

# THE GERMAN HOUSE



# THE GERMAN HOUSE

A Novel

ANNETTE HESS

Translated from the German by Elisabeth Lauffer



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# PART ONE



THERE HAD BEEN ANOTHER fire last night. She smelled it the moment she stepped out, without a coat, a thin layer of snow blanketing the quiet Sunday-morning street. It must have happened near her house this time. The sharp odor cut through the familiar smell of damp winter air: charred rubber, burned fabric, and melted metal, but also singed leather and hair; some mothers used lambskins to protect their newborns from the cold. It was not the first time Eva wondered who could do such a thing, who could sneak through backyards to break into apartment buildings and set fire to the strollers parked in the entryways. *Must be a lunatic—or a bunch of hoodlums!* many thought. Fortunately, none of the fires had spread to the building. No one had yet been hurt. Other than financially, of course. A new baby carriage cost 120 marks at Hertie's. No small peanuts for young families.

"Young families" echoed in Eva's mind. She paced nervously up and down the sidewalk. It was freezing out. Although Eva wore no more than her new, light blue silk dress, she wasn't cold—she was sweating with excitement. She was waiting for none other than, as her sister teased, the "apple of her eye," her

future husband, who would meet her family for the first time today, the third Sunday of Advent. He had been invited to the midday meal. Eva checked her watch. Three minutes past one. Jürgen was late.

The occasional car crawled by. It was snowdusting. Eva's father had coined the term to describe this weather phenomenon: tiny ice flakes came sailing down from the clouds, as if someone up there were shaving an enormous block of ice. Someone who made all the decisions. Eva gazed up at the gray skies over whitish roofs. She discovered then that she was being watched: standing at the second-story window—above the sign that read "German House," above the letters "ou"—was a beige figure looking down at her. Her mother. She appeared unmoved, but Eva had the feeling she was taking her leave. Eva quickly turned her back on her. She swallowed. That was all she needed right now. To start crying.

The door to the restaurant opened and her father came out, heavy and dependable in his white chef's coat. He ignored Eva and opened the display case to the right of the door, to place a supposedly new menu in it, although Eva knew there wouldn't be a new one until Shrove Tuesday. Her father was actually very worried. He doted on her and now jealously awaited the unknown man making his way there. Eva heard him softly singing one of those folk songs he delighted in butchering, pretending everything was normal. Much to his own dismay, Ludwig Bruhns was utterly unmusical: "While a-clownin' at the gate, a little song comes to meeeee. Under the linden treeeeee."

A younger woman with teased, light blond hair appeared next to Eva's mother at the window. She overeagerly waved at Eva, but even at this distance, Eva could tell she was depressed. But Eva did not blame herself. She had waited long enough for her big



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sister to marry. Then Annegret turned twenty-eight—her waistline expanding with every passing year—and following a secret discussion with her parents, Eva decided to break with convention. Before it was too late. She was practically on the verge of becoming an old maid herself. She hadn't had many admirers. Her family couldn't understand it. Eva had such a healthy, feminine presence, with her full lips, slender nose, and long, naturally blond hair that she cut, styled, and sculpted into an artful updo by herself. Her eyes, though, often appeared troubled, as if she were anticipating some impending catastrophe. Eva suspected this frightened men away.

Five minutes past one. No Jürgen. Instead, the door to the left of the restaurant opened. Eva watched her little brother Stefan come out. He wasn't wearing a coat, which prompted a concerned rapping on the window and gesticulation from their mother upstairs. Stefan obstinately trained his gaze ahead. After all, he had put on his orange pompom hat and matching mittens. He tugged a sled behind him. Purzel, the family's black dachshund, scampered about his feet; he was a sneaky dog they couldn't help but adore.

"Something stinks!" Stefan said.

Eva sighed. "You now, too! This family is a curse!"

Stefan began pulling the sled back and forth through the light snow on the sidewalk. Purzel sniffed at a streetlight, circled excitedly, then pooped in the snow. The pile steamed. The sled runners scraped across the asphalt, joined by the rasp of a snow shovel, as their father got to work before the entrance. Eva caught the way he clutched his back and screwed up his eyes. Her father was in pain—something he would never admit. One morning in October, after his back had been "smarting like hell," as he put it, for

some time, her father was unable to get out of bed. Eva called an ambulance, and the hospital X-rayed him and discovered a herniated disc. They'd operated, and the doctor advised him to close the restaurant. Ludwig Bruhns explained that he had a family to feed. And what about his measly pension? They urged him to hire a cook and get out of the kitchen. But Ludwig refused to allow a stranger to enter his realm. The solution had been to stop offering lunch, so since that fall, they'd opened only in the evening. Revenue had dropped by nearly half since then, but Ludwig's back was feeling better. Still, Eva knew that her father's greatest wish was to start serving lunch again that spring. Ludwig Bruhns loved his job, loved it when his guests gathered in good company, when they enjoyed the food and went home smiling, satisfied, and tipsy. "I serve up full bellies and happy hearts," he liked to say. And Eva's mother would tease back, "He who can, does. He who cannot, serves."

Eva was feeling a bit chilled now. She crossed her arms and shivered. She hoped fervently that Jürgen would treat her parents with respect. There had been a few times she'd witnessed an unpleasant, condescending attitude toward waiters or shop girls.

"Police!" Stefan bellowed. A black-and-white vehicle with a siren on its roof was approaching. Two men in dark blue uniforms sat inside. Stefan froze in awe. The officers were surely headed for the burned stroller, Eva thought, to collect evidence and question the building's residents whether they'd noticed anything suspicious the night before. The car glided by almost soundlessly. The policemen gave first Ludwig, then Eva a nod. People knew each other in this neighborhood. The car turned onto König Strasse. *Sure enough, the fire must have been in the housing estate. That new pink apartment building. Lots of families live there. Young families.*

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Twelve minutes past one. *He's not coming. He reconsidered. He'll call tomorrow and tell me we aren't a good match. The disparity in our families' social standing, darling Eva, is just too great for us to bridge.* Pow!!! Stefan had thrown a snowball at her. He hit her square in the chest, and the icy snow slid down into her dress. Eva grabbed Stefan by the sweater and yanked him toward her. "Are you crazy?! This is a brand-new dress!" Stefan bared his teeth, his guilty face. Eva would've scolded him further, but at that moment Jürgen's yellow car appeared at the end of the street. Her heart leapt like a spooked calf. Eva cursed her nerves, which she'd even seen a doctor about. *Breathe deeply.* It was something she failed to do now, because as Jürgen's car drew near, Eva was struck by the realization that nothing would ever convince her parents of Jürgen's ability to make her happy. Not even his money. Eva could make out Jürgen's face behind the windshield. He looked tired. And serious. He didn't even glance at her. For one horrifying moment, Eva thought he might step on the gas and drive off. But then the car slowed. Stefan burst out, "Gee, he's got black hair! Like a Gypsy!"

Jürgen steered the car a bit too close to the sidewalk. The rubber tires squealed against the curb. Stefan reached for Eva's hand. Eva felt the snow melting inside her bodice. Jürgen switched off the engine and sat in the car for another moment. He would never forget this scene: the two women—one fat and one short—standing at the window above the word "House," in the mistaken belief that he couldn't see them, the boy with the sled gawking at him, and the father, massive, standing in the door to the restaurant with a snow shovel, ready for anything. They studied him as though he were a defendant entering the courtroom and taking his place for the first time. Except for Eva. Hers was a gaze of anxious love.

Jürgen swallowed, put on his hat, and picked up a bouquet

wrapped in tissue paper from the passenger seat. He got out and approached Eva. He was about to smile, when something nipped him painfully in the back of the leg. A dachshund. "Purzel! No! No!" Eva cried. "Stefan, bring him inside. Put him in the bedroom!"

Stefan protested, but grabbed the dog and carried the struggling animal back into the house. Eva and Jürgen locked eyes timidly. They weren't entirely sure how to greet one another with Eva's family watching, so they shook hands and began speaking at the same time.

"I'm sorry, they're just so curious."

"What a welcoming committee! To what do I owe the honor?"

The moment Jürgen released Eva's hand, her father, mother, and sister vanished from their posts, like rabbits slipping into their burrows. Eva and Jürgen were alone. An icy wind swept across the street.

"Are you in the mood for goose?" Eva asked.

"I've thought of nothing else for days."

"You just need to get along with my brother. Then you'll have everyone on your side."

They laughed, neither certain why. Jürgen headed for the restaurant, but Eva steered him to the left, toward the door to the house. She didn't want to lead him through the dim dining room that smelled of spilled beer and damp ash. Instead, they climbed the polished staircase, with its black banister, to the apartment above the restaurant. The two-story house had been rebuilt after the war, having been almost completely destroyed in an air strike. The morning following that inferno, all that survived was the restaurant's long bar, which stood there defenseless and exposed to the elements.

Eva's mother waited by the apartment door upstairs, wearing

the smile typically reserved for regulars at the restaurant. Her “sugar face,” as Stefan called it. Edith Bruhns had put on her double-strand garnet necklace, along with her gilded stud earrings with the dangling cultured pearls and her gold brooch shaped like a clover leaf. Edith was wearing all the jewelry she owned, which Eva had never seen before. She was reminded of the fairy tale she had read aloud to Stefan, about the fir tree. After Christmas, the tree was stored in the attic till spring, when it was carried outside and burned. In its brittle branches hung the forgotten remains of Christmas Eve.

*Fitting for Advent, at least,* Eva thought.

“Herr Schorrmann, what is this weather you’ve brought with you? Roses in December?! Where on earth did you find these, Herr Schorrmann?”

“Mum, his last name is Schoormann, with two o’s!”

“I’ll take your hat, Herr Schooormann.”

In the living room, which also served as the dining room on Sundays, Ludwig Bruhns met Jürgen, wielding a roasting fork and poultry shears. He offered Jürgen his right wrist in greeting.

Jürgen apologized, “The snow.”

“Not to worry. No harm done. It’s a big goose, sixteen pounds. It takes its time.”

Annegret emerged from the background and fell upon Jürgen. The eyeliner she’d put on was a little too black, the lipstick a little too orange. She shook Jürgen’s hand and smiled conspiratorially. “Congratulations. You’re getting the real deal.” Jürgen wondered whether she meant the goose or Eva.

A short time later, they were all seated at the table, regarding the steaming bird. The yellow roses Jürgen had brought stood to the side in a crystal vase, like flowers brought to a funeral. The

radio played unidentifiable Sunday music in the background. A Christmas pyramid powered by three flickering candles twirled on the cupboard. The fourth had yet to be lit. At the center of the pyramid, Mary, Joseph, and the newborn child in the manger stood before a stable. Sheep, shepherds, and the Three Kings and their camels scurried around the family in an endless circle. They would never reach the Holy Family, never be able to offer their gifts to the Baby Jesus. This had saddened Eva as a child. She'd finally snapped the gift from the Moorish king's hands and placed it before the manger. By the following Christmas, the little red, wooden package had gone missing, and since then, the Moorish king had spun empty-handed. The gift never had turned up. Eva's mother told this story every year, when she brought down the pyramid from the attic for the Christmas season. Eva had been five at the time, but she had no memory of it.

Eva's father carved the goose along the breast with the poultry shears. "Was the goose alive once?" Stefan looked quizzically at his father, who winked at Jürgen.

"No, this is a fake goose. Just for eating."

"Then I want breast meat!" Stefan held out his plate.

"Guests first, sonny."

Eva's mother took Jürgen's plate—the Dresden porcelain patterned with fanciful green tendrils—and held it out to her husband. Eva observed the way Jürgen looked around without being obvious. He eyed the worn sofa and yellow checked blanket her mother had arranged over a tear in the upholstery. She had also crocheted a small coverlet for the left armrest. That was where Eva's father, once he'd closed up his kitchen, would sit after midnight and rest his feet on a low padded stool, as the doctor had recommended. The weekly newspaper, *The Family Friend*, lay on the

coffee table, opened to the crossword puzzle, a quarter of which had been solved. Another doily protected the precious television set. Jürgen inhaled through his nose and thanked Eva's mother courteously for the full plate she set before him. She positioned the dish to look especially appetizing. Her earrings swung as she moved. Eva's father, who had traded his white chef's coat for his Sunday jacket, sat down next to Eva. There was a small green fleck on his cheek. Probably parsley. Eva quickly brushed it off his soft face. He took her hand and gave it a little squeeze without looking at her. Eva swallowed. She was furious at Jürgen for his appraising look. Fine, he might be used to something else. But he had to see how hard her parents were trying, how good they were, how endearing.

They started eating in silence. As she always did in front of company, Annegret restrained herself and poked at her food, as though she weren't hungry. But afterward, she would stuff herself with leftovers, and then go for the cold goose in the pantry later that evening. She offered Jürgen the salt and pepper caddy and winked.

"Would you like some pepper, Herr Schoooooormann? Salt?"

Jürgen politely declined, which Eva's father registered without looking up.

"No one's ever had to season my cooking."

"Eva tells me you're a nurse? At the hospital?" Jürgen addressed Annegret, who was a mystery to him. She shrugged, as if it weren't worth mentioning.

"Which department?"

"Nursery."

In the silence that followed, they could suddenly all hear the radio announcer. "From Gera, Grandma Hildegard sends her

regards to her family in Wiesbaden, especially her eight-year-old grandson Heiner, on this third Sunday of Advent.” Music started to play.

Edith smiled at Jürgen.

“And what do you do professionally, Herr Schoooooormann?”

“I studied theology. Now I work in my father’s company. In upper management.”

“Mail-order business, isn’t that right? Your family runs a mail-order business?” her father chimed in.

Eva elbowed him. “Daddy! Now don’t pretend to be dumber than you are!”

A short silence, then everyone laughed, including Stefan, although he didn’t understand why. Eva relaxed. She and Jürgen exchanged a glance: *It’ll be fine!*

“Of course we receive the Schoormann catalog too,” Eva’s mother admitted.

Stefan sang the jingle in falsetto. “Schoormann’s got it, Schoormann gets it—to you. Ding dong! Dong ding!”

Jürgen feigned seriousness. “And have we also ordered from the catalog? That is the question.”

“Of course,” Edith responded solicitously. “A blow-dryer and a raincoat. We were very satisfied. But you should start selling washing machines. I’d rather not go to Hertie’s for such a big purchase. They always talk your ear off. With a catalog, you can consider your options in the comfort of your own home.”

Jürgen nodded in agreement. “Yes, you’re right, Frau Bruhns. I happen to have several changes planned for the company.”

Eva gave him an encouraging look. Jürgen cleared his throat.

“My father is sick. He’ll not be able to run the company much longer.”



"I'm so sorry to hear that," Eva's mother said.

"What has he got?" Her father passed Jürgen the gravy boat. Jürgen wasn't prepared to say any more, though. He dribbled gravy on his meat.

"It tastes delicious."

"Glad to hear it."

Eva knew that Jürgen's father was growing increasingly senile. Jürgen had only spoken about it once. There were good days and bad. But his unpredictability was only getting worse. Eva hadn't met Jürgen's father and his second wife, yet. After all, the groom was supposed to visit the parents of the bride first. Eva and Jürgen had argued about whether he should ask for her hand today. Jürgen was against it. Eva's parents would think him unserious if he stormed in with such a request. Or—even worse—think that there was something else going on. The quarrel went unresolved. Eva studied Jürgen's face, trying to detect whether he planned to ask her father today. But his expression revealed nothing. She looked at his hands, which clenched the silverware tighter than usual. Eva hadn't experienced an "intimate encounter," as Doctor Gorf called it, with Jürgen. She was ready to, considering she'd already lost her virginity two years ago. But Jürgen had clear expectations: no intercourse before marriage. He was conservative. A wife was to submit to her husband's authority. From the first time they met, Jürgen looked at Eva as though reading her from the inside, as though he knew what was best for her, better than she did herself. Eva, who most of the time didn't know what she really wanted, had no objection to being led—whether dancing or in life. This marriage would also allow Eva to move up in society. From the innkeeper's daughter born and raised in Bornheim, to the wife of a

distinguished businessman. The thought made Eva dizzy. But it was a happy dizziness.

Right after lunch, Eva and her mother started fixing the coffee together in the spacious kitchen. Annegret had left. She had to work the late shift at the hospital, had to feed her infants. Plus, she didn't care too much for cake with buttercream icing.

Eva sliced thick pieces of Frankfurt Crown Cake while her mother ground coffee beans in a small electric grinder. Edith Bruhns stared at the growling appliance. When the noise stopped, she said, "He's not at all your type, Evie. I mean, I can't help but think of Peter Kraus. He was always your heartthrob. . . ."

"Just because Jürgen's not blond?"

Eva was shocked by how obviously her mother didn't like Jürgen. And she considered her mother a great judge of character. Working at the restaurant, Edith had met countless people. At first glance, she could tell whether a person was decent or a lout.

"Those black eyes . . ."

"Mum, his eyes are dark green! You just need to look more closely."

"I mean, it's up to you. His family is certainly above reproach. But I have to be honest, child, I can't help it. He will not make you happy."

"Would you just get to know him first?"

Eva's mother poured bubbling water into the filled coffee strainer. The coffee smelled like the expensive kind.

"He's too withdrawn, Eva. He's spooky."

"He's thoughtful. Jürgen did want to become a priest. . . ."

"God forbid!"

"He had already studied theology for eight semesters. But then he met me and started rethinking celibacy."

Eva laughed, but her mother remained stony-faced. “Surely he left school because of his father? Because he needs to take over the company.”

“Yes.” Eva sighed. Her mother was not in the mood to joke. They watched the bubbling water seep through the coffee filter.

Spooky Jürgen and Eva’s father sat in the living room with cognacs. The radio played untiringly. Jürgen smoked a cigarette and studied the ponderous oil painting hung above the cupboard. It depicted a marshy landscape at sunset, the red sky flaring up beyond the dike. Some cows grazed upon a lush meadow. There was a woman hanging laundry beside her cottage. A short distance away, on the right edge of the painting, stood another figure. It appeared out of focus, as if sketched in after the fact. It was unclear whether this was the cowherd, the husband, or a stranger.

Stefan crouched on the rug and prepared his plastic army for battle. Purzel had been let back out of the bedroom, and he lay on his belly and blinked at the soldiers gathered before his nose. Stefan assembled long rows. He also had a tin wind-up tank. It lay waiting in its box.

Meanwhile, Eva’s father was sharing a general outline of the family history with his future son-in-law. “Yep, I’m an old sandworm. Grew up on Juist, as you can probably hear. My parents owned a shop. Supplied the whole island. Coffee, sugar, window glass—we had everything. Actually, Herr Schooormann, just like you. My mother died early. Father never really did recover. He’s been gone for fifteen years now, himself. Edith, my wife, well, I met her at the school of hotel management in Hamburg. That was in ’34, and boy were we wet behind the ears! My wife comes from a family of artists, if you can believe it. Her parents were both musicians in the philharmonic. He played first violin, she

played second. It was the other way 'round at home. My wife's mother, she's still alive. Lives in Hamburg. My wife was meant to play violin too, only her fingers were too short. So her hope was to become an actress, which her parents nipped firmly in the bud. At the very least, she wanted to see the world, so they sent her to study hotel management."

"And what brought you here?" Jürgen asked with friendly interest. He'd enjoyed the roast goose. He liked Ludwig Bruhns, who was giving such an enthusiastic account of his family. Eva had inherited her sensuous mouth from her father.

"'German House' had belonged to one of my wife's cousins, and he wanted to sell it. Boy, if that didn't fit like an ass on the can. Pardon the expression. We seized opportunity and reopened in '49. We've never looked back."

"Sure, Berger Strasse is worth it. . . ."

"The decent part, I'd like to point out, Herr Schoormann!"

Jürgen smiled reassuringly.

"Anyway, since the episode with my back, my doctor's been saying I should close up shop! So I spelled out my pension for him. Now we don't open till five. But there will be an end to this decadent lifestyle, come spring!"

They fell silent. Jürgen sensed there was more Ludwig wanted to say. He waited. Ludwig cleared his throat and did not look at him.

"Yes, well, my back issues. They're from the war."

"An injury?" Jürgen asked politely.

"I served in the field kitchen. On the Western Front. Just so you know." Eva's father polished off the rest of his cognac. Jürgen was slightly perplexed. He didn't sense that Ludwig Bruhns had just lied.

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Pow pow pow! Stefan had released his tank. It made a tremendous racket struggling over the rug, as though the pile were eastern marshlands. It ran over one soldier figurine after the other.

“Young man! Take it into the hallway!”

But Stefan had eyes only for Jürgen, who feared children’s directness. Then he remembered Eva’s advice, to win over her brother.

“Can you show me your tank, Stefan?”

Stefan stood up and handed Jürgen his tin toy.

“It’s almost two times bigger than Thomas Preisgau’s,” he said.

“Thomas is his best friend,” Ludwig explained, pouring more cognac.

Jürgen admired the tank with due care. Stefan snatched up a figurine from the floor. “Look, I painted this one. It’s a Yank! A Negro!”

Jürgen glanced at the small plastic soldier with the painted face Stefan was holding out for him. It was blood red. Jürgen closed his eyes, but the image remained.

“And I’m getting an air rifle from Father Christmas!”

“An air rifle,” Jürgen repeated absently. He took a long draft from his glass. The memory would fade in a moment.

Ludwig drew Stefan close. “You don’t know that for certain, little one.” Stefan squirmed loose.

“I always get everything I ask for.”

Ludwig looked at Jürgen apologetically. “It’s true, I’m afraid. The boy is spoiled rotten. My wife and I, well, we certainly weren’t expecting anything to come after the girls.”

The telephone rang in the hallway. Stefan reached it first and flatly recited his lines: “Bruhns family residence, Stefan Bruhns speaking. Who’s there, please?” Stefan listened, then called out,

“Eva, it’s Herr Körting! For you!” Eva came out of the kitchen, drying her hands on her apron, and took the receiver. “Herr Körting? And when? Immediately? But we’re all here—”

Eva was interrupted. She listened and looked through the open door at the two men sitting at the table. *They look quite comfortable with each other already*, she thought. Then Eva spoke into the phone, “Yes, all right. I’ll come in.” She hung up.

“I’m so sorry, Jürgen, but that was my boss. I have to go to work!”

Her mother emerged from the kitchen with the coffee tray.

“On Advent Sunday?”

“Apparently it’s urgent. There’s a trial date scheduled for next week.”

“Well, it’s like I always say, you can’t mix duty with pleasure.” Ludwig got to his feet. Jürgen stood too. “But you stay here! You’ve still got to try this cake!”

“It’s made with real butter. A whole pound!” Edith added.

“And you haven’t even seen my room yet!”

Jürgen escorted Eva into the hallway. She had changed and now wore her modest business suit. Jürgen helped her into her pale checked wool coat and murmured in comic desperation, “You planned this as a test, didn’t you? You want to leave me alone with your family and see how I fare.”

“They don’t bite.”

“Your father’s got those bloodshot eyes.”

“That’s from his pain medication. I’ll be back in an hour. I’m sure it has to do with that suit for damages. Those faulty engine parts from Poland.”

“Should I drive you?”

“Someone’s picking me up.”

"I'm coming with you. If you're not careful, you could end up compromised."

Eva pulled on her deerskin gloves, Jürgen's gift to her on Saint Nicholas Day.

"The only client who's ever compromised me is you."

They looked at each other. Jürgen moved in for a kiss. Eva pulled him into the corner beside the coatrack, where her parents couldn't see them. They embraced, smiled, kissed. Eva felt Jürgen's arousal, saw in his eyes, that he desired her. Loved her? Eva stepped out of the embrace. "Would you ask him today, please?"

Jürgen did not respond.

Eva left the apartment, and Jürgen headed back into the living room. There the Bruhnses sat at the coffee table, like actors waiting onstage for their prompt.

"We're not at all dangerous, Herr Schoormann."

"Totally harmless, Herr Schooormann."

"Except for Purzel. He bites sometimes," Stefan called from the rug.

"Well, let's get a taste of that cake."

Jürgen returned to the warmth of the living room.

Eva came out of the house. It was already getting dark outside. The snow cover glowed soft blue. Circles of amber lay beneath the streetlights. A large vehicle, its engine running, stood in the middle of the street. The driver, a young man, impatiently beckoned to Eva. She climbed into the front passenger seat. It smelled of cigarette smoke and peppermint in the car. The young man was chewing gum. He was not wearing a hat, nor did he shake Eva's hand. He just nodded curtly: "David Miller." Then he stepped on the gas. He wasn't a good driver—too fast—and routinely shifted gears either too late or too soon. Eva didn't have a license, but

she could tell he was not familiar with this vehicle. He was a bad driver in other ways too. The car repeatedly fishtailed. Eva studied the young man out the corner of her eye. He had thick reddish hair a little too long in the back, freckles, fine, pale eyelashes, and slender hands that gave off a strangely innocent impression.

It was evident Herr Miller had no interest in conversation. As they drove in silence toward the city center, the lights grew brighter and more colorful, with a particular tendency toward red. The lower section of Berger Strasse featured several such establishments. Suzi's or Mokka Bar. Eva thought of Jürgen, who had by now returned to the table, sat, and eaten the Frankfurt Crown Cake she'd baked, barely tasting a thing. Because without question, he was nervously debating whether he could ask of his family that they accept hers, and whether he wanted to spend the rest of his life together with her.

The law offices were in a tall building on one of the city's main streets. David Miller stepped into a small elevator alongside Eva. The doors shut automatically twice. Double doors. David pressed the eight, then looked at the ceiling, as if expecting something. Eva also looked up, at a screwed-shut hatch with countless little holes. A ventilation duct. She suddenly felt confined. Her heart pounded faster, and her mouth went dry. David looked at Eva. Looked down, although he wasn't much taller than she. He felt uncomfortably close. His eyes were strange.

"What was your name?"

"Eva Bruhns."

The elevator stopped with a jolt, and for a moment Eva feared they'd gotten stuck. But the doors opened. They stepped out, took a left, and rang at a heavy glass door. An office girl in green trotted up from the other side and let them in. Eva and the girl swiftly



looked each other over. Same age, similar figure. The girl had dark hair and bad skin, but her eyes were a clear gray.

Eva and David followed the girl down a long corridor. As they walked, Eva scrutinized the girl's tight suit and the folds that formed on her rear with every step. The heels on her black pumps were brazenly high. She'd probably bought them at Hertie's. What sounded like sobbing could be heard from a room at the end of the hallway, but the closer they came, the softer the noise grew. It was silent when they finally reached the door. Perhaps Eva had simply imagined the cries.

The girl knocked, then opened the door to a surprisingly cramped office. Inside were three men, surrounded by cigarette smoke and document files stacked on tables, shelves, and the floor.

One of them, a short, older gentleman, sat bolt upright in a chair in the center of the room, as though the entire room—the entire building—had been constructed around him alone. Perhaps even the entire city. A younger man with light blond hair and fine, gold-rimmed glasses was wedged behind a desk laden with files. He had cleared himself a small spot, where he was now writing. He was smoking a cigarette but had no ashtray. As Eva looked over at him, the ash fell on his notes. He mechanically brushed it to the floor. Neither man rose, which Eva thought quite rude.

The third man, a gnarled figure, even turned his back on her. He was standing at the window, peering out at the dark. Eva was reminded of a film on Napoleon she had seen with Jürgen. The general had assumed the same stance at the palace window. In despair over his planned campaign, he had gazed across the countryside. Only they could see that the landscape outside the window was painted on cardboard.

The blond man behind the desk gave Eva a nod. He gestured

toward the seated man. "This is Herr Josef Gabor, from Warsaw. The Polish interpreter was meant to come with him today, but he encountered some difficulties in leaving the country. He was detained at the airport. Please."

Since none of the gentlemen made any moves to help her, Eva removed her coat herself and hung it on a stand behind the door. The blond man pointed at a table against the wall. On it were dirty coffee cups and a plate with a few leftover cookies. Eva loved speculoos. But she refrained from indulging. She had put on two kilos in recent weeks. Eva positioned herself at the table so she could look Herr Gabor in the face, and removed the two dictionaries from her handbag. One general, the other a lexicon of specialized economic terms. She slid aside the cookie plate and set the books in its spot. Then she pulled out her notebook and a pencil. The girl in green had taken a seat at the other end of the table, at a stenotype machine. She fed the paper tape into the machine, the roller chattering. She never took her eyes off the light blond-haired man. She was interested in him, but it wasn't mutual, which Eva detected straightaway. David Miller also removed his coat and sat down in a chair against the opposite wall, as though he weren't involved, his coat across his knees.

Everyone waited, as if for a starting pistol. Eva looked at the cookies. The gnarled man standing at the window turned around. He addressed the man in the chair.

"Herr Gabor, please tell us what, exactly, occurred on the twenty-third of September 1941."

Eva translated the question, although the year struck her as odd. That was more than twenty years ago. They must be examining some crime (although hadn't the statute of limitations expired?) rather than a contract violation. The man in the chair

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looked Eva straight in the face, clearly relieved to have finally met someone in this country who understood him. He began to speak. His voice was in direct contrast to his upright bearing. It was as if he were reading from a letter faded with time, as if he were at first unable to decipher all of the words. He also spoke in a provincial dialect that gave Eva some trouble. She translated haltingly.

“That day it was warm—almost humid, in fact—and we had to decorate all the windows. All the windows in hostel number eleven. We decorated them with sandbags and filled all of the cracks with straw and dirt. We put a lot of effort into it, because mistakes were not tolerated. We finished our work toward evening. Then they led the 850 Soviet guests down into the cellar of the hostel. They waited till dark, so you could see the light better, I suspect. Then they threw the light into the cellar, down the ventilation shafts, and closed the doors. The doors weren’t opened till the next morning. We had to go in first. Most of the guests were illuminated.”

The men in the room looked at Eva. She felt slightly nauseous. Something was wrong. The woman tapped away at her machine, unfazed, but the blond man asked Eva, “Are you sure you understood that correctly?” Eva paged through her specialist dictionary. “I’m sorry, I usually translate in contract disputes, regarding economic affairs and negotiating settlements for damages. . . .”

The men exchanged looks. The blond man shook his head impatiently, but the gnarled man by the window gave him a placating nod. From across the room, David Miller looked at Eva with disdain.

Eva reached for her general dictionary, which was heavy as a brick. She had the feeling it wasn’t guests, but prisoners. Not a hostel, but a cell block. And not light. No illumination. Eva eyed

the man in the chair. He returned her gaze, his expression as if he were suddenly feeling faint.

Eva said, "I apologize, I translated that incorrectly. It was, 'We found most of the prisoners suffocated by the gas.'"

Silence filled the room. David Miller was trying to light a cigarette, but his lighter refused to catch. Chk-chk-chk. Then the blond man coughed and turned toward the gnarled man. "We should be glad we found a replacement at all. At such short notice. Better than nothing."

He responded, "Let's try to continue. What other option do we have?"

The blond man turned to Eva. "But if you're ever uncertain, look it up immediately."

Eva nodded. She translated slowly. The woman typed on her machine at the same trickling pace. "When we opened the doors, some of the prisoners were still alive. About one third. It had been too little gas. The procedure was repeated with double the amount. We waited two days to open the doors this time. The operation was a success."

The blond man stood up behind his desk. "Who gave the order?" He moved the coffee cups and laid out twenty-one photos on Eva's table. Eva regarded the faces from the side. Men with numbers under their chin in front of whitewashed walls. But some in sunny yards, playing with big dogs. One man had the face of a ferret. Josef Gabor stood up and approached the table. He gazed upon the photos for a long time and then pointed at one so suddenly, it made Eva jump. The picture showed a younger man grasping a large rabbit by the scruff, holding it toward the camera with a proud smile on his face. The men in the room exchanged satisfied glances and nodded. *My father used to breed rabbits*, Eva

thought, at their garden plot outside the city, where he grew the vegetables for the kitchen. The endlessly chewing animals were kept in little enclosures. But the day Stefan realized he wasn't just petting and supplying his silky soft companions with dandelions, but also eating them, he had thrown a terrible fit. Her father got rid of the rabbits.

Later, Eva had to sign her translation of the testimony. Her name looked different than usual. As though written by a child, clumsy and rounded. The blond man gave her an absentminded nod. "Thank you. Invoice goes through your agency?" David Miller rose from his chair against the wall and said brusquely, "Wait outside. Two minutes."

Eva put on her coat and stepped into the hall, while David conferred with the blond man. She could make out, "Unqualified! Utterly unqualified!" The blond man nodded, picked up the telephone, and dialed a number. The attorney general dropped heavily into a chair.

Eva stepped up to one of the tall windows in the hallway and peered out into the shadowy back courtyard. It had begun to snow. Thick, heavy flakes. Countless dark windows, deserted and mute, in the high-rise opposite returned Eva's gaze. *Not a soul lives there*, Eva thought. *Just offices*. Three mittens had been laid to dry on the radiator under the window. *Who do they belong to?* she wondered. *Who does the single mitten belong to?*

Josef Gabor appeared beside her. He bowed slightly and thanked her. Eva nodded at him. Confused. Through the open door, she noticed that the gnarled man was observing her from his chair by the window. David Miller joined her in the hallway, pulling on his coat as he walked. "I'll drive you." He clearly wasn't happy to.

Neither spoke in the car. The wipers moved fitfully, driving off the innumerable snowflakes from the windshield. David was beside himself. Eva could sense his fury.

"I'm sorry, but I just jumped in. Normally I just handle contracts. . . . It was absolutely horrible, what that man was—"

The car skidded narrowly past a streetlight. David cursed under his breath.

"What was he talking about? An incident from the war?"

David did not look at Eva. "You're all so ignorant."

"I beg your pardon?"

"You all think that the little brown men landed their spaceship here in '33. Am I right? Then off again they went in '45, after forcing this fascism thing on you poor Germans."

It wasn't until he spoke for a longer stretch that Eva could hear he wasn't German. He had a slight accent, maybe American. And he placed his words very precisely. As though everything he said had been rehearsed.

"I'd like to get out, please."

"And you're just another one of the millions of idiot *Fräuleins*. I saw it the moment you got in the car. Oblivious and ignorant! Do you know what you Germans did?! Do you know what you did?!!"

"Stop the car this instant!"

David hit the brakes. Eva seized the handle, opened the door, and got out. "That's right, just run away. I hope your German comfort ki—"

Eva slammed the door. She hurried through the falling snow. Suddenly everything was quiet, the furor behind her. The heavy vehicle swooped off. Eva thought, *That driver, or whatever he is, isn't mentally stable!*

Jürgen's car had disappeared from out in front of German House. Where he'd parked was covered in snow, as though Jürgen had never been there. The windows of the restaurant glowed warmly. The drone of voices inside could be heard from the street. Company Christmas parties. Those meant good business for them every year. Eva watched the silhouettes moving behind the panes. She saw her mother, laden with plates, approach a table and serve the guests swiftly, deftly. Chops. Schnitzel. Goose with red cabbage and the endless dumplings her father, the magician, formed with his soft, dexterous hands and sent into the seething salted water.

Eva wanted to go in, but she hesitated. For a moment, the place seemed like a maw that threatened to swallow her. Then she pulled herself together. Herr Gabor had experienced something terrible, but the question of the hour was: Had Jürgen asked for her hand in marriage?

As Eva stepped into the restaurant—into the human warmth, the haze of sizzling goose fat, the roomful of bodies, all a bit drunk and merry—her mother came up, balancing plates. Edith Bruhns was now wearing her work clothes: black skirt and white blouse, a white apron and her comfortable beige shoes. She whispered in alarm, "What happened to you? Did you fall?"

Eva shook her head indignantly. "Did he ask?"

"Talk to your father!" Edith turned and carried on serving.

Eva entered the kitchen. Her father was hard at work with his two helpers. Her father, in his white coat, dark trousers, chef's hat on his head, his belly always pushed out a little in front, which gave him a funny look. Eva whispered, "Did he ask?" Her father opened an oven, which released a massive cloud of steam in his face. He didn't appear to notice. He heaved a large pan of roast

goose—two whole, brown birds—from the oven. He did not look at his daughter. “Nice young man. Decent.”

Eva sighed in disappointment. She had to struggle to keep from crying. Then her father came up to her. “He’ll ask, Eva, sweetheart. But if he doesn’t make you happy, heaven help him!”

That night, Eva lay in bed and stared at the ceiling. The street-light in front of the house threw a shadow into her room that looked like a man on a horse. A tall man with a lance. Don Quixote. Eva studied him every night, the way he floated above her, and asked herself, *What is it I’m fighting in vain?* Eva thought of Jürgen and cursed her fear that he might leave at the last moment. Maybe women didn’t interest him. After all, who voluntarily decides to become a priest? Why hadn’t he ever touched her? Eva sat up, switched on the light on her bedside table, opened a drawer, and pulled out a letter. The only letter from Jürgen in which he’d written “I love you.” It was, however, preceded by “If I had to settle on a feeling, then I could definitely say that . . .” There it was. In Jürgen’s awkward way of expressing emotions, this was an untarnished confession of love! Eva sighed, placed the letter back in the bedside table, and turned off the light. She closed her eyes. She saw flakes swirling, and an indistinct façade with dark windows. She began to count them. At some point, she fell asleep. She did not dream of Jürgen. She dreamed of a hostel, far to the east. A hostel tastefully covered in flowers and grasses to keep out the wind and cold. She had invited many guests. As Eva and her parents served the crowd, the guests reveled heartily till early morning. Till none of them were breathing.

Monday. The city lay under a thick blanket of snow. Those responsible for the roads ate breakfast standing that morning while making phone calls about the precarious situation, only to spend



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the rest of the day in their overheated offices, being bombarded with complaints about vehicular damage and streets that hadn't been cleared.

Mondays meant that German House was closed. Ludwig Bruhns got in his "weekly beauty rest" till nine. Annegret, who had gotten home from her shift earlier that morning, hadn't made an appearance yet, either. The remaining family members ate breakfast in the big, bright kitchen that faced the back courtyard. The fir tree that towered there was covered in white, a few crows perching motionless in its branches, as though they couldn't comprehend the snow. Stefan had stayed home, supposedly with a "beastly" sore throat. Edith Bruhns had feigned mercilessness and responded, "Well, someone decided to play in the snow without a coat . . ." But then she had rubbed his little chest with eucalyptus salve, which lent the kitchen a gentle aroma. She'd wrapped a scarf around his neck and was now slathering a third slice of bread with honey, which was good for sore throats. Meanwhile, she was also comforting Eva, who paged unhappily through the morning paper.

"Your worlds are too different. I can understand the attraction, child. But it would be the end of you. Just the thought of that estate. I know the ones, up there in the hills. People's properties the size of ten soccer fields . . ."

"Can I play soccer up there?!" Stefan asked with his mouth full.

"After the first flush of love has faded," Edith continued, "you need to represent. You need to keep a smile on your face and stay strong. And don't expect much of your husband. He's got such an important post, you'll barely set eyes on him. You'll be alone. And that's not the life for you, Eva. It'll make you sick. Your nerves always were so delicate. . . ."

"Nerves." The word bothered Eva every time she heard it. It was as though her nerves were something outside of her, cladding her body. As though her delicate nerves were a matter of having chosen the wrong clothing. Eva thought of Brommer's Costumes, by the train station, a store as musty as it was magical, as dark, dangerous, and impenetrable as the jungle. Since childhood, she had loved plunging into their wares every year in preparation for Carnival. She imagined coming across strong nerves hanging among ruffled princess gowns on one of the store's countless racks. A coat woven and knotted out of thick, steely strands. Impregnable, impossible to tear, protection from all pain. "Mum, that's something you can learn! Just look at Grace Kelly. First an actress, and now she's a princess. . . ."

"You have to be the right type for something like that."

"Then what type might I be, pray tell?"

"You are a normal young woman who needs a normal man. Maybe a tradesman. Roofers make very good money." Eva snorted in outrage and was about to voice her disdain for every last type of tradesman, when a small black-and-white photograph in the newspaper caught her eye. It showed two of the men she had spent an hour with in a smoke-filled room yesterday: the younger, blond man and older fellow with the funny windswept hair. They were pictured in serious conversation. The caption read, "Lead prosecutor and Hessian state attorney general holding preparatory discussions." Eva started to read the one-column article. A trial against former members of the SS was evidently set to begin in the city that very week.

"Eva? Are you listening? I'm talking to you! What about Peter Rangkötter? He courted you for such a long time. And tilers never run out of work."

“Mum, do you seriously think I would ever want to be named Eva Rangkötter?” Stefan, his little chin covered in honey, giggled and gleefully chanted, “Frau Rangkötter! Frau Rangkötter!” Eva ignored her brother, pointed to the article, and looked at her mother. “Have you heard about this? This trial? That was my assignment yesterday.”

Edith took the paper, glanced at the photograph, and skimmed the article. “It’s terrible, what happened. In the war. But no one wants to hear it anymore. And why in our city, of all places?” Edith Bruhns folded up the paper. Eva looked at her mother in surprise. It sounded as though she had some stake in it. “And why not?” Her mother didn’t respond. Instead, she stood and began to clear the dirty dishes. She was wearing a tight-lipped expression—her “lemon face,” as Stefan called it. She turned on the boiler above the sink to heat dishwater.

“Can you help downstairs today, Eva, or do you have to work?”

“Yes, I can. Things are slow around Christmas. Besides, the boss always asks Karin Melzer first. Because she always wears such pointed brassieres.”

“Shhh,” Edith hissed, with a glance at Stefan, who merely smirked.

“As if I didn’t know what a brassiere is.”

“As if I didn’t *know*,” Edith corrected him. The water in the boiler began to seethe. Edith stacked the dishes in the sink.

Eva opened the newspaper again and finished reading the article: twenty-one men had been indicted. They had all worked at a camp in Poland. The trial had been repeatedly delayed. The main defendant, the camp’s final commander, had already died on them. His adjutant, a Hamburg businessman of excellent repute, had been indicted in his place. Testimony would be heard from

274 witnesses. Hundreds of thousands of people in the camp were allegedly—

“Boo!”

Stefan unexpectedly smacked the bottom of the paper, one of his favorite jokes. As always, Eva was terribly startled. She tossed the paper aside and leaped to her feet. “Just you wait!” Stefan stormed out of the kitchen, Eva on his heels. She chased her little brother through the apartment, finally capturing him in the living room, where she held him tight and threatened to squish him like the lousy louse he was. Stefan squealed in delight, his peals so shrill they shook the crystal glassware in the cupboard.

In the kitchen, Edith still stood at the sink, watching the boiler. The water was now boiling loudly, unsettlingly. The dirty dishes waited in the sink. But Edith didn’t move. She stared, motionless, at the big, hot bubbles dancing behind the glass.

At the same time, in the offices of the prosecution, the atmosphere resembled backstage at the theater shortly before the curtain rises on a world premiere. David Miller attempted to appear composed and professional as he stepped into the corridor but was instantly seized by the feverish surge: every office door was open, telephones were ringing, pastel-colored office girls balanced towers of files or wheeled documents across the linoleum on squeaky carts. Ring binders were laid out along the length of the hallway, dark red and black, like collapsed rows of dominoes. Plumes of smoke spilled from every room. The clouds reminded David of greyhounds hovering, as if in slow motion, over the nervous chaos and dissipating before their chance to chase the mechanical hare. David almost laughed. It made him uncomfortable, it seemed cynical—but he was excited. He was there. Of the forty-nine applicants for the clerkship, only eight had been

selected. Himself included, despite having passed the bar only a year earlier in Boston. David knocked on the open door to the lead prosecutor's office. He was standing at his desk, on the phone, a glowing cigarette between his fingers. The outlines of a construction crane in the courtyard outside were visible through the foggy windows. The blond man gave David a curt nod and, as usual, appeared to struggle to recall exactly who he was. David entered.

"The length of the trial will depend on the chief judge," the blond man spoke into the phone. "And I cannot read the man. If he acts according to the consensus, then things will be hushed up and relativized and we'll be through in four weeks. But the prosecution will insist upon a thorough evidentiary hearing. Personally, I'm expecting more along the lines of four months." He paused. "Sure, consider it a present. Go ahead and write it." The blond man hung up and used the butt of his cigarette to light the next. His hands were steady. David didn't waste time with a greeting: "Has he been in touch?"

"Who?"

"The Beast."

"No. And I would prefer it, Herr Miller, if you would refrain from using such slanted terms. We'll leave that to the public."

David waved off the rebuke. He couldn't comprehend how the prosecutor could remain so calm. One of the main defendants had been released from custody three months earlier, citing health issues. For the past five days now, they'd been unable to reach him at his registered address. And the trial was scheduled to begin Friday morning.

"But then we've got to get the police involved! They've got to launch a manhunt!"

"No legal basis, I'm afraid. The trial hasn't begun yet."

“But he’ll abscond, damn it! Like all the others, to Argentina and—”

“We need that young woman. The one from yesterday. What was her name?” the blond man interrupted him. David shrugged reluctantly, although he knew who he meant. The prosecutor didn’t wait for a response.

“They won’t let Dombreizki leave the country.”

“Dommitzki.”

“Exactly, him. Negotiations are under way, but he’s staying where he is for now. In a Polish prison. An agreement could take months to reach.”

“I don’t believe that a young German woman, of all people, is suitable for such a demanding position. Sir”—David was becoming more insistent—“we are entirely dependent on our interpreters. They could tell us whatever the hell they wanted—”

“She’ll take an oath. You could also see it this way: a woman might have a calming effect on witnesses. And that’s exactly what we need, witnesses who feel safe! We need to get everything we can out of them—and they have to tell us what happened, have to endure the strain. So drive over there straightaway. You remember the address?” David nodded hesitantly and shuffled out.

The blond man sat down. This Miller fellow was too keen, too dogged. He’d heard a rumor that Miller’s brother had died in the camp. It would be tricky if there were any truth to that rumor, because they’d have to replace him then, due to conflict of interest. On the other hand, they needed dedicated young people like him to spend day and night processing the thousands of documents, comparing dates, names, and events, and helping maintain order in this cacophony of voices. The blond man deeply inhaled the smoke from his cigarette, held his breath for a moment, and

turned to the window. Outside in the courtyard, the shadowlike crane traced its usual circles.

Eva mopped the floor of the cavernous German House dining room. Her father, who had since risen from his beauty sleep, was in the kitchen polishing surfaces with the radio on. A *Schlager* pop song Eva and Jürgen had once danced to carried into the dining room. Peter Alexander crooned, “Come with me to Italy!” Jürgen was a good dancer. And he smelled so good, like resin and the sea. He held her so tight when they danced. He always knew what was right and what was wrong. Eva swallowed. She pushed him away in her mind, furious and disappointed. Jürgen, who for half a year had called from his desk every morning at eleven, hadn’t been in touch today. Eva slapped the wet mop on the floorboards. She resolved never to see him again if he didn’t call by two. As for his letters, the white gold bracelet, deerskin gloves, angora undergarments (she’d had pneumonia in November, and Jürgen had been very concerned), collection of Hesse poems, and . . . boom boom boom! Someone was thumping on the locked front door. Eva spun around: a man, a young man. Jürgen, overcome by emotion, had uncharacteristically abandoned his desk to ask for her hand in marriage, right here, right now. On bended knee. Eva set aside the mop, hastily shed her smock, and rushed to the door. Everything was fine. But then she recognized the unfriendly man from yesterday through the glass. David Miller. Annoyed, she opened the door. “We’re closed!” David shrugged and looked at her, unfazed. “I’m here on behalf of . . .” Eva was astonished to notice that David hadn’t left any tracks in the fresh snow, as though he’d flown up to the door. Strange.

“The lead prosecutor sent me.”

Eva hesitantly waved him inside. David entered. They stood

at the bar, while in the kitchen, an Italian tenor sang his heart out. Eva could have joined in. “Seven days a week, I want to spend with you.”

“The interpreter can’t enter the country, at least not yet. He was deemed politically unreliable, and he’s got to get his affairs in order. So we need a replacement. Trial begins Friday.”

Eva was stunned. “You mean to say I should translate?”

“I’m not the one saying it. They just sent me.”

“Oh, my. And for how long? A week?”

David studied Eva almost pityingly. He had pale blue eyes, and his left pupil was larger than the right. Perhaps it had to do with the light, perhaps it was something he’d been born with. It gave him an unsteady, permanently searching expression. *And he’ll never find himself*, Eva thought instinctively, although without a sense of why.

“Have you already spoken with my agency? With my boss, Herr Körting?”

But David appeared not to have heard the question. He recoiled, as though Eva had struck him, and leaned against the bar.

“Are you unwell?”

“I forgot to eat breakfast. It’ll pass in just a minute.”

David caught his breath. Eva stepped behind the bar and filled a glass of water from the tap. She handed it to him, and he took a sip. As he drank, his gaze traveled to the opposite wall, which was densely hung with autographed black-and-white portraits. There were men and women, mostly local celebrities, he assumed—actors, soccer players, or politicians who had eaten at German House. They smiled at David and showed him their best side. He didn’t recognize a single one of them. He straightened and placed the half-empty glass on the bar.



“Call this number.” David handed Eva a business card with the name of the attorney general, an address, and a telephone number. “And if you take the job, you’d better start learning the necessary vocabulary.”

“What do you mean? Military terms?”

“Every conceivable word for how to kill a person.”

David turned abruptly and left the restaurant. Eva slowly closed the door behind him.

Her father had come out of the kitchen in his white coat and dark trousers, chef’s hat on his head, a red checkered dish towel slung over his shoulder. *He looks like a clown about to get a cannonload of spaghetti and tomato sauce blown in his face*, Eva mused.

“Who was that? What did he want? Perhaps another suitor, daughter dearest?” Ludwig winked, then got to his knees before the bar and with the dish towel, began polishing the tin facing at its base, which was there to protect the wood from being kicked. Eva shook her head impatiently. “Daddy, can you think of nothing else? It was about a job. As an interpreter in court.”

“Sounds major.”

“It’s a trial against SS officers who worked in that camp.”

“And what camp would that be?”

“Auschwitz.”

Her father kept polishing the facing, as though he hadn’t heard her. Eva studied the back of his head for a moment, where his hair was thinning. Every eight weeks, she trimmed her father’s hair in the kitchen. He couldn’t sit still for long and fidgeted like a little boy. It was always a tedious process, but Ludwig refused to go to a barber. Eva had a deep aversion to the hairdresser’s, herself. She had a childlike fear that getting her hair cut there might hurt. An-negret called Eva’s fear “nervous nonsense.” Eva reached for the

mop, dunked it in the bucket, and wrung it out with her hands. The water had gone lukewarm.

Later that evening, her parents sat in the living room. Ludwig to the left, on his shabby end of the sofa, Edith in her little yellow armchair, whose velvet upholstery had once glowed gold. Purzel was rolled up in his basket. He yipped occasionally as he dreamed. The *Tagesschau* was on television, and small images appeared onscreen as the anchor presented the news stories. As usual, Ludwig provided commentary for each segment. Edith had pulled out some sewing. She was mending a tear in Stefan's orange mitten—apparently Purzel had gotten hold of it again. The anchor was reporting on West Germany's largest dike construction project. After only four months' time, the final section of the three-kilometer-long protective dike on the Rüstiersiel mudflats had been completed. The footage showed a great deal of sand.

"Rüstiersiel," Ludwig said, with a bit of homesickness in his voice. "Do you remember the time we were there and ate fresh plaice?"

Edith didn't look up, but answered, "Mmh."

"In an art gallery in Detroit, a fire has destroyed thirty-five paintings by the Spanish artist Pablo Picasso. The damage amounts to approximately two million Deutschmarks," the anchor read. A Cubist painting appeared behind him, but on the small black-and-white screen, it had no impact.

"That's almost sixty thousand marks per picture! God only knows why these pictures are all worth so much."

"You wouldn't understand, Ludwig," Edith replied.

"All the better."

"Federal Minister of the Interior Hermann Höcherl has ordered the transfer of former SS Hauptsturmführer Erich Wenger

from the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution to the Federal Office of Administration in Cologne.” The wall behind the anchor remained gray. Viewers did not get to see what Erich Wenger looked like. Eva’s parents were silent. They breathed in time with one another. The weather forecast followed, showing a map of Germany covered in white crystals. It would continue to snow.

“She should hurry up and marry that Schoormann fellow,” Ludwig said, putting on his thickest Low German dialect.

Edith hesitated. But then she responded, “Yes. It would be for the best.”

In the Schoormanns’ mansion, Jürgen sat at dinner with his father and his second wife. Like every evening, they didn’t sit down to eat until half past eight, a by-product of working in the mail-order industry. Jürgen had worked well into the evening with his staff on the new catalog. Now he watched his father, who sat across from him at the table, warily dissect his bread and cheese. His father was deteriorating noticeably. He’d always been bulky but was now turning into a shrunken little man. *Like a grape becomes a raisin when left in the sun*, Jürgen thought. Brigitte sat close to his father, stroked his cheek, and placed a slice of cheese back on the bread.

“It’s Swiss cheese, Walli. You like that.”

“At least Switzerland is neutral.”

Walther Schoormann took a careful bite and began to chew. He sometimes forgot to swallow. Brigitte gave him an encouraging nod. *She’s a blessing*, Jürgen thought. He was certain his mother would approve. The first Frau Schoormann, whose gentle face appeared in soft focus in a photograph on the sideboard, had been killed in an air raid on the city in March of ’44. Jürgen, then ten,

was living on a farm in the Allgäu region, where his parents had sent him. The farmer's son told him his mother had burned up, that she had run through the streets like a flaming torch. Screaming. Jürgen knew the boy just wished to torment him, but he couldn't escape the image. He began to hate everything. Even the good Lord. He nearly lost himself to it. His father was in prison at the time. The Gestapo had picked him up in the summer of '41 for his membership in the Communist Party. On an early morning two months after the war ended, he appeared on the farm in the Allgäu to get his son. Jürgen shot out of the house and embraced his father, refusing to let go and crying so hard and for so long that even the farmer's son had pitied him. Walther Schoormann hadn't said anything then, and even now, he refused to speak about his time in prison. Since falling ill, however, he had taken to spending hours in the little garden shed, perched on a stool and looking out the barred windows, as though an eternal prisoner. Whenever Brigitte or Jürgen took his arm and tried to lead him out, he fought back. Jürgen was baffled by this, but Brigitte believed that his father was doing it perhaps to come to terms with something he'd experienced. Walther Schoormann swallowed and took another bite, lost in thought. The bread and cheese tasted good. As a former Communist and later businessman, he was a much-respected anomaly. He had always insisted, however, that his social attitudes were the very reasons for his success after the war. He wanted to help those people who had lost everything by offering affordable products. Affordable because he bypassed retailers, saved on sales and distribution, rent, and employees, and delivered straight to households. Within ten years, the "Schoormann Shop" grew into a company of 650 employees, whose proper treatment and social security Walther Schoormann always

prioritized. In the mid-fifties, he built a house in the Taunus hills that turned out a little too big. Its many rooms served no purpose, and the pool was only filled that first year. The blue-tiled basin remained drained and deserted after that. Now, five years after Walther Schoormann remarried—one of the underwear models from the Schoormann catalog, thirty years his junior, worldly and ever optimistic—there was at least one person in the house who appreciated the luxury. The pool was filled with water once more, and Brigitte swam her daily laps. The smell of chlorine gently pervaded the house again. *Eva would live here too, and maybe even swim*, Jürgen thought. Eva. He knew she was waiting for his call. But something he could not pinpoint—nor wanted to—was holding him back. Jürgen had wanted to become a priest since childhood. The captivating rituals, numbing smell of incense, magnificent robes, and infinitely towering naves had fascinated him. And God undoubtedly existed. His devout mother supported his inclinations and played Mass with five-year-old Jürgen. She sewed him a purple cassock, and when he stood at the little table in his room and intoned “O Lamb of God . . .” she represented the congregation and humbly responded, “Hosanna.” Lit candles and incense were the only things he was not allowed. His father, an unwavering atheist, always disparaged the performances. And when, shortly before his final exams in secondary school, Jürgen expressed his wish to study theology, father and son found themselves at odds. Ultimately, Walther Schoormann deferred to the wishes of his late wife. Jürgen was free to begin his studies. But everything changed two years ago. Walther could no longer be left alone, the company suffered marked losses under a succession of new managers, and Jürgen traded in his life plan for his father’s lifework. But if he was honest, the idea of celibacy had increasingly concerned him.

Eva. She had come to the office a few times to translate correspondence with their Polish suppliers. The first thing he noticed was her hair, which she wore in an updo, rather than a more current style. There was something touchingly antiquated and naive about her, he found. She would take direction—she would behave in subservience to her husband. He wanted to have children with her. Only he wasn't sure what would happen when he confessed to his father that Eva's family ran a restaurant on Berger Strasse, of all places. It helped that the Bruhnses were Protestants. But a restaurant in the "merry village" of Bornheim? No matter how innocent Eva was or how vehemently Jürgen stressed that their business was in the decent section of the street—anything on Berger had to be a flophouse! Walther Schoormann was not only a socialist businessman, he was also one of the rare examples of a prudish Communist.

"Jürgen, what's so funny? Can I get in on the joke?" His father looked at him directly, his eyes clear, as though a line in his brain had been reactivated. Jürgen set down his silverware.

"Do you know what Schurick wanted to include in the catalog? An electrical device that pokes holes in eggs. Apparently it's all the rage in America."

His father smiled, and Brigitte shrugged. "I'd buy one."

"Because you'd buy anything."

Walther Schoormann took Brigitte's hand and gave it a quick, but loving, kiss, then held on to it. Jürgen looked past the two into the snowy yard, which resembled a park. The outdoor lamps wore snowy caps. The bushes were still. He had to call Eva.

Eva sat at her desk, an extremely useful piece of furniture, and made an attempt at a letter to Jürgen. She voiced rage and disappointment and threatened blackmail, while also attempting

to spark love and desire for her and her body and her virginity (which, of course, he didn't know no longer existed). It was useless. She crumpled up another piece of paper, sat there for a moment, at a loss, and then pulled the business card David had left out of her pocket. She turned it indecisively. There was a knock on the door, and Annegret came into the room. She was wearing her powder pink dressing gown and hadn't put on her face or done her hair. Eva welcomed the interruption. She put the business card on the table.

"Don't you have work?"

"I have off. I worked a double shift yesterday." Annegret dropped heavily onto Eva's bed and leaned back against one of the posts. She'd found a package of pretzel sticks in the pantry, and she pulled them out by the dozen and snapped them off in her mouth.

"We've got a newborn, a boy, two weeks old, who almost died. He was totally dehydrated."

"Again?"

"Yes, it really isn't funny anymore. Someone must be carrying these germs in. The doctors, they can't be bothered about hygiene, but of course there's no talking to them. I sat with the tiny bean for eight hours and kept giving him sugar water, one drop at a time. Little fellow was in pretty good shape again by the end."

Annegret's eyes fell on the balled-up papers.

"Has he still not been in touch?"

Eva didn't respond. Annegret hesitated. She pulled a pack of cards from the pocket of her dressing gown and waved them invitingly. Eva sat down across from her sister on the bed. Annegret shuffled the cards in a quick, practiced manner with her fat but

supple fingers. She was wheezing slightly. Then she set the cards on the blanket between her and her sister. "Ask a question. Then draw a card."

"Will Jürgen marry me?"

Eva concentrated and drew a card. Annegret took the stack and laid out the cards following some pattern. It was clear she knew what she was doing. Eva noticed that her sister smelled slightly of sweat. Annegret was excessively clean. Although their parents thought it a waste of water, she bathed daily. Nonetheless, she could never quite rid herself of the faintest whiff of pea stew set out in the sun. Eva was filled with affection as she watched how earnest Annegret was in laying out the cards for her. *I love you*, Eva wanted to say. But they didn't say that to each other. And it would have come across as pity, condescension. She let it go. Annegret pulled another handful of pretzel sticks from the bag and crunched into them. She studied the arrangement of cards as she chewed.

"Queen of hearts, upper left. You will become a queen, the wife of a millionaire. Provided you don't make a mess of it. Here's the seven of spades. That means there's still a chance of botching things."

"That's a real help, Annie. Where is Jürgen? What's he thinking? Does he love me?"

Annegret gathered the cards. "Now you shuffle. Then lay out the cards. The twelfth card is Jürgen."

Eva shuffled as though her life depended on it, and sent a few cards flying. She laughed, but Annegret remained solemn. Eva then laid out the cards and counted under her breath to twelve.

"Why are you counting in Polish?"



"Doesn't that count?"

"Sure it does, but I think it's odd."

Eva paused before turning over the twelfth card. She looked at Annegret.

"Do you know what's really odd?"

"All of life in its entirety?"

"I've always known my numbers in Polish. I mean, even before I began studying translation. Perhaps I was a Pole in a previous life?"

"Who cares about your previous life, little Evie-cakes? Show me your Jürgen. Come on now, show some courage!"

Eva flipped the card. It was the eight of hearts. She looked at it, blind to its significance. Annegret grinned.

"Well, my pretty little sister, be as dotty as you damn well please, because you'll never shake this man off!"

"And why is that . . . ?!"

"The suit is hearts, and eight is the symbol of infinity."

"Or handcuffs," Eva said.

Annegret nodded. "Either way, your days here are numbered."

Annegret collected the cards with her eyes lowered. She looked like a sad lump all of a sudden. Eva stroked her cheek. "Can I have a pretzel?" Annegret looked up and gave her a crooked smile.

The sisters lay beside each other in the semidarkness a while later, chewing on the last of the pretzel sticks and watching the gently quivering Don Quixote on the ceiling.

"Do you remember seeing the film in the theater?" Eva asked. "Where that old man attacked the windmill with his lance and got it caught in the sails. He was carried off and spun 'round and 'round on the windmill, screaming. I thought it was just terrible, it made me sick to my stomach."

"Children always find it unsettling when adults lose control."

"Annegret, should I take it on, this job? Translate in the trial, I mean. It's—"

"I'm aware. I wouldn't do it. Or do you want to help spread these horrifying myths?"

"What do you mean, 'horrifying myths'?"

At that, Annegret stiffened and fell silent, got up, and left without a word. Eva was familiar with this. Her sister would now head for the kitchen and really stuff herself. The phone rang in the hallway. Eva checked the time. Ten thirty. Her heart began to pound. She leaped from her room and reached the phone before her mother. It really was Jürgen.

"Good evening, Eva."

Eva tried to sound nonchalant, casual. "Good evening. A little late for a phone call." But it came out a bit hoarse.

"Are you well, Eva?"

Eva was silent.

"Please forgive me. I'm sorry. But it is for the rest of our lives."

"I realize that."

They were silent until Jürgen asked, "Would you like to go to the movies with me tomorrow evening?"

"I don't have time. I have to prepare for my new job."

"A new job? Did you get an assignment?"

"It's a lengthier engagement. I've got to provide for myself, after all. I can't live off my parents' goodwill forever. I've got to earn money."

"Eva, I will pick you up at seven tomorrow!"

He sounded stern. Eva hung up. Annegret came out of the kitchen, chewing, with a new, dark stain on her light-colored dressing gown, and looked at Eva quizzically. Eva shrugged in

mock despair, but she was smiling. Annegret said, “You see? The cards don’t lie.”

The next morning—without any instructions from the prosecution, without any official permission—David Miller started driving south in a rental car that had cost him half a month’s earnings. His destination: Hemmingen, near Stuttgart. One of the main defendants, the head of the political department at the camp—the Beast—was registered there as a resident. David had read all of the interview transcripts and allegations against Defendant Number Four and prepared an analysis for the prosecution. If only a fraction of the accusations were true, this man—now employed as a commercial clerk—lacked the very capacity for human emotion. The prosecution had been trying for days to reach him by phone. In vain. And with so little time left before the trial. As he sped through wintry southern Germany, David felt justified in pursuing his suspicion that the defendant had absconded. He drove in the passing lane and far too fast. The countryside, hills, forests, and odd farm to the left and right of the autobahn hurtled by and looked like a toy landscape compared to Canada’s ancient grandeur. David fishtailed, after braking abruptly. He forced himself to slow down. *Imagine the irony if I were to die here on one of Hitler’s autobahns*, David thought, and smirked.

David had intended to bypass Heidelberg but found himself in the heart of the city, entangled in a network of streets. He crossed the same bridge three times, and whenever he thought he’d found the way, the towering castle would rise in front of him again, as in a bad dream. David cursed. There was no city map in his road atlas, and he was about ready to surrender. While waiting at a stoplight, however, he discovered himself behind a car with

French plates. He followed the foreign vehicle, in the hope that it would guide him out of the city. His plan proved successful, and after an hour of senseless straying, David's car was once more flanked by forests and fields.

In Hemmingen, a sleepy town, he rolled down his window and asked someone cautiously picking their way through the snow for directions. Moments later, David stopped the car on Tannenweg, in front of number twelve. The house was well tended, a typical single-family home in a working-class area; built before the war, David imagined. Like all of the houses in the neighborhood, it was simple, with white plastered walls and a dark, wraparound balcony with barren flower boxes. There was no car outside the garage. David got out, walked across the snowy yard, and rang at the front door. He couldn't find a nameplate. He waited. Everything was quiet behind the small barred window in the door. He rang again, twice, and looked around. A few shrubs stood naked in the small front yard. Several rose bushes had been covered with old sacks and looked like bony, mummified figures. They seemed prepared to ambush him should he drop his guard for even a moment. David heard a door inside. He rang again, and this time he kept his finger on the button. The door slowly opened a crack—it was locked on the other side with a door chain. "My husband isn't here." David could make out the elegant features of a dark-haired woman of about sixty, who looked at him with dullish, almond-shaped eyes. *A faded beauty*, David thought. "Well, where is he?"

"Who are you?" The woman regarded David with suspicion.

"It's regarding the trial. We can't seem to reach your husband. . . ."

"Are you a foreigner?"

David was momentarily thrown by the question. “My name is David Miller. I’m a clerk for the prosecution.”

“Then I know exactly the sort of man you are. You listen to me, Herr David,” the woman spat through the crack. “What you’re doing is utterly indecent! These outrageous lies you’re spreading about my husband. If you knew how engaged my husband has always been, the kind of person he is. He is the best father and best husband anyone could ask for. If you knew my husband . . .”

While the man’s wife continued to expound on her husband’s virtues, David recalled one witness’s account that had been placed on the record for the prosecution. She had had to work as the defendant’s secretary in the camp. She described a young prisoner, whom Defendant Number Four had interrogated for hours in his office in the political department. “By the time he was through, it was no longer a human being. It was just a sack. A bloody sack.”

“If you don’t tell me where he is, I’ll have to inform the police. Surely, you don’t want him to be picked up by the police, like a criminal—which you’ve assured me he isn’t.”

“He’s done nothing wrong!”

“Where is he?”

The woman hesitated, then snarled, “Hunting.”

THE TWO MEN SLOWLY traverse a rugged mountain landscape on horseback. The sun glitters, waterfalls tumble, birds of prey circle overhead. Screeching. One of the men is dressed in a buckskin suit with fringes. The other wears Indian garb. It’s Old Shatterhand and his blood brother, Winnetou. They ride in silence, on

guard, scouting the area. Because somewhere in those rocks up there, their enemies are on the lookout, waiting for the perfect moment to shoot them dead on the spot.

Eva and Jürgen sat in the second row of the Gloria Palast cinema, their heads tilted back. They hadn't managed to find any other spot. Every last seat was taken. *Apache Gold* had just opened in theaters. More importantly, Ralf Wolter would be signing autographs after the show. He played Sam Hawken and was everyone's favorite. Eva's and Jürgen's faces reflected the colorful shadows onscreen. Another screech of the eagle. Or was it a vulture? Eva didn't know her raptors. The first shot was fired with a loud bang. Eva jumped and mused happily, *The gunshots always sound best in Winnetou films.*

The music swelled, and the battle got under way . . .

A LITTLE LATER, after good had prevailed, Eva and Jürgen ambled around the brightly lit Christmas market. The sky was black, the air frigid. Clouds formed in front of their faces when they spoke. They felt far removed from the heat of the prairie. Eva had gone without getting Ralf Wolter's autograph, and Jürgen would rather have seen the new Alfred Hitchcock film, anyway. *The Birds*. Eva had linked arms with Jürgen. She was telling him about her first time at the movies. *Don Quixote*. The way the old man screamed as he hung from the sails of the windmill. She had been frightened. Her father had comforted her quietly: loons like that were very rare. Eva said her father could always calm her down. Jürgen wasn't really listening. He stopped at a booth and bought two mugs of mulled wine. As they stood facing each other, he asked to hear more about this assignment. Eva told

him. She lied, though, and said she had already agreed to the job. Jürgen had read about the trial.

“Eva, this trial could stretch on for ages.”

“All the better. They pay weekly.” Eva was already a little tipsy from the half cup of mulled wine. Jürgen remained stern.

“And I do not wish for my wife to work. Our family is known in this city, and word would get out . . .”

Eva looked at him defiantly.

“And which wife might that be? I thought those plans had been dashed last Sunday.”

“You shouldn’t drink any more wine, Eva.”

“My family isn’t refined enough for you! Admit it!”

“Eva, please, don’t start with that again. I found your parents very likable. I am going to ask your father.”

“And besides, I’m not sure if I like that I’m not allowed to work. I’m a modern woman!”

But Jürgen was still speaking. “Under one condition: that you resign from this job.” He looked at Eva with the dark eyes she loved so much. His gaze was calm and secure. He smiled. She took his hand but couldn’t feel its warmth, because they both wore gloves.

Not far from where they stood, a brass ensemble began to play “Unto Us a Time Has Come.” Others at the market stopped to listen, the mood solemn. But the old men played so unsteadily and off-key that Eva and Jürgen couldn’t help laughing. Though they tried to stifle the urge, it was no use. With every new blunder, one of them would start again and infect the other. By the end they both had tears in their eyes, despite its being Eva’s favorite Christmas carol.

Later, on the walk home, she quietly sang it for Jürgen.

ANNETTE HESS

*Unto us a time has come,  
And with it brought an awesome joy.  
O'er the snow-covered field we wander,  
We wander o'er the wide, white world.  
'Neath the ice sleep stream and sea,  
While the wood in deep repose doth dream.  
Through the softly falling snow, we wander,  
We wander o'er the wide, white world.  
From on high, a radiant silence fills hearts with joy,  
While under astral cover, we wander,  
We wander o'er the wide, white world.*

Jürgen loved the way Eva nestled up and clung to him. If someone were to ask him that very moment what he felt for her, he thought, he could say, *I love her*.

DAVID WAS BACK IN HIS CAR. It bounced down a forest track, wheels spinning, till one of his rear tires slid into a pothole. The Ford wouldn't budge. David switched off the engine and climbed out. The air was still, the sky starless. A cold full moon provided the only light. David looked around and spotted a gleam in the distance. He turned up his coat collar and trudged toward it. Snow filled his oxfords and melted. His socks were soon soaked. David kept walking. He arrived at a simple cabin with shuttered windows. A little light forced its way between the cracks. He heard nothing but a gentle rustling in the treetops. He hesitated, then opened the door without knocking. Three men in hunter green were gathered around a suspended carcass. All three looked toward the door. None appeared surprised. Two of the men were drinking bottles



of beer. The third—haggard, with the face of a ferret—held a long knife in his hand. David recognized his face as that of Defendant Number Four. He was gutting a deer. Or whatever it was, it hung from a hook in the ceiling. It could be a person, for all David knew. Either way, it looked like a bloody sack.

The defendant gave David a quizzical but friendly look. “How can we help you?”

“My name is David Miller. I work for the attorney general.”

The man nodded, as though he’d expected as much. One of his hunting mates, meanwhile, a red-faced man who was already drunk, advanced menacingly on David, but the defendant stopped him. “What are you doing out here, and at this hour? The trial doesn’t start till Friday.”

“We’ve been trying to reach you for days.”

“Make yourself scarce, kid!” his other crony joined in.

David trained his gaze on the defendant. “I would like you to come right now, come with me back to the city.”

“You couldn’t possibly have the authority! Or can you show me some credentials?!”

David didn’t know how to respond. The defendant set aside the knife and wiped his hands on a threadbare cloth hanging from a hook on the wall. Then he slowly approached David, who involuntarily recoiled. “I know I’ve nothing to fear. I’ll be there punctually. You have my word.” The man held out his right hand to David. David looked at it. A human hand, like any other.

A short time later, David stood outside the hut as though marooned in the moonlit forest. His feet were cold and wet. He didn’t remember where his car was. He set out, stumbled through the snow for a while, then stopped. No car. The cabin had disappeared now too. David stood under a thick cover of fir trees, in the middle of

Germany somewhere. A gust of wind blew through the treetops, a quiet sigh. David looked into the canopy above him. Here and there, snow fell from the branches. He was suddenly overcome by the staggering number of crimes to be presented in three days' time. He briefly imagined the number of people they were fighting for and for whom justice was due. As many as were he to gather all of the needles from the fir trees above him. Each stood for one of the persecuted, tortured, murdered humans. David's legs went weak, they began to shake, then buckled. He fell to his knees, folded his hands, and held them high over his head. "God, visit your judgment on us all!"

Half an hour later, he had found his car. He maneuvered it laboriously out of the pothole. The car careened back down the forest track to the main highway, which had since been plowed. David hit the gas. He was embarrassed by his genuflection. Luckily, no one had seen him.

The new day brought with it new record low temperatures and blue skies. Eva, feeling well rested and in love, marched up the street to the newsstand. Her father needed this month's issue of his favorite food magazine, *The Pleasing Palate*. The elderly Fräulein Drawitz vanished into the depths of her stand to look for it, surprised anew by the request, as she was every time. Eva's gaze lingered on the daily papers on display. The upcoming trial was front-page news. One especially thick black headline read, "70 Percent of Germans Do Not Want Trial!" Eva felt guilty: she had never contacted the office of the prosecution. She bought the paper. Along with several others.

EVA HAD THE APARTMENT to herself. Her father was at the wholesale market, as he was every Thursday morning, her mother tak-

ing care of Christmas errands in the city, Stefan sweating it out at school, and Annegret tending to her infants at City Hospital. Eva sat down at the kitchen table, spread the papers out in front of her, and started reading. The time had come to draw a line under things, the articles argued. The twenty-one defendants were harmless family men, grandfathers, and good, hardworking citizens who had all undergone the denazification process without incident. That tax money should be invested more sensibly in programs for the future. Even the victors considered the chapter closed. "The moment one believes the grass to have grown back on a thing, along comes some stupid camel and eats it all up." In this case, the camel had the same glasses and hairstyle as the state attorney general. Eva discovered, in a newspaper from Hamburg, that it had been the young Canadian lawyer David Miller who had managed to locate the Polish witness Josef Gabor just in time for him to testify on the first ever use of Zyklon B. That was the gas allegedly used to kill more than one million people in the camp. Eva was sure the number was a misprint. One entire back page was dedicated to photographs of the accused, several of which Eva had already seen at the law office. Now, however, she could study the men closely and right side up. She fetched the magnifying glass from her mother's sewing box and looked at each face individually. One was fat, the next narrow, others smooth or wrinkled. One man grinned like a big friendly ferret, nearly all wore glasses, and several defendants were going bald. One was heavily built, with bat ears and a flattened nose, whereas another had very fine features. There was neither correspondence nor distinction. And the more Eva wanted to find out, the closer she leaned into the images, the more the faces dissolved into tiny squares of black, gray, and white.