenever Emma went round for coffee and cakes, seemed to need to “pop out” to the toilet (for up to twenty minutes), making it, embarrassingly a total no-go area for the rest of her visit (despite her assurances that it had now become “begehbar” (literally, go-able)) .The poor woman had bowel contents with a half-life of

at least twenty years. Emma's landlady, the opposite of my dear Rapunzel, was unhelpful and sullen. Only after the school had intervened and threatened to find her other accommodation had she reluctantly agreed to let her have a small stove, muttering something about the previous incumbent being well disposed to exist on a diet of apples and bananas. ("*Does she think I'm a fucking chimpanzee? A fruit bat*?")
She had also found herself teaching, shared between them, in two grammar schools. The bus fare between them had amounted to a considerable drain on her money, one hundred and twenty marks of which already went to pay for her measly one room, forty more than I paid. Nevertheless, and in spite of her reservations and questionable health, she had resolved to come back with me and we duly met up at Victoria Station and caught the boat train.

The return was unmemorable. The sea was calm and flat as if it had decided to lie low and hibernate beneath the misty January chill. We knew what landmarks to watch out for on the journey and were able to endure the long stretches between cities and waits on platforms and in waiting rooms with more fortitude. When we parted again on that long platform in Augsburg we waved, but this time, before I was engulfed by the long tunnel, she had looked down and was already grappling with her luggage. Again that strange voice said "You might never see Emma again."

In fact Emma came to Frankenheim another twice, I think. The first time she was more her old self and we enjoyed the weekend almost as much as we had our first ever there. We had a good laugh. The second or third weekend we had a row. She didn't want to go skittling with my mates from the sixth form. She couldn't skittle. She would show herself up. She didn't know them and didn't particularly want to. After much persuasion and reassurance she eventually agreed to go. At first she seemed to enjoy herself. A huge glass boot called a Stiefel had been brought out by the landlord into which, by tradition, everyone's chosen tipple was mixed up, no matter what it was. Even Emma's Coke went in. This big boot had then to do the rounds of every one's mouth until it was empty - and then had to be refilled, of course. It tasted rather weird - and had it contained so much as one drop of rum I would have refused it – but the novelty of the experience overcame my reservations and eventually Emma's too. But she had never had a good head for spirits. The previous summer on the Rhine she had tipped out all the flower pots in a pub after the landlady had slapped her drunken chops for singing God Save The Queen (the tune to which is a German hymn) at the top of her voice. Her bowling went from very bad to a ludicrous worse and finally, and to a chorus of cheers, she had to rush out, hand over mouth, to the ladies.
The morning after she had sunk into a low, which was very low even by her standards. I kissed her neck and stroked her back.
"Just get on with it" she snapped. "I'm not bothered."
Over breakfast she began to cry. She had hated it last night. Why hadn't I told her in advance what was planned? She could have stayed in Bayreuth and marked books! She then sat in a reproachful silence staring and picking at the ends of her hair until I could bear it no longer.
"Look, I'm sorry, I'm sorry. I thought you would enjoy yourself! What else can I say?"
She announced at eleven that she would have to go back on an early train to prepare lessons, etc. I saw her off at about one thirty on a very cold empty platform. It was a gloomy farewell.

Chapter 9
"Oh that rogue Jamie has mail from his girlfriend again!"

Heidi teased me with the envelope, with its tell-tale pattern of tiny pink and white squares. It was Tuesday morning I remember. I sat down with a sinking heart and opened it.

Dear Jamie,

I won't be coming to Frankenheim again. Ever. I nearly told you at New Year but I couldn't find the right time or words. Now I'll be honest with you. I have met someone else. I shan't spare your feelings. You need to get over me quickly. It even began the first week we arrived here. I was homesick and lonely. Jörg came round with a book about Bayreuth. He was so nice and kind. He made me laugh. I couldn't stop myself. I'm very sorry. He teaches at the boys' school. Last Friday before I came to you he asked me to move in with him. I said no. Tomorrow I shall. Out of this dingy hole!

Thank you for some lovely time (sic). I shan't forget.

Emma.

I found Wagner and told him I was ill. I went back home and lay on the bed. I got up. I walked around. I lay down again. I reread the letter. I wrote her a reply begging her to change her mind. I ripped into it shreds. I wrote a letter telling her she was a slut, a slag, a shag-bag. I tore it up. I walked to the station and bought a ticket to Bayreuth. The train came in. I got on. I got off. I threw the ticket on the rails. I went back home.
On Wednesday I didn't answer the buzzer and eventually Heidi, I presume, went away.
On Thursday morning Mrs Ertl said "Only two more days and your lovely bride will be here again Herr Neumann!"
I lowered my eyes and shook my head. "She isn't my bride anymore."
That evening as I lay contemplating the picture of angels hovering over a sick-bed on the wall opposite, Ursula played something slow and melancholic on her violin but she did not come round. Then one Thursday there was no violin. Mrs Ertl told me they had moved to Munich.
I resisted the temptation to sink ever lower as my predecessor had done. I drifted in and out of school like a talking ghost. As the cold, slow days turned into weeks I began to pull myself together. Karl and Bertholt knew why I was so low and began to call for me at night. Occasionally we drove to Sternbach. But I was poor company. I mainly kept to my room and was glad when it grew dark. By the light of my bedside lamp I began to read the story of the brother and sister Scholl.

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Do you remember when, as a child, you awoke in a panic, fleeing a nightmare, just how delicious a feeling it was, as your drumming heart slowed, to realise that its fading cast of demons were not real; that the burgeoning chorus of birds in the nearby wood, the growing light at the window and the dew on the new-minted petals of flowers were the true patterns of the world, as your spirit rose and wandered off into the dawn, leaving your body safe and snug in a warm bed and drifting back into the arms of a peaceful slumber?
Do you remember?

I wake. That was not a nightmare. The horrors I saw yesterday and the ones I foresee today are real. They pollute the sweet oblivion which I seek and sometimes find in my sleep. It is a living nightmare world I walk in every day; the sullen streets, the pale, fearful faces, the fat, brutal, saluting swine-men, the drab flag-draped public buildings, the rubble of destruction and, all-pervading, the cautious Silence which follows everyone like a fog onto trams, into shops and onto trains. It is the silence of the sickroom, and in the bed, the patient, the Fatherland, lies in a cold sweat.There is no relief to find except in sleep. But it often does not come. The calendar tells me it is spring but I cannot face a walk into the cool, green dark of the wood. Spring has no business coming to a land so forsaken and dismal. It seems so cheap and gaudy to daub that grey earth with yellows, blues and reds. I shall not go.

Who I am, my name, is not important. I am only important to you because I knew Hans and Sophie Scholl. I have spoken in hushed tones to others who knew them and this is an imperfect account of their lives. The more I wake, the more I envy them. But I keep quiet. I more or less behave. Unlike them I shall doubtless survive the war. Then I must survive the guilt and shame. With the years, like the years, no doubt they will slowly fade. The one consoling thought about survival is that someone needed to live on in order to tell the story of the Scholls.
In one sense life is a dream for each of us, before we plunge back into the utter darkness of untroubled, dreamless Sleep. Anguish, mental and physical, though it be acute and prolonged, is but an eddy, a trickle in that constantly ebbing ocean of Time. Perhaps it does not matter, a voice might say, what cruelties we inflict upon each other as no torment ever lasts long. Perhaps the Leader thinks this. They say he loves and fears no God. Did not those who wrote the constitution of America declare that the point of life is the pursuit of happiness? But for the Leader the point of life is the pursuit of power, of war, of domination, of revenge, of cruelty.

And yet in that spring of 1933, in the way that most nightmares begin, Hitler's Germany began all as a jolly dream, bewildering and inspiring. At 15 Hans Scholl had grown into a tall impressive young man and we all admired him. In his Hitler Youth uniform he was so upright and fiercely proud. After all those years of depression and doubt he seemed to embody that spirit of energy and hope which the Leader promised to set free.
Girls could not join the Hitler Youth. I got to know Sophie better (the Scholls had recently moved to Ulm where I lived) when we both joined its female counterpart, das Bund deutscher Mädel, the Federation of German Girls. I remember Robert Scholl, their father, as a larger than life man. He smoked great cigars and enjoyed wine. I remember the mother as a quiet, dignified sort of woman. She was a protestant lay-preacher who made sure that her children were strictly but lovingly brought up. He was independently minded, preached tolerance and had a conviction that all would come good in the end. If the coming of the Leader troubled him, he did not say as much. But my father, who had become his friend in the local administration, a factory inspector, became enthusiastic in 1933 about the changed atmosphere, about the quicker step with which everyone walked, the hope in the faces of men who had been idle, the more intense activity in fields, on construction sites and in factories. He decided to join the NSDAP in the summer and later became a man of some importance. Sophie and I would sometimes listen to them talking over a glass of wine and having one of their mainly good-natured quarrels. Once, when I had gone to play with her dolls I heard Robert laughing at my father who would not listen to a joke he had heard about the Leader. When he tried to tell him he clapped his hands over his ears and kept shouting NO!

"What was it to be Robert? National Socialism or Communism? What should the Nation choose?"
I remember father saying this over and over again to Robert, until I even heard myself thinking it. I asked Sophie one day what Communism was. She shook her head and said she did not know, but that it must be very evil if it was the opposite of what the Leader believed. One day a very important man came to give us a political lecture at the BDM. He kept saying "Communism" with a snarl if it was an infection like pneumonia. When he had finished speaking he asked if we had any questions. Brave Sophie put up her hand and actually asked him what Communism was. He looked at Frau Hassel, our leader, and she looked at him. He shouted that it was evil and depraved, the foul scheme of a Jew called Marx, the creed of our enemies in Russia. Again Sophie raised her hand and asked him, but what was Communism about? He whispered to Frau Hassel and she said quietly "Her name is Scholl….Her father, a tax consultant, is not a party member." She had gone home and told him this. Unusually for him, he had been angry with her and she had burst into tears. I asked her what he had said.
"He told me I must never ask another question of such a man, or say what I thought. I was just to enjoy the hiking and fresh air. If she had questions she was to ask him or her mother. Or read the books in her room."
Robert did not like Hans joining the Hitler Youth or Sophie joining the BDM. She was twelve and I was thirteen when we first went along. She did not cease being a member until 1941 and became a Group Leader. I am a member still and was expected to become a leader, as I am over twenty-one, but I only put in an appearance now and then, in these dwindling days of pretence that the war can be won. Robert was, as I said, easy-going and tolerant. He did not wish to forbid his children doing or joining anything. He must have known that they were intelligent enough to remain independent-minded and would eventually come to see the ludicrous aspects of all the square-bashing and the adulation of the Leader. And their membership disarmed to a great extent his enemies in the local party who did not care for his eccentricities. Whenever Hans came home from meetings aglow with the brainwashing he had been subjected to Robert would gently satirize him and try to deflate everything with a well-chosen comment. Sophie came to me upset one day because her brother and father had fallen out so badly that they were barely speaking. Why? What had happened?
"Hans asked him if it was all in his imagination that the great motorways were being built; that men had jobs and meaning in their lives?"
I could not see how this could be denied. What had her father replied to make her brother so angry?
"He said something about the motorways and the barracks and the factories making weapons had only one purpose…" Then Sophie turned to make sure that none of the other girls was listening – especially the Bader twins whose uncle was a bigwig in the S.S. – and whispered "War".
Sophie worried that her father would talk himself into trouble. One night she had heard her parents have a subdued quarrel about something he had said incautiously about the Leader to an acquaintance of hers who was visiting.
Then, sometime in 1934 after Ernst Röhm and all the other so-called traitors in the S.A, the NSDAP's shock troops, had been eliminated, Sophie, who was then just thirteen, began to tell me things about those events which at first I did not believe. I remember we were all celebrating one night around a huge campfire in July because the traitors, who had tried to stab the Leader in the back, had been killed. Sophie smiled and applauded like all the rest of us as Frau Hassel, a

woman with bad teeth and a skeletal smile, kept leaping around with her puppet plaits of blond hair swinging to and fro, telling us more and more excitedly of how Himmler and Göring had discovered the plots against the Leader, who, being such a trusting man, would not believe at first that his old comrade Röhm had betrayed him, and how with such a heavy heart he had had to choose between his friend and the Volk.
"And girls. Who must the Leader choose?"
"Das Volk!" we had all shouted back into the growing dusk, so loud that the cry seemed to make the fire leap up in sparks as it carried off to the woods. But Sophie's smile faded after each new shout of acclaim and she stared with those great brown eyes of hers into the fire. I knew that something was troubling her. As we walked back in the warm darkness I asked her what was wrong. She stopped and made me promise that I would not say anything. I promised.
"My father has a friend who lives in Munich. He is a journalist, I think father said. He wrote and told him of a terrible tragedy. A Doctor of Music, the music critic for one of the Munich newspapers was playing his cello one evening when four armed S.S. men burst into his flat and dragged him off in front of his three children and his wife. When he came back in a coffin some days later she was instructed not to open the lid."
"Why was he killed? Was he a traitor too? A music critic?"
"No. They had made a mistake. His name was Schmidt. They were after another Schmidt with the same first name. They got the address wrong."

I plucked up the courage to ask Frau Hassel one evening if this could be true. She told me I was a naughty girl to believe such Jewish lies! Who had told me this? Where did they live? I said that I had forgotten and for two weeks I did not go to meetings because of a "sore throat".

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I put the book to one side and began to imagine the circle of virtuous, serious girls around the campfire. On one page I had found a photograph of Sophie. It had the air of one taken at school for it was obviously a portrait. She was perhaps fourteen or fifteen. She was certainly no great beauty, rather too high in the forehead and square-featured, but there was a sad intensity in the dark coals of her eyes, slightly cast down, as if she was unconsciously staring into her own thoughts. The photograph was compelling, inviting me to wonder what she was feeling.

I awoke with a start in the middle of the night with the light still on. I heard something fall onto the floor and I felt scared. I had been dreaming of the dark wood with the girl carrying a lantern. As I had raced to catch her up I wondered if it would be Emma, or Trudi Steiner or my new love Sophie. As I overtook her the figure shrank. I removed her cloak and found a tiny child. She was weeping for her father.

Chapter 10
The early thaw of February, the brave, peeping crocuses and the hint of green in the park trees in the illumination of the strengthening sun were reviving the town and my spirits too. In the earth, air and bluer sky, I sensed a waking giant, stretching and yawning as temperatures rose. A warm breeze began to blow from the south and everyone spoke of the Föhn, which blew through alpine valleys from Italy. I wrote to Emma and wished her well. I looked forward to seeing again her in October when the term began. She did not reply. I determined to stop thinking about her but

every Friday night I still came home from the pub nursing the vain hope that she had changed her mind and might be sitting waiting in the flat for me.

One morning Steiner said to me “Jamie, tonight there is a meeting of the SPD youth group in The Lion. The landlord is a supporter and sells the beer at half-price and cooks Bratwurst and Sauerkraut for only one Mark. It should be interesting. In a few weeks the new treaty with the DDR will come before the parliament to be ratified. Will you come? Papst, who proposed the name-change to the Gymnasium is speaking.”

When I arrived Trudi was there. I had not seen her since my first night in Frankenheim. She had blossomed even more since then and was a truly beautiful girl. She bounded over to me and shook my hand.
“Hello, Mr Englishman! How is Humphrey Bogart today?”
“Oh, still holding onto that joint, I think!”
She sat down next to me, beckoning her shy, but excited girlfriend Waltraud to come over and sit next to her. Waltraud whispered something to her and Trudi giggled. Her lustrous blonde hair, which ended almost in a fine wispy mist, smelt of lemons. At once my spine began to tingle.

The speech was interesting. Papst was a thick-set man, about thirty, who had the proud aura of a clever craftsman about him. He ground special industrial lenses, I was told by Steiner. He spoke about the creation of a new identity for the Federal Republic and for the German people. Could the BRD and the DDR, through their rapprochement and détente, foster a new climate and encourage the Superpowers to find an easier accommodation with each other, promote disarmament and be a shining beacon for world peace? Could the two nations perhaps one day share a joint seat at the UN and be readmitted officially to the fold of the civilized world? Was it not a time to sever all links with the past? The old Nazis, rehabilitated as some may be, still held many positions of power and influence, in politics, in boardrooms, in administrations and yes, he said with a wink in the direction of Steiner and his friends, still in the Direktorat of many a school. The meeting laughed and applauded.
“But soon they will be retiring!” he declared. “It is up to us to demand a fresh, young image for our country when they are pensioned off! Especially in a year when the whole world will be focussed on events in Munich!”
All the way through Trudi had whispered words of explanation into my ear. I had been less than candid with her, and had sought some answers when I knew perfectly well what had been meant. In the discussion which followed, after steaming plates of sausage and sour cabbage were handed round and eaten, it was not long before Steiner was on his feet.
“Herr Papst, thank you for such an inspiring speech. In the light of this may I enquire what has happened to your original proposal about a monument to the heroism of the Scholls?”
The expression on his face of self-congratulation vanished and told Steiner immediately what he wanted to know. Although he went on and on about his support for the name-change (“Of course, it was my idea!”) he and many party colleagues at local and regional level had come to the decision (“after much careful thought”) that now was not the ideal time to pursue it. It was a distraction; it had been hijacked by extremists; it had alienated some SPD members and supporters; it had stirred up some bitterness amongst some older people; it had given the neo-Nazis an opportunity to make trouble; it had given their opponents ammunition at a time when they had run out of rounds……...

“”So” said Steiner quietly. “It is off the agenda?”
“Yes. For the time being. Until the Ostpolitik question - and other matters causing tension - have been settled.”
All at once I found myself on my feet. I had a few cheap beers and I was ready for an argument. The words just seemed to pour out of me.
“Herr Papst! You have just spoken to these young people about creating a new identity for their Germany. What could be more symbolic of such an aspiration than changing the name of a great centre of learning, Hindenburg, a name associated with a Germany which everyone feared and mistrusted, a name which still conjures up those feelings,……..to the name of Scholl, about whom the world knows little or nothing, brave ordinary, young Germans who spoke out against Hitler, who spoke the truth about the National Socialist creed while the older generation trembled in silence, too afraid to say what they knew?”
This drew to my astonishment a great round of cheers. Trudi threw her arms around me in a great passion.
“Jawohl!” shouted everyone. “Ja-WOHL!”
Papst, perplexed, had turned red. He looked at me and bent to speak to his seated colleague, who merely shrugged and blew out his cheeks. Calm restored itself. The eager audience awaited his response.
“And, you, my young Sir, you are….?”
“My name is Newman. I am an English student here as an assistant –“
“You are not a member of the SPD?”
“No.”
“Then, regretfully, I must request that you leave the meeting.”
“Can I not join now?”
“No, indeed, young man, you may not.”
Steiner was on his feet again.
“Herr Papst, may I say that many of us here feel betrayed by your words. I think it is time that you left this meeting. And not Herr Newman.”
Although some remained undecided and silent, the majority were stamping their feet and rapping the tables with their knuckles. Seeing how the wind was blowing, Papst picked up his briefcase, put his papers back and giving me one final withering look he stomped out with his colleague, an obsequious, oily little man who reminded me somewhat of Dieter, in his wake. Like a hairy Lenin, Steiner immediately rushed forward and declared that there should be set up a committee of the SPD youth to campaign for a change in the name.
“We should not resort to immature, illegal and self-defeating acts of vandalism and graffiti and we should condemn any that appears and make it clear that it is the work of our opponents….and even help to clean it off!”
Others were on their feet.
“We should organize a petition and a silent demonstration in front of the school…” shouted one.
“With gags on our faces!” shouted another.
“We could march through the town!”
“Print posters…..and leaflets to give out and put in car windscreens.”
“Where could we get them printed?”
“My uncle is a printer! They would be my birthday present!”
“Why do we not organize a school strike for one lesson in all the secondary schools of the town!”

This proposal was first met with enthusiasm and then cries of NO.
“If we do anything to provoke the authorities we will be dismissed as louts. Let us remain responsible in everything we do,” shouted someone at the back.
“I agree!” I said. “You should form a committee to plan all these things before you go, otherwise you might lose the drive to do it all.”
Trudi held up my arm and shouted “I propose that the Englishman be the president of such a committee!”
“He could write to the BBC or a good newspaper in England to publicize what we want!”
But now the landlord was in clearing us all out after, no doubt, hearing of our insurrection. He turned to me and hissed in my ear “Never return to these premises, young man. You are a trouble-maker stirring up children. Shameful. I shall report you to the school director.”
I told him to bollocks. And without ever intending it I become involved with the campaign to change the name of the school.

Afterwards, as I walked home with Steiner and Beppo (Trudi had left with Waltraud) Markus remembered a favour that Trudi had wanted to ask of me, but was a little shy.
”She is doing French and is in her third year of learning. Unfortunately the teacher is quite ill and the substitute teacher is bad. Didn’t you tell us that you also do French in your degree course?”
“I’m doing a Joint Honours course in German and French” I said quietly knowing – both dreading and dying to hear - what he was about to say. I told him that if I was to be involved with his friends I would not have much time for private tuition. I would have to think the request over. Markus Steiner left us first and, as I bade Beppo good night he turned at his gate and gave me the filthiest wink I have ever seen.

As I got into bed and looked for my book amongst my papers on the floor I was sobering up and wondering what I might be letting myself in for. In every sense.

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I knew that Sophie was upset. As we walked in the slanting evening rays to the meeting she seemed to tarry, pulling at the hawthorn flowers in the hedgerow. She had a way of showing her feelings without speaking. Then she came out with it. Her friend Leni wanted to join das Bund Deutscher Mädel but she could not. It had been discovered that she had a Jewish grandfather. That we continued to go to meetings and continued to go for years, I sometimes find unbelievable. All I can say is that we enjoyed being all good friends together on hikes and those lovely warm summer nights when we camped in our brown tents. And there was simply no alternative to the BDM. To remain aloof or to organize private outings would have aroused suspicion.
Sophie could brood but could never suppress the mischievous imp in her for long. She had a trick of throwing her voice and imitating others. She loved to play jokes, especially on those awful Bader twins and poor Frau Hassel. One night she kept shouting from our tent, sounding first like them and then like her “Oh, I adore the Leader! What a man!” Girls were giggling all over the clearing. We heard Frau Hassel going from tent to tent shouting “Who is it? Who is saying this?” And when she came to our tent Sophie, as cool as a cucumber says, “Frau Hassel, I heard someone shouting this from the trees. I think we have prowlers!”
“Those damned renegades of Youth 1.11!” she shouted. (Youth 1.11 was about as bad a group

as could be. Ultimately Hans would join it.)
As Frau Hassel and her helpers trampled through the undergrowth shining flashlights and calling out "Who is there? Show yourselves, contemptible cowards!" we covered our heads with our sleeping bags, we were laughing so much. And when she shouted "Oh, I have scratched my poor leg on a thorn!" we were helpless.
Hans and his father were hardly speaking. If they did, Sophie told me, they usually finished up arguing. One night, pushed and pushed, as my father had pushed Robert Scholl on more than one occasion, to say which ideology - (Hans was a very clever boy, read widely and knew impressive words like ideology) – National Socialism or Communism, the Germans should have chosen, Robert rounded on him and told him that liberal democracy did well enough for most of the West.
"Democracy?" Hans had retorted. "The curse of Germany for fifteen years? The philosophy of the weak? Look how the Leader mocks and teases the English and the French! And they do nothing! Democracy instils weakness.....politicians avoid difficult but necessary decisions because they are afraid to be unpopular - and lose votes! "
"This is the Quatsch they teach you at the Hitler Youth, Hans. You disappoint me. You are seventeen. Do you not have a mind of your own yet?"

Hans was soon elected to be standard bearer for the Ulm section at the 1935 Nuremberg rally. This was of course a great honour. At seventeen he was the epitome of young German manhood. I longed for him to gaze in my direction but his eyes were filled with other things, with dreams of how to achieve glory and to show his loyalty. He was a patriot and never ceased telling us of his love of the great German forests - through which one could almost walk the whole length of Germany - and of his love for the very soil of his native land.

But when he returned from Nuremberg Sophie told me he was a changed person. She had even heard him sobbing in his bedroom. His mother came up and looked in him, wondering if he was ill, and bringing him broth which he refused. Finally his father was prevailed upon to speak to him. At first he told him to go away, but finally it all came out. He felt ashamed. He was deeply disappointed. He had taken his guitar with him to Nuremberg, dreaming of teaching new comrades around their campfire the folk songs which he had collected from France, Scandinavia, even from Russia. But one man had shouted "Why can you not play a proper German tune? We do not wish to sing that bolshevist shit!"
And he had hated the beer-swilling S.A. men with their crude anti-Jewish jokes. The rally itself had been little more than an exercise in stupid and fussy attention to detail. They had rehearsed again and again for the Leader's visit until their boots were centimetre perfect in line. Then he had got his first ever glimpse of Him, a tiny figure behind a lectern, a ranting voice echoing around the vast parade ground incomprehensibly. That night a fat, drunken S.A. man had grabbed the book he was reading by the light of the campfire while all his comrades were off having three-legged races and tumbling about. Reading? What was this? A boy reading a book when he could be enjoying himself with his friends? Was he a snob, an intell-ect-ual?
Hans had replied that he had a head-ache and wanted to be quiet. On peering closer at the cover he had suddenly exclaimed to his drunken comrade "Hey, Dirk! Isn't Stefan Zweig a banned author?"
"Yes we burnt the bastard in the town square when we raided the library!"
They had grabbed the book and thrown it onto the camp fire. Hans was only seventeen. These fat

pigs were over twice his age. He dared not challenge them and had meekly rejoined his comrades when they had threatened to report him.

Within a few months the bad memories of this event faded and Hans continued to go to meetings of his local group for whom he had a special comradely affinity. One night he returned with refreshed enthusiasm. He had been created troop leader. He wanted everyone to have a say in the activities of the group. A boy had suggested they make their own special banner, over which they could swear an oath of allegiance to the Leader. This was taken up eagerly. They had had a drawing competition and the motif of a black mythological lion on a gold background was chosen by vote. Hans and his friends asked Sophie, me and some others from the BDM to show them how to stitch. What a laugh we had! It was a glorious spring day. We were in the Scholls' back garden with needles and cottons, showing them all what to do. We had cakes, ice cream and litres of lemonade. I remember how the geese in the pen at the bottom honked and laughed, whenever we laughed, making us laugh all the more. And I found myself lying near to Hans on the sweet, new grass. For the first time he seemed to be noticing me and I caught him once, red-faced, looking down the open neck of my blouse. This made my heart race and I tingled in every nerve. He pricked his finger and he let me suck it until it stopped bleeding. That night he walked me home. As the darkness fell I grabbed his hand and we slipped into the bushes. It was all harmless. We did little more than kiss. I dared not tell him how much I was longing for him. After he was conscripted into the army in 1937 we sometimes went out together when he came home on leave; to the cinema, to the ice cream parlour and on warm days into the woods near Ulm. How I wish now that I had told him exactly what I wanted. I was just sixteen. He was too shy to ask.
When I bumped into him in Munich during the war I was sure that we could carry on where we had left off but apart from the odd squeeze of my hand and kiss on my cheek there was nothing. He always seemed to prefer the company of his university friends and of course, when she began her studies, Sophie. But I am getting a little ahead of myself.

The standard, black on gold silk, which we helped to produce after many weeks of work was glorious. How it flapped in the breeze and glowed in the June sunshine! The evening came when the Ulm troupe was to be inspected by a regional official of The Hitler Youth whose father, everyone whispered was a colleague of the great S.S. man, Heydrich. Their banner, it was decided unanimously, would be presented by their youngest member, a boy of just twelve called Werner.

But Hans returned from the event ashen-faced with fury. That higher-echelon officer, a pompous, stupid young man of 21, was not at all impressed with their flag. He had demanded that it be handed over to him.
"Why can you not have the same banner as everyone else? Why must you be different? Is our HJ flag not good enough for you?"
Hans tried to explain that it was their special way of showing their dedication to the Leader and that the whole troupe had reaffirmed their allegiance to him over it, but he was brusquely cut short. Three times he demanded the flag from that little boy who was so proud to have been chosen, shouting louder every time when he would not surrender it. Finally little Werner, trembling from head to foot, burst into tears when the bully snatched the flag from his hand. At this point Hans could no longer contain his anger and suddenly broke ranks to slap the official

on the face, knocking him to the ground. Many behind him had laughed and hurrahed. For this outrage Hans was stripped of his troupe command and suspended from meetings for a month. He might even have gone back had it not been for an event at his school which upset him greatly.

There was a young teacher there whom he greatly admired, hero-worshipped even. He, like Hans, was something of a free spirit and introduced him to the thought of Aristotle and Plato and others. Imagine then his disgust when this teacher was dragged out by a contingent of swinish S.A. men and humiliated as the boys looked out of the window. He was harangued for not being a member of the Party - the duty of all teachers who had responsibility for the health of the minds of the young! He, however, had steadfastly, in spite of many exhortations, refused to join. As the boys crowded at the window, a queue of brown-shirts had taken it in turns to spit into his weeping face. His head hanging with spittle and phlegm, he had been bundled into a vehicle and driven away. Someone whispered that he had gone to a concentration camp. I asked Sophie what one of those was. She did not know. But Robert Scholl did. He said it was a place where enemies of the Leader were taken. We were both horrified. One of the Bader girls said that she would write to the Leader to tell him of what had happened, as he would be too busy to know what terrible things were happening in his name. Frau Hassel refused to speak about it and told her not to be so silly. Did she ever write her letter? I doubt it.

Chapter 11

"Democracy! How could a great nation prosper and prevail with such a political creed? Did the English ever have this when they built their great Empire? Should Alexander The Great have taken a vote amongst his battalions as to which country he should conquer next? If each person has a vote then the ne'er-do-well and the drunken pauper cancel out the vote of the industrious, the sober and prosperous; the idiot the vote of the genius; the criminal the vote of the law-abiding, the Jew the vote of the German! Weimar Democracy did not suit the psyche of the Germans. Hindenburg and his barons finally had to face up to this and choose. Bolshevism or National Socialism? For one or the other is inevitable. Those lost souls who vote for the Communists only do so because they have been duped into thinking that there is no other possibility. A National Socialist Germany would give the people jobs, bread and hope. Their support for the Reds will afterwards seem like a bad dream. For what is Bolshevism? It is a creed based on *social class* - not the Tribe - it is internationalist in outlook and takes no account of the aspirations of a great people, the Volk, which indeed Bolshevism would destroy, just as the wandering, cosmopolitan Jew attempts to do, by weakening the racial purity and cultural identity of the land he infiltrates; it is the alien philosophy of an exiled Jew, Marx, whose followers would now install the apparatchiks of Stalin in Berlin, forcing the people to pay tribute to Moscow, as the Romans made the enslaved Jews pay tribute to Caesar in Rome. If Communism is based on the dictatorship of the proletariat - the ragged-arsed and envious - then National Socialism is based on the dictatorship of the Volk and at his head is the Leader from whose ranks he sprang!"

I had only asked an innocent question of this man, a question which I cannot even remember. The above is a reconstruction of his rant, whose gist, however, I remember only too well. I listened to him carefully and watched his flashing pale blue eyes for clues as to whether he was playing a strange kind of role, only evoking the rhetoric of the thirties, or whether these words sprang from his own convictions. When he had subsided Ernst slapped him on the back while

Wolfgang stared enigmatically into his gleaming glass of beer. Their friend, whose name I forget, but shall call Max for narrative convenience, then seemed to divest himself of either the pretence or of the demon itself and with a laugh took a long swig of his beer. But his pale, glassy eyes never left my face as he drank. I could not decide what he wanted to impart and for some reason he made me feel very uneasy.
We sat in a corner of The Stag. Unusually for Ernst Ertl, he had come upstairs to my room, chatted a while and then invited me out to meet his friend from work.
"You may find his ideas a little strange. He is a member of the NPD - the National Party and contributes a lot to their newspaper Die Nationalzeitung."
Now I sat trying to think of something disarming and neutral to say when he took the initiative again.
"You, Mr Newman, are English, an Anglo-Saxon, member of the Germanic Volk. You are blonde. Your name is Germanic. English is in so many ways the brother or cousin of our German language – you say "beer", "glass", "hand", "arm" and so do we! You cannot grasp how it pained the Germans – and still does many – that a Germanic race like yours was the enemy of the Third Reich. Many blame the British for what happened to the Germans in their heartland!"
"But Max," countered Wolfgang, perceiving how uncomfortable I was, "You cannot blame –"
"I? Did I say "I"? No!"
He went to carry on but a meditative Wolfgang wanted his say.
"Hitler should not have attacked Russia as late as he did. We all thought he should have gone in early springtime and not June. We sat outside Moscow and froze our arses off because of him. No warm clothes. We had to defrost our own comrades' corpses so that we could take the clothes from their back. And rumours of cannibalism were rife."
"Yes, Wolfgang, Russia was a bad mistake," whispered Ernst "And people like you paid for it….but if the stupid Japanese had not attacked the Americans we still might have won!"
"No, blame the British!" Max rejoined. "If the British had accepted the peace which Hitler offered in June and October 1940 and had attacked the Soviets with us, then the US would have not raised a finger…Or, may even have joined the pact against their ideological enemy!"
All eyes were on me again.
"But what of all the Jews he killed? How can you defend that?" I asked, feeling a flush of indignation spread through me.
"I don't defend it!" said Max hotly. "Although I doubt there was as many as the Russian and American propaganda said. If Hitler had just paid attention to the settling of old border grievances in the east, to providing jobs and bread to the people then all would have been well"
Wolfgang threw back his head and laughed. "That is like saying that if only the devil had no horns, no wings, no claws and no sharp tail he would be a nice fellow and fit to marry your sister!"
But Max had no intention of being distracted by Wolfgang's jest.
"Don't be silly, Wolfgang!" he exclaimed. His smile vanished as he stared back into some inner landscape of his own. Wolfgang lit two cigarettes and gave one to Ernst. We waited.
"Of course, Hitler betrayed the National Socialist movement - and, ultimately, the German people. He used the party as a rider would his mount - solely to achieve supremacy for himself."
Now I felt thoroughly confused. Max must have seen this in my face for he beamed again and said, "Our young British friend seems to believe, like all his compatriots, that all Germany supported Adolf Hitler!"
I shook my head, remembering would Peter Breitner had told me, but before I could interrupt

him he waved me away.
"No. Let me tell you about Gregor Strasser, Jamie. My father knew him well. He admired Strasser and distrusted Hitler. Strasser, like my father, was a true National Socialist, an idealist. He dreamed of a racially pure, classless, nationalist Germany, of a German socialism with a fair distribution of wealth. Of course, he and his wing of the party upset the wealthy backers of the NSPAD - the Thyssens, the Krupps and so on….and embarrassed Hitler who had no time for economics and who believed not a word of the party's radical programme. In the lean years of the twenties Strasser spread the message of National Socialism beyond Bavaria; to Hamburg and Berlin…. He built it into a truly national party. He helped turn Hitler from a laughing stock - in 1928 he only polled 810,000 votes in the general election - into a politician which the country had to take seriously by 1930."
"Oh come on Max!" said Wolfgang, "You know perfectly well that it was the Great Depression that turned the tide for the Nazis!"
"Of course. But Strasser had worked hard to put the party into a position where it could take advantage. Strasser was a great man but lacked the determination to confront Hitler. He advised Hitler to share power in a coalition under van Papen in 1932 but he refused. Hitler's obstinacy came so close to shattering the party into smithereens. Had Strasser openly challenged him the whole party would have split. Instead he resigned, disillusioned and demoralized. And, at the time, his wife wanted to go on *holiday*! On such everyday matters does the fate of us all turn. Events in January 1933 proved Hitler right of course but he had the luck of the devil!"
"And what happened to Strasser?" I asked. He slowly shook his head either at my ignorance or at what he had to say next.
"Shot. In 1934. Under the camouflage of the Great Purge of the S.A. - the revolutionary wing of the party. My parents fled to Sweden."
He began to speak rapidly in a Nordic tongue I could not understand, then smiled at my evident confusion and reverted back to German.
"I grew up there," he said. "We only returned in the 1950s. Of course, our neighbours began to whisper stories about us; we were Jews; we were Communists; my father was a coward, a draft-dodger, a conscientious objector; this broke his heart. He began to drink. No-one would employ him. In 1954 he killed himself. So you see, dear friends, I have a lot to be grateful to Herr Hitler for."
He drained his glass. There was a long silence. Then he returned from his reverie and grabbed my arm.
"Many Germans cannot understand one particular point, Jamie. OK, you British could not support Nazi Germany but WHY did you not just mind your own business - like you had in the previous century? Chamberlain even spoke in Westminster of the Sudetenland and Czechoslovakia as far away places which he and his compatriots knew little about. Why, in 1939, did the fate of Danzig on the Baltic suddenly bother him – a city stolen from the Germans by the Treaty of Versailles in 1918? It would be as much of a nonsense were we suddenly to get upset about your little Isle of Man! Hitler kept pleading with that meddler Churchill, even when the war broke out, when France lay defeated, before the Luftwaffe began to bomb London for him to come to his senses and let Germany have a free hand on the continent in exchange for a guarantee not to lay a finger on the British Empire – Hitler even promised to defend it against attack from the Japanese! – What business was the continent of the British? Even now your politicians argue furiously about whether to join the EWG – our glorious Common Market! You are a maritime power, a Commonwealth power, an Atlantic power. You had – and still have - no

business to interfere here."
This last sentence was delivered with a vehemence that made me lean back in my chair. He tossed a folded leaflet onto the table in front of me. I undid it. It was the one the youngsters had handed out in the main square the previous Saturday, calling for the name of the school to be changed to Geschwister Scholl. This then was the reason I had been invited out for a drink. To be warned.
"I have a friend of a friend who was at the meeting in The Lion where you were so eloquent. Believe me, Mr Newman there are many people who are very unhappy about all this – and not just people on the Right, as, admittedly I am. Ask Wolfgang and Ernst."
I was rather confused. I looked to them for help. Ernst ordered more beers but I declined his offer. I wanted to make sure I kept a clear head. Ernst handed cigarettes around and said,
"I'm afraid Max is right Jamie. There are many at the factory who are angered about this whole business of the Scholls."
"But please explain why!" I said." Surely the Scholls and others like them were only trying to stop Hitler hurting the German people more?"
Max was about to cover me with scorn when Wolfgang almost threatened him. Max was rather slight and Wolfgang a heavyweight.
"Jamie" said Wolfgang kindly "Let me tell you what the Scholls and many others who printed defeatist leaflets did to our morale at the front. We were freezing to death and people were sending clothes from their own wardrobes for us to put on. One day the S.S. education officer – a man we hated – showed us a leaflet which had been picked up in Munich. It asked the German people to send us nothing – to give not a penny for textiles, not a stitch – because that would prolong the war. The leaflet called for sabotage in factories and weapons production. This was treason, declared the S.S. man, lies and defeatism spread by Bolshevik traitors to destroy the morale of Germans on the home front and of brave soldiers like us. At first we privately whispered to each other that these must be forgeries, got up by the S.S. to whet our hatred against the Commies; but then there were mentions of such leafleting in letters from home. Since then I have read the leaflets. They were calling for their own country – the country which had clothed and fed them - to be defeated."
"Jamie," said Max as gently as he could. "It really would be best if you did not interfere. You encourage these young people. You should not! Leave German politics to those who know best. This is not the time to send other shock-waves through buildings which are already shaky. And never forget where you are, here on the Danube, on the border of Bavaria, the very cradle of National Socialism. Go to Berchtesgarden one weekend, the little town at the foot of the Obersalzberg where Hitler received that cringing Nazi king of yours, Edward, and his American whore, the Simpson woman! - If you like I will take you! Go and see the murals there in the main square - of machine-gunners engaging the enemy ……Go and speak *there* of painting over them and replacing them with a memorial to the Scholls!"

I was at a loss for words. (Later that night, picking up the Scholl book, I would turn again to those very leaflets in its appendix and re-read them. I would see what Max and Werner meant, (although the call not to contribute clothing was only implied.) After turning out my reading light I tried to imagine how a Londoner, bombed out of his home, losing his family and all he had in the Blitz, might have felt to pick up such a leaflet, dropped from a Junker bomber, calling for the overthrow of Churchill ("….who continues to subject the brave English people to nightly horrors while he sits swigging brandy and smoking his great cigars safe in a deep bunker, dismissing

kindly German offers of peace.”))

After Max had left the pub I accepted Ernst’s renewed offer of a drink. I told them how idealistic Steiner and the young Social Democrats were. I could understand that people like Max were annoyed but did the young people not have a point in wanting to change the name of the school to Scholl? Even if the Scholls had been not quite politically astute and as tactful as they might have been, was not the cause in their hearts, of a free Germany, and their deaths in 1943 not an inspiration to all? Hindenburg was associated with a militaristic past and had helped Hitler to power, even if it had been against his better judgment. To my surprise Wolfgang was nodding his head.
“What I did not tell you - while Max was here - is that as we retreated across Russia after the defeat at Stalingrad we listened to broadcasts of the National Committee for a Free Germany. The S.S. officer forbade this on pain of execution, but one morning we found him with his throat slit and the words Down with Hitler smeared on his jacket in frozen blood.”
He explained that the NCFG was set up amongst German enlisted men, captured by the Russians, to promote a rebellion in the ranks.
“And how did that make you feel?” I asked.
He looked at his drink and seemed to stare into his past.
“I saw my best friend shot for saying something unwise which was overheard. To be honest with you, Jamie, all that the most of us were thinking about then was lying in a soft warm bed with our wives again and eating a square meal.”
“Is Max a Nazi?”
“Not quite” said Ernst “He and his friends are looking forward to the day when Nato – the Americans, the French, the British and everyone else - rips aside the Iron Curtain – as he thinks should have happened in 1939 - to liberate our brothers and all other nations under Soviet occupation - an unfulfilled promise your Chamberlain made to the Polish people! He is sure it is coming. What do you imagine they think of Brandt’s Ostpolitik and the promise of détente?”
“But the USA tells one set of Germans what to do. The USSR tells the other lot what to do. Why can the Germans not think for themselves?”
“Ah!” said Wolfgang returning from his reverie. ”Most foreigners do not want the Germans to think for themselves, because they think up mischief!”
Ernst took my arm and whispered “A friend of Max told me that he was sure that the Bader-Meinhoff group were stirring up all this unrest in Frankenheim. The landlord at The Lion told him he had learnt that one of the boys in the young SPD at the Gymnasium was the cousin of one of the terrorists. And then there is a rumour that the Communists are behind it all. Papst, the SPD councillor used to be one.”
I shook my head in disbelief.
“And never forget, Jamie” said Wolfgang “How nervous and jumpy the police are, worrying about a possible terrorist incident at the Munich Olympics this summer. This is not a good time to stir things up. Believe me.”

As we parted on the stairs Ernst took me by the shoulders and asked me to do nothing which would cause trouble for the household. I promised that I would stay out of sight (as I had resolved to do anyway, worrying how Huber might react if it became known I was actively supporting this cause.)

Chapter 12
I hurried into bed to pick up the story of Hans and Sophie where I had left it off.

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One spring day in 1937 the whole Scholl family had been on a long hike in the silence of the forest where no ears could pry on their discussions. Sophie told me that Robert and Hans had buried all their differences there. Hans had at first still clung to the one straw he had left – the jobs which the Leader had undoubtedly provided. Robert had looked at the trees and said
"Hans, what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul? Is the loss of one human freedom a price worth paying for one job? How many things must one possess, how rich must one be to make up for being afraid to speak one's mind?"
In the silence of the forest the mother and the father felt at last able to speak freely about the way things were going. They swore all their children to secrecy about what was said but Sophie knew that she could trust me. On their walk Robert had looked back to 1935 when the Leader had announced the increase in Germany's army from eight to thirty-six divisions; to the reoccupation of the Rhineland in 1936 and to the present time when there were more and more rumours that Austria would be invaded.
"All this leads to only one conclusion. Your Leader will not be happy until he has his war. I have read Mein Kampf, unlike most of those Brownshirts, who can barely read. It is all there! Anyone who doubts what he intends should read it."
Then he told them the story of Felix Mendelssohn, the great early romantic composer, a genius to rival even Mozart, who had died at the early age of 38. The Leader had banned his music because he was a Jew. In Leipzig, where Felix had been musical director, a cheering S.A. mob had just recently toppled his statue. Robert said that he was sure that none of the Philistines would recognize one note of his music. How ironic that Mendelssohn's father had had him baptized a Christian!
"They who start with statues soon move on to real people."

Sophie missed the next meeting of the BDM and when at last she came I was so pleased to see her. There was a great sadness in her eyes. On the way home she told me about all those things she had had on her mind since the family hike. She had decided that she would come less and less to our meetings, giving as an excuse her need to study for her final school exams if anyone asked. She would not however resign. Her father had told her that it might interfere with her matriculation. He had heard about an outspoken refusenik, the eighteen year old son of a Lutheran in Ingolstadt, who was not being allowed to take his exams.
In 1937 Hans had already done his school finals and had already been called up into the army. He had secretly joined Frau Hassel's detested Youth 1.11. Formed on that date in 1929, they were now a proscribed group who met clandestinely. They had their own bright ideas about dressing and used to do crazy things like hitch-hike to Sweden or to Italy for the hell of it. They read and said what they wanted.
Then, that summer there was almost a disaster for the Scholls. We did not know who it was who betrayed him, but by then Hans had made many enemies. Sophie felt sure that one of those spiteful Bader twins had said something. The Gestapo got to hear, somehow, that he was involved in illegal youth activities. Three officers had called when everyone but the mother was

out of the house. She had delayed them and quickly dashed upstairs to her children's rooms and swept up as many books and magazines as she could lay her hands on and hidden them. Even so, all the children were arrested, even the youngest called Werner. Most were released in a day or so but Hans, the eldest, was kept in detention for five weeks in Stuttgart, where he just kept playing dumb. Finally his call-up date came and went, and when the commanding officer angrily contacted the Scholls, demanding to know where their shirker of a son had got to, and was told that the Gestapo had him, within days he was released. It had been a very close shave and Sophie was upset for weeks.
Sophie missed Hans, as I did. She seemed to find little joy in anything as the winter set in. She buried herself in her books, occasionally going to BDM meetings for the sake of appearances. I began to train as a kindergarten teacher and nurse. I was an able pupil but Sophie was much cleverer than me. She was a good and patient friend who always took the trouble to explain to me very difficult matters which I could not quite grasp at first.

One day in March 1938 everyone was on the streets celebrating. I bumped into Sophie as she came out of the library in Ulm.
"Everybody is celebrating, Sophie!"
She had been poring over her books. She looked around blinking as if blinded by the light and asked me what was going on.
"What? You have not heard? Austria has joined the Reich!"
She did not look surprised or interested and said she had to catch her tram home. When I arrived home with my errands done my father had been drinking.
"Now he has achieved what even Bismarck did not care to do!" he shouted.
My mother looked annoyed and worried. She hated my father to drink. He had no head for alcohol. He looked at her and asked her if she was not pleased. For a time, she did not answer and continued to stoke the coals on the range. Then she said "What will he do next? He is never satisfied."
"Hush woman! You have no understanding of what this means for the German people!"
Then I suddenly thought about what Sophie's father had predicted during his walk with the children. I began to understand where events were leading. By the autumn there was talk of war. The Leader was demanding the return of land from the Czechs and father said the British were being difficult. A pall seemed to descend over the city streets and people spoke in hushed tones as if to avoid waking someone. A column of troops and vehicles moved north through the town in the last days of September but on there were no cheering crowds. There was total silence. My father sat tensely waiting for news on the radio. How he cheered when it was announced that the Leader had triumphed again and had got what he wanted without one bullet being fired! There would be peace! We all danced around, my mother included. She even allowed herself a glass of wine.
"Now!" said my father to a neighbour who was tottering about, "The wily, old fox has trounced them again. Now we have all the territory we need. Now we can start to feel the benefits in our pockets!"
He meant that wages would soon rise (they never did) since not so much would now have to be spent on armaments. For in spite of all the jobs, we were not well off. There was already resentment - but it was always hushed - about certain people, well-connected in the Party, having more than their fair share of what was on offer in the shops; for example, why were only the fattiest, cheapest cuts of meat on display in the butchers' shops? My grandmother said

quietly, out of the hearing of my father, as she pored over her sewing, that the party men were obviously full of the best pork. You could see it in their cheeks and noses. It was also common knowledge that one of the worst spivs in Ulm had a brother in the S.S.

I said to Sophie one bright, cold November day that we could go into Ulm and meet two handsome boys I knew. She laughed and agreed. When we reached the middle of the town we could not believe our eyes. Everywhere on the pavements there was smashed glass. Groups of fat S.A. men were standing around laughing. A piece of glass with a painted Star of David was being booted about amongst the debris outside a jeweller's shop. There was not one item left in the display cases behind where the window had been. And worse, in front of the door was the unmistakable dark stain of blood brushed out as far as the gutter. The shadow of a man. Onlookers whispered that old Herr Mostowy had tried to stop the looters and had been shot. His grieving widow had been dragged away from him and taken God-knew-where. Some passers-by were tipping their hats at the S.A. and laughing. But most did as we did – stopped, shook their heads in shock to see bloodshed in their calm little town, and slowly moved on – to the next station of that dreadful street-theatre, christened afterwards Kristallnacht, which had been performed in most towns in Germany that night. We forgot about our date with my friends. We rode back on the next tram. No-one spoke. Eventually I wound my arm around Sophie's and whispered, very quietly, drowned out by the whine of the tram,
"Dear Sophie, do you think the Leader knows about this vandalism and violence?"
I will never forget how she turned full-face to me and at the top of her voice furiously replied "He knows. He knows everything. How could he not know?"

Chapter 13

Where on Earth could Heidi be? She had not returned one February Monday morning, a week or two after my meeting with Max. There was still no sign on Tuesday, so the Captain tried her number. There was no reply. Had there been a dreadful accident? Then on Wednesday (it soon became common knowledge amongst us) Wagner received a letter saying that due to a domestic matter she would be unable to return until the following week. Another Monday came and went. A second letter arrived and announced that due to difficult, personal circumstances she would have to withdraw, with deep regret, from the course. Berthy said that she had probably decided to stay at home and help with the baking. Karl thought that she did not really enjoy teaching. She had often moaned about the silliness of the boys. Dieter of course knew the answer.
"In my opinion she realised that this course was rather beyond her. She did not have the ability, in my opinion, to teach at grammar school level."
He had privately advised her, he continued, to reapply to go on a Realschule or even Hauptschule course. (Germany had, and still has, a tripartite system of schooling where children at eleven are selected according to ability.) That night, Berthy had more to drink than he should and said he would hit Dieter the next morning. We all missed Heidi. She was funny. She was not the brightest but she was popular with the children (who found Dieter too testy, too starchy and very hard to follow.)

Then one evening Trudi came round. The private lesson had been arranged through her brother. I had not seen her since the meeting in The Lion. I had written out a long list of verbs to test her knowledge. It must have been late February or early March. It was unseasonably warm and I remember she wore a loose cream top decorated with tiny daisies and tight fitting cherry red

jeans. She was exquisite. She knew she was. She sat down beside me at the table and pulled back her hair in a let's-get-down-to-business manner behind her delicate little ears. She glanced across at me to make sure I had watched her do this and blushed.
"Ça va, Monsieur l'Anglais?" she said with a melting smile she must have rehearsed in her mirror as often as the question itself. What a thrill it must be to be as beautiful as she was! (What an ordeal to watch it fade.)
"Je vais très bien, Mademoiselle Steiner, merci! Toi aussi ? »
« Oui ! »
After these opening courtesies, after assuring each other how well we were, I showed her the list I had written out. She put her slender index finger unnecessarily on each word and, murmuring, let it slowly descend, taking my beguiled eyes with it. She smelt of mint. I hardly need add that I tingled from the top of my head to the bottom of my spine to be so close to such a lovely girl.
" *Amener*? ….To bring??"
I nodded.
"*Apporter*?....To wear??"
"No, *porter* is to wear. *Amener* is to bring a person, *apporter* to bring a thing…"
"Oh, merci."
After about half-an-hour we arrived at the bottom of the list. I had asked her to make up sentences in various tenses using those verbs, which she knew pretty well. Her French was in fact good. I could see no reason why she needed extra lessons.
"Une tasse de thé, Mlle Steiner?"
« Merci. Pourquoi ne dis-tu pas Trudi ? Je préfère Trudi , Monsieur Jamie! » She pretended to pout. I pretended not to notice.
« Pas de thé ? Tu n'as pas soif?"
"No I am not thirsty…no tea for me, thank you…..Oh, Jamie, you have missed an important verb out. How does one say that in French?"
"*Oublier* - to miss, forget…..*J'ai oublié un verbe? Lequel* ? »
« *Aimer*. » she said.
The little minx. I looked over at her as formally as I could in the futile hope that this was after all an innocent remark. No. She had a glint in her eye and her head was inclined slightly to one side.
"Would Monsieur kindly teach me "to love"?"
"But it must be one of the first verbs you learnt" I protested weakly, and continued to stare at her lost for an adequate reply. In response she neatly crossed her arms over, took the two corners of her top and hauled it over her head. As I had immediately divined as soon as she had seated herself she wore absolutely nothing underneath it. She sat there triumphantly watching my face, which must have looked enraptured by such a vision. She began to lean towards me. The drumming in my head was almost a headache and - as the Germans say so charmingly - the music in my trousers was.....Wagnerian. But then there was something stronger than either. Determination. I hauled her arms from around my neck and told her to put her top back on. Now her eyes flashed with hurt and anger.
"Don't you like me, Jamie?"
"Trudi, you are the most beautiful girl I have ever seen. It is not right."
"But" she said breathlessly looking down "Look how big you are!"
I put a book in my lap. She came over again and tried to kiss my neck.
"There is nothing to worry about," she whispered. "I am not a virgin"."
"Then you damned well ought to be!" I shouted, hauling her off again.

"I am twenty-one and you are seventeen, a schoolgirl. Take your things and go!"
I closed my eyes. The door slammed. Left only with her lingering perfume I felt desolate in that silence. I threw myself on the bed.

As the twilight grew I switched on my reading lamp and found my book.

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

The Leader had turned his attention to Danzig and Poland. Throughout August 1939 the threat of war, like a horrible black fruit, a new parasite in the apple orchard, swelled steadily and in early September burst open. All winter we waited for its seeds to spring up but they did not. Nothing happened. People relaxed and began to say that the British and the French had secretly come to their senses and realised that they could do nothing for Poland. My father confidently asserted that when a respectable time had elapsed, they would quietly sit down with the Leader and discuss a peace settlement.
Hans had completed his military service and had been allowed to begin his medical course at Munich University. In the false peace of the spring of 1940 he was allowed to carry on but then in May, when all hope of a speedy resolution to hostilities was snuffed out, he was drafted into a medical team and saw service in France. When that campaign was over - within just five astonishing weeks -and the Leader had climbed the Eiffel Tower in triumph, Hans returned to Munich and took up his studies again. Another long lull in the war set in, to end spectacularly in June 1941 with the invasion of Russia.
During that lull he wrote to me occasionally saying how strange and unsettling it was to be part student, part soldier, going backwards and forwards between barracks, university and hospital. He told me of the unbearable crudity of barracks life. It was excruciating for him to have to listen to coarse jokes about Jews, Slavs and Poles and pretend to be amused.

After the British had been bombed almost to a standstill everyone thought that at last the war would end. How could Churchill, with his tiny army entirely without an ally, alter what Europe had become under the Leader? The map was redrawn and could never be altered. The British were fools if they did not accept this! Now the war would surely peter out.

I found myself transferred to work in an orphanage in Munich. I did not see Hans at all for months and my occasional letters went unanswered. I told myself that he must be really busy with his studies. Sophie I did see. She came to Munich to do a kindergarten course in the hope that it would count as National Service and so enable her to begin her university course in 1941. She confided that she had a soldier friend called Fritz Hartnagel. This surprised me.
"How, dear Sophie, can you be good friends with a regular soldier who is fighting for everything which you oppose?"
She thought about this for a while and then said "Whoever does not fight ***against*** *the Leader is just as guilty as any who fights for him. Fritz trains recruits but I know his heart is not in this war. How brave are any of us?"*
We were talking these things over on the tram together, laughing about the old days, the hikes, the camps and that absurd Frau Hassel, whose brother had been blown to tiny pieces in Belgium. I reminded Sophie of the time when she had thrown her voice on the campsite. She laughed and then stopped as if gripped by a sudden stroke of genius.

“I bet,” she whispered “That everyone on this tram is thinking how much they hate Hitler. But of course no-one dares say it. What if we wrote on a wall “At twelve o’ clock today all shout I HATE HITLER” ?”
She began to giggle her most mischievous of giggles and I told her to stop it. I could see those crazy high spirits welling up in her and I wondered what she was planning. As we walked to the end of the tram to get off she said, without moving her lips, in a stupid parrot voice - I HATE HITLER. The tram pulled away and she watched in delight as passengers looked from one to the other in astonishment. One face was laughing out of the window. I scolded her. Did she want to have herself sent to prison and all her family? Me too? I made her promise not to run such a stupid risk again. She promised but her dancing eyes said different.

Then Sophie was disappointed. Her kindergarten course was not accepted as a substitute for Community Service. And on the top of that, in the summer of 1941, as the war-juggernaut lurched forward again into Russia, she was forced to do nearly a year of War Service work in a munitions factory and to live in a barracks. We saw each other only occasionally and she was usually depressed because of the dreadful repetitiveness of factory work and the petty regimentation and empty routine of barracks life. They were allowed no books and Sophie had to keep her precious copy of the thought of St Augustine well hidden.
One day she said “Now you see, I make the bullets and shells which kill those soldiers who fight against Hitler and my friend Hartnagel loads them into the breach. We are now as guilty as each other. At least you only look after the children. Your hands are clean.”
But I had a dreadful story to tell her, one I could scarcely believe. A nurse had been transferred to my orphanage from a hospital-cum-home for children with mental and physical handicaps. She said a van had begun to come to them to take some of the children for excursions. Some were taken to new homes. There was a particular young girl with whom she had a close, fond relationship. She was slightly spastic and with physiotherapy and callipers she would, it was hoped, be able one day to return to her family and lead almost a normal life. This nurse had asked the doctor for the address of her new asylum as it was her birthday and she wanted to send her a card. When he shook his head sadly and muttered that he was unable to give her any information a terrible suspicion seized her. She watched more and more children ride off in the jolly van and noted that none ever came back. Why transfer children when there was so much room there? Late one evening she found the doctor slumped over his table with a half-empty bottle of Schnapps in front of him. She roused him with some coffee and he began to whisper the truth to her. Her little girl and all the others were dead. Dead? All of them? How could that be? He told her that they had all died of scarlet fever. He had filled in the ledger. She challenged this. It was all nonsense. There had been no scarlet fever about.
“The S.S. says there is and that is what I am told to record.”
Sophie stared at me in horror. “And do you believe her?”
I replied that she seemed such a sincere person; yes, I did believe her. Sophie lowered her voice even further and told me of rumours circulating in the barracks and factory of many Jews being taken to camps in the east to be murdered. We were in a café, I remember. A very jolly young waitress flounced over to us and asked if we had enjoyed the cake. We smiled and said yes.

That year, 1941, was undoubtedly the turning point of the war. The man who could do no wrong, who had begun to believe in his own infallibility, began to miscalculate; and other, distant events of which he could not be master went against him. The best way to describe his run of success in

the thirties and early forties is perhaps to imagine you are a motorist setting out on a journey of a thousand miles. You look back at the end of it with great delight because every traffic light you have passed has been, almost unbelievably, on green. Then suddenly outside Moscow in November 1941 all lights were on red. The army could not capture Moscow as Hitler vowed they would. The troops did not even have winter clothing, a challenge and a spur to them perhaps, to get the job done.
Then in December, without informing Hitler, the Japanese foolishly roused the USA from its indecisive torpor to a great anger by attacking their fleet in Hawaii. The next day Hitler, equally foolishly, declared war on the Americans! No-one needed to say everything. In every passer-by's face it was written - Now we shall surely lose this war. More bombs dropped on Munich killing many. Christmas came and was celebrated with a forced jollity. The radio urged us to supply all the warm clothing we could for the Russian front. Sophie snorted with indignation.
"I shall send nothing!"
"But Sophie, your brother Werner and hundreds of thousands of other brothers are there shivering! How can you say such a cruel thing? Is it their fault that Hitler made a mistake? They are freezing to death as we speak."
"I know it sounds harsh" she replied with obvious anguish "My heart weeps for them all. But the sooner Hitler loses a battle the sooner the people will lose faith in him. The sooner then Germany will be free. Germany must lose the war to be free!"

Soon afterwards graffiti insulting Hitler and calling for resistance began to appear in underpasses, as if they were the very sentiments which people kept hidden deep down in the underneath of their hearts and dare not utter.

In early 1942, when Sophie could see an end in sight to her soul-wearying War Service, she returned from a short leave at home and showed me a leaflet. It had appeared in their mail-box in Ulm and in the mail-boxes of others they knew well and trusted. The letter had been sent, apparently haphazardly, from the north. It reported extracts from the sermons of the Catholic Archbishop of Münster, Count Galen. Münster had been bombed by their official enemy, the British, he declared. But the real enemy of Germany, of civilization and of Christianity itself was the Nazi regime. I gasped to read such bold words. The sermon complained of the Nazi suppression and seizure of monasteries and convents and other interference with religious life, but something caught my eye and almost made me cry out came towards the end. Any doubts about my new colleague's reports of children disappearing were annulled. Mental patients had, according to Galen, been forcibly removed from hospitals in Berlin and then reported dead and cremated. Relatives could collect their ashes when convenient.
Sophie said "We used to laugh at father when he compared Hitler to the Pied Piper of Hamelin leading the children away to their doom. He could not, of course, know then how literally right he would be proved."

Sophie showed this leaflet to Hans when she arrived in May, the very day of her birthday to begin at last her biology and philosophy course at the university. I shall never forget how excited he was at her party that evening when he read it.
"At last someone has the courage to speak out about such abominations!"
One of his friends, Christl Probst, a very handsome man took out the pipe from his mouth and exclaimed.

“Yes Hans, but don’t you see, as a bishop he may speak out - to a small congregation in his church! Those who composed this leaflet have rather written out than spoken out!”
There was a long silence as they all thought this over. I must admit, the Scholls’ university friends, though always very, very kind to me, made me feel a little nervous because they knew so much and were so clever. They read and discussed authors I had never even heard of. They tried to outdo each other in quoting from philosophers and poets. One called Alexander Schmorrell (who also smoked a dashing pipe) now said quietly to the rest “That is the way then. We must get a printing press.”

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One morning, not long after my meeting with Max, I walked into school and found a Captain definitely not at his smiling best, and I realized immediately that his displeasure concerned me. Had a resentful, spiteful Trudi tried to get me into a bother? Surely not. Was it to do with my yelling at a boy in 11b the previous week, the fat-faced boy who could never say “the” but insisted on “zer”? Possibly, for the boy had looked mightily aggrieved.
“Huber wants to see you.”
“I know.”
“How do you know?”
“I can tell from your face.”
“What have you been up to? He’s really angry.”
I told him that it might have something to do with the Scholl campaign and of my slight involvement. He held his head. Why had I meddled? Had not one warning been enough? He would do what he could but it might be touch and go this time. Personally, I was not worried. I knew now of many a way to earn a living in washing-up kitchens and behind bars. I could even do private tuition!

Huber had stuck his spectacles on the end of his nose. His puffy, myopic eyes looked weary but full of venom.
“It would appear, Herr Wagner, that our Mister Newman has been involving himself in some controversial political activities with some of our older boys….once again…”
“Oh?”
“Yes indeed. I’m rather afraid to say that I have received two letters - one from an angry parent and one from a concerned landlord of a local tavern, complaining, I’m very sorry to say, of his drunkenness and of his agitation of impressionable young minds - I quote….“meddling in matters where he should know better not to.” - “. He laid the letters down and looked only at Wagner, as if I was not there. The latter now cleared his throat.
“Herr Huber - I,” he began but I was already holding out my hand to silence him. I had already thought over what to say in the event of such an interview and was well prepared.
“Thank you, Herr Wagner. I am well over twenty-one and can speak for myself. Would you do me the favour of witnessing and recording what is said here?”
Huber started backwards as if he had been slapped in the face.
“Firstly, Herr Direktor, I absolutely deny drunkenness in the company of pupils. Such conduct would be unforgivable. Secondly I would like to congratulate the landlord for finding an admirable way of describing what education is about……would you oblige me with a sight of his letter?” (He handed it over, all amazement.)…..”Ah yes, here it is “the agitation of

impressionable young minds”…..Could we, or the Minister, put it better ourselves?”
Huber had in front of him - further damning evidence! - a copy of the second leaflet which we had produced. To his further astonishment I took it from beneath his nose and held it up.
“Would Herr Huber care to say what precisely he finds objectionable about this?”
He began to stutter something then stopped.
“Does it, I ask, defame anyone? Use foul language? Is it provocative? Does it insult the memory of Paul von Hindenburg?”
I began to read a key passage aloud (which I had persuaded the boys to accept in lieu of their rather spiky sentence.)
“Paul von Hindenburg was a great soldier and a great servant of the German state. We would argue, however, that his name more properly belongs on a war memorial along with the soldiers who he commanded than on the front wall of the local grammar school……”
I put the leaflet back into his hand and asked him what he could find to deplore in that. He pushed his glasses back up his nose and found his ferret-eyed composure.
“I - the fathers of the school - and the Minister - have expressly forbidden any political activity in this school. You have now been with us many months… *(he checked his records).*..yes indeed, many months. Neither naivety nor a defective knowledge of the German language - indeed your fluent utterances have just confirmed this! - can excuse your renewed involvement in these matters - “
“Herr Huber” I interjected “I agree with you and understand this perfectly well. That is precisely why I absolutely refrain, even when prompted, from any mention of this or any other political issue. I discuss cricket, the weather, the tourist attractions of London and other cities, as you yourself suggested, and for which I am grateful….”
“But this involves boys FROM THIS SCHOOL!” he exclaimed furiously.
“There are very many more boys - and of course girls - from other establishments and walks of life who are involved with this. They asked me for help. I agreed.”
“But this is……OUTRAGEOUS!”
“On the contrary. My role is entirely invisible. I do not attend demonstrations, do not hand out leaflets. My role is a responsible one. I advise them that they should remain at all times: number one, within the law, two, polite in the face of discourtesy, three, scrupulous about not causing any offence to good taste or good manners. You should, as a headmaster, applaud this. This, my venerable Sir, is the power for good which I exercise. Has there, but to mention one example, been any recurrence of the graffiti? Have I not helped in some small way to channel that negative energy into a more responsible pattern of behaviour? Have I not encouraged these boys and girls to practise and learn legal and sensible methods of persuasion which are entirely consistent with a democracy, and indeed necessary for all to learn, in order that democracy is sustained? ”
Wagner squirmed with embarrassment. Huber sat speechless. Suddenly he got up and poured himself a cup of coffee. Finally, with his back to us he said, “You have placed me in a great difficulty Mr Newman. I personally do applaud a great deal of what you say….but there are matters afoot of which you are unaware. Certain…officials….are aware of this activity of yours and are demanding amplification….These are people not …to be taken lightly…I shall do what I can…”
“Thank you, Sir. Kindly tell these people who are “not to be taken lightly” that I have done nothing wrong and that my free time is my own business. Will that now be all?”
“Yes. For the time being. I urge you to think very carefully before you undertake further activities in this field.”

Outside Wagner managed a slight smile. He relit his pipe.
“Well, young man. I don’t know whether I agree with you but you certainly gave a good account of yourself. But be careful. Huber hates to be bested. You have not heard the last of this. He can be very vengeful.”
I thought of what Breitner had confided in me and, with a significant, I hoped, arching of my eyebrows, wondered aloud if he was the only one of that vengeful bent. Wagner seemed to catch something of my meaning, sucked his pipe into a bright glow, turned and walked away.

Chapter 14

Was it that afternoon when trouble blew in from a wholly unexpected quarter? I was buying a few things from the supermarket by the station. I could see customers pointing out of the window. On the car park opposite, in front of the station was a group I recognized with a banner. It read in German SCHOLLS FÜR DIE SCHULE! Trudi was there collecting signatures. Most people hurried by as if they were invisible. It was raining and not the best day for a demonstration. Some however did stop to sign. The children stood quietly. An old man I thought I recognized stopped and shook his stick at them. To their credit they remained perfectly silent. My way home took me past them. Trudi now looked up and saw me. She gave her clipboard to her friend Waltraud and rushed up to me, throwing her arms around my neck. I hugged her.
“Tu n’es pas furieuse avec moi, Mlle Steiner?”
"Furious with you? No, no! You are my honourable English gentleman and I love you dearly! "
I told her that I would love to give her another lesson but on the spot I invented a lie.
“My landlady, Mrs Ertl, said that she would prefer me not to give lessons to young girls - especially not ones as gorgeous as you - in my flat. Could I come to your house?”
“Of course! Come for tea. My mother knows what you have done for us all and would love to meet you.”
So it was settled. Unfortunately, the man with the stick had recognized Trudi and Markus, and was back.
“What did you call me in the park? A shit Nazi? A fascist?”
I told them not to respond. Other citizens were stopping now, hoping to see a bit of free street theatre.
“You are nothing but a bunch of layabouts! If you had lived in the times of the Leader you would have been imprisoned! It is only now in these stupid, permissive, lax times that you are allowed to get away with it. You swine! How dare you support those Scholl traitors!”
Beside himself with rage, he began to thrape the banner which had been so carefully lettered in blue paint. Markus could not help himself. He stepped forward and grabbed his stick. Somehow the sinewy old man wrestled it free, prodded it into Markus and ripped the banner down one side away from its pole. To their credit the others did not react but I could not stop myself from standing between the man and the banner. Quite a crowd had grown. I felt uneasily that there was more sympathy for him than for us.
“Out of my way, young man!” he shouted.
“DAS IST GENUG” I shouted back. (ENOUGH!)
He glared at me. “And what sort of a land’s man are you?”
“Ich bin Engländer, mein Herr!”
„Der Engländer ist er!“ people were whispering in the crowd. The old man smiled. For a moment I thought we were out of the woods, but I was so wrong.

“So you are the Englishman folks here are talking about, the meddler!”
I shook my head. I realized I had taken his stick into my hand.
“Let go of his stick!” someone shouted. But I would not.
“You see what has happened?” he shouted. “You meddled in 1939 and now you meddle again! If your Churchill had not meddled we would not here be overrun with Turks, Slavs and Communists now. Germany would not be divided. These young people would be dressed properly and speak politely to their elders. You British would not be overrun still with Jews, and now, since you won the war, with niggers, Indians and other scum!”
To my horror, though some people shouted “For shame!” many were cheering - whether in approval of his sentiments or in delight to witness such a drama on a rainy afternoon, I could not tell. I was reminded of an incident I had once had with a billy-goat which had menaced Emma and me in a field. I had grabbed its horns but then could not, of course, let go.
To my relief, from nowhere, Max stepped forward and persuaded the man to stop his rant, and persuaded me to let go of the stick. With a final flourish, and a final tirade of insults, he turned and pushed his way through the clapping crowd. I sensed that the two burly fellows at the back were in two minds about whether to drift away like the rest or hang around a while.
“Thank you Max.” I said and tried to shake his hand. It felt like a dead thing.
“Nichts zu danken, Jamie. But this I think shows you exactly what I meant in the pub.”
“But that crazy old man is not typical, surely?”
“Sure, he talks a lot of rubbish and he is a vile racialist. But there is a tiny corn of truth in what he thinks. And many, as you saw, do not entirely disagree with him. Jamie, give this up. It achieves nothing. It angers people. Let things happen gradually. Maybe in twenty or thirty years’ time when the old Hitlerites like him are underground with the worms, then these things will come to pass.”
“But this was entirely a peaceful demonstration” I said so loudly that everyone could hear me.
He smiled, grabbed my upper arm and whispered
“But Jamie…this is not really…a peaceful country!”

Later, as I was sitting down to eat, a distressed Weintraut came to tell me that Trudi could not do her French lesson that evening. Markus and Beppo had been swigging Lambrusco on their bench in the park and had been savagely beaten up - Markus so badly that he was in hospital. His philosophy books had been thrown in the lake.

Chapter 15

Ernst Ertl was very apologetic but it could not be helped. How were they to know, when they let the room to me, that his niece would be so unexpectedly uprooted from her post in Hof to work just five miles from Frankenheim? These things happened in the German Civil Service and were quite unpredictable. By Easter, regrettably, my rooms would have to be vacated for her to move in. I had three weeks in which to find new accommodation and they would, of course, in view of these unexpected circumstances, waive the rent. Frau Ertl could not conceal in her sad face what a lie this was, but I gave her no indication that I knew. I quite understood, I told her as I tucked into her delicious apple cake, that her niece took precedence, and did my best to be cheerful and relieve her of her guilty feelings. I decided in my garret that if I were them I would not want me as a lodger for much longer either.

I went to see Markus Steiner in hospital. His teeth would have to be capped. They must have

known a lot about him, he murmured sadly, looking at his bandaged right hand. They obviously knew he played the piano and had broken two fingers. I bumped into his mother, a tall and elegant Bostonian. She told me quietly as we walked along the corridor that Markus had been inspired by me and that I should in no way hold myself responsible for what had happened to him. When he came out in a week I could come round for supper. She would do twice-fried beans and chicken. As we parted she took my hand and said how much Trudi looked up to me, too.
"She is a very beautiful girl, Mr Newman. I worry a great deal about her. She is a little too, shall we say, exuberant for her own good."
In her grey eyes, as well as in her words, I caught her real meaning and replied that I would be so pleased to resume our lessons when all this nasty business was settled.
"She is such a clever girl." I said.
"Yes, indeed, a clever girl, a lovely *girl*, she is…."

When I told Karl I would have to move, he said that he had a spare room in his flat if I didn't mind it being a bit chilly. But it could only be for a short while, because after Easter it was already let to a new Referendar, when he - and Berthy and Dieter - were due to move on to other schools as their second placement. This was welcome news. It gave me about five weeks to look for another furnished room. The Sekretariat could not help - or rather seemed to choose not to. Their tone, and the air in the office, had become rather frosty. I was referred to the local paper. There was any number of furnished flats in the back pages. Then I spotted the very newspaper on the desk of the lanky secretary. To my dismay an article on the front page reported a whole load of pro-Scholl leaflets left scattered around in the town centre. Could I borrow the paper a moment? Unfortunately not. The director had especially asked for it to be brought in with his coffee. There was a newsagent's on the square where I might easily purchase my own copy.

That Wednesday evening I had been studying the flats on offer in the back of the paper. The story about the leaflets seemed rather exaggerated. They had been put in people's windscreen wipers, it turned out. The drivers had probably thrown them down themselves. Nevertheless it was a lesson in hidden pitfalls in campaigning and I made a note to dissuade the committee from making more mistakes by careful planning. Perhaps a door-to-door leafleting was better?
The doorbell rang. It was dark. For just a split second I wondered if my lovely, bouncy librarian had returned to swap books! I felt a surge of excitement. I pressed the button and sat down opposite the door. Footsteps approached rapidly but they did not have the timbre of a woman's. For a split second I thought it was Karl, because this man was fat and had that rather permanent sardonic smirk about his lips which was his trademark. But this fellow was much taller and burlier. He smiled and wrenched me from my chair and slammed me against the wall. I was so winded I could not make a sound. He put his hand to my throat and pushed me upwards from the floor. I am by no means a weakling - as many an opposing football thug had made the mistake of thinking - but against this man I could do nothing. The last thing I really recall is him putting his knee behind mine and forcing me slowly and quietly to the floor. And then such a blow. I felt absolutely no pain - only a sensation I can only describe as like standing right next to a huge striking, vibrating bell in a cathedral belfry.

Chapter 16

I remember waking in a white room and thinking I was about to have a bath. But how could I, with all these people there? At my bedside Emma was holding my hand and smiling. She had changed her hair and was looking at me in an unfamiliar way. Had she forgiven me? I began to weep and held her hand all the tighter. The salt in my tears stung my eyes so much that I cried out. She dabbed my eyes dry. When I looked out again she was strapping a black band on my forearm and saying something to me in German. She was fluent. (This came of living twenty-four hours a day with her new bloke!)

She bent down to my ear and whispered "Ich prüfe Ihren Blutdruck."

Why was Emma taking my blood pressure? Why was she telling me in perfect German? Why did she use the formal "Ihr" for "your" rather than the familiar "dein" form?

When I woke again Emma had disappeared and a nurse had taken her place.

My face was an awful mess. What good looks I did have were to disappear for ever. My nose was broken and my eyebrows, puffed up like a prizefighter's, never did quite return to their original shape. I could scarcely see out of my eyes and for weeks they were bruised. The tear on my cheek which my assailant's ring had made needed six stitches and is still visible today like the tiny tail of a comet.

The photo of me at my worst somehow got into the paper, identifying me as the prime organiser of the Scholl campaign, sadly now, the reporter lamented, another victim of extremist intolerance. Karl read the article out at my bedside and on the whole the tenor of it (and of the editorial and subsequent correspondence) was favourable. "What" wondered one correspondent "Lurks just below the political surface of the Federal Republic? How could those on the Right justify such a vicious assault on Mr Newman - a foreign guest and an educator, a first rate one by all account - on any grounds, no matter how fundamentally one might disagree with him?"

An unsigned letter, plainly the work of Max, commented that I had been warned about the attention I had attracted to me from some very dangerous people. He too condemned "a deplorable attack" but pointed out that everyone had to tread carefully in the current overheated atmosphere in Germany. Another letter speculated that this was the work of the Reds using one of their own as a sacrifice to extract sympathy. This drew such a howl of derision in the next postbag that the editor, giving only a flavour of their outrage, then declared the matter closed.

During my hospital stay the Bader-Meinhoff group had been active again. I heard the nurses discussing it. A bank guard and an innocent bystander had been killed. An industrialist had been snatched from home and was being held for ransom.

Over the next week or so, I rapidly improved. My eyes had opened enough to see the many gifts and cards I had received from friends and strangers. Pride of place went to a huge bouquet from the SPD. An honorary membership card in my name was tied to it. Berthy and Karen came to see me but Karen sat and cried. The Captain came, smiled, and patted my arm. He stayed for about twenty minutes, until Peter Breitner arrived. He poured us both a glass or two of Frankenwein disguised as lemonade. He told me that someone would have to pay for this outrage. Something in his eyes told me that this was not his first glass of the evening, nor would it be his last. Trudi came with a limping Markus but immediately ran out howling.

One night, to my utter astonishment Huber came. I offered him my hand and he took it. He kept saying “If only” and shaking his head. This made me think of Max. Without wanting to, taking stock of all that had happened to me in those few months, I began to weep uncontrollably until I had not a tear more left to weep and Huber had gone. Something in the air told me that he too had not arrived without prior fortification of the spirit.

Two stern policemen in leather jackets came twice. Had I remembered anything? What had the assailant looked like? They told me that he had crept in and out totally unnoticed by the Ertls. I thought of Karl and instantly swallowed the impulse to say anything. It would be so unfair to arouse any suspicion about him! So I said “He was tall and fat with dark hair; clean-shaven, fat in the face, with staring blue eyes.”
Had the assailant spoken? I racked my brains. The word “*stören*” - interfering, disturbing - kept surfacing but I could not decide whether it was a memory of Max, or Huber, or my attacker (who had almost killed me) or simply my own imagination. I had a fractured skull, five cracked ribs and a broken jaw. If my lovely Rapunzel had not come up to wish me goodnight, if I had lain on that cold floor all night I would almost certainly have died. A renowned local thug, scourge of beatniks, homosexuals and lefties, was arrested and held briefly until the landlord of the hostelry where he been drinking that night confirmed his alibi.

And then one lovely spring day, the pretty nurse who only, after all, looked a little like Emma came in to tell me I was being discharged. Karl collected me and I spent a further two weeks recuperating in his flat. My suitcases had been hastily packed. Clothes and other belongings had all been thrown in. In vain I searched for my precious book. Had that vicious bastard stolen it? Karl had had to go back unexpectedly to Erlangen. His wife had fallen ill. Late that afternoon, as I was looking out on the fresh chestnut leaves just beginning to emerge like emerald moths, and wondering if I might actually witness one sticky cocoon of a bud burst, I heard with some apprehension a key turn in the door. But it was Peter Breitner.
“I have some letters for you from your mail-slot!” he said as he plonked down two flasks of Frankenwein, a great stoppered glass jar full of Bratwurstsuppe, (a delicious broth of franconian sausages with bayleaves) and a Graubrot , surely, in spite of its greyness, the tastiest bread in the world.
“Karl gave me the key and asked me to feed you. Gisela is ill.”
He turned to look at me properly. He told me, though just a little too gravely to be convincing, that I was looking better.
“The right eye is almost normal and the left one will be better by next week. It’s so beautiful and warm outside. You must come and stay with me when Karl leaves. I’ll take you up to the Fränkische Schweiz. I know a lovely tavern in the hills where the landlord produces his own wine. He cooks the most delicious wild boar with red cabbage and dumplings! The fresh air will help you to heal.”
I tried to turn to watch him at work in the kitchen. He was humming the Ode to Joy from Beethoven’s ninth symphony.
“There is still no news about your attacker but there is wonderful news about the Scholls!”
He set the hot soup down on the table where I could easily reach it. It was delicious. I sipped at it, when it had cooled, through the undamaged corner of my mouth. He poured me a quarter of a litre of wine. I asked him to find me a drinking straw because the edge of the glass hurt my lips. I sucked on it long and within seconds it made my brain float off like an air balloon.

“Yes, Jamie! You are a real hero! The council have decided by one vote to rename the square where the school stands **Der Geschwister-Scholl-Platz.** The black bastards in Munich can do nothing about it of course. Oh, the school will remain the Hindenburg Gymnasium but it is only a matter of time. And you know what else? On the central lawn of the square they are going to create a special Scholl memorial garden. They are going to plant thirty white rose trees to celebrate next year’s anniversary and add one every year from then on! Is that not wonderful news?”
I was sniffing. He laughed and told me to pull myself together. He filled my glass and collected our plates up.
“Peter…..see if you can find my Scholl book. I’ve tried. It must be here somewhere…..”
“In a moment. Oh, your letters!”
He put them in front of me and went to wash up. There was no pink and white squared one as I had hardly dared to hope. I pictured Emma now as a small white yacht sailing serenely around her placid bay, oblivious of my shipwreck out at sea. One letter was official-looking. It was from the Bundesministerium in Munich. After the third sentence I put it down. The official jargon was so complex and I felt so dreamy. I gave it back to my dear Peter and asked him to tell me what it said. It gradually deflated his excellent spirits.
“The sows! To send you this at this time! What filthy sows they are!”
To call someone a sow in Germany is about as bad as it gets.
“Come on Peter. Out with it. I am not bothered”
“Well Jamie, it bitterly regrets your “misfortune” - Misfortune! The mealy-mouthed bastards! - but says that if your involvement with local politics should in any further way compromise the school then your contract would be terminated with immediate effect. “Furthermore, following consultations with the competent Bavarian Office of Foreign Registrations your Aufenthaltserlaubnis - oh the rotten bastards! - Aufenthaltserlaubnis, wie sagt man das in Englisch?”
“Residence permit.”
“- Your residence permit would also be cancelled and that, as a consequence, you would have to leave the territory of Federal Republic. The swines! The black swines!”
“Peter! Calm down. I don’t care. Pour me some more wine!”

The handwriting on the second envelope looked strangely familiar. It was a white envelope and for a second I thought that perhaps Emma had used up all her cruelly pretty pink stationery and had sent me her guilty sympathy in this. Then I noticed that the stamp was English. It was from her mother. She felt bound to write to say, she said, just how sorry she was that we had split up, etc, etc, etc. She had always liked me and my offbeat sense of humour. Was I still enjoying Germany in spite of everything? Oh, there was one more thing…Emma thought that she might have left her collected verse of Heine and a Langenscheidt dictionary in my flat. Would I have the goodness to return them by post to Burton at my earliest convenience in the summer? (She included two one pound notes for cost of postage) Emma had decided not to return to Manchester that autumn. She was asking for a transfer to study in Bayreuth in order to be near to *her Jörg*. She wished me of course all the best and hoped I would soon find someone else. I decided then and there that I would tear her bloody Heine and dictionary to shreds and burn them on the fire.
“Pour me another, Peter. Come on, don’t be mean!”
The third letter looked boring. Good old Peter was drying up in the kitchen and putting another

two bottles of dry turpentine in the fridge. The pain in my face and particularly my mouth was becoming blurred. I wanted to become just a blur. I had had enough. I realised I wanted, more than anything else now, just to go home. The third envelope was tiny as if it contained one of those cheap, pathetic Xmas cards that people send to the least of their acquaintances. Inside there was indeed a little get-well-soon card. I almost threw it away but eventually I opened it.
It was in an English which rang a faint bell.

Dear Jamie,

I was really sorry to hear about you. I told a friend I trusted about our secret meetings. A stupid mistake. She went behind my back and told our secret to someone she should never have told. I think you might guess who I mean. It seems my friend herself had her own plans where *he* was concerned.

Anyhow, we try to put it behind us. I am pregnant. I am thinking it will take a long time but he will, I hope, forgive me for the sake of the child – just as I am hoping you will be able to forgive me and, of course, him and his very bad anger.

With my best hopes for your speedy recovery,

Heidi

I folded the letter and put it into my pocket. Chuckling, I sipped my glass to a gurgling emptiness and Peter refilled it.
“Is anything the matter?” he asked. For a while I could think of nothing to say.
“It’s only a card from Heidi. Just to wish me well, that’s all.”
“Does she say how she is?”
“Oh, she’s fine.”
And then, although it was very painful, I began to laugh out loud until he clearly thought I had gone completely mad. Before he left Peter went all through my stuff. He found that precious book wrapped up in a pullover. In the cosy, lamplit corner of my bed surrounded by the dusk, a shadowy darkness like the past, I went back to walk with those phantoms who now rose up again from that other Germany to greet me.

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

I remember how at the end of Sophie’s party we ran laughing, with bottles of wine, into the English Garden, putting them in the chilly Isar to cool. Alexander took his balalaika and we sang. Hans joined in with his guitar. Under those stars it felt as if the war had evaporated into space where Hitler exercised no control. How I weep now to think how Sophie would have reacted if she had known that this was to be her last birthday.

I did not see Sophie for many weeks after that glorious evening in May. She was settling into her course and had lots to do. Then in late July I got a long letter from her explaining what she had been up to that spring. She told me never to show this to another person and to burn it when I

had read it. I am glad now that I kept it. Firstly, she had bad news to relate. She had had to report to the munitions factory for further duty and would have little of her summer vacation. Worse, Hans and his friends had been ordered to the Russian front for the summer. He had been so depressed.
"I heal no-one," he complained. "I repair Hitler's marionettes for the front line so that they can shoot or be shot again"
But the worst news concerned her father. In April he had been briefly arrested by the Gestapo. He had said something indelicate in front of a woman colleague. The silly woman had twittered on about a rumoured visit of the Leader to Ulm. Robert had felt unwell after a late night and had muttered that he would not go to the end of his garden to see that "scourge of mankind". She had heard him clearly enough and had mentioned it to her son who was in the Gestapo. Now he had been sentenced to four months imprisonment. The mother was strong but shocked nonetheless. Sophie dared not tell her, she wrote, what else she and Hans had been up to.
In the envelope were four leaflets entitled The White Rose. She disclosed that Alex had indeed bought the printing press - he was quite wealthy - and it had been installed in the nearby workshop of a sculptor whom they knew and trusted. She mentioned a Professor of Philosophy called Huber who "spoke above the heads of the stupid asses in his lecture theatre to the ears of those free spirits who hated the regime." He had finally agreed to advise them and edit their leaflets (which exhorted the German people to wake, to resist and sabotage the war effort at all levels. Each leaflet urged the reader to duplicate it and pass it on.)

I reproduce here Sophie's exact words: "When the first leaflet appeared in June I was ecstatic! They went from hand to hand at the university causing excitement and, admittedly, much indignation. At long last the student body was in ferment! Finally, some brave soul had summoned the courage to throw a great rock into the grey stagnant pool which Munich had become. But when I read properly that first leaflet, which calls, as you will see, my dear old friend, the German people to resist in order that they might not be judged too harshly in the post-war world, I literally froze with fear. This was so familiar. This was the very substance of the discussions I heard night after night in our flat. I felt a chill pang of anxiety for our family. This was treason. (Do you recall the army officer, the first world war ace Udet, who was recently forced to shoot himself for criticising Hitler and his war tactics?) Our father was already under suspicion. Would he too be shot? And Hans? What would our poor mother do if he too got himself arrested?
When Hans came home from the hospital I asked him straight out if he knew where the leaflet I showed him came from. I told him I remembered their talk of a printing press. He would not tell me a lie but he told me it was best if I did not know.
So I yelled at him. I was now over twenty-one! A woman, not a little girl anymore! He smiled and then told me everything. He said that to do something was a way of removing the guilt he felt. I thought this over. What about the danger of being caught with those leaflets? He shrugged. But then it became so obvious to me what I should do. I would make an ideal distributor! Who would suspect me? I do not look anything like as old as a twenty-one year old, as you well know, and I could dress to look even younger. Who would think that any bag or suitcase I carried contained such leaflets? I went on and on and on until I managed to persuade Hans and his friends. Did they want to treat young females like the NSPAD had done in 1933, banning them from the Hitler Youth? Could young women not join their resistance? So, within a few days I began to travel late at night with another girl on my course (for a young girl to travel alone at a late hour might

arouse too much curiosity) as far south as Innsbruck and as far north as Hannover, taking leaflets to post to private addresses all over Germany or simply to leave scattered about. We even went one night to Linz where Hitler had spent his childhood. It was vital to vary the postmark on envelopes, partly to give the Gestapo no clue as to their origin and also to cause consternation amongst the Nazis that we were a more widespread, stronger group than just seven or eight young students."
She ended her letter saying how close they had come to arrest one night when the Gestapo had started to make a routine search of luggage. They had left their compartment and sat elsewhere, getting off at the next stop without their precious cargo. Now she begged me again to say nothing. In her postscript she added that by a strange quirk of fate Hans had been stationed within a mile of his brother Werner's battery at the Front. I wrote back and told her to be careful of course. I said I admired her bravery. I mentioned getting together sometime in the summer. Yet I did not see her and Hans, who had just returned from the Front, until the late autumn in their flat. He had seen a thousand horrors and heard of many more during his posting in Russia. His eyes were more distant, as if he still gazed on them, and their youthful gleam had gone. He told of whole communities starved to death; of countless Jews and communist officials rounded up and shot; of Russian prisoners murdered and of horrific reprisals on captured German soldiers, left naked but not quite dead by their lines. He had no solution to their vile injuries and more than once he had administered a large dose of morphine to hasten along the agony of their dying. On the interminable train journey back across the unrelenting plain he had pondered if all humanity would eventually be squeezed out of people by the war. At one halt for the engine to take on water he had secretly offered his chocolate ration to a pretty young Russian woman conscripted to work on the track. In fury she had thrown it back. Undeterred he had picked a daisy growing up between the sleepers and had placed it on top of the chocolate at her feet. As the train rolled out he saw her looking up at him with her pick-axe in her hands. Into her hair she had threaded the flower.
"I tell you comrades" I remember him saying after we had all thought this kindness over " That coil-spring we have pressed back, and further back, into the eastern steppes, when it rebounds on us in its full vehemence Berlin will suffer as much and more than any Soviet town."
"We must begin to leaflet again," said Sophie simply. "The only hope for the German people is to prove to the Americans and the Russians that many at least tried to speak out. We must challenge the people by insisting that they see the information. So they can never argue they did not know. Not to know is no longer an option. We must destroy denial."

In Munich and in many towns the anti-Nazi slogans had ventured out from the underpasses and now regularly appeared on public buildings. I knew that the Scholls had made a stencil of a swastika crossed out which could be rapidly painted in with black bitumen paint. One night, dodging police patrols, they had defaced scores of walls in the town centre. One morning on the tram I watched the futile efforts of conscript Slav women bussed in to scrub away those murals. The feeling of something dying to get out, a suppressed scream of anger, was tangible amongst the passengers. I am convinced that it needed only one voice to shout Down with Hitler to set us all off. I saw this in others' faces too. But no-one dared to. For who was the man in the long leather coat beside or behind you? The crowd would drift homeward after the euphoria of the protest and become vulnerable individuals again. Who would come out and shout for you then as you were bundled into a waiting van? I glanced at the middle-aged man next to me in a fur hat. He looked angry.

“Verdammte Kommunisten!” he muttered. Some others growled in agreement. But the majority were silent. I stole a glance at the young man on the other side of the gangway. He looked at me, shrugged and closed his eyes. What a monstrous, powerful Evil it was to render us both, and all the silent rest of us, so weak!

The impending disaster in Russia could not be lessened by any Nazi cosmetic speech on the radio. Göbbels might try to disguise it but the news was too ugly. It was common knowledge that “strategic readjustments” were in fact steady retreats in the face of fresh Russian divisions conjured up by Stalin from the bottomless pit of the Russian populace. Only in Stalingrad did the iron fist of the Wehrmacht grip like a dying, desperate hand.

One evening Sophie paid me an unexpected visit with a suitcase. I assumed that she wanted to stay and I told her she could have my spare bed. It was a chilly room but she was more than welcome until my tenancy expired. She shook her head and told me she needed a big favour. Her university friend, Karen, who went with her on leafleting missions had sprained her ankle on the stairs. Could I go with her tomorrow to Salzburg?
“To do what?”
She opened her case. There were hundreds of leaflets. There were envelopes and sheets of red eight Pfennig stamps. There was a Munich telephone directory. I shook my head as if I was looking into Minerva’s box. I felt very afraid.
“Well, at least help me to put them into envelopes,” she said matter-of-factly.

The leaflet read - ***A Call to All Germans!***

It stated that Hitler could only prolong the agony of war and not win it; it exhorted the people to dissociate themselves from the evil of National Socialism and to commit themselves by word or deed to show that they dissented; it warned that apathy, hesitation or feigned ignorance would meet with a terrible punishment when the world judged the Germans; it called for a new federal Germany and a new Europe on internationalist, not narrow nationalist lines. Tears filled my eyes. I turned to Sophie and embraced her. I would meet her at the station the following evening.

It was early December. She had purchased two return tickets to Salzburg. In the dark at the end of our platform the impatient, unseen locomotive breathed in and out like a great black monster. We were asked for our papers. The policeman studied them and handed them back
“Please, young ladies, why are you travelling to Salzburg?”
Sophie had told me already to let her do all the talking. She had told me one name. Angela Schmidt. She had made me repeat it ad nauseam to myself.
“We are old school friends. We are travelling to the funeral of a good friend who moved to Salzburg last year. She has died in a tragic riding accident.”
“You have only one case between you?”
“Yes it has our black dresses and other clothes for tomorrow.”
“May I see inside please?”
“Of course.”
I thought I was going to faint. Boldly Sophie then placed the case on the trestle table. She sprang the catches. On the top, neatly folded, were a black dress and some grey blouses. A pungent smell of camphor rose up. The policeman turned two or three garments over and, losing interest,

waved the smell away and gestured to her to close it. We got on the train. My legs were weak. Sophie winked at me.
"Where are they?" I breathed.
"At the very bottom. I sewed a false lining into it, just in case anyone probed too far."
The train was quite full. Many Austrian soldiers were going on leave and almost every compartment was taken. Finally we found two spaces opposite each other. A tall, handsome soldier put our case into the net. Above his head there was a framed picture of Kufstein castle.
"Aren't you rather young to be travelling on such a late train?" he asked Sophie.
She looked absolutely lovely. His friend knocked his elbow and told him not to be so nosy! In the corner a spindly woman sat reading The People's Watchdog. It spoke of heroic resistance in Russia and, further down, called for the most severe punishment for those few cowards, defeatists and vandals littering streets and defacing buildings. I even found myself agreeing with it! I shut my eyes tight and felt very sick. I desperately wanted to get off.
"Are you still at school?"asked the handsome soldier.
"Yes, we are going to a funeral in Salzburg."
"Without mum and dad?"
"Yes it is an old school friend of ours. She fell from her horse and was kicked in the head."
"Oh, how dreadful!"
The woman in the corner sniffed and looked over the top of her paper at us. She evidently found Sophie's story rather odd. I prayed that they would just leave us in peace. I dared not say a word.
"Your friend seems to have lost her tongue" said the other soldier whose eyes had been running me up and down since we had entered. Sophie jumped straight in.
"Please excuse her" she whispered so that I would not hear. "She was very, very close to Angela."
I opened my lips slightly to show I had dropped off to sleep. The engine whistled at long last and pulled out. I pretended to wake with a start. We went through a long tunnel, so long that I thought we would never emerge. Then in the silver-grey light the darkened, up-and-down suburbs of Munich first trundled then hurtled by. There was a bright moon. At some point the RAF would be over. One of the soldiers undid a sausage and some bread. It smelt delicious. He heard my stomach rumble and laughed. He took a penknife and cut us a few centimetres each and a two corners of bread. As I ate my fear subsided. I pressed my nose to the glass and thought I could already see the white-capped peaks rising above the horizon beyond the plain on which Salzburg lies. I must have fallen asleep. I felt a tapping on my ankle. Sophie urgently lifted up her eyes and stood up. Immediately I copied her.
"Gestapo" she whispered. Trembling, I followed her out trying not to touch the legs of our sleeping fellow passengers. From the next-but-one compartment there protruded the back of a dark leather coat like the folded wings of some grotesque beetle. We stole the opposite way along the corridor and reached the next carriage.
"We may have to abandon the mission," she whispered. "Of course, if they search our case it is best that we are here and not there. I'm just surprised that they are on the train at all."
We continued walking and found two more spaces in another compartment. A large man in the corner was snoring loudly. Then as the train slowed for a station Sophie stood up again and I instantly followed her. A few people got on and off. The engine stamped impatiently. We waited until the platform was quite empty.
"Come on!" she yelled. We got off and ran swiftly back to the end of the train, keeping low and

close to the carriages. We heard the whistle blow. As the train began to stagger forward we opened a door and jumped in. Tentatively we made our way back along the corridor until we found our compartment. The soldiers were asleep and the stick-woman had gone. The suitcase - to my astonishment and horror - was still there.

We got into Salzburg at about eleven p.m. We walked and walked until the streets were narrow, dark and deserted. A cold wind was blowing straight from the mountains. We took it in turns to carry the suitcase. My hands, though gloved, were stiff with cold and from the bite of the handle.

"Here!" exclaimed Sophie. It was a cemetery. We walked through the sighing gate and on and on past the graves as far from the road as we could go. Sophie placed the case on a slate grave and sprang the locks again, this time with the other side uppermost. Scores of white envelopes lay there, their red stamps black in the half-light. We stuffed them into our coat pockets, down into our brassieres, up our sweaters and into the waist bands of our skirts. There were about three hundred loose leaflets left which we would scatter later. I noticed, but she did not, that the name on a nearby gravestone was Scholl.

We went back towards the road noiselessly like a pair of phantoms. We waited for a patter of footsteps to fade and then we re-emerged into the streetlight. Into every post box we found we placed a few envelopes and gradually worked our way back into the town centre. As we rounded one corner we heard a cry of Halt! There were two policemen behind us. My blood froze. How long had they been watching us? We turned to face them. They ambled up to us in no great hurry. Sophie whispered again to let her do all the talking.

"Try to look upset."

I did not need to try very hard.

They were clearly disarmed by Sophie's sad cow-eyed expression. I even managed a tear.

"Oh thank goodness!" she exclaimed. ""We could find no-one to ask! We have come by bus from Lofer and got off a stop too early. We are looking for the train station. Would you be so kind as to direct us?"

One asked for our papers but the other stayed his hand.

"Where are you bound for?" asked this one.

"To Munich."

"You'll be lucky to catch a train at this hour."

"Oh, it doesn't matter. We will sit in the buffet until the first train in the morning."

"Follow us."

In the Bahnhofstrasse they said goodbye and wished us pleasantly a safe journey. We walked towards the station and then dodged into a side-street. It was past midnight now and all was in darkness. In a shop doorway, while I kept look-out, Sophie removed the remaining leaflets from the case and we stuffed them about our person again. Within an hour we had none left. They were in café doorways, on park benches, in bus shelters, in public toilets, male and female, in car windscreens and in every public nook and cranny we could find. Sophie took some blue wax from her pocket and drew swastikas on walls and pavements and crossed them out. Through all this Salzburg slept.

Imagine my relief to be in the station buffet with a lighter, innocent suitcase and warming my icy hands on a huge mug of cocoa. For a moment I thought the skinny woman in the corner with the newspaper was the stick-woman from the compartment. We had about four hours to wait until the early train. I would have about an hour to travel back by tram, get back to my room and change for work. Holding hands we put our heads on the table and tried to sleep.

I was being gently shaken. Sophie was already seated at a distant table speaking to one Gestapo man. Now the other sat down opposite me and blocked my view of her. He slowly removed his gloves and placed them deliberately, one over the other, on the table. He did not look at me. His eyes were ice. He had blonde wavy hair of which he was obviously very proud. He held out his hand, tapped the table with his knuckles and quietly said "Papers." Trembling I handed them over. He studied them carefully as if he thought they might be forged. I felt relief that there was nothing to discover on that count. In the corner stood our two policemen from earlier on. One looked triumphant, one despondent. I kept saying to myself "keep calm". My ticket was scrupulously examined. On another table I could see the suitcase open and the dark clothes spread about around it. Again, here was nothing to worry me. The black clock hand lurched up the white dial to 03:42. A few railway workers and some soldiers were watching. My man would not speak, just kept looking at the ticket and my papers. He put his hand in his pocket and placed a leaflet in front of me. I needed all my strength not to collapse.
"Is this why you came to Salzburg, young Miss?"
I shook my head and said we had been to a funeral.
"Oh? Who has died?"
"An old schoolfriend. Angela Schmidt." I whimpered.
"What was this girl's address?"
I buried my head in my arms. Again, now less patient, he asked me for the address. Through my sobs I said that I couldn't remember. Now Sophie's officer was speaking.
"Hans, be careful, there are witnesses. These are young girls."
My officer told him that it was peculiar I could not remember my old friend's address. He wanted to keep us until the Angela Schmidt story could be properly checked out in the morning. In the morning!
I had a horrified vision of a narrow, cold prison cell. What would my mother and father say? I thought of my father's disgrace. I began to howl with sorrow.
Sophie shouted "Her friend has died. Can you not both see she is upset and confused?"
I heard someone at the bar mutter in agreement. Sophie's man took mine to one side and I heard him whisper something about checking the address which "the Scholl girl" had given them. He said we were very young and innocent. We were not likely to be the culprits.
"Very well," replied mine "I will check the address in the directory. Schmidt might take some time. What is the initial of the parent, young lady?"
Without a second's hesitation Sophie said, "B for Bernd."
"Very well. If it checks out we will let them go." I heard mine say.
He was gone for an age. I sat and shook with terror. We had been caught out. Our lie had been exposed. I dared to glance at Sophie while her man searched for a cigarette. She gave me a quick, sly wink. Then my man returned, put on his gloves, smiled icily and apologized. The address was genuine. These were times when one had to check up on everyone, he emphasized. He had even phoned the telephone number, I heard him tell his colleague, only to hear an angry, grieving parent remonstrate with him. I must have stared in such amazement at Sophie because she almost laughed.

We caught the train at ten to five. Only then, in the privacy of an empty compartment, did I ask her how she had got the address right.
"Sophie, I cannot believe you could keep so cool"
"What about you? You played the role of grieving friend to perfection."

I replied, of course, that it had not been grief but genuine terror! She told me that on our next excursion I would feel more relaxed. I said nothing but I was resolved that there would never be a next time, as if it had been the worst ride on the fairground, a great dipper I had been persuaded to go on against my better judgment.
"So, Angela Schmidt really exists?" I asked.
Sophie laughed out loud at my innocence.
"No. Her "daddy" is a Salzburg friend of Alexander's. There are dead Angelas and Friedas and Gabis in all the cities we visit."
Tomorrow, she added, there would even appear in the People's Watchdog a very sad obituary to a sadly missed daughter, Angela Schmidt, just in case the blonde Nazi decided, in an idle moment, to delve a little deeper. Exhausted, I was soon rocked to sleep by the train. By nine o'clock I was smoothing bed sheets. The previous night then seemed ridiculously implausible, even though my sore eyes confirmed it, and the rest of my body confirmed it in every aching joint.

The nights grew longer. That December, 1942, it was if a sheet of freezing cannon smoke had drifted in from the east and had come to a halt over Ulm. From the week before Christmas until the New Year it persisted. It was eerie. There was no frost but there was a biting chill more intense with every day; no breeze stirred, no rain fell, no snow. Every morning began with the same bleak half-light which barely grew by midday and quickly faded into a total darkness bewailed by our geese. We saw no sun, no moon, no stars. Neighbours remained at their hearths; solitary horses stood still, steamed and stamped in the cruel fields. Christmas houses flared briefly like lanterns and subsided.
Whatever I said I could not rouse my father. He sat every day by the range, raking and staring into the coals. Within her aura of patient silence, my mother cooked and baked around him. In the evening he would turn on the radio for a while and twiddle the knobs. The whine of the static sounded like an alien wind, a snowstorm on some outer planet of the solar system. He would find a station and then twiddle again, as if seeking cause for optimism, a cheering snippet of good news. Some dance music would lift his spirits for a while; then he would find Radio London or Radio Beromünster and curse their propaganda and the traitors who believed it; soft, sinister voices gave way to marching music. He would get to the end of the band and then come back again and finally switch off with a resigned complaint that there was nothing worth listening to on the radio these days. As mother carefully smoothed down the house for the night he would slowly ascend the stairs. I fell asleep to distant murmurs of despair. Every creak on the stair, every crack in the beams, and every call of the owls said the war would be lost.

Sophie and Hans only came home briefly. We scarcely had time to say hello. Our fathers had barely spoken for years. Robert Scholl had been released from prison in November. When Hans and Sophie did call, my father would hardly acknowledge them. He asked me one day if I saw them often in Munich. I answered truthfully that I did not. He seemed pleased. Sophie's friend, I thought, must have recovered from her ankle injury because she had not asked me to go out with her again. I had lain in bed every night in December praying for her safe return. We never spoke of that journey to Salzburg.

I saw Sophie for the last time in late January. She was so excited. Things were really beginning to happen at the university and further afield. Hans had painted up the word FREEDOM at the

main entrance in bitumous paint. No amount of scrubbing had managed to get rid of it and in the end it had been covered up with a Nazi poster. Everyone sniggered. They knew exactly what lay beneath it; it was if the word was still there, burning through unquenchably to the eye. Some Nazi students had condemned it but their voices were drowned out by the conspiratorial silence and smiles of the rest. Hundreds more leaflets had been scattered around the town centre. The next leaflet would target the student population alone, calling for a boycott of Nazi lecturers and party organizations. Even more encouragingly, Sophie and Hans had found out that their brilliant leaflets were now turning up in all German towns and cities and even in concentration camps; and what really excited their group was the news that other cells of The White Rose were forming in Hamburg, Berlin and Freiburg. In Munich even more graffiti had appeared - not just theirs - and the police were rushing around like the Keystone Cops, depositing foreign washer-women at all points.
At that point, in order to bolster flagging morale and regain control of the agenda, it had been decided by the University Rector, Herr Oberführer Walter Wrist to use the 470th anniversary of the university on 17th January 1943 to invite the Gauleiter of Munich, Paul Giesler to give a rousing speech. All students had been obliged to attend. To the consternation of the professors and lecturers he appeared to have been on the bottle. The audience grew restless and some even sniggered at the nonsense he was talking. But there was worse - or better! - to come. Seeing he was not going down too well, he decided to crack a joke.
"Why," he had wondered "Why are you women students bothering yourselves with stupid books at all? Why not do something more useful, like produce a sturdy child for the Leader? If these lads cannot oblige you my men here would be only too willing!"

"Well," said Sophie "We just could not believe our ears. For a few seconds there was absolute silence apart from a few embarrassed attempts at laughter from his swinish henchmen. Then there was uproar! Students were booing. Women were on their feet shouting and leaving the hall. Many were arrested and that made the situation worse. The Nazi student leader was dragged from the stage and beaten up - and not even by our group! - I really thought the time had come. The police were called and it was agreed to release the Nazi hostage in return for the release of the women. It all died down but how long for? One more good kick and the whole rotten structure will fall! One more leaflet!"
I laughed but there was something in Sophie's eyes which frightened me, something far brighter than the naughty gleam in that BDM camp, on the Munich tram or in the waiting room in Salzburg. When she left I had an awful feeling that I would never see her again.

Later I realised that the sparkle in her eyes had been a perilous hope.

Chapter 17
After Easter I felt well again. Spring was in full April spate. The fresh air in the hills, with Peter Breitner as my guide, had done me good and my face looked better. I could turn my body and get to my feet now with little difficulty. So one fine day I returned to school. Workmen had already changed the street sign to Der Geschwister-Scholl-Platz and were beginning work on the rose garden. Some rose trees had already been planted and on closer inspection one or two tiny buds were visible. A high plaque on a tree trunk announced that this was the Hans and Sophie Scholl Memorial Garden. I reached the steps at about seven forty-five. Boys were milling about the entrance.

“Da ist er!” shouted one as he spotted me. As I slowly mounted the steps they began to applaud. All down the corridor I was cheered. I laughed. If only they knew the truth! Most of the staff came up to me, bade me a good return and shook my hand. A delighted Wagner introduced me to the new Referendare. I blushed while he told them my story so far.
“Jamie has a perfect accent too. Just listen!”
In my finest Prince Charles I took their hands and said how absolutely delighted I was to meet them. I felt sure that the tiny black-haired woman from Cologne was going to curtsey! Peter Breitner came over and hugged me.

How ironic that such a knave as I should be a hero!

Mr Huber sought me out and invited me into his office for a cup of coffee. Had I found a flat? I told him that I was still looking but had a temporary bed at Herr Breitner’s place. I had also discovered that it might be possible to extend my stay as assistant beyond May 15th to the end of term in July. He looked rather surprised but I asked if he would do me the courtesy of finding out how to go about it. He picked up the phone and was soon speaking to a Frau Schuster in Munich. At least I assumed he was.
“Ah, I see…….I see….right…pity……pity……..,” he said at intervals. “He should have applied when?.....By the end of March?.....but he was hospitalized around then!.....I see…..So it makes no difference?”
So that was that. In May I would be on my way home. He shrugged his shoulders. There was nothing he could do, he regretted.

I saw Steiner. His mother would love me to come round for that long promised chicken and twice-fried beans. But that Thursday, the day of our dinner date, Steiner was not in school. No-one, not even Beppo knew why. I got his number from the office and rang up. There was no reply. That afternoon after school I took a slow walk the half-mile to his house, a great villa in an avenue of copper beeches. I found Beppo outside astride his bicycle. The house was shut up and deserted. Several windows downstairs were boarded up.
“What on Earth has happened?” I asked.
“He phoned me from Munich. They are flying out tonight to Boston to be with Herr Steiner. They were eating their dinner last night at about eight when the windows went in. Trudi was cut by flying glass. The police came. They advised Mrs Steiner to go to a hotel for the night.”
“Do you know who did this, Beppo?”
“It is probably that damned fascist Klaus in 14a and his friends. They hate Steiner because he is so much cleverer than them. They are bad people but there will be no proof of course. They were the ones who beat us up, almost certainly. Now we shall probably have to move out as well.”

I have never seen the Steiners since. I saw Beppo, briefly, once more.

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

In mid-February 1943 I returned home briefly for my grandmother’s funeral. I was very upset. She was such a comic and we had been very close. My father had a drink or two afterwards. The battle of Stalingrad had been lost. He began to sound off against the Russians, the stupid British, the useless Italians, the cowardly Generals who had let down the Leader and anyone else he

could think of. A neighbour who was forever trying to ingratiate himself with my father, now a party man of some considerable local standing, chose this moment to produce a "scurrilous" leaflet which had turned up in his sister's letter box. This I recognized instantly as one of the batch we had taken to Salzburg. My father read it with increasing anger, finally screwed it up and threw it at the fire, missing though, not surprisingly, by quite a margin. After he had staggered off to bed I sat talking quietly to my mother. I began to tell her some of what I and my friends had been up to. I knew she privately despised Hitler and I was sure that she would be sympathetic and supportive. But a great inner swell of suppressed misery seemed to break within her. I was appalled. She sobbed like I had never seen her cry before. She had just lost her beloved Mutti, she wailed, now she might lose her only beloved daughter! I tried to calm her but the noise had already woken Father. He came down and demanded to know what was going on. He saw the leaflet I had unscrewed and put into my bag.

"Are you mad?" he ranted. "Do you want to get us all shot? Throw it into the fire at once!"

I did so, but my mother was inconsolable, and now to my horror she began to tell him of my exploits.

"And the Scholl children put you up to this?"

"We only put stamps on the envelopes and posted them!" I rejoined.

"Only? Only? Is this all?"

"No" said my mother "She went to Salzburg to scatter them!"

"Is this true?"

When I nodded the poor man sat down heavily. He made me tell him the whole story.

"My God, we are in danger of losing everything! Liberty, position, home….What a fool I have been, allowing you to mix with those Scholls! And this is where free-thinking gets you, Robert Scholl! This is what it leads to. Treason!"

"But father, they are not the main ones. Others write these things. There is a Professor Huber. We only deliver."

He thought this over until an awful gleam came into his eyes. I knew he was ambitious and it was that gleam I now recognized.

"There might be a way of turning this to our advantage, Mother! Stop crying woman and listen! These are only children. Mislead by this professor…They would get six months, a year at the most. And of course who would have the credit for smashing this ring of saboteurs? Who knows what that might lead to?"

"But think, my dear husband, they would arrest our daughter too!"

He thought this over for a moment then asked me for the date of my trip I to Salzburg.

"That is not a worry!" he declared, pouring himself a Schnapps. "We shall maintain that she was at home for the evening with us. I am an important man in this town. Who would contradict me?"

I awoke the next morning feeling dreadful, but for a moment unable to understand why. I could hear my father speaking on the telephone. He was speaking in that official, smartened-up way he adopted whenever he spoke to a superior, the mayor or the vicar. Then it hit me. I crept down the stairs. I was devastated to hear the following:

"Yes, it is quite astonishing that such a man should still be lecturing in 1943 at one of Germany's great centres of learning. His name begins with an H - Hüttner, Hübner or something, the voice said on the telephone. It was a bad line. He is a lecturer in philosophy I think he said. No, Herr Oberführer, the informant did not give his name. Yes, Herr Oberführer, I quite agree that it is a disgrace that this man is there polluting our children's young

minds.…..…Yes, yes….it is he who concocts this filth and his students who distribute it…..my daughter is a good BDM girl, she has heard a rumour that the names are Scholl…..a brother and sister…..…but of course, they are young and impressionable…..…they are really not so much to be blamed…..…I'm glad you agree…..it is that red swine of a professor who sits at the centre of his web, pulling the strands….thank you, thank you, thank you…that, kindly Sir, is very much appreciated…..Goodbye."

When he put down the phone I sat on the stairs and tried to decide what to do. Sophie had told me once that there was bookseller in Ulm who supported the cause, an old friend of her father. If ever I heard in Ulm that they were suspected I should let him know. He had a secret code - something about a book being out of stock - which he could pass to a close friend of theirs in Munich. I finally remembered the name and waited until my father had gone off to inspect some warehouse. I told the bookseller over the phone that everyone involved with the White Rose was in great peril, and that I had overheard a Gestapo friend of my father boast that the rose would soon have all its petals torn off. I did not tell him who I was. He did not wish to know.

Why the message did not get through I never found out. Perhaps the go-between in Munich was out. Perhaps the Scholls were away from home, up to their mischief. I did not go in person to warn Hans and Sophie I am ashamed to say. I tried to persuade myself that I had done my duty. I was sitting in the tram a day or two later. The man opposite me was reading The People's Watchdog. I froze when I read towards the bottom of the front page the headline - Student Traitors Arrested! At last - it triumphantly declared - the vile source of vandalism, treason and defeatism was discovered. I got off and boarded another tram to take me to where the Scholls lived. The windows were dark. Had they just gone out for a while? I waited around the corner for an hour but no-one came. I hurried round to Alexander's flat where I found him and Willi Graf, another member of the Rose, sitting in disconsolate silence. They had been collecting up any incriminating material. They were both shaken. Alexander had hardly dared to open the door when I knocked until I told them who I was. He looked around the door and quickly let me in.

"You should keep away from here. We could be arrested at any moment!"

Imagine how dreadful I felt. This was all my fault. I began to cry. Willi took my hand. What a fine young man he was! I tried to find the words to confess in what way I was involved with this disaster but Alexander was already speaking.

"What fools! Why, why did they take such a risk?"

Risk? I looked up and, wiping away my tears, asked him what had happened.

"They took a suitcase of the new leaflets to the university in broad daylight. At nine o' clock! They put them everywhere so that the students would find them before the lecture rooms were unlocked. What madness! They left the building. If they had then disappeared it would have been alright. But no! Willi said that Sophie suddenly turns, laughs and races back in with Hans chasing her. They had some leaflets left and decided to throw them all from the top corridor down the stairwell. And of course they were seen! What stupidity! Now we shall all be caught!"

Willi looked at me and ran his fingers ruefully through his hair. I asked him where they had been arrested.

"The caretaker, that creep Schmied, saw them and grabbed hold of Sophie. Hans came back up but couldn't get her free. Schmied shouted out, the doors were all locked and the Gestapo were called. And Christel Probst has been picked up too"

So it was not my fault. With unworthy feelings of relief I left Alex and Willi and took a tram

home. I never saw those lovely brave lads again.

Alex was executed in July, with Professor Huber, and poor Willi in October. Whether it was due to my father's accusations or based on other evidence found in Sophie's flat I never did discover. I wrote to my father and told him I would never speak to him again. This was prophetic because he died of a stroke that July.

The trial of the Scholls was set for 22nd February in Munich, a mere four days after their arrest. I could not sleep. Would I be arrested too? Would they so torture them that they would give up all their friends? I waited in a state of dread for four days for that rap on the door. It never came. I somehow plucked up the courage to go to the court. There, outside I met the parents. They had clearly not slept either for days. Robert shook his head when I lamely said that their age would surely mean a lighter sentence.
"They have flown down that dreadful man, Judge Roland Kreisler, from Berlin. It does not look good."
At one point Robert managed to push his way into the courtroom (which was reserved for specially invited Nazis). He had eventually been ejected but had managed to cry out that there was a much higher court before which all must stand. He said that brave Sophie had said very quietly to her judge, when asked to plead, that her only crime was to say what most people were thinking, but dare not utter; of that she was proud to plead guilty as charged. Finally the news seeped out like a terrible smell. All guilty. All sentenced to die. To die! Mrs Scholl collapsed weeping.
"No!" I remember shouting out "They are only young! My father said so! There has been a dreadful mistake!"
I asked the two policemen on the door to be allowed in. They said absolutely nothing and just stood there like stone statues.
"I want to explain to the judge! I want to see my friends!" I screamed. Robert dragged me back. As he did a van drove out through the courtyard gates. Through the windscreen I just caught sight of three dark figures.

When Freisler announced the verdicts and the sentence of death on all three, he asked them, as was customary, what they had to say for themselves. Brave Sophie had already had her say and remained defiantly silent. Christl pleaded for his life, not for his own sake, but for his three young children, one of whom of only four weeks he had not yet even seen. Hans tried to plead for the life of his friend but was brutally cut short by the unspeakable Freisler who told him that if he had nothing to say on his own behalf he should shut his mouth. Then he announced that the death sentence would be carried out that very day at five p.m. at the execution prison of Munich-Stadelheim. This vile place lay at the edge of the beautiful Perlach forest.

They had then about three hours of life left.

That evening I sat in my flat hoping that some higher power would intervene, that commonsense would prevail. I turned on the radio and as the announcements went on and on with no mention of an execution my conviction grew that my hopes were justified. It was not until the very end that the "elimination" of three traitors was announced. That was how insignificant they were.

I could not go to work. I could not eat. I sat all day and stared at the wall, imagining the words I wanted to write there. A few days later I received a letter. It bore a red eight Pfennig stamp. The handwriting on the envelope was unfamiliar. Inside was a letter from Sophie smuggled out of the jail.

"My dearest, my oldest friend, today when I woke the sun was shining. I knew it would be the last morning I would ever see. Is it sadder to die, do you think, on a bright day or a miserable day? Then I remember that everywhere people are dying in this vile war. We have just said goodbye to our parents. They were allowed in to prison at four o' clock to see us separately a final time. I told my mother I was sorry. How lame! How many times had I said sorry before to her about such really trivial things; about breaking a dish, about forgetting to run an errand or to make the fire? She was very calm and did not weep. She told me to be brave and said that soon I would be with God. And I know this is true! Never again would I come racing through the door, she said. I replied that a few more years of life were neither here nor there for me any longer

I really do not regret, dear friend, the loss of those years in this dreadful prison of the mind! Even when the war is over what fate awaits our country, crushed in the vice from west and east? What price will be exacted for Hitler's folly, for all our folly?

And now as I retreat, rising above, dearest friend, and away from this Here and Now, from this era in which we have had the misfortune to be born, how clear to me it becomes that this was all the work of some evil force which fashioned an absurd drama in which we have all been the puppets; we are all guilty and yet none are guilty; the costumes were strewn around waiting for us to put them on; the props were waiting for us to pick them up; the verses of stupidity, of brutality and hatred were written and were only waiting to be learnt and spoken. Even Hitler seems to me now a mere ranting marionette of this pitiless destiny. How I long now to escape this guilt of being here and to regain my freedom!

Goodbye dear friend. I think again of those lovely summer days together in the forest before the darkness closed us all in.

Sophie

Her cellmate had inserted a brief note.

"Your three friends were brought together by the warders at the end to say goodbye. We had smuggled cigarettes down for them. They were very brave. Everyone said so. Even the Nazis were impressed. We heard that Sophie had had the nerve to tell her Gestapo interrogator, Mohr, who had lectured her condescendingly on her conduct, as if she was a naughty schoolgirl, that it was he, not she, who was wrong-headed. He even made her real coffee, he was so taken with her. She impressed us all with her serene courage. She did not tremble before death. In a few short hours I made and lost my dearest friend.

She went first. She just strolled up to the guillotine as if it were an old, tall, rickety door, as if she as going out through a gate for a breath of fresh air in the woods. After they had removed her, Hans went next. He shouted ***long live freedom*** *before the blade fell. We heard it in our cells. We cheered. The other boy wept at first but then went bravely on his way too."*

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

And so I closed the book on Hans and Sophie Scholl. Death was not the end for them but a pause. Years later they would come to life again in the esteem of many millions of people.

Chapter 18

I had not walked out in Frankenheim for a good while. It was on a Saturday in late April. I noticed with some distaste the policemen with sub-machine guns on every corner. Fresh posters of the Bader-Meinhoff terrorists were up everywhere. This was a display of strength to reassure the citizenry. As I walked along I began to realise with some pleasure that Frankenheimers were pausing to look at me and were pointing. Here was celebrity at last! I was their meddlesome Englishman, for better or for worse. Perhaps they were making a mental comparison of this improving face with the battered one which had appeared in the newspaper? I saw a lady indicate a photo on a poster. Still it did not register. I smiled when I recalled Berthy doing the same in December and joking that I was a wanted man. Near the post office I saw Beppo. We chatted for a while. Gradually I sensed that he wanted to take his leave of me. Had he heard from Markus? Yes, he had had one card from Boston. He might be back in the autumn but they would definitely move to another town for a fresh start.

"In every way." Beppo added. "Because Markus told me his parents had not been getting on very well….." Now he lowered his voice. "Jamie, people are looking at you."

"I know. I'm quite a hero, aren't I?"

"No. Jamie. The photo. He looks like you. Look over there. Those two old women are staring at us."

I thought of Bertholt again. I laughed. I had indeed grown my hair longer since February. So what? I glanced at the photo on the poster behind us, comparing it to the puffy face - my new face - reflected by the glass of the shop window to which the poster had been taped….My God….. Beppo was right. …It was me…..I had been beaten into a terrorist! And the young man in the photo above "mine" had lank dark hair like Beppo's.

"Jamie, let us walk slowly towards the park."

He took my arm. We went a few steps. I heard a voice I recognized. It was the old man from the park. I could not help but turn. His flapping coat-wings had fascinated me ever since our first encounter. There he was, twittering excitedly like some huge insect to the two policemen, and prodding at the poster with his stick. The policemen were telling him cheerfully to calm down but he persisted. Now he thrust his stick towards me.

"Da ist einer - ein Scheissterrorist!" he yelled.

In slow motion a policeman looked smilingly at me and then casually at the poster. I saw his expression gradually alter. Now his keener eyes were on me again.

Beppo whispered, "Komm, wir gehen!" I saw the first policeman nudge the other. The old man kept shouting at them "Bist du blind? Das ist er!"

We began to walk away again. First slowly, then more quickly. The left turn to the park was only twenty metres away. A voice shouted HALT!

" Pretend we haven't heard," said Beppo.

"This is crazy!" I said with a laugh. "Let's go for a beer!"

I paused and looked across the road to a pub I had never been into. Beppo pulled my arm. I heard rapid footsteps behind us echoing our own. I know, I thought, I'll show them my passport. Beppo kept pulling harder. He was crying, silly boy! I turned to face our pursuers. To my utter bewilderment they were now training their guns on us. I began to shout something. I made the

mistake of reaching into my inside pocket for my passport. Beppo panicked, dropped his shopping and began to run. A volley of shots rang out. I remember hurtling backwards, overtaking Beppo, as if I was caught in a mighty private squall. My shoulder and leg seemed to catch fire. I fell. I raised my head from the pavement. A great plate of blood was spreading on my shirt. Absurdly, I looked up to see where it was falling from. Behind me I heard the desperate cries of a young man dying.

The bullet in my abdomen had nicked the edge of my liver and missed my spine by a fraction. My hip, thigh and shoulder were shattered. I did not pass out. I did not cry out. The awful, insistent pain came later. This time Emma really did come to see me, a day or so before I was flown back home.
“Didn’t you get my letter?” I asked.
“Did you send it to my landlady?”
I nodded.
“Rotten bitch.”
We chatted for about an hour, about old times, about school, about the schoolchildren, managing somehow to dodge our real areas of contention. When she finally went she bent down to kiss me on the cheek as a sister would her brother.
“I still love you, you know. I think I always will,” she whispered.
I watched her leave and close the door with one last wave and a smile. A man came to greet her. I knew I would never see her again.

In the weeks and months after I was stretchered home I underwent many operations to piece me back together with plates and screws and wire. My life went into suspension and I became clinically depressed. The shocking events at the Munich Games sent me lower. I tried to read but soon lost interest. I began to wish that the bullets had been more telling. Yet somehow I got through it. My mother came regularly to take care of me and eventually returned to the house for good. My father stopped drinking and they were reconciled. Winter went and spring came again.

Then one morning in early summer 1973 I remember I was doing my exercises in the front room when I heard the letterbox. My mother had popped out on an errand. On my crutches I managed to get to the hall. Amongst the bills I could see a familiar corner peeping out. I brushed away the other letters with the end of my crutch and revealed an envelope with tiny pink and white squares.

Emma had decided to come home. She had finished with Jörg. She couldn’t stop thinking about me. How was I? Could she come up and see me?

In 1975/76 I finally finished my course. I was able to walk without sticks. With physiotherapy my gait improved. I would never achieve my ambition of playing for the Mighty Reds but at least I could get to matches again, and walk onto the Kop. Over the years, my hip improved and my mates stopped calling me Old Hopalong. When hip-replacement surgery became possible I was one of the first candidates. My left shoulder will always be a problem. It clicks and can ache for hours, but I never did want to play golf.

In 1977 I married Emma. I became a teacher and she became a librarian. Eventually I told her

about Heidi and used her to cancel out Jörg. I was too ashamed to tell her about the violinist. I kept it back, reasoning that Emma would have her secrets too. In the end it ceased to matter. But one day when I was having a really bad day with my shoulder I asked her straight out
"Emma, was it pity that made you come back home to me?"
She thought this over and laughed.
"What's so bloody funny?"
"I'll be honest with you," she said. "One of the main reasons was his feet."
She collapsed laughing on the sofa.
"His fucking feet?"
"Yes old George had really bad, sweaty feet! And a little dick!"
I laughed and cried.
"So what was the main reason you came back, smelly feet and a little dick apart?"
"Oh, I don't know. I just loved you. That's all."

In the early nineties we returned to Bavaria. We took our son and daughter, bribing them with a week at the lakeside on Lake Constance on the return leg. Frau Ertl had not moved. She cried and cried when we showed up in the Birkenstrasse. She would not let us go. Ernst and Mutti were no more however. I was shown to Beppo's grave and we laid a wreath on it. There was no sign of Steiner. I looked through the phone book but there was a long list of Steiners. I gave up after three calls. Peter Breitner had gone down to Italy with his friend, a neighbour informed me. Huber had died in 1987, and the landlord at the Noble Stag confessed that he had no recollection of me at all. No-one knew of the whereabouts of the Captain. We did not have time to go across to see Berthy and Karl.

We walked onto the school square which was now full of white roses and there was a proper monument telling the briefest story of Hans and Sophie Scholl's bravery. And in great white letters the school announced proudly that it was now **Das Geschwister-Scholl-Gymnasium**. We walked to the spot where Beppo and I had been gunned down, had a drink in the pub I had never been into, and then left the town for ever.

In Munich we strolled into the Geschwister-Scholl square in front of the university. The memorial there was a simple but overwhelming one; a sculpture of a scatter of leaflets, as if thrown down, that very instant, onto the ground. First Sophie, our daughter, and then John, our son, stepped forward and placed one white rose on either side of it.

Epilogue

Since my assistantship in Germany in 1971-72 I have unearthed many similar stories of bravery and self-sacrifice in the war years in Germany. The story of that Resistance has yet to emerge a full, sixty years later. Of course Hitler was popular. But the number of his opponents grew as the years wore on. His was the most rigid, intrusive, watchful, totalitarian regime in history, equalled perhaps only by Stalinist Russia. Those of us here at home who did not experience that tyranny should perhaps beware of a too easy condemnation of those who were silent. Finally, I reserve my contempt for the military opposition in Germany. With some noteworthy exceptions these men stood and dithered when they alone had the means and ample opportunities to eliminate Hitler. They could have shortened the war, saved millions of lives and rehabilitated the

reputation of Germany to some extent. These were the real cowards (who Hitler ironically despised above all in the German Establishment) ultimately so shamed by glorious young heroes like Hans and Sophie Scholl.

God bless.

The author finally offers five sonnets to their memory

FOR YOU AND YOUR GENERATION
Was that a time for youth to bloom
When wicked wizards conjured war?
Should budding lads have met a doom
Where jealous old men failed before?
Your greatest gift was stolen away,
The thieving warlock made you hail;
Your meadows, sweet and soft in May,
Turned winter steppes in stark betrayal.
It should have been a time to woo
To feel a trembling lover's kiss;
Love's rose which lay in wait for you
Fell withered in war's wilderness.

Sharp February's kiss did bring
Relief before the cruel spring.

YOUNG FOOLS
You could have lived a private life
Like us; and swallowed quiet despair
- A bitter draught one need not share.
And *you* could have been a bustling wife,
And smothered up your ire with chores,
Like fire all dampened down with slack…..
You could both have bitten fury back
And won medals in an evil cause.
But no; with tact you were not blessed…
By whom were your examples set?
What convinced you both you owed a debt
To Humanity? Why were you so obsessed?

Did you dream on streets and squares and schools
Your names would ever gleam, young fools?

FROM THE HOME FRONT FOR A BROTHER AT STALINGRAD
What right have I to live now you are dead,

Undone by shell, preserved in ice and clay,
With love's sweet smiles unseen and vows unsaid?
What have I done to merit one more day?
What pious words, self-righteous words I spoke,
That you loaded rounds of evil in your breech;
Such hypocrisy I shamefully revoke.
What blessed right had I to stand and preach?
I should have turned on him who sent you there
- Not faltered, though my blood was seized with fear -
Stood up and screamed out NO though no-one dare,
And tried to slow at least war's cruel career.

At last I shall atone for my slow guilt,
My silence, when my urgent blood is spilt.

COWARDICE

Sleep peaceful, brother, for here I shall lie
And watch for the steely glint of the dawn
To prize open my dull dispatcher's eye,
A slave, like I, of vengeful tyrants born.
No forfeit this, this cornered life of mine
Measured out in gloom and silent days
Watching my native land I love decline,
Weighing up in fear each word and phrase.
What sweet relief it was to turn and shout,
To cast in sturdy spears of words our thought
Those wicked spells of rules and laws to flout,
Those lies our skulking, scoundrel teachers taught.

Such a half-life my yearning soul disdains
With brothers creeping free, but lost, in chains.

THE INCANDESCANT ROSE

Where in winter sleeps the rose?
Where bides her perfume warm and sweet?
Where hide the buds a summer throws,
Where are those clusters, swirled, complete?
In broken branch and surly stem
In wretched wood and weary root?
Can such devices hold the gem
Which might adorn a nuptial suit
In glowing bridal hands and hair,
Delight of June's immortal days
Profligate, beyond all care
All wanton in her wild displays?

In February’s frozen jaws
Where pout those lips which May adores?