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Encampment

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ENCAMPMENT

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by

Deborah Michelle Hutson

2022

DEDICATION

To my family for all of their love and support.

ENCAMPMENT

by

DEBORAH MICHELLE HUTSON, BIS, M.Ed.

THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at El Paso

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I would like to give a heartfelt thank you to my family for their patience with me when I was frantically busy with work and writing. Also, a special thank you to my thesis committee members for their willingness to work with me even when it got down to the wire. I truly appreciate it!

ABSTRACT

Novella about a German Jew, Frederic, who escapes Nazi Germany on the *SS Columbus* by concealing his religion after the arrest of his mother by the Gestapo. After the *Columbus* is torpedoed by the British while trying to run a blockade, he eventually ends up at the Fort Stanton German Internment Camp in New Mexico. There he falls in love with Elizabeth, a Mexican American nurse at the tuberculosis hospital, who is also dealing with grief and questioning her place in the world after losing both of her parents. The bombing of Pearl Harbor forces Frederic to deal with tightened security, the hostility of pro-Nazi internees, and the conflict between himself and Elizabeth. Violence, prejudice, and an escape attempt create a story of love, grief, and inner strength.

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CRITICAL PREFACE

Encampment is a project close to my heart. The idea for the story started as I sat on a bench in the square at Fort Stanton, New Mexico, surrounded by the old, vacant buildings of the fort. As the wind whispered in the trees around me, I could picture the ghosts of the past. I imagined what it would be like to be a nurse working in the tuberculosis hospital or a wife of one of the officers stationed there in the 1800's. The empty buildings seemed to hold a positive energy from the past, and I always felt at peace there. I continued to visit the fort whenever I had a chance, and on one visit I learned about the internment of the German seamen of the *SS Columbus*. Most of the buildings from the internment are no longer there, only a few dilapidated sheds and concrete foundations from the past structures, but it is still surreal to walk around the site and picture past events. How would the men have felt arriving at a place so foreign to them? How would the workers of Fort Stanton have felt about the newcomers? What would their lives have been like? *Encampment* is a story of a man and a woman, two outsiders from different backgrounds who have experienced trauma and grief in their pasts, who learn that after great heartbreak and grief can come acceptance, peace, and even happiness. When writing my story, I had to carefully consider how I would use characterization, symbolism, point of view, and plot to create a historical fiction that was both entertaining and enlightening.

When I considered who my protagonists would be, a nurse felt like the natural choice for Elizabeth. As a character, Elizabeth deals with the death of her parents, her place in society, and the trauma that comes from an abusive encounter with James, the border patrol agent in the story. She is dealing with grief, and I imagined her character at a time when I was dealing with the grief of losing my mother, a Mexican American woman who became a nurse at a time when many women did not have the choice to have a career in South Texas in the 1950's. I have

always had great respect for nurses, and Elizabeth becomes a nurse in the story as a means of survival after the death of her father.

When creating her character and deciding what would drive her choices, I thought carefully about the role that women play in society and in literature. It was important for me to paint a picture of a woman who was strong, but still had all the natural vulnerability, desires, and dreams that all human beings have. My timeline right before the start of World War II was also significant and had to be considered when writing her character. In Bernthal's article "If Not Yourself, Who Would You Be?" she explores author Agatha Christie and her novels written during the era of World War II. She theorizes that many of her novels have an "escapist nature" and were so popular because people needed an art form that could help them process the death and horrors of war, without actually writing about the war. As Bernthal writes "there is a running commentary on domestic and commercial sphere and women's roles within these." (Bernthal 41) It became important to me for Elizabeth's role to be of a strong woman who could overcome hardship, and for the story that would develop to be a pleasant form of escape for the reader. Books have always been my escape from the routines and pressures of everyday life, and I hoped to write a story that would also be a meaningful and allow the reader to wander into a different world and experience what my characters were experiencing.

When writing Elizabeth's point of view, I wanted to be sure that her voice represented the mixed emotions that she would be feeling dealing with grief, falling in love, and trying to find her place in society. I decided that using a third person limited point of view would best help me show her inner thoughts and feelings. In the novel *The Book of Lost Names* Kristin Harmel uses third person limited point of view when showing the voice of her protagonist Eva. For example, in one scene when the protagonist is being questioned, Harmel writes from Eva's point of view:

“How could she lie to a child? But it was more dangerous to tell the truth.” (208) By showing the reader the character’s inner thoughts we can see the story from their limited, pinpointed vision.

For my other protagonist, Frederic, I chose to have him be a German internee, a young man who is conflicted and blaming himself for his mother’s arrest by the Gestapo. I also chose to write his thoughts from the third person limited point of view. By doing so, I was able to show the inner struggles he was having dealing with his guilt and feelings of incompetence. Furthermore, he is grieving for the uncertain fate of his mother and the betrayal of his country which is in the middle of the Nazi holocaust. He is a German Jew who feels he must conceal his religion to be accepted by the other crew members of the ship. However, this concealment leads to conflict between him and Elizabeth as their attraction to each other grows.

The conflict between Elizabeth and Frederic was key to making my novel a romance. They both feel instant attraction for one another, but circumstances keep them apart. Besides Frederic concealing his true self, there is also conflict between them because Elizabeth is distrustful of men. She has worked so hard to become a nurse at Fort Stanton after the death of her father to tuberculosis. She is not sure if she wants to allow herself to trust a man, especially one whose character and moral beliefs are suspect. James suggests to her that Frederic is pro-Nazi, and the doubts she has about the integrity of his character adds to the conflict. The bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941 will become a catalyst for change and will test both protagonists and determine if their attraction can go any further.

Another important conflict that the protagonists must overcome is the relationship that Elizabeth has with James at the beginning of the story. James has been courting Elizabeth for months at the beginning of the novel, but she has always turned him down. After Frederic arrives, she feels confused about her true feelings and agrees to go out to dinner with James.

What happens between them is a subplot that must be resolved for her to go on and heal and ultimately realize her true feelings for Frederic.

Frederic also has conflict that he must resolve. He is left with a feeling of impotence after his mother is arrested and there is nothing that he can do to save her. Through dream scenes throughout the novel, I touch on the inner turmoil that Frederic is feeling to help show the reader why Frederic feels he isn't good enough for Elizabeth, and why he feels that he has nothing to offer her. "Dreams dazzle us by their vivid and succinct images, symbols, and metaphors, which come upon us when we are asleep." (Rheinschmiedt 47) In one dream sequence Frederic is dreaming that his mother is aboard a burning ship, and he is watching helplessly from the water as she calls out to him, however he is impotent to help as he watches the ship sink. In another dream, Frederic thinks he is waking to hear the sound of a mountain lion about to attack, which is a metaphor for the danger that awaits him. Dreams are a way to show the inner torment and anxiety that a person feels, so this felt like a natural way for me to show that in my characters.

The conflict and attraction between my protagonists are vital to the romance, but another important aspect of their characterization that I wanted to portray was the feeling of "otherness" that both characters were experiencing. Elizabeth is half Mexican American in a small, sheltered community that is almost entirely white, Christian Caucasian. She is an orphan with no relatives living nearby and a woman working at a time when there were very few acceptable careers for women. Frederic is a German Jew who has been hiding his religion to protect himself from the hostile German government, and then later from a pro-Nazi faction of the men at the internment camp. They are both strong survivors, but their alienization affects their actions and their feelings for one another.

Although I am familiar with what it feels like to half Mexican American and feel at times caught between two worlds, without truly fitting into either, I have no idea what it feels like to be a Jewish man in an alien land. As a result of the Nazi Holocaust the Jewish diaspora expands into many Central and South American countries. One author who writes from a Jewish Latin American point of view is Ricardo Feierstein. When doing research, I found his novel *Mestizo* very enlightening and helpful to try to understand a little bit of what my protagonist Frederic might be feeling. Feierstein writes: “Yes, we are survivors. Since childhood, we survived by chance. We are here, others could have been.” (11) Frederic is a survivor by chance. His mother is arrested by the Gestapo when it was meant to be him. It is hard to ever truly know what another person experiences when our own situation is so different, but when writing Frederic’s character, I tried to express the guilt he felt because he was a survivor.

The feelings that I had for Fort Stanton were the beginning of my story, so it was very important for me to create a sense of space in the novel. I wanted to use imagery that would allow the reader to feel as if they were there in Fort Stanton along with Frederic and Elizabeth. I also wanted to use poetic imagery that would help the reader to feel the sense of peace that comes from the beautiful, alpine setting there. It was vital that I describe the mountains, the trees, and the beautiful New Mexico sky to help paint the picture and set the scene for the story.

In the giftshop at Fort Stanton I came across a book of photographs by James McBride. The black and white photographs of Fort Stanton were invaluable to me in picturing the landscape and setting of my story. In *Internment of the SS Columbus Crew at Fort Stanton* McBride compiles hundreds of photographs that he discovered when he wrote his own thesis on the internment of the German soldiers. The photographs tell a story in pictures of the lives of the German seamen and the community they lived in during 1941. There are photographs that show

how well the men adapted to their temporary homes by building huts along the River Bonito, gardens, and even a swimming pool for a summer Olympics.

One photograph that particularly stood out to me was of the celebration that the German internees had in January of 1941 to celebrate Hitler's birthday. The photograph shows the musicians from the orchestra of the *Columbus* being led by the conductor who is dressed as a clown. Behind him is a portrait of Hitler and a framed swastika. The juxtaposition of the smiling clown and the swastika was so startling and disturbing to me that I wanted to include a scene in the novel that would represent that moment. The turmoil that Frederic feels in that moment is also a catalyst in the storyline because it reveals his true feelings to the pro-Nazi Germans who he will have conflict with, and it also leads to a chance encounter with Elizabeth.

Another technique that I wanted to incorporate in my writing was the use of symbolism. I chose the title *Encampment* because it holds two meanings in the story. According to the Merriam Webster dictionary it means "the place where a group (such as a body of troops) is encamped" or "the act of being encamping; the state of being encamped." In the novel the German internees are encamped at Fort Stanton against their will. Furthermore, Frederic and Elizabeth are both encamped, literally and figuratively. They will become encamped when they are both trapped together in a cabin after a snowstorm, and they are emotionally encamped in their own hurt because of the trauma they have experienced.

The Bonito River is also an important symbol in *Encampment*. It is a physical barrier between the German camp and the hospital and main square at Fort Stanton. The river is not very wide, and this created an opportunity to have each protagonist be able to stand on the bank of their side and look over to where the other was, creating more of a feeling of longing despite how close they really were. In the autumn of 1941, flashfloods caused the river to swell and take

out the bridge. I used this event in history to create another symbolic obstacle between Elizabeth and Frederic.

The landscape and environment of Fort Stanton is home to many forest animals, and one of the most beautiful is the raven. The first time I saw one in person I was shocked at their size and at how clever the birds are, so the raven was a natural choice for me to use as symbolism. Rather than use them as symbol of something negative or menacing I chose to have them be a good omen in the story. At many points where the protagonists are struggling emotionally, a raven appears.

When researching for my thesis I was influenced by the novel *When the Emperor Was Divine* by Julie Otsuka. In her novel, Otsuka writes from three different characters' perspectives using a third person limited point of view. By doing this she allows the reader to experience the events of the Japanese American internment the way they were experienced by three different family members during World War II. It was a very impactful way to write, and I was very moved by the novel. Therefore, I decided I would try to use the same type of point of view with my own characters. In *Encampment* I write from the point of view of both Frederic and Elizabeth to give the reader a look into their thoughts, feelings, and motivations.

The third person limited point of view was also the best way for me to show the inner turmoil that both characters are going through. Frederic is conflicted because he has feelings for Elizabeth but knows that he has nothing to offer her. He also feels torn by the guilt and helplessness he feels by not being able to save his mother and being uncertain of her fate. Elizabeth is also conflicted, because she feels torn between wanting to have a relationship but also feeling obligated to devote herself to nursing.

Originally my storyline for *Encampment* came from a screenplay that I wrote, however I felt as if the screenplay format didn't allow me to express the inner thoughts and point of view of my characters. Therefore, I decided to adapt my story into a novel. The process involved more work than I ever imagined and ultimately changed my storyline completely. There are not many sources that describe the process a writer goes through when changing a screenplay into a novel, but in a reflection by Georgina Lock she discussed the differences in point of view: "Screenplays use words to describe experiences that can be seen and heard...Expressing inner conflict is challenging in a screenplay, because thoughts are invisible...By contrast, novels can only use words to articulate thought and feeling, which may often be analyzed or discussed by the narrator, or through dialogue...While novels...are able to more accurately present inner conflict than screenplay can." (127) The challenge for me became showing the point of view and inner turmoil of both protagonists.

In *Encampment* I am telling a love story, but more importantly a story of how two people heal from past traumas and discover that they can still find happiness. The novel falls within the genre of historical fiction, but there is an element of romantic fiction as well. Through my research of historical novels, I have tried to create a story that will move the reader, entertain them, and give them a glimpse into what life was like in Fort Stanton in the beginning years of World War II.

As I envisioned the story that I wanted to tell, the biggest challenge for me was characterization. I am often able to envision a character in my mind but find it more challenging to translate that character into words. To make my choice of point of view successful I needed to make sure that I created characters that were believable, and that the reader would feel sympathetic towards. Elizabeth is a hard-working young woman who has been shaped by her

environment and by the early deaths of her parents. She is a survivor, and this contributes to the conflict she feels. Frederic has just been through a devastating experience and is also a survivor. He is young and hardworking and throws himself into his chores at Fort Stanton to get through the days. James is another important character who is two sided. He is a product of his environment as well and represents stereotypes and the prejudice that many people had at the time of people different than themselves. It was also important to me that his character be multifaceted, and to show that not everyone is either all bad or all good. Although he has moments where he seems like the villain, I wanted to show that in all people there is also some good.

Other characters that are important to the story are Dr. Hammond, Cook, and Carol. These characters help show the relationships and attachments that Elizabeth has to Fort Stanton, and they help build her characterization. The mix of characters are meant to show that life is not black and white and the relationships they have with one another at times complicate the inner turmoil that Elizabeth and Frederic have. The only villains in the story are the internees who are pro-Nazi and the Hitler regime in the beginning of the novel.

Research played a vital role in my journey of writing *Encampment*. Since my novel is a historical fiction, it was very important to accurately portray the environment and social climate of Fort Stanton and Nazi Germany in 1941. This time period was a pivotal one in world history and accurate research was necessary for me to gain a good understanding of what life would have been like for my characters. It is common advice to “write what you know.” However, when writing about time periods that occurred in the past, writers can still incorporate their own experiences into their stories. I personally know what it is like to feel the grief of losing a parent like Elizabeth and Frederic and the sense of “otherness” they both feel. I also know the peace and

beauty of the natural surroundings around Fort Stanton and consider the area of Lincoln County, New Mexico to be a second home to me. Therefore, my research process felt very personal.

“Sometimes it’s not possible to choose the story you write. Sometimes, the story chooses you.”

(Lucier 78) This is how I felt about *Encampment*. I felt compelled to write a story that represented this unique place and time.

They say a picture tells a thousand words, and for me this was true. The photographs that I came across that are compiled in James McBride’s books *Interned: Internment of the SS Columbus Crew at Fort Stanton* and *Fort Stanton Hospital: a Photo Essay History* were invaluable to me in giving me an authentic viewpoint of what the fort was like. The past lives of the nurses and doctors of the hospital were easy to imagine through the photographs of their lives, and the unusual nature of the German camp came to life in the photographs. The Germans lived very comfortable lives before the United States entry into World War II, which would probably be surprising to most people. However, the bombing of Pearl Harbor would change their situation. Overnight they became alien enemies, and the Border Patrol began to build barbed wire fences and watch towers.

This change in their situation acted as a catalyst for Frederic to make an escape attempt and moves the plot along, ultimately throwing Frederic and Elizabeth together. This becomes a turning point in the story.

My research began with the journey that the Germans took to Fort Stanton after being torpedoed by the British as they attempted to run the blockade and return to Germany.

Newspaper articles from the time were a great resource in being able to imagine how they would have felt arriving by bus to Fort Stanton after journeying to Ellis Island, then Angel Island, and then finally to Fort Stanton.

Ultimately it was necessary for me to combine the knowledge I had gained from research and combine it with the ideas I had for characterization and symbolism to create a believable environment for my plot. To make it believable it was also important that I create subplots in the story to move it along, and to create conflict and tension so that the plot wouldn't be too predictable. Early on I worried that the resolution of the story would be too obvious. As soon as Elizabeth and Frederic see one another there is an instant attraction. So, it was necessary that I create a need for the reader to want to discover what conflict and tension would keep them apart until the resolution of the story.

The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society is a story that takes place right after German occupation of Britain at the end of World War II. In the story the two main characters feel an instant attraction for each other, but the plot twists and conflict keep them apart. They have differences in social status, live in different countries, and are in part kept from resolving their conflict by a secret that is being kept to protect a young girl. By adding all these elements Mary Schaffer and Annie Barrows create a story that makes the reader compelled to read on to the end. It was a challenge for me to create a story line that was also compelling enough to keep the reader interested until the end of the story.

My idea for *Encampment* began with a feeling and a sense of place that I felt when I first visited Fort Stanton. Through my research and writing I tried to build a story that was realistic, but also reflected the unique sense of adventure that I felt there. Through symbolism, characterization, plot, and third person limited point of view I strived to create a historical fiction that is both entertaining and informative. I have always felt that good stories are a way to escape the pressures of everyday life and live, if only for a short time, in a fantasy world. I hope with

my story I have created an enjoyable escape from everyday life and a chance to imagine what life would have been like in Elizabeth and Frederic's shoes.

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

In January of 1941 thirty-nine German men arrived in Fort Stanton, New Mexico. They were the first of a group of 410 crew members of the *SS Columbus*, a German luxury liner that had been rescued by US forces in December of 1939 after trying to run through a British blockade in an attempt to return to Germany. They were initially taken to Ellis Island, and because the United States was not at war yet with Germany the men and women were not considered “prisoners of war” but “distressed seamen.” The Immigration and Naturalization Service would decide their fate, and they were to be sent home across the Pacific to Japanese ships that would then take them to Germany. However, when that plan wasn’t possible the Immigration and Naturalization Service began to look for an inland location to hold the men. Wilhem Däehne, the captain of the *Columbus*, was a strong leader and had some input in what to do with the men. It was finally decided that they would take over a former Civilian Conservation Corp camp at Fort Stanton. Therefore, Fort Stanton became the first civilian alien internment camp in the United States and was established before the United States’ entry into World War II in December of 1941.

For the most part the men were treated humanely and even in some cases kindly by the United States Immigration and Naturalization, the border patrol, and the citizens of Lincoln County. At the time Fort Stanton’s main function was as a Public Health Service Sanatorium/Hospital devoted to treating merchant marines who were suffering from tuberculosis. The New Mexico sunshine, dry air, and high altitude were considered perfect conditions for people living with tuberculosis. The hospital operated for fifty years and became a hub of the Fort Stanton community and their families. The local community was made up of people from all

walks of life including Border Patrol men from El Paso, Texas. The surrounding area was also diverse with nearby towns Lincoln, Captain, and the Mescalero Apache Reservation to the south.

The men of the *Columbus* quickly adapted to life at Fort Stanton. Although a few men tried to escape over the years, the camp was relatively unsecured and security at the camp was minimal. On December 7, 1941, that changed as the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and the United States entered World War II. Life at Fort Stanton changed as well, and security was increased since the men were citizens of a country we were at war with.

Life in Lincoln County would be affected as well as the rest of the country as the atrocities committed by Hitler came to light, and the world learned of the living nightmare that was the Holocaust. *Encampment* is a fictional glimpse into the lives of people that might have lived in Fort Stanton in this turbulent time in US and World history.

CHAPTER 1

Hamburg, Germany, August 1939

The night sky was dark with no sign of the moon as two men dressed in the field grey uniforms of the Gestapo roughly thrust a middle-aged woman into the back of a truck crowded with prisoners. The sound of someone quietly weeping drifted through the night air as prisoners huddled, scared, and bewildered inside. Suddenly a tall, slim young man ran out of the alley that ran between the two tenements across the street. He had thought if he stayed in the small alcove where he had been hiding, the men would have gone on without him. He never imagined they would take his mother in his place. He ran across the street as fast as he could and threw himself at the men.

“No!” he cried as he watched his mother being shoved into a crowded trailer.

“Get him!” commanded one of the men in German. “*Jude!*” he spat at the young man as the other grabbed him by the arms. The trooper pulled the young man’s arms tighter behind his back and held him as the other man beat him mercilessly with his fists. The young man struggled to see his mother as she was led into the trailer, but the world seemed to spin as he began to lose consciousness.

Through a haze of fury and panic he pulled himself back from the darkness, thrashed loose, and with the last of his energy he fought back. The first soldier pulled his pistol from its holster, struck the young man across the face with the muzzle, and then jabbed him in the chest. The young man crumpled to his knees as he collapsed to the ground. Though his eyes were almost swollen shut, he could still see his mother’s weeping face through the wooden slats of the trailer as the truck drove away, and the soldiers continued to beat him, eventually leaving him for dead.

Frederic slowly opened his eyes and was blinded for a moment by the glaring sunlight. From somewhere nearby the town clock struck twelve. For a moment he couldn't remember where he was or how he'd gotten there. His head ached, and one eye was completely swollen shut. His throat was so dry that swallowing was a difficult task. Instinctively he tried to raise himself up on one elbow, but searing pains ripped across his chest, and he realized his ribs were cracked in several places.

With great effort he turned his head slightly to one side until he could see the alley that ran behind the row of houses and tenements that made up his neighborhood. Thinking about home reminded him of the nightmare of the night before. *Dear God!* He thought as choking sobs escaped his mouth. After a while he became vaguely aware of someone speaking to him. He looked up and saw his neighbor, Frau Schmidt's kind and weathered face looming over him, haloed by the bright sunlight. He saw her hand reach down toward him, and then everything hazed over into a bright ray of sunlight as he drifted back into unconsciousness.

He had no idea how much time had passed but he heard her voice again.

"Shhh! We must hurry and get him inside before someone sees us." He had a vague feeling of being lifted as pain shot through his whole body, and someone with strong arms carried him like a baby before he drifted off again.

Later he woke in a cool, dark room. He had a vague feeling of safety and noticed familiar surroundings. He had been laid down on a bed and a cool cloth lay on his feverish forehead causing a chill to run down his body before he slipped into merciful sleep again.

He didn't know how much time had passed, hours, maybe days, but he woke when he heard voices coming from somewhere not far away.

Soft footsteps padded down a hallway nearby, and then the familiar face of his mother's old friend appeared in the doorway.

"You are awake!" She cried and then quickly left the room. When she returned, she had a bowl of water with a clean rag hanging from the rim. Gently, with the cloth that on any other day she would have used to dry her dishes, she began wiping his face, across his forehead, then carefully down his cheek. A dull ache radiated across his cheekbone where only the faintest bruise remained, and an angry scar was forming.

"There, there Frederic. Hold still," she scolded in a tone a mother would use on a child. He struggled to sit up, but his chest still had a dull ache, and his body felt like a heavy weight was sitting on his chest.

"A terrible thing that happened." She watched him carefully as she fussed over him, and as the memory of that horrible night came back to him tears began to roll down his cheeks.

"I had heard that they were only taking men, but now we see it is not true. Even though your name was on the list, I never thought they would take her in your place." He felt like he was dreaming. How could this have happened?

"If only we had known, we could have helped you and your mother to leave before. I knew it was getting worse, but I never imagined this. In Timothy it says, '*in the last days there will come times of difficulty.*' I pray for your mother!"

When she was finished cleaning his wounds, she helped him to sit up by propping pillows behind his back.

"You must sit for a moment while I get you something to eat. We have to help you build your strength back, but you cannot stay here many days more."

Frederic licked his dry lips and forced his hoarse voice to speak. “How long did I sleep?”

“You have been in an out of dreams for six days.” As the reality of it all hit him, Frederic leaned his head back against the pillows, closed his eyes, and wept.

The next day Frederic had regained some of his strength and was sitting in the dull sunlight of the kitchen. The curtains had been drawn for privacy and Frau Schmidt worked quietly by the sink. Silently she washed the dishes as she kept an eye on Frederic across the room. He had more color in his cheeks, but there was a dull look in his eyes that caused a knot to form in her throat. She felt the need to help him, but worried about the danger they were putting themselves in. When she finished the dishes, she went to get a loaf of bread she had just baked that morning from the hutch across the room. She wrapped the whole loaf in a cloth, and then took two sausages from a covered dish by the sink. Grabbing a burlap sack, she quickly put the food together with a thermos of water.

Her simple domestic actions suddenly seemed surreal to Frederic. His mother should be at home in her own kitchen baking bread, boiling water for tea.

“It is not safe here for you anymore Frederic,” she whispered as she sat beside Frederic. “They think you are dead, but if someone reports that they saw you, they will come looking for you my dear boy. You will be arrested like your mother and taken away.”

“I have nowhere to go,” Frederic glanced around the room as if men would be there any moment to arrest him.

“I do not know yet, but I think my husband might be able to help. We spoke of it last night. You are strong enough, I think. Yesterday Fraulein Heinrich was asking questions about you. I did not like the way she was looking at me, as if I had something to hide. I never did like her. She always liked you, and I think she has never forgiven you for not caring for her in the

same way. If she knew you were here, she might tell the Gestapo, and if they come to ask questions, I am afraid they will see you. So, I want you to take this food and hide in my shed for now. Later, when we have a plan, I will come and get you. Do not come out until then!”

“Frau Schmidt, you put yourself in danger helping me. If the Gestapo find out, you could be arrested too. I should just go,” Frederic had gripped the woman’s hand and was now squeezing it tightly.

“Your mother was my friend. You are Jewish and I am not, but God does not see the difference. I must help you. Wait a little longer, and my husband will come for you.” She wouldn’t be able to forgive herself if she didn’t help him.

As Frederic sat in the cold, dark shed the hours seemed to pass by with torturing slowness. Every time he heard the motor of a vehicle pass by in the street, he tensed, expecting it to be soldiers. Sometime during the afternoon, he dozed off, but woke quickly when he heard a man and a woman speaking in hushed voices. The sound of urgency and panic roused him, and he realized it was Frau Schmidt arguing with her husband. He couldn’t make out their words, but he was filled with guilt that he was causing trouble for his mother’s good friend. If only he could turn back time. What if he and his mother had just packed up and left weeks ago? Money, or lack of it, had prevented them from fleeing the country. They knew others who had left already.

When night fell, he heard footsteps approaching the door of the shed. Bracing for the worst, he tensed, ready to defend himself, and then froze as Heir Shmidt stood in the doorway. He carried a small lantern and a bundle of clothes as he entered the small shed. Frederic squinted as his eyes adjusted to the sudden, bright light.

“Son, I want to help you, but I am afraid.” Herr Schmidt closed the door and sat down on a stool beside Frederic. “I believe what the Reich is doing is wrong, but if you stay here and get caught it might be very bad for my family. People are disappearing every day. I do not know what will happen to our country, but you cannot stay!”

“I do not want to cause you and your family any trouble, but I do not know where to go. My mother! I do not know where they have taken her.” His hand shook as he rubbed at his tear-stained eyes.

“When I was by the shipyard this morning, I saw a line of men signing up to work on the luxury ship, the *SS Columbus*. They are in port right now looking for workers to sail on the next voyage. In the morning you should go, change your name. If they ask for your passport, tell them you are a sailor, and you lost it on the last ship. No one can see the *J* marked on it. You must start fresh. Do whatever it takes to get on that ship, but do not let them know you are a Jew! Germany is not safe for you anymore!” Frau Schmidt gripped Frederic by the shoulders. “Do you understand me?”

“Yes, but I cannot leave my mother!” Frederic spoke quietly, but his heart was pounding loudly in his chest.

Herr Schmidt spoke in a firm and solemn voice, “you cannot help your mother now. Your mother would want you to survive, to live. When things are better you can come back and find her.” The words rang false even in Herr Schmidt’s head, but he knew he must convince Frederic to leave in the morning.

“In the morning I will take a shipment of lumber to the harbor. I leave at 8:00. Tonight, I will leave a blanket and tarp in the back of my truck. When I leave you must be hidden in the back. You must! Do this for me and my wife. Do this for your mother!” He pulled a small

bundle out of his pocket and handed it to Frederic. The young man opened the cloth and found a small sepia photograph of his mother inside. It had been taken when she was first married. Her beautiful face held the hope and innocence of a new bride. Under the photograph was a small roll of bills and a pile of coins.

“I cannot take this money,” Frederic started, but the older man cut him off.

“Take it, it is yours. Your mother gave it to my wife months ago just in case anything were to happen. We have been keeping it safe for you. It is your money Frederic, money that you and your mother worked hard for, take it! If your father were alive, he would want this too.”

Then Herr Schmidt gripped Frederic by the shoulders and pulled him into his arms.

“Be careful and be safe!” As the men embraced, silent tears rolled down Frederic’s cheeks.

Frederic spent a fitful night in the dark of the shed, and when the town clock struck six, he woke with a start. He had dreamt of his mother. She was aboard a ship, and he watched from the shore as the ship slowly drifted out to sea. As he waved farewell, his mother smiled and waved back. Then suddenly there were blazing flames all around her. In desperation he leapt into the water and tried to swim towards the ship. No matter how hard he moved his arms through the water, he never got any closer to the ship. Wave after wave forced him back as he watched the ship slowly sink into the dark sea. He screamed in grief as a wave of water rushed over his head and into his mouth. Frederic woke with a gasp and realized he had been holding his breath. He was drenched in sweat and shivering in the early morning chill.

Forcing himself to breath in and out he sat up and stretched out the stiffness in his back but was rewarded only with a sharp stabbing pain in his ribs. Slowly and laboriously, he changed into the fresh set of clothes that Herr Schmidt had brought him the night before. And although

his ribs still ached, the pain was becoming more bearable. He quickly ate some of the bread from the night before and then bundled the photograph of his mother along with the money into his bag of food. Gingerly he opened the door of the shed just a crack and peeked outside. The alley behind the houses was empty, so he slowly crept out and made his way to the side of the Schmidt's small home. As he came around the front corner, he heard the sounds of a horse drawn wagon and shrank back into the shadows. The milkman's delivery wagon was slowly making its way down the street as a young boy jumped off and on delivering glass bottles of milk onto different doorsteps. On any other day his mother might be waiting for her milk delivery to drink with her morning tea. He waited until the wagon passed and then quickly made his way to Herr Schmidt's wagon. He laid down in the back and covered himself with the blanket and tarp. Clutching his bag to his chest he breathed a sigh of relief and settled in to wait for eight o'clock.

The ride to the harbor seemed to last forever as they lumbered over the streets of Hamburg. When Herr Schmidt finally stopped outside of a warehouse on the wharf, Frederic waited a few moments to make sure no one was nearby. When he felt like it was safe, he emerged from the back of the wagon. As soon as he was clear of the tarp, he quickly crossed the road to the other side and hoped that he blended in with the activity at the harbor.

It didn't take him long to spot the *Columbus*. She was a magnificent ship that rose out of the water like a giant mechanical sea creature. She was larger and higher than anything Frederic had ever seen before. Her smokestacks seemed to rise forever out of a cliff face of steel. All around the harbor clusters of people stopped to stare at the luxury liner, so Frederic blended in, and no one noticed the handsome young man with the sad eyes.

He quickly found the line of men and women hoping to find employment aboard the ship. This had to work. He had never thought of leaving his homeland before, but now he had no choice. The minutes ticked by, and a line of sweat trickled down his back as he waited.

After half an hour he reached the front of the line and started to write his new name on the list that a large, burly man thrust towards him.

“What happened to your face?” The man asked brusquely as he stared suspiciously at him.

“I had a small squabble on the last ship I was on. Another sailor did not like the look of me.” He shrugged his shoulders.

“I’d say that wasn’t such a small squabble. What ship did you work on before?”

Frederic thought for a second and then said the first thing that came to his mind “*Das Gluckliche Fraulein.*”

The seaman laughed hard and patted Frederic on the back “I guess you weren’t so lucky though?” Then he glanced down at the list, “Herr Benigson. What job did you have on the last ship?”

Frederic wished he had thought it all through more and said the first thing that came to mind. “I worked in the boiler room.”

The man looked Frederic up and down. “You look a little thin for that kind of work.”

“Thin, but tougher than I look.” He would need to be now.

“Well, we could always use more men in the boiler room. Go on up the ramp and check in with the seaman on deck whose signing up the other workers. He will check your papers. Welcome to the *Columbus*, and try to stay out of trouble, Lucky!” The man laughed at his own joke as Frederic made his way to the ramp that would take him up to the deck of the massive

ship. The long ramp took him up into the interior of the ship, where he then had to take another two flights of stairs to the open deck. A seaman in a naval uniform was sitting at a long table processing each applicant. There were just a few others in line ahead of him, and while Frederic waited, he took a moment to look around at the other people on deck. Some sailors were busy securing rope lines and checking the emergency crafts, while others were escorting travelers and leading them to their quarters. Everywhere he looked he saw excited faces as workers and civilians prepared for the voyage ahead. The excitement seemed surreal to Frederic. Suddenly he felt sick to his stomach, but he squared his shoulders and pressed forward, prepared to play his part.

When Frederic reached the table, the crewman held out his hand towards Frederic.

“Passport please.”

Frederic smiled sheepishly and held up his hands as if to apologize. “I am sorry, I do not have a passport.”

“What do you mean? You cannot work on the ship without your passport. Do you at least have a birth certificate?”

“No, sorry. I lost both on the last ship I worked on.” The crewman barely held in his irritation and stared at Frederic for a long moment. It felt like forever as Frederic held his breath, waiting for his response. This had to work. He didn’t know where he would go if it didn’t.

“Excuse me.” The crewman got up and went to speak with a man in a dark blue naval uniform with shiny brass buttons and military awards covering both sides of his lapels. The man had been talking to some passengers nearby, as the crewman approached, leaned toward him, and whispered something in his ear.

“Excuse me ladies,” the man bowed slightly to the women he had been talking to “I must see to a ship matter.” Both men walked over to the table where Frederic waited.

“Hello, I am Captain Daehne. Herr Fishcer tells me you have no papers but wish to work on the *Columbus*.”

“Yes, sir. I lost all of my papers on the last ship I was on, but I am a hard worker. I can do any kind of work. I worked in the boiler room before.” Frederic felt slightly guilty for lying, but he was a hard worker at least.

Captain Daehne looked at Frederic’s face and wondered what kind of hardship the boy had been through. His pale blue eyes held grief, and there were the faintest greenish yellow bruises on his cheek, proving that he had been in some kind of trouble recently. He ran a tight ship, but the boy’s stoic expression pulled at his heart.

“Alright, we will put you to work in the boiler room. Do not make me sorry.” Captain Daehne reached out his hand to shake Frederic’s and then patted the crewman on the back. “I must get back to greeting passengers, not much time left before departure.”

“What is your name?” The crewman turned to Frederic and asked.

“Frederic Benigson, sir.”

The days quickly passed, and Frederic soon became accustomed to life aboard the *Columbus*. His heart ached for the home he had left behind, and the uncertainty of his mother’s fate pressed on his heart. The sweat and toil of each day helped to distract him, but the heat of the boiler room was oppressive.

“They are being taken by the thousands to the labor camps,” said Josef, an older man who had worked on the ship for many years and knew all the other crewmembers. He spoke in a

quiet, solemn voice, but the other crewman still listened to him when he spoke. “Not just men anymore.”

“You want me to have sympathy, but I am glad. Germany will be better for it! All those Jews were ruining our homeland,” spat a seaman named Klaus who had joined the crew only days before Frederic.

“How can innocent men and women ruin our country? Do their children ruin it too?” Josef pressed on.

“I read all about it. You think you are so clever old man. Have you not read any of the pamphlets that have been circulating since they started the Ghettos? They say the Jews were behind the last war. What would happen if they joined the Bolshevik’s? Do you want our country to become a communist country? They’re a danger to our country, our way of life, parasites that will suck us dry! All they care about is making money, but at whose expense? Hitler will lead us in the right direction, and our country will prosper!” Several of the men cheered and clapped in agreement. Frederic felt his stomach turn as anger burned inside of him, but he held his tongue.

“Prosperity on the backs of innocents. Murder is a sin in any religion.” Josef glanced over at Klaus who just glared at him.

One of the men in the back of the room called out to Klaus, “are you going to let the old man keep talking to you that way?”

Klaus just fumed for a moment and then said “what does he know? He is probably a Jew lover. Just an old man, anyway, one day he will see.”

Several men laughed, and a senior crewman who had just entered to check on what was causing the commotion yelled out “Back to work! You do not get paid to stand around and talk

like a bunch of old women!” Disgruntled and still riled up, the men reluctantly got back to work. Anger and hurt warred in Frederic’s heart as he pumped the machinery that would power the ship. Sweat dripped down his face blending in with the tears that had begun to sting his eyes and blur his sight.

The night air was heavy with tropical moisture as the ship sailed through the West Indies. Each stop at port had brought new sights that were so foreign to home. Frederic took advantage of his precious time off to sit aboard the promenade deck. Leaning back in the deck chair, he gazed at the thousands of stars in the night sky. To think that his mother was somewhere miles away under the same night sky was almost too much to bear. Reaching into his pocket he pulled out his wallet and gingerly took out the photograph of his mother. He was careful to carry it with him always, and in the moonlight, he could just make out her face. As he gazed at it, his mind wandered back to the memory of that awful night. He shut his eyes, hoping to push the images away, and made a silent prayer for her safety.

As he opened his eyes, he noticed movement along the shadowy deck beside him, and glanced over in time to see several seaman rush across the deck and through the doors leading to the bridge. A moment later two more men in heated discussion headed in the same direction. He tried to make out what they were saying, but only heard “Offload them in Havana.” As the men disappeared through the same door, he laid his head back down to enjoy a few more minutes of peace before going down to his cabin for the night.

The night brought no peace, and the morning brought a bustle of activity. As Frederic was gulping down his morning coffee, word spread quickly through the crew mess hall that the *Columbus* was heading for Havana, Cuba to offboard all its civilian passengers.

“Daehne received orders last night. ‘All German merchant ships must return to Germany or take refuge in a neutral port.’ That was the coded message!” One of the galley workers pronounced carefully, proud to be the bearer of such important news.

“Havana, Cuba? How many days to Havana? And then what?” A young crewman with blonde, sandy hair and pale grey eyes that Frederic recognized from the boiler asked.

“Three days and then we head for Veracruz,” the galley worker shared the news he had heard from his friend who worked in the galley, who had heard it from her friend who worked as a server taking Captain Daehne his meals.

“More importantly, what does this mean?” Klaus asked angrily from the other end of the room.

Frederic spoke for the first time that morning. “It means we are at war.”

For the next four months Frederic and the other seamen went about their daily chores and prepared the *Columbus* for any possible move while the ship sat and waited in port off the coast of Mexico. Frederic felt the days pass in a slow-motion dream while he listened to any news he could get of Germany and the war it waged against Poland, France, and Britain. The uncertainty of his mother’s fate weighed on him, and he felt like a wire was slowly being tightened around his heart.

One December day Frederic woke with a start. He was drenched in sweat. He had been dreaming about his mother again. It had been the day of his thirteenth birthday. His aunt and uncle had come from far to see him. His uncle embraced him with both arms. *You are the man of the house now. Always look after your mother Frederic.* His mother leaned over the birthday cake to kiss him on the cheek. *Happy Birthday Frederic! Make a wish!* As he blew out the

candles his mother disappeared and he was alone, standing in a bank of snow as a storm raged all around him. *Always look after your mother!* Breathe, just breathe. He forced the air in and out of his lungs and sat up. For a moment he was confused by the dark, grey metal walls as he anxiously glanced around at the small windowless quarters of the ship. He felt like an animal trapped in a cage. Then he remembered where he was. Shivering despite the heat of the cabin he dressed quickly and headed out to see if there was any change in the ship's status.

In the crew mess hall, there was a distinct tension in the air as the crewmen and the few women workers of the ship gathered for coffee and what breakfast they could make from their thinning provisions. Frederic looked around for Josef. If there were news, he would rather hear it from the older man whom he had come to respect than from anyone else. Spotting him at a table across the room he headed in Josef's direction.

"Is there any news?" He suddenly hoped they were heading back to Germany. Home. Even if it wasn't the same home as before.

"Daehne has been ordered to try to run the British blockade, to try to make it back to Germany. I hear we are going to get a briefing today with orders on what to do if we get captured." Josef's hands had a slight tremor to them as he sipped his black tea.

"Do you think we'll make it?" Frederic hoped the older man would have answers. He trusted Josef more than anyone else on the ship.

"I do not know. The British will try to capture the ship to prevent Hitler from using it in his war fleet. If we are captured, God knows what becomes of us, but if we make it home, I hope my family is still safe." Josef looked Frederic deep in the eyes. "I hope your family is safe too." He reached over and gripped Frederic's arm, and Frederic realized that Josef was hiding the

same secret. He tried to imagine what they would find if their return passage home was successful. Would there ever be a home for them in Germany again?

Early the next morning the seamen of the *Columbus* waited on deck for Captain Daehne to give orders and instructions as the ship prepared to run the blockade. The ship would run up through the Gulf of Mexico, and then along the eastern coast of the United States through the Neutrality Zone. They had two days to wait before the run would take place, and as Frederic and the men and women of the ship continued the daily work of running the ship, he hated feeling uncertain of what their fate would be.

Two days later in the dark of night the *Columbus* began her journey through the Gulf of Mexico. As she entered the waters off the Eastern coast of the United States, the US Naval ships that patrolled the Neutrality Zone began tracking her position. The darkened ship sailed through the sea and Frederic remembered the orders they'd been given days before. If the ship fell into Allied hands, they were to open the sea cocks, set the ship on fire, and abandon ship. *It must not get into the hands of the enemy* Daehne had said, by orders of Hitler. Enemy hands. But who was really the enemy?

When the *Columbus* reached the coast of New York they began to head northeast, out into open seas, escorted by the *USS Tuscaloosa*. They were almost in the clear, but they didn't know that the reports from the neutral US ships had been intercepted by the British *HMS Hyperion*.

Suddenly the silence of the night was shattered as two shots flew across the bow of the ship. All around him men began running in different directions as a handful of senior officers barked orders. Before he knew what was happening Frederic was helping other crewmen as they began loading the rescue boats. As soon as one was full, he helped others as the workers of the

Columbus climbed one by one down the precarious Jacob's ladders to safety as the ship began to burn around them.

At some point the shouts and orders seem to die down, and waking from a daze, he realized there were only a few people left on board. A man was approaching Frederic. His lips were moving, but Frederic couldn't make out his words. Instead, he saw a man from another night in a field grey uniform, his mouth moving in a contorted rage as hateful words poured from him. He could hear his mother's cries as she was pulled from their home. *Frederic!* He saw a flash of moonlight on a shiny black pistol, a wooden trailer filled with fearful faces. Then someone was shaking him. And instead of a Gestapo, the man shaking him was a face he knew, the older, lined face of an officer from the *Columbus*.

"Move! Abandon ship!" The man roughly grabbed Frederic by his upper arms and thrust him sideways and onto the ladder that led onto the small rescue boat that was dangling over the edge of the ship. Frederic shook out of his stupor and made his way down the ladder and then gripped the side of the boat as he and a few others were lowered down into the pitch-black sea.

CHAPTER 2

Fort Stanton, New Mexico, January 1941

Despite the cold, crisp air, and a blanket of snow on the ground, the New Mexico sun was shining, and the sky was blue and clear in every direction. Three ravens circled overhead, flying gracefully with the breeze as if they didn't have a care in the world. Elizabeth noticed them and glanced overhead. Her dark, shiny hair was pulled back neatly into a bun, but a few tendrils escaped and floated around her smooth, golden skinned face. Her darker coloring made her stand out from the others, and her hazel eyes were large and round and had an ephemeral look that always took people off guard. She stepped out of the hospital with her fellow nurses including Carol, the young woman who she'd come to love like a sister. Although she enjoyed her work at the hospital, she was happy to have an excuse to get outside in the fresh air for just a few minutes and assuage her curiosity about the arrivals. Together they walked down towards the thin, lazy river that wound through the ash and gambel oak trees. This morning only a trickle of water made it through the icy river. Dr. Hammond had come outside too and Cook and the other workers from the mess hall were already there. They were straining their eyes, trying to look across the river and into the distance. It seemed everyone had gathered to see the greyhound bus rumble along the snow-covered road down into the valley beyond the Rio Bonito. The bus lumbered through the gates, disturbing the peaceful morning. It parked in front of the few broken down wooden barracks that had been prepared just in time for the first internees. The weathered pine of the dilapidated structures blended in perfectly with the pale winter landscape looking as if they had always been there.

One by one about forty disheveled men stepped off the bus and were lined up by a slender man in a German navel uniform. The men seemed lost, some looked hostile, some of the

younger ones even looked scared as they glanced around at the foreign New Mexico landscape and were slowly led away towards the barracks. A chill ran up her spine as she watched the men. The events in Germany felt distant from her life here, but now those men were right across the river.

Beside her, Cook clucked her tongue in disapproval. The older woman was never afraid to make her opinion known.

“So many strange men and more on the way. It can’t be good or safe for that matter. They should have left them up in New York or wherever it was they were keeping them.”

“I think they were sent to San Francisco before they came here. I heard they tried to arrange passage back to Germany, but they couldn’t get them past the blockade.” Glancing back at the men across the river Carol asked “Do you really think some of the German seaman are Nazis? It’s hard to believe they could be here at Fort Stanton.”

Elizabeth thought about her father and wondered what he would have thought about the men. Her parents had taught her not to judge. She had certainly experienced it enough to know how much it hurt to be judged, but now she didn’t know what to think. She watched with solemn eyes as the men trooped by in the distance. One of the men stood out to her. Tall and thin with a gangly but muscular frame, he seemed different from the others. He didn’t look hostile or scared, but rather defiant. His pale, gaunt face was framed by wavy, golden-brown hair that lay in every direction. As if sensing her gaze, he glanced over at her as he walked towards the barracks. His light blue eyes held hers for a moment and suddenly his serious face was lit up by a beautiful smile. He didn’t look like an evil man. Embarrassed and surprised at the quick tightening in her chest, Elizabeth quickly glanced away and turned toward her friend Carol.

“I’m sure they can’t all be Nazis.”

Carol shuddered. “We better not take any chances though. I’m going to listen to what they told us, and I’m not going anywhere near them if I don’t have to.”

Elizabeth linked her arm with Carol’s “You’re right, and Nazis or not, in a few months there will be about four hundred more men here, and sooner or later some of them are going to need the hospital, even if they will have their own sick hall. We better get back to work.”

“Four hundred men? I wonder if any will be young and handsome?” Carol asked with a smile.

“Carol!” Elizabeth smiled despite the unease that she suddenly felt.

“What? A girl can only hope.” As Elizabeth laughed at her friend, she realized it was impossible to be mad at Carol when she smiled like that, and the dimple popped out on her left cheek. Still, the thought of so many men disturbed her. Unlike Carol she wasn’t looking for a husband.

“Come on, back to work.” Arm and arm the two friends walked back into the marine hospital that was on their side of the river. Frowning, Elizabeth took one last glance over her shoulder, but the young man with the beautiful smile was already gone.

The next morning Elizabeth woke with a start. She had the unsettled feeling that told her she’d had another nightmare, but try as she might, she couldn’t quite remember it. Parting the simple white cotton curtains and looking out the window beside her bed she could see that it was a cold, overcast morning. So different from the day before. Ominous clouds were forming above the mountains in the distance, and she could see a flock of birds flying south. A feeling of sadness settled over her and her gaze was drawn across the room to her dresser. In a small gilt frame, an old black and white photo of a man and a woman looked back at her. Sitting in a chair

a young Hispanic woman wore a white lace dress. She seemed so happy. Standing behind her a handsome, young man in a Merchant Marines uniform stood proudly with his hand on her shoulder. Even though life had been hard for her parents they had always persevered. They had always loved each other. Elizabeth sighed and reluctantly swung her legs over the side of the bed and into her slippers. Her nurse's uniform was hanging inside her small wardrobe where she always kept it. Going to it, she quickly chose her wool stockings and white uniform and dressed for the day. She looked at her reflection in the mirror and smiled. Her father had been so proud that she had become a nurse, she only wished her mother had still been alive to see her that day. If there was time this afternoon, she might take a few minutes to stop at her father's grave.

Later when she got to Dr. Hammond's office Elizabeth discovered she was helping him with the inspection of the German seamen that had arrived the day before.

"I don't understand doctor, if the men are prisoners why do we have to inspect them?" She knew he hated being questioned, but she felt she had to ask.

"Not prisoners, internees. Anyway, whether we like it or not, these men are under our care. They have some medics from the *Columbus* coming at some point, but for now they're our responsibility. Are you ready?"

Elizabeth nodded, buttoned up her wool coat, and followed the doctor out the door. The German camp wasn't far from the hospital. Just a short walk down a small rise and across the wooden bridge that crossed the narrow, gurgling river. Spanning the small valley, the camp consisted of just a few buildings including tent barracks that had popped up overnight alongside the dilapidated wooden barracks. The border patrol agents' cabins ran along the front side of the perimeter so they could keep guard between Fort Stanton and the barracks. A gently sloping hill rose up behind everything and marked the back boundary of the camp. All around the edges of

camp there were barren gambel oak bushes and the sage green junipers that grew so well in this part of the country. It was beautiful really. Even as a young girl she had thought so.

Rushing to keep stride with Dr. Hammond, Elizabeth was breathless and flushed when they arrived at the first barracks. Inside the long wooden structure about thirty Germans were lined up, bare chested, waiting to be inspected. The same slender man in a German naval uniform that she had seen the day before was standing at the head of the line talking to some of the men. Elizabeth couldn't make out the German words he spoke, but the men smiled respectfully as the man in the naval uniform patted the first internee in line on the back.

Dr. Hammond approached the man in uniform and held out his hand. "Captain Daehne, it's nice to meet you, I'm Dr. Hammond. This is Elizabeth, one of our nurses, she's here to help with the physicals this morning."

Captain Daehne reached out to shake hands with Elizabeth. He had a stern but handsome face with delicate, regal features. She was surprised by his warm smile and firm handshake.

"Good morning," he said in a heavy German accent. He turned back to the doctor, "we have several medics among our men from the ship, but I am happy for your help today. Let me know if you need anything. In the meantime, I will be with one of my officers inspecting the new barracks site if you need me." Nodding at Elizabeth he smiled again and walked away.

From the back of the room several Border Patrol agents came forward towards Elizabeth and the doctor.

"Good morning, Doc. I'm James Denton. We were told to come help out this morning, keep watch on the men," said one of the agents. He was a large, thick set man with blonde hair and ruddy cheeks that made him appear even more youthful than he was. He stepped towards them and shook hands with Dr. Hammond. It had been a few weeks since Elizabeth had seen him

and when he reached out for her hand, she hesitated for just a moment before she reached out and shook his. The skin on his palm was rough from manual labor and his grip was strong, and although she had been pleased to see him again, she unconsciously took a step back when he released her hand.

“Good morning, Elizabeth. I haven’t seen you around camp in a while.”

“I’ve been busy at the hospital,” she answered and quickly followed Dr. Hammond to where he had gone to the first man in line. Dr. Hammond pulled up a wooden chair for the first internee to sit down in and began to take the man’s blood pressure and pulse. Elizabeth recorded the measurements when the doctor called them out to her. They preceded this way down the line for the next hour or so until there was a sudden commotion from farther down the line.

“For the last time - I said stand up straight!” Elizabeth caught a glimpse of one of the Border Patrol Agents standing behind one of the internees, an older man with a thin frame and grey hair, when he was suddenly shoved forward and fell shakily onto his knees. Next to him one of the Germans internees bent down, grabbed the older man by the chest, and helped him up. As he stood up Elizabeth could see it was the young man with light brown hair that she had seen the day before. He turned quietly to the old man and whispered, “Do not worry Josef, after this we eat, work, then rest up. A little fresh air is all you need.” The older man nodded and did his best to stand up straight and wait to be examined.

Dr. Hammond continued down the row of men with the discipline of a drill sergeant. Elizabeth walked along beside him helping when needed and recording the results of the physicals. When they got to the slim, young man Elizabeth noticed that he had a long, pink scar on his left cheek and another scar on his left shoulder. The ugly scars looked so out of place to her on the smooth, young skin. Dr. Hammond pointed at the scar on his cheek.

“How’d you get that?”

“It is a souvenir from my journey here.” The young man looked Dr. Hammond squarely in the eye as the older man glared at him.

“Are you saying that US sailors did that to do, because if you are, I’d call you a liar!” The doctor’s face turned bright red, and his breathing was hard.

“I never said it was the United States sailors.” Frederic said in careful English despite his German accent. The young man held his ground and didn’t look away from the doctor.

Finally, Dr. Hammond turned to Elizabeth and in a tight voice said, “mark this one down as eligible for work.”

“Yes, doctor.” Confused about the confrontation, Elizabeth frowned and then glanced down at her clipboard to make the notation under Frederic Benigson- eligible for work. She could feel Frederic’s eyes watching her as she moved to the next man in line. She had completely forgotten about James.

The next morning the weather had cleared up and the sun was out and burning a break in the winter clouds. The Germans were taking advantage of the sunshine by starting to build the new wooden barracks. Sweaty and out of breath, Frederic and several other men were laboring with a rope. They were trying to pull up a framing wall that would form the front side of the building. After several minutes of straining on the rope, they almost had it in place.

“Hold it!” one man yelled in German as they pulled with all their might to lift it. Slowly, slowly the wall slipped into place and rested along the other two framing walls. Two men rushed to hammer nails into the studs as the other men held steady on the rope. But just as they hammered the first nail into place, one of the men’s hands, wet with sweat, slipped on the rough rope. As he lost his grip, the wall shifted and began to fall back down onto the men below.

“Get out of the way!” Frederic yelled in German. Fearing it would fall on the men, he rushed over and tried to hold it up as two other men scrambled for the rope, but the weight of the wall was too much. With a loud crash it fell on top of Frederic, knocking him to the ground and knocking the breath out of him. Dust clouded the air as men rushed towards Frederic from all directions, border patrol agents and Germans alike. Working together they slowly lifted the wall off of Frederic, and one of the Germans dragged him out from under it. For a moment it looked as if he was unconscious, but suddenly he coughed and sat up as several pairs of hands supported him.

“*Lieber Gott,*” Frederic muttered as he took off the bandana that was around his neck and wiped the dust from his face. Several of the Germans let out a cheer. Two of the border patrol agents helped him to his feet and dusted him off.

“Are you hurt?” asked James, the same agent who had been with the men while they were inspected by the doctor the day before.

“Just my hand,” Frederic tried to open the curled-up fingers of his left hand, but the movement was too painful and after a moment he gave up.

“We better get him to the hospital, have it checked out,” James told one of his fellow Border Patrol agents. Smiling good naturedly he looked at Frederic and said “playing the hero again, huh? Come on. Everyone else, back to work.” The Germans grumbled to themselves in German and English both, and several men patted Frederic on the back as they slowly got back to work on the barracks.

As the two men made their way across the yard and towards the wooden bridge that spanned the river the caw of a raven could be heard overhead. Frederic paused for a moment and

glanced up at the ebony black bird, its wings shining in the sunlight. What would it be like to be so free? Flying without a care in the world, but maybe the raven grieved too.

“Beautiful thing, isn’t it?” James’ voice broke Frederic from his reverie. “Couldn’t believe how big they were the first time I saw one. Something lonesome about them though,” James spoke as he stopped and looked up at the sky.

“Yes, it is beautiful creature,” Frederic replied to the agent. “You are not from here?”

“No, just got here a few months ago when we knew you all were coming. Going to have us up here in thirty-day shifts. I’m normally stationed down in El Paso, but I’m originally from Oklahoma. Most of the men weren’t too happy at first, but me, I think it’s a nice change of pace.” With a thoughtful look in his eyes, he stopped and looked at Frederic.

“It must be different from Germany? Are you anxious to be sent back?”

Frederic was quiet for a moment, his eyes somber.

“I do not know if I have anything to go back to.”

Slowly the two men crossed the wooden bridge that spanned the Rio Bonito as the water trickled quietly by beneath them. James glanced down at the water. “Not too much water right now, but I heard that after a good snow it’ll be flowing hard and fast. Or at least that’s what one of the old timers from the Fort said.”

Frederic was quiet. He looked at James with genuine confusion. He had expected hostility and suspicion from all the guards. He still didn’t know how he felt about being contained here in this barren landscape so far from home, but at least for now he wasn’t being treated poorly, and he felt like he could bear it.

“I’m sorry about what happened to the old man the other day. Some of my friends didn’t want this assignment, I guess to tell the truth I didn’t either at first. The countryside sure is pretty

though.” He winked and smiled at Frederic, “Some of the nurses too. Even if they aren’t too friendly.”

They continued up the bank of the river and towards the entrance of the Marine Hospital. The front of the hospital was flanked by benches. A few patients were sitting outside in wheelchairs, bundled up in blankets to ward off the chill while they enjoyed the New Mexico sunshine. A short flight of steps led them up onto the porch and through the black, wooden front doors of the hospital that housed tuberculosis patients from all over the country. Inside nurses were busy pushing trolleys with supplies or patients in wheelchairs. The occasional sound of coughing was a constant background to the gentle voices going about their day.

“Excuse me,” a petite blond nurse who was pushing a wheelchair that held an elderly man brushed past James as she made her way to the front door. As she passed the two men she glanced back and smiled shyly at James. Then made her way out the wooden doors into the fresh air. James smiled back and tipped his hat at her. Tapping Frederic on the back he said, “See? Come on,” and led him straight ahead down a dimly lit corridor.

On either side of the long passageway there were doors that led to exam rooms, doctor’s offices, and other spaces that held men and women of various ages. Before they reached the end of the hallway, James stopped and turning to the right, knocked on a door.

“Who is it?” Dr. Hammond answered gruffly from the other side. Rather than answering, James slowly opened the door to the doctor’s office.

“Morning doctor, I know it’s early, but I’ve brought a patient for you.” Dr. Hammond was sitting behind a large wooden desk piled high with manila folders stuffed with medical papers. At the interruption he closed the file he was reading and pushed his chair back from the

desk. Looking at both men absently for a minute, he shook his head and then rose and came around to stand in front of them.

“What’s happened?”

Both men were surprised into silence, half expecting to be told to leave. James finally spoke first.

“Had an accident this morning, some of the men were working on the barracks and this man here hurt his hand when a framing wall came down. Might have broken something. Thought it should be looked at.”

Dr. Hammond pushed his glasses higher up the bridge of his nose and held out a hand to Frederic.

“Let me take a look.” Frederic held out his hand that was starting to swell. Blue marks were starting to appear on his wrist.

“What’s your name?” The doctor gripped his forearm with one hand and with the other he slowly moved Frederic’s hand up and down. Trying not to grimace Frederic slowly exhaled with the pain in his swollen joint.

“Frederic Benigson, sir.”

“Ah yes, I remember now. The scars.” Glancing up he looked carefully at Frederic’s face as if searching for some answer.

“It’s not broken, just badly sprained. We’ll wrap it up for you and you’ll have to be careful to rest it. No heavy lifting for a few weeks.” Just then Elizabeth walked in the doorway.

“Dr. Hammond I have the chart you requested,” seeing Frederic and James she stopped short looking from one man to the other. Handing the chart carefully to Dr. Hammond she asked, “Is everything alright?”

“Yes, just a sprained wrist, nothing serious. Elizabeth, could you please take Mr. Benigson here to one of the exam rooms and wrap his wrist for me? There’s something I need to see to.”

“Yes, of course doctor. This way please.”

CHAPTER 3

Fort Stanton Hospital, January 1941

Elizabeth motioned to the door and then turned and led the men out into the hallway. Seeing the German again so soon had her heart racing unexpectedly, and it unsettled her to see both James and Frederic together. She led them both to an exam room a few doors down. Then she had Frederic sit down on a reclining medical chair.

“How did you get hurt?” she asked Frederic as she carefully rolled up his shirt sleeve.

“We were working on the new barracks and a wall came down.” Frederic smiled sheepishly. He sensed her nervousness and suddenly had a desire to put her at ease.

“A wall started to fall on several men and Freddy here jumped in and saved the day liked Superman,” James interrupted, and Elizabeth quickly glanced over at him and instantly noticed the contrast between the two men. The border patrol agent with the large frame and ruddy cheeks, and the German who looked so long and lean with a gentle handsomeness to his face.

Instead of answering she turned to Frederic “you should be careful. You’ve broken your hand before. I don’t think it was set right the first time.” Elizabeth glanced up at Frederic, but he remained silent. “I’ll wrap it in a splint, but you’ll need to rest it for a few weeks.”

“Who is this super man?” Frederic asked making Elizabeth suddenly laugh despite her unease. James answered before she could respond.

“Who’s Superman? He’s just the best character from the DC Comics. It used to run in the funnies in the newspaper, but now Superman has his own comics, and even a radio show. I heard they’re making a movie that’ll be on the silver screen later this year. Maybe Elizabeth will finally go with me into Lincoln to see it when it comes out.” He glanced at Elizabeth to see her

reaction, but she carefully kept her eyes down on her work. James had been asking her out to dinner for the last few months, and although she had been tempted, something held her back.

James turned to Frederic. “Don’t you read comics in Germany?”

“Not the last few years.” When Frederic didn’t say any more Elizabeth quietly began to unbutton the top of his shirt. Frederic glanced at her in surprise, and she felt color come to her cheeks.

“It will be easier to wrap your arm in a splint if I take your shirt off on this side,” she explained. As she lowered the sleeve of his shirt, she saw the shiny, pink scar on his chest again, and before she even realized what she was doing, she reached over and gently ran her finger along the smooth skin. Her heart thumped harder in her chest, and she quickly drew her hand away. Hoping that James hadn’t noticed she quickly wrapped his wrist in the splint, secured the bandage, and then carefully placed his arm in a sling.

Frederic was confused about the reaction he’d had to her touch. He had only just met this woman, but when her fingers had lingered on his scar for that moment his breath had caught in his chest. He felt an overwhelming urge to reach out and take her hand in his.

“There. That should prevent further injury, but you need to rest it. You can’t be working on the new barracks anymore for a while.” Squaring her shoulders she turned to James, “Will you see that he gets a chance to rest it for a week or two?”

“I’ll do my best and let the others know, but I don’t really have any say in what the men do.”

“I’d appreciate that,” she said with a sigh and a smile.

“Thank you, Elizabeth.” James tipped his hat, and Elizabeth quietly watched as both men left the room.

Several days later as Elizabeth left work, she found herself wandering past the little stone church, beside the hospital, to the rise above the river. In the distance she could see several men working on the new barracks. Right in the middle of the work, with his hand still wrapped up in the splint and bandages, was Frederic. What was he thinking? Suddenly angry, she began to walk down the rough path and over the small wooden bridge that spanned the Rio Bonito and led to the Germans' camp. Walking up to the closest border patrol agent she turned to him and cleared her throat. "Excuse me," she asked when he acted as if he hadn't noticed her. Slowly the man turned to her.

"Yes?" he asked as he looked her up and down.

"That man with the bandages has injured his hand. He's not supposed to be working."

The man shrugged his shoulders and turned back to the men at work, but Elizabeth persisted.

"He shouldn't be working with an injured hand."

"I told him to just help carrying the supplies, but he wanted to work. Seems to me that's his business if he wants to keep working with his hand like that. Why do you care anyway?" His smirk irritated her.

"I don't care," and she turned abruptly to go back the same way she had come.

When Frederic had seen her coming down the rise, he had felt guilty. He knew he shouldn't be working with his hand the way it was. But what else would he do with his time? When he was in his small quarters with nothing to do but sit on the bed, his mind would wander back. He couldn't stand thinking about what he could have or might have done any longer. The

manual labor kept him distracted, and he enjoyed the physical work. If he was tired enough, the dreams might stop, and he just might sleep that night.

One day Elizabeth was working in the small office in the hospital where she and Carol filed the manila folders filled with patient information for Dr. Hammond. They had treated so many patients over the last few years. Patients just like her father. Tired of her work she glanced out the window at the spring day outside. The sky was blue and cloudless, and the sun was shining brightly. When the door to the office opened suddenly it startled her into dropping the files in her hand. James walked in and quickly bent down to pick up the files for her. She jerked the file cabinet drawer open with a swift movement, but despite the barrier between them he reached out to hand her the file. When his hand accidentally brushed hers, she pulled back instinctively. She wasn't sure why he made her nervous, he always seemed nice enough and went out of his way to see her when he could.

"I'm sorry Elizabeth. I didn't mean to startle you."

"You didn't. Or least it wasn't your fault. I was thinking about my father."

"I'm sorry. It must have been hard for you to lose both parents." He seemed to genuinely care, and she felt guilty for always brushing him off. Now he was smiling hopefully at her as he passed his hat from hand to hand.

"It's such a beautiful spring day that I thought we might take a walk, maybe go sit in the shade on that nice little bench near the garden." He added as an afterthought, "where we sat that first time we met."

"I can't. I'm on duty." She quickly thrust the files together and nervously placed them on the desk. She wasn't sure what she felt for him, but despite the attraction she felt for him, he

always made her feel slightly uncomfortable. She turned her head and glanced out the window. Surely it wouldn't hurt to go sit outside with him for a few minutes though, and the fresh air would be a relief after being cooped up in the hospital all day.

When they got outside the sun was shining down warmly but a spring breeze kept the air just cool enough. The cottonwoods were bursting with fresh, pale green leaves and as they sat in the shade on the old, wooden bench, she felt at ease. A small white butterfly flew past on the breeze, and she watched it so intently that she hadn't even noticed what James was saying.

"Elizabeth?" he asked expectantly. She turned and looked at him blankly and James smiled as he realized she hadn't heard what he'd said.

"Yes?"

"I said would you like to go out to dinner on Saturday in Lincoln? I heard there's a new diner that makes a great chocolate malt. We could grab a bite to eat, and I'll have you back before dark. Boy Scout promise." He held up his three fingers in a pledge that made her laugh. She looked into his laughing blue eyes and thought that there couldn't be anything wrong in accepting. It was just dinner in town anyway.

"Ok, that sounds like fun," and she smiled as he held out his hand to her.

"You promise?"

"Yes," and she smiled as she took his hand, and they shook on it.

CHAPTER 4

Fort Stanton, New Mexico 1941

The gardens behind the hospital had always been one of her favorite places to be. This morning as she walked along the rows of vegetable plants with Cook and Carol, she could feel the sun warm the skin on her back through her white uniform. Cook would stoop down every few feet to weed the young seedlings that were coming along well, and Carol chatted off and on about the gossip that she had heard at the hospital. Even though she had hardly heard a word that Carol said, it was still a nice break from the work at the hospital. If only everyday could be so peaceful.

“I can’t believe they’re building a swimming pool.” Carol’s statement suddenly brought Elizabeth from her reverie.

“A pool?” She stopped in her tracks and looked at Carol.

“Yes, an Olympic sized one too! I wonder if they’ll let us swim in it when it’s done?”

Carol was swinging her basket and almost dropped the gloves and tools she carried inside it.

Cook, older and jaded from a lifetime of labor, stood up and carefully stretched her back.

“As far as I’m concerned you should both stay away from all of them. There are too many men and not enough women around here.” She turned to Elizabeth. “I’ve seen how that guard James looks at you. I think he’s up to no good, and if I were you, I’d steer clear of that one.”

Elizabeth smiled at the older woman. Cook had always looked out for her, even when her father was still alive. “I don’t think he’s so bad. As a matter of fact, he’s taking me out to dinner on Saturday.”

Cook sighed, “I can’t say I like the idea, but God knows you’re entitled to a little fun every now and again. But please be careful!”

“I will. Now if you’re done here, maybe we can go sneak a peek at the swimming pool,” Elizabeth answered hopefully.

The ground had been dug out so that there was a pit about the size of a boat. It was a perfect rectangle, and the floor slowly angled downwards from one side to the other that would eventually be the deep end. Several of the Germans were down in the pit building wooden side walls. Most had their work shirts folded up to their elbows while others had abandoned their shirts altogether. They were all drenched in sweat from the labor. Down in the bottom on the deep end Elizabeth could see Frederic helping alongside the other men. From where they were standing beside what would be the future pool Elizabeth could see the countryside in every direction.

The hospital stood tall and white in the distance across the little river, and the flag was blowing gently in the breeze from the flagpole that stood out front of the hospital. The place where she had stood when Dr. Hammond had told her that she would be allowed to stay on and work at the hospital. When her father had finally lost his fight to live, she had thought for sure she would have to go. She had no other close family and nowhere to turn. Thank God Dr. Hammond and some of the other nurses had come up with the idea of letting her stay on and train. Now she was home, a nurse, and part of Fort Stanton. Standing there she could look past all the smaller buildings and just make out the new nurses’ quarters across the way. Home, she was home now, and she wouldn’t let anyone take that away from her.

On Saturday afternoon Elizabeth found herself staring at her reflection in the mirror of her small bedroom. She was so used to seeing herself in her uniform that she felt like she was staring at a stranger. She had taken longer than normal brushing her hair and choosing which of her two simple dresses she should wear. It was the first time she had ever gone to dinner with a man and although she was nervous, she had begun to look forward to the meal with simple pleasure.

James had been waiting for her on a bench outside the nurses' quarters. He rose when he saw her and smiled. He was wearing dark blue jeans that were pressed into a crease down the center of each leg, and he was wearing a light blue dress shirt and the top button was opened to show a white shirt underneath.

"Ready?" he asked her and reached for her hand. As they drove into Lincoln in his two door Ford pickup truck, he told her stories about the hunting trips he'd been on recently and complained about the new agents that had been assigned to the Fort. She listened to his banter, and although he rarely asked what she thought, she enjoyed looking out the window at the passing scenery. She really didn't leave Fort Stanton very often.

They had a pleasant dinner, and she was feeling full from the Saturday night special, chicken fried steak and mashed potatoes with a chocolate malt for dessert. As they drove back towards the Fort, she leaned into her seat ready to enjoy the ride as sleepiness settled in making her eyes droop. When James pulled the car over, she was surprised that they were already home, but as she glanced out her window, she saw that they were on a small dirt road, away from the highway.

"James? Where are we? Why are we stopped?"

“I thought it might be nice if we got to know each other a little bit.” He leaned towards her and before she could stop him or even say a word, he was kissing her and pushing her farther down in her seat. His mouth was hard and wet against her mouth, and for a moment she couldn’t think, she only felt - trapped and claustrophobic. Then as he started to run his hand along her body from her waist to her breast, anger took over and as he forced his tongue in her mouth, she bit down hard. James moaned and instantly jerked back. Before she knew what she was doing she surprised herself by slapping him hard on the face.

“What the hell!”

“Don’t touch me.” Her words were barely above a whisper, but they were powerful nonetheless, and he stopped and stared at her in shock. His eyes were dark, and his hands shook, but he turned away from her, sat up straight in his seat, and started the engine. They drove back to Fort Stanton in silence, and when he stopped the car to let her out, neither one of them said a word.

Elizabeth tried to avoid Carol for the rest of the weekend, and on Monday she kept herself so busy, that no one had a chance to ask her how her date had gone. Finally, after hours of work Elizabeth decided that she needed some fresh air. Mindlessly she wandered across the bridge towards the German camp to watch construction on the swimming pool.

“Elizabeth? Did you hear me?” Carol asked.

Elizabeth was startled when Carol walked up beside her and answered, “no, sorry, I guess I was daydreaming.”

“I saw you leave, and I was worried about you. I’ve hardly seen you all day. Elizabeth felt guilty, but she didn’t know what to say.

“I just needed some fresh air,” she said and tried to smile. Carol glanced over her shoulder and then back to Elizabeth’s pale face.

“Well James is headed this way. Do you want me to leave, give you a minute alone?”

“No, please stay. I don’t have anything to say to him.” Elizabeth sighed and braced herself as James approached her. He was walking slowly and squinting from the noon day sun. He smiled sheepishly and almost looked apologetic. Staring at him she felt a strange sort of pity.

“Morning Elizabeth. Carol,” he tipped his hat at both women before taking it off and then angled himself towards Elizabeth.

“I was thinking that there are things we need to talk about. She looked up at him and could smell the faint scent of his aftershave, the starched cotton of his uniform, it reminded her of the day they met not long before. How could he not know that whatever they might have had was over now, dead. His actions from that night were haunting her, and now she knew that they could never have anything more. She might have hoped at one time that they could have had a happy ending together, but now looking at him passing his hat back and forth between his hands, with that hopeful look in his eyes like a little boy, a little part of her felt sorry for him. He had no idea how much what he had done had hurt her. She still felt anger too, that couldn’t just disappear overnight, but pity was now mixed in with her feelings.

“I’m sorry James, but I don’t want to talk to you.” She calmly looked away from him, forcing herself to stay focused on the activity inside the giant pit instead of the tightening in her chest. She could almost feel the anger building up inside of him as he stood there staring at her, and she became faintly aware that other people were staring at them. A few border patrol agents were on the other side of the pit whispering and several of the Germans were trying to

inconspicuously glance their way. James took a step closer to her, and his anger was vibrating off him in invisible waves like a cougar ready to pounce.

Suddenly, before she could even take a step back, he grabbed ahold of both of her upper arms. “Who the hell do you think you are? Think you’re too good for me? I said I was sorry!” For a moment Elizabeth was stunned as his hands pinched harder and harder into her flesh.

“Let go! Let go of me,” she found her voice and yelled back at him. The next thing she knew someone had grabbed ahold of James and was pulling him back off of her. She caught a glimpse of Frederic’s face, sweaty and grimacing in anger, as the two men began to scuffle. For a terrifying second it looked like both men would fall into the pit, but before they could several other border patrol agents were grabbing both men and pulling them apart. Two men held James by the shoulders and arms while one held Frederic around the waist. James let out a guttural shout and pulled himself free from the hold the men had on him. He rushed forward and before anyone could stop him punched Frederic in the face.

“Denton! What the hell! Stand down,” yelled one of the agents. James seemed as stunned as everyone else as he stared down at Frederic and shouted.

“Why the hell do you care about her anyway! She’s just a dumb half breed Mexican! Aren’t you a Nazi anyway?” James’s breath started to slow down, and he glanced around, finally realizing what he’d done. Sweat was dripping down his flushed face as he looked at the crowd that had gathered around them. He looked at Elizabeth. Her eyes were dark with anger and looking at her he suddenly regretted everything. Deflated now he muttered, “I don’t even know why I waste my time.”

Someone must have gone to get Captain Daehne because the German captain rushed up assessing the situation quickly. “Hold up! Turn that man over to me. You know I oversee my

own men!” After looking from face to face as if he needed permission, the guard reluctantly released Frederic, thrusting him towards the Captain. Elizabeth watched as Frederic was led away. He only glanced back once, but it was long enough for Elizabeth to see his mouth was set in a hard grimace and his eyes had darkened to a slate grey.

Elizabeth was shaking as Carol put her arm around her and gently led her away. “Come on, Elizabeth, let’s get out of here.” As she walked away with Carol his words kept playing back in her head. *Half-breed*. Now she knew how he really felt about her, and yet it didn’t help ease the pain in her heart.

Elizabeth remembered the day she first came to Fort Stanton as a girl. Her mother had just passed away, and she felt like the whole world had been turned upside down. The days before the trip blurred together in her memory, but always there was the sound of crying. Her Tia Isabel said she must be strong, that her father needed her now, but she didn’t know what that meant. His coughing had been getting worse, and without her mother there, she didn’t know how to make the coughing stop. They arrived at Fort Stanton on a cold March day. The sky was overcast, and she remembered there was the smell of moisture in the air. She had seen a deer for the first time that morning. It had stopped in its tracks when it saw her, its big, dark eyes staring back calmly at her, trying to decide if she was friend or foe. Then it just wandered off into the trees. As she gazed around at her new surroundings white snowflakes began to drift down from the sky and she noticed the stillness and the quiet. The peace. She had finally stopped crying.

This spring there had been little snow. The yellow grass on the ground was dry and stiff from the cold, and the deer that wandered in to drink from the Rio Bonito looked thin and shaggy as they began to shed their winter coat.

People were beginning to whisper about her. The way they had when she had first arrived. *What would they do with her while her father received treatment? Shouldn't they send her back to her people in El Paso?*

As the days passed it had become easy to avoid James. She had learned to push down her feelings until she didn't feel them anymore. Bury them down so deep that they wouldn't resurface unless she chose to dig them up. So, when he found her in the records office at work one day, she was taken off guard.

"I want to talk to you. Dr. Hammond's out at the barracks. One of the Germans passed out, probably overheated. He'll never know if you slip out for a little bit."

"I don't want to talk to you, James."

"But you need to know it was just a misunderstanding. What happened was a mistake, I just rushed things."

"You're right, it was a mistake. It shouldn't have happened at all. I want you to leave." She turned away from him and walked towards the window. The bright day suddenly didn't seem so cheerful.

"You act as if I'm a monster. You wanted what happened just as much as I did!" He said with a genuine look of confusion on his face. She kept her back to him. She knew he didn't listen anyway, but she hadn't wanted what had happened. She had only wanted to get to know him. She knew now that she needed to confront him, to make him understand.

"I didn't want you to make love to me that night," she said carefully, trying to control the quiver in her lips. "You tried to take advantage of me. I thought we were starting to have a

friendship, that it might lead to something more.” She watched his face, but she couldn’t tell if what she said was sinking in. When he finally spoke, she saw that he didn’t understand.

“Everyone knows that all the single nurses are trying to find husbands. You had your chance to show me that you wanted a relationship. If I hadn’t stopped, I probably would have asked you to marry me afterwards,” he said in an angry voice.

“You act like you were doing me a favor!” Now the quiver in her voice was from anger.

“I was doing you a favor. I don’t know who the hell you think you are, but just because you have a pretty face doesn’t mean you’re as good as everyone else. You’re still a half bred Mexican, and no matter how hard you work at the hospital, no one has forgotten that!”

Before she could say a word, he left, slamming the door behind him, and she exhaled a shaky breath. She suddenly felt exhausted and began to tremble as she relaxed her tensed shoulders.

When Carol walked in, she found Elizabeth gazing out the window. “Are you ok? I saw James leaving a little while ago.”

“Yes, I’m alright. Just tired.” Carol walked over and looked carefully at her friend.

“You do look tired. I know you don’t want to tell me what happened between the two of you but…”

Elizabeth smiled weakly, “it’s alright. What happened was a mistake, and I think I don’t have to worry about James anymore.”

“Elizabeth, I’m not so sure. He didn’t look very happy right now. I think you should stay away from him.”

“I try to. I really do.” Elizabeth glanced out the window again. The wildflowers were just beginning to bloom, and she saw a pale, yellow butterfly glide by. Her mother had always said to

look for the flowers after the storm. Smiling she turned back to Carol “Why we don’t go pick some flowers? We could take them out to the patients in the outdoor cabins. It might cheer them up.”

The next day thoughts of Frederic caused her to wander over to the German camp, even though she knew she should stay away from both men. If Frederic was a Nazi sympathizer like James had said, she didn’t want anything to do with him. How could she have feelings for a man that could believe such terrible things. Weren’t they arresting people just for being the wrong race or religion?

They had assigned Frederic to a team of men working on digging a new well. The back breaking work was given as a punishment, and Frederic was down in the center of the well shoveling buckets of dirt that were then attached to a rope and hoisted up to the surface.

As she approached, Frederic saw her out of the corner of his eye. The white of her uniform seemed to glow against her tan skin and to him she looked like an angel. He knew she must be feeling guilty, but he shouldn’t talk to her. It would be better for both of them if they didn’t speak at all. It only led to trouble, and what could he offer her anyway? He tried to ignore her, but he realized she was just standing there watching. He had enough worries without worrying about her too and that rough handed border patrol agent. He sent up one more bucket and then signaled to the man with the rope. Holding tight to the rope he hoisted himself up and carefully placed one foot after the other along the line of the rough dirt wall until he reached the surface.

As soon as he cleared the surface Elizabeth called out to him. “You shouldn’t be doing that kind of work when your hand has just barely healed.”

Why did she care? He looked down at his bare hand and unconsciously rubbed his palm with the thumb of his other hand. It had been aching again, but the mindless work and the physical exertion helped keep his mind off her. It helped him handle the rage that had bubbled up inside of him the day he saw James grabbing her. It had brought back that same helpless feeling that he had felt only a year before. That terrible feeling of impotence. He had failed his mother. There should have been something he could have done. It would be better to put up a barrier between them now, before his feelings for her could get any deeper.

“If I am a Nazi, like that agent said, you should not want to say anything to me,” he told her defiantly.

“Do you believe in what Hitler preaches?” she asked him unsure of what he wanted to hear.

“You should stay on your side of the river.” The he turned his back to her and got back to work.

When she returned to work Dr. Hammond pulled her aside as she started her afternoon rounds. “You should steer clear of him Elizabeth. You’ve worked so hard to earn your position here at the hospital, and you’ve proved your place. Don’t let a passing romantic attachment ruin that. You don’t know if you can trust that young man.” But did he mean Frederic or James? She had trusted James. Maybe Dr. Hammond was right, and she should just stay away from both men.

CHAPTER 5

Fort Stanton, New Mexico, 1941

When Frederic entered the dining hall that evening most of the men had already gotten their meals and were seated at the tables that were arranged side by side across the interior of the hall. After getting his tray of food he glanced around the room and noticed that Josef was sitting at his usual table at the far end near the back door, absorbed in a game of chess with one of the men who shared their barracks. The back door was propped open allowing a cross breeze to pass through cooling the long building, and relieved to be done with work for the day, Frederic let out a sigh as he sat down.

“How is the work on the well going?” Josef asked him as he sat down in the chair opposite the older man.

“It keeps my mind busy. How are things here?” Frederic asked as he glanced at the other men in the dining hall. Klaus and the men from his barracks were seated at their usual position in the middle of the dining hall. They were laughing and rowdy as usual, and even from the far end of the hall Frederic could hear Klaus’s booming laugh. The grating sound interrupted the calm of the evening and reminded Frederic that everything was not as peaceful as it seemed.

“They are preparing the celebration for Hitler’s birthday this weekend.” Josef rolled his eyes as he said it.

“We are not even in Germany anymore. How can we still be celebrating him!” Frederic stabbed at the meat on his plate.

“Shhh,” Josef whispered. “Do not draw attention to yourself. Better to keep to ourselves. When there is peace again, we will return to Germany, look for our families, God willing. For

now, it is better to stay quiet and stay safe.” Concentrating on the game again he moved his bishop to guard his queen.

The birthday celebration for Hitler was held in the recreation hall one Saturday in late April. The men of the ship’s orchestra were dressed in their formal ship attire and sat at one end of the hall playing Strauss’s *Der Rosenkavalier*. Instead of a conductor at the front center of the ensemble leading the orchestra there was a clown. He was wearing an oversized suit with a polka dot lapel and a black bowler hat on his head. His face was painted with heavy white grease paint that had smeared into the red paint on his lips. As Frederic watched from his seat in one of the back rows, he almost felt as if he had been transported back to his childhood when the circus had once come to his village. Then the clowns had been magical, but this was a ridiculous farce.

The clown smiled at the audience as he played along poorly on a xylophone in sharp contrast to the peaceful notes of Strauss. Frederic could almost laugh at the display except that hanging on the wall directly behind the clown was a small, round plaque with a black and white swastika in the center. Directly below it was a photograph of Hitler. As he sat there staring at the portrait something began to build inside of him. He felt his chest tighten and a feeling of panic began to grow. How could he sit here and pretend like everything was alright? That his heart wasn’t broken. As a feeling of claustrophobia and dread overwhelmed him, he had a sudden urge to run. The air was stifling as the sweet notes of Strauss hung in the air. A cold sweat had started out on his forehead, and he stood in a sudden jerking motion. He was aware for an instant that people were staring at him, but he had to get out of that room. As he slipped out the back door one of Klaus’s men turned to Klaus and nodded his head in silent signal.

Frederic rushed outside and desperately breathed in the cool spring air. The sounds of the orchestra and the high-pitched treble notes of the xylophone slowly faded away as he ran across the camp. He walked mindlessly until he realized he had come to the wooden bridge that crossed the river. Something compelled him to glance up at the night sky, and as he gazed up at the thousands of bright stars, he was finally able to breathe again. His heart wasn't pounding so hard in his chest anymore, and he felt more grounded as he walked across the bridge to the rise just on the other side. Even in the dark he could see the hospital and all the buildings that belonged to it along the south side of the fort nearest the bridge, and across the square on the far side he could see the nurses' quarters in the distance. A few lights were on here and there and he imagined one might be Elizabeth's room. Was she in there somewhere reading a book before bed? Maybe talking to a friend? Was she thinking of him just like he was thinking of her?

Elizabeth sat on her bed crying as she looked through old photographs that were scattered across her lap and bed. The radio on her bedside table was playing the gentle notes of Jimmy Dorsey's "Amapola" as she gazed at the photograph she held in her hand. It was an old sepia photograph of her and her mother. She was just a baby, maybe two years old, and her mother held her in her lap. Her mother's dark hair was pulled back in a tight bun, but despite the austerity of her dress and hairstyle she had a playful smile as one hand held baby Elizabeth's hand and the other was securely around her waist. Her mother had always smelled so good, like fresh soap and baby powder, but it was getting harder and harder to remember her. Looking through the old pictures was reassuring and reminded her of being loved.

In another photograph her mother and father were dressed in their Sunday best standing outside the old church they had gone to in El Paso, before her mother passed away and her father

got sick. Her father held her, and her mother stood beside them holding her Bible and tambourine. Her father had rarely gone to church, but when he did it had made her mother so happy and proud. Sighing, she started to gather the photographs together to put back into the box she kept all her treasures in - her mother's gauzy black *velo*, her father's old silver watch on a worn, leather band, and her mother's gold wedding band. She needed to quit crying and be happy with the life she had. She didn't have family anymore, but she had her job and her good friends at the fort. She carefully placed the box into the bottom drawer of her dresser and absently walked across the room to the window. Looking out into the darkness she could see the shadows of the trees that lined the river. She looked past the river to the barracks just barely visible in the distance and wondered about the young seaman who haunted her thoughts. What had he left behind? She shouldn't think about him, but he kept coming back into her thoughts and she remembered how he had looked that day he had first arrived. And without thinking about what she was doing, she walked out her bedroom door, out of the nurse's quarters, and across the dark square towards the river.

After the birthday celebration Klaus and several other men decided to continue the celebration at one of the small huts that they had built along the river. The small adobe structure was one of many that had been built up and down the bank along with several chicken coops and even a dove cote. Inside the air was thick with the cigar smoke that hung in the air, golden and backlit by the small kerosene lamps they used at night. Several of the men were drunk from the German wine they had bought in Lincoln the week before in preparation for the party. On the table in the center of the room an empty wine bottle laid knocked over on its side along with several stainless-steel mugs from the dining hall. Leftover food from the celebration laid

carelessly across plates scattered haphazardly on the table as Klaus, Otto, and their friends laughed and talked about the party.

“You saw how he left right in the middle of the performance.” One of the men was drunk and starting to slur his words. “I tell you - he is not one of us!” The other men turned to Klaus to see his reaction.

“Otto is right. We must stick together. Frederic, Josef, some of the others – they are not one of us.” The rowdy laughter had stopped, and the room was suddenly quiet. Klaus looked around at the men through the thick haze. Each one was waiting expectantly for guidance from Klaus.

“For now, we bide our time and keep a close watch.” Then he slapped his hand down on the table in front of him. “Then when they are not expecting it – we strike!” The men cheered and patted one another on the back a contrast to the quiet New Mexico night.

As Elizabeth approached the bridge, she saw a figure illuminated in the moonlight and her heart skipped a beat as she realized it was Frederic. As if in a dream she approached him as he silently watched her.

For a moment Frederic thought he was dreaming as he saw her move closer and closer. It was as if his thoughts had willed her here. Now she stood just a few away, and needing to make sure he wasn't dreaming, he reached out his hand and touched her shoulder, then ran his hand along her arm until he took her hand in his. To his surprise her fingers wrapped around his and squeezed tight. Now his blood was racing, and he couldn't think any longer. He pulled her in and wrapped his arm around her waist, still holding tight to her hand, and with his other hand he

pulled her face to his. When he kissed her, it was as if time held still. All of the pain and regret from the last year slipped away in that moment.

Elizabeth sank into the kiss. She allowed herself to let her guard down and for a few precious minutes she felt true happiness. She leaned into his body, and as she felt the beat of his heart against her chest, it no longer mattered whether he was a German or Nazi, she only knew that she loved him.

CHAPTER 6

Fort Stanton, July 1941

The summer was warming up as the men completed work on the swimming pool. It took several of the Germans a week to figure out how to pipe water from the Rio Bonito to the Olympic sized pool, but when they did, the plans continued for the Fort Stanton summer Olympics.

On the big day Germans, workers, and locals crowded around the multiple events to watch the men compete. The pool was filled and ready for the diving and swimming competitions. A boxing ring had been constructed with Captain Daehne himself acting as referee, and tennis courts had been built along the river. For a day it seemed the tensions between the internees would be put aside as men in shorts, bare chested or in white shirts competed in the mock Olympics. The pool had been constructed right up against the barracks along the hillside that ran along the back of camp and as the noon sun beat down men crowded along the edge to get a better view.

Most of the spectators were the internees, happy to see the fruits of their labor. The men were tanned a golden brown from working for months out in the New Mexico sun, and as Elizabeth and Carol approached, she had a sensation that they didn't belong among so many men. She glanced around expecting to see dirty looks but was surprised to see that most of the men were so intent on the competition that they didn't notice her or her friend.

She hadn't seen Frederic since that night on the bridge. She had needed to use all of her willpower to leave him there and return to her room.

She began to relax as Carol pulled her along by the hand, trying to find a place to watch. The diving competition was about to start, and they finally found a spot at the shallow end across

from where the diving board was set up. It's supports were made of rough pine trunks with adobe bricks stacked up along the base of each pole for support. Across the top of the platform several men were seated waiting for the competition to begin. As she glanced around at the crowd, she could see that there were a few border patrol agents here and there, but there was no sign of James. The nerves that had tightened her chest relaxed just a little bit and she let out a long breath as Captain Daehne began to address the crowd.

“Welcome everyone to the first Fort Stanton Olympics! We are happy for the warm sunshine on our backs today and the hospitality that has been shown to us here at Fort Stanton.” He began to announce the competitors and list their hometowns, and Elizabeth was surprised to hear that Frederic was one of the them. She glanced over at the platform and saw that he was waiting his turn at the base of the ladder.

The competition started and the first competitor made his way to the edge of the diving board. Raising his hands over his head he straightened his arms and placed one palm against the over, bent his knees, and then made a leap up off the board and into the air. He flipped once and then landed in the water with a splash that made the crowd erupt into applause. Elizabeth couldn't help but smile, she had never seen anything like it before. More people had rushed over to watch, and men were even standing on the roofs of nearby barracks to get a look at the competition.

The diving continued and two judges that sat at a small wooden table on the end closest to the diving platform held out cards with numbers ranging from one to ten. Carol nudged Elizabeth “Look, there's your German!”

“He's not my German,” Elizabeth said to Carol but then quickly looked up to see Frederic poised at the top of the platform. His lean body showed muscles that had been honed

from hard physical labor and his brown hair had been bleached almost blond in places from the sun. Her heart started thudding faster as she watched and waited for him to make his dive.

As Frederic climbed the ladder he couldn't stop thinking about Elizabeth. He had seen her in the crowd as soon as she and Carol had approached. Her white uniform stood out like a bright beacon in the crowd, and he knew she must see him too by now. As he walked across the platform and prepared to dive off the end of the board, he pictured her face in his mind's eye. He glanced down for a just moment at the deep water rippling with reflections of sunlight and then, pulling himself up straight as an arrow with his hands above his head, he thought of her, and a smile broke out across his face. Bending his knees once he leaped up and out, performed a perfect flip, and then pierced the water below with his legs straight and in perfect form. The crowd erupted into cheers and as Frederic surfaced, he glanced over to where Elizabeth had been, but he couldn't find her in the crowd of men anymore.

When Elizabeth had seen Frederic jump her heart felt like it was jumping into the air with him. For a split second she was terrified and pictured him hitting his head at the bottom of the pool. Her irrational reaction and fear irritated her and made her feel foolish. As soon as she saw Frederic surface, she stepped back a step and the men that had been standing behind her filled in the space she left.

"Elizabeth – are you alright?" Carol quickly followed her and reached out and placed a hand on her arm. Without thinking Elizabeth jerked her arm back away from her friend's touch.

"I think the heat is just too much for me." A pang of guilt added to her irritation. She hated lying to her friend. She wasn't sure she understood herself what she was feeling for Frederic. Together they walked in silence back towards the hospital where they were both due to start the afternoon shift. By the time they got back the unusually warm day had a trickle of sweat

running slowly down her back and her crisp cotton uniform was making her itch. As she approached the old cottonwood in front of the hospital she stopped, faced Carol, and let out a sigh.

“I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to snap at you.”

“It’s okay, but it’s not like you to get upset so easily. I wish you would tell me what’s bothering you.” Carol brows were furrowed together and her usually happy eyes looked intensely at Elizabeth. “I know that people think I don’t notice things, but ever since you went to dinner with James you haven’t been the same.”

Thinking about that night brought back a quick feeling of panic in her chest. “It’s not your fault Carol. I was lonely. That’s why I went out with James when he asked me. I thought I could trust him, but he went too far.” She could still remember his rough hands on her shoulders, pushing her down in her seat. Then she remembered the shock in his eyes when she had slapped him hard across the face. He had never expected that.

“What do you mean too far Elizabeth?” Carol asked.

“It doesn’t really matter because I was able to stop him.”

“Oh Elizabeth, I’m so sorry,” and she reached out and held Elizabeth’s hand. From somewhere in the distance a raven cried, breaking Elizabeth out of her reverie. She glanced around at the bright blue sky and the sunlight gleaming through the cottonwoods and realized it was a beautiful day. Carol was studying her face and she smiled as she saw the concern in her friend’s face.

“I really am alright. I’m so lucky to have a good friend like you.” She leaned in and hugged her friend and knew that everything really would be alright.

Later that afternoon they worked together with the patients living in the open-air cabins that lined the front of Fort Stanton. Although they usually worked alone, today Elizabeth and Carol decided to pair up as they checked in on the patients. In the first cabin they visited Mr. Ellis. The older man was freshly bathed already when they arrived at the front of his cabin. The front door was wide open and the canvas flaps on either side that served as privacy, but still allowed the fresh air in, were pinned open allowing the sunshine to stream in. The small cabin held just the bare necessities for a person living alone, and Mr. Ellis sat in the single chair in the room reading a book. When the ladies appeared in the doorway he looked up and smiled.

“Good morning, ladies, to what do I owe this pleasure?” Mr. Ellis was always enjoyable to visit, but despite his gallant greeting, Elizabeth noticed his eyes looked tired and his skin was a little pallid.

“We’ve come to visit our favorite patient,” Carol replied easily as she stepped up the two wooden steps into the cabin. Elizabeth followed her in and placed their basket of supplies down on the small table beside his chair along the wall.

“We came here first after a quick visit to the Olympic festivities,” Elizabeth said as she got out a blood pressure cuff and gently rolled up Mr. Ellis’s sleeve.

“Ah, the Olympics. I could hear the cheers from way over here. Must be something, when I arrived here last year, I never imagined we’d be hosting Olympic games!” He laughed at his own comment, but it evolved into a coughing fit that had him desperately reaching into his pants pocket for a handkerchief. “Damn, I’m so sick of this cough.” Elizabeth released the cuff and made a note of his elevated blood pressure while Carol poured him a glass of water.

“Can we make you some tea, Mr. Ellis, or coffee?” Carol handed him the water and he carefully drank small sips of the water.

“No, that’s alright. To tell the truth, I’m not sure if I could hold it down.” His hand was shaking as he carefully placed the glass on the table. “All my years as a merchant marine I never got sea sickness, and now here I am on dry land, and it feels like the room’s spinning me in a gale.”

“We should help you to lie down.”

“No, just let me sit here a little bit, see if it settles. Not sure what’s come over me, but it’ll pass.” Elizabeth glanced down and saw that he was reading *Moby Dick*. Reluctantly they left him to his book to check on the other patients.

In about half the cabins they found patients in similar conditions. Several patients had fevers along with diarrhea and vomiting. Mr. Elis seemed to be one of the least affected. As soon as Elizabeth and Carol realized they were dealing with something contagious they rushed back to the hospital. Donning white surgical masks, they quickly went in search of Dr. Hammond. Within an hour the whole hospital was on alert, and it was soon discovered that patients within the hospital’s walls were getting ill as well.

The next morning Dr. Hammond, several other doctors, and the head nurses from each ward held an emergency meeting. “The symptoms are mostly identical.” Dr. Smith set down the files he’d been writing in on the table where they were all sitting. “The patients in the hospital have had no contact with the ones in the cabins, except for contact with the nurses who work both. There has to be some common denominator, because so far none of the nurses are sick.” As soon as he spoke there was a knock on the door. An orderly opened the door with a doomsday look on his face.

“Carol Channing and a few other nurses and orderlies are suddenly feeling ill. Elizabeth Thomas is with them now in one of the rooms that was empty in the last hallway off ward B. What would you like us to do?”

Dr. Hammond sighed as he ran his hands over his eyes. “Let’s keep them isolated there until we can figure out the cause of illness.”

By the time the sun went down for the evening almost half of the staff was ill and even more of the patients. The head agent in charge of the Border Patrol was assisting Dr. Hammond and the administration of the hospital to find the cause of illness. Elizabeth’s back ached and her feet were sore and swollen, but she didn’t want to leave her shift. With so many nurses sick they needed every hand available to care for those that were ill. The sick staff now took up four rooms of the hospital crammed with more beds than they would normally hold. Carol had been suffering from terrible stomach cramps and after delivering fresh linens and making up the bedding in one of the other rooms, Elizabeth decided to take a moment to sit by her friend’s side.

Carol’s dirty blonde hair was drenched in sweat and her usual golden skin was pale and clammy. She slept fitfully, and her eyes darted back and forth under her closed lids. Seeing her friend this way reminded her of another time. She had been so young when her mother passed away, only ten, but she remembered how her mother seemed to sleep for days before she passed away. Her eyes would dart back and forth, and Elizabeth in her child’s mind had believed her mother was only dreaming. A dream she never woke up from.

Taking a rag, Elizabeth dipped it in the bowl of water she had beside the bed and used it to gently wipe down her friend’s forehead, cheeks, and neck. Sensing the coolness Carol opened her eyes and smiled faintly.

“I always knew you were a good nurse.”

Elizabeth sighed in relief. “And you’re a good patient, but I certainly never thought I would be nursing you.” Elizabeth glanced around at the other patients, many sleeping, others propped in their beds or curled up on their sides trying to listen to the *The Shadow* on the radio. One of the nurses had turned the radio on earlier hoping to lift everyone’s spirits. But the sound of Frank Readick cackling “who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men” while an ominous organ rift played somehow added a surreal element to the atmosphere of the room.

“Is there any word yet on what it is? My stomach hurts so badly! I don’t think I’ve ever felt this way before,” Carol said as she rubbed her abdomen, hoping to ease the pain.

“They don’t know yet, but the Border Patrol’s helping them try to figure it out. They think it might be something that people ate. They’ve been talking to the kitchen staff, trying to figure out what was served in the last few days.”

“Poor Cook. If it was something she served she’s going to be so upset!”

Cook had been distraught all afternoon. First knowing that so many people she cared about were ill, and then when they questioned her, and mentioned it might have been something they ate, she was heart sick to think it might have been something she had served in the dining hall. She had cooperated fully with the agents and doctors and made a list of everything served in the dining hall within the last four days. Samples had been taken of any leftover meat from the last few days and any carcasses they had stored in the cooler. The entire kitchen had been sterilized with bleach, top to bottom, and all meals were now restricted to dry goods like cereal for breakfast, toast, or soups that had been boiled for long enough that they were assured of its safety.

Caring for all those sick became difficult with so many of the staff being ill themselves. By the next morning, after only getting a few hours of fitful sleep, Elizabeth was exhausted and was relieved when she heard that some of the border patrol agents would be helping to care for patients. She was surprised later to find that James was one of the agents who had volunteered to help. If she kept as busy as possible caring for the nursing staff in the hospital, she might not run into him.

Thankfully the next day many of the patients including Carol were feeling better. When Elizabeth had a moment to take a break, she walked arm in arm with Carol outside to get some fresh air. They sat in peaceful silence under the shade of an old ash tree as Carol tried to catch her breath. From where they sat, they could see the open-air cabins across the road. White curtains fluttered in the windows and the ever-present sound of an occasional cough drifted across the breeze. They sat in companionable silence as the fatigue of the last two days was beginning to catch up to Elizabeth. She had almost fallen into a doze when something caught her eye. There was a border patrol agent pulling a small wagon piled with freshly cleaned chamber pots from cabin to cabin. The shirt sleeves of his cotton uniform were rolled up to his elbows and even from a distance she could see that the back of his shirt was drenched in sweat. Without medical training most of the agents who volunteered had been given grunt work, but despite the heat of the summer day this man was whistling as he walked from cabin to cabin. Something about him looked familiar, and when he stopped to take off his hat and wipe the sweat from his forehead, Elizabeth realized with a jolt that it was James. Then as if sensing her gaze, he glanced over to where she and Carol sat. His face was still for a moment and then he raised his hand in a small acknowledgement and turned back around. He placed his hat back on his head, picked up the wagon handle, and continued walking cabin to cabin, only now he didn't whistle.

Carol glanced at Elizabeth and studied her face for a moment. It was so pale and there were dark circles under her eyes as if she had been sick too. She wanted Elizabeth to be happy and hated to see her this way. She reached over and took ahold of Elizabeth's hand and squeezed it gently. "If neither one of us ever gets married you'll have to promise to stay with me always." This made Elizabeth smile, "I promise."

After three days many of the patients were feeling better and Carol had made an almost full recovery. Elizabeth insisted her friend stay in bed at least one more day. When Dr. Hammond announced they had discovered trichinosis, she had been relieved that they at least knew the cause of illness. The doctors had said that symptoms might last for weeks, but she was hopeful because many of the patients were doing well, especially Carol.

"When I was a little girl, I had a bad fever once. We were so poor mama couldn't even call the doctor to see me. When I was going through the worst of it, she sat beside my bed all through the night and read to me from the Bible. That first night when my fever was so bad, and you sat beside me, I thought it was mother for just a minute." Carol smiled at Elizabeth, "thank you."

"Do you ever miss her? Or home?" Elizabeth wished her own mother was still alive.

"I write to mama now and then, but home was never really a safe place. I love my mother, but once I was old enough, I was better off on my own. When I came here to work Cook showed me around and me feel like one of her own." She had worried so much about cook when they discovered the trichinosis came from the venison that was served the week before. "Have you spoken to Cook today?"

“No, but I heard the venison was cooked by Jimmie, one of the new cooks.” Knowing Cook, she knew the older woman must be feeling responsible for everything that happened in the kitchen.

When she found Cook in the kitchen later, she was working at a desperate pace cleaning the work surfaces in between meals.

In the hospital kitchen Cook’s hands were red and raw from the Clorox and water mix she was using to clean the work surfaces where food was prepared. It was between meals, so there was no one else but Cook there, and the sunlight streaming through the windows showed Elizabeth how pale and drawn the older woman’s skin looked. She suddenly looked much older in the harsh light and Elizabeth’s heart went out to her.

“Carol is feeling so much better today, she’ll probably be back to work tomorrow.” Elizabeth watched Cook’s face carefully. Cook smiled weakly.

“I’m glad. From now on I’ll oversee all the meal prep. That day I was feeling tired. I had gone to lie down for just a little while before the rush before dinner.”

“No one blames you,” Elizabeth couldn’t stand to see her friend take the blame this way.

“I know, but that just makes it harder.” Cook continued to clean, so Elizabeth picked up one of the washcloths from the bucket and started to clean too.

Sometimes when she worked thoughts of Frederic would drift in and out of her mind. Today she realized it was better that she hadn’t seen him in so long. Her friends needed her, so she needed to forget Frederic and that night on the bridge.

For the next hour the two women worked in silence until it was time for Elizabeth to return to her shift and the preparations began for dinner.

CHAPTER 7

Fort Stanton, August 1941

Frederick had volunteered willingly for many of the harder tasks at Fort Stanton, but now he was glad he'd been asked to work in the fields this summer. Although the heat was sometimes stifling, he enjoyed the fresh air and felt like he could breathe better when he was out in the open. As he stopped to take his lunch break, he found an old fallen log beside the field of cabbages that were almost ready to be harvested and sitting on the ground he leaned back against the smooth wood. He had chosen this field today, because it required a smaller crew to weed between the rows of plants, but in the distance, he could see several of the men who lived in Klaus's barracks working in the bean field.

He thought about how over the last few months, the men whose loyalties lied with Hitler had banded together. More and more it was causing divisions among the men. From his peaceful spot on the log, he could hear their loud voices laughing about something as he ate the bread and butter he'd packed for himself that morning. They were probably laughing at the expense of someone else, but either way he had learned to steer clear of them. Better to keep to himself and the friends he trusted, like Josef and the other men in his barracks. As he finished his lunch sleepiness set in, so tipping his hat over his eyes he leaned his head back and drifted into sleep and dreams.

He was back in Germany again. He was a little boy and his mother and father had taken him on a picnic in the forest. They sat beside a gurgling brook and his mother was peeling an apple for him. He looked up and saw a beautiful bird with yellow on its wings perched out on a rock beside the water. He got up and ran towards it, but the startled bird flitted over to a larger rock on the opposite bank of the river. Rocks spanned across the shallow river, forming a bridge,

and testing the first rock Frederic gingerly stepped out onto it and began crossing the river. *Stop Frederic! Come back!* His mother called to him, but all he could think about was the pretty little bird flitting just out of reach. Now the bird perched on a fallen log jutting out of the water, and as Frederic stepped one step closer his foot wobbled on the loose rock, and he fell into the shallow water gashing his knee. He looked down at his wet and torn pants as blood flowed from the deep gash and trickled down his leg and into the water. He looked up but the little bird was gone. *Frederic! Frederic!* His mother called to him, but when he looked back to where his mother and father had been sitting on the grass, his mother was gone. He saw a flutter of wings beside him and quickly looked up, but instead of the little, yellow bird there was a large, black raven perched on the log. Holding its ground, it frantically lifted its wings in the air, stared straight at Frederic and cried out. *Caw! Caw!*

Frederic jerked awake, knocking his hat to the ground. Standing just six feet away was a black, shiny raven staring directly at him. It let out a cry, flapped its wings up and down, and then pranced in a circle, returning to the same spot. Frederic reached into his sack and pulled out the small piece of leftover bread. "Here friend." He tossed it to the bird who snatched it right out of the air, then turned, lifted off the ground, and flew off towards the trees near the river. Frederic rose, placed his hat back on his head, and got back to work hoeing the weeds between the rows of cabbages.

The sun was low in the sky when he headed back towards the tool shed where they kept the farming gear. He was in the back corner placing his hoe on a hook when someone shoved him from behind. He fell forward but caught himself just before falling face first into a one of the metal blades from the variety of metal tools hanging on the wall. As soon as he gained his

footing, he swiveled back around to see Otto standing across from him with a smirk across his face.

“Sorry, comrade – I did not see you standing there.” Frederic knew that Otto was one of Klau’s friends, but he had never spoken to him before even though they had both worked in the boiler room on the ship. His face was red and sweaty from working in the fields and Frederic thought he had a wild look in his eyes. Thinking it was better to avoid a fight, Frederic tried to step around Otto, but the man quickly moved the same way blocking Frederic. Then he stepped to the right and hit up against Otto’s sweaty body. The physical touch was too much for Frederic and a blurred image of a man in a Nazi uniform and the gleam of moonlight on a shiny black pistol flashed through his mind. He began to shake with rage as all his anger from the past six months built up inside of him.

With deliberate effort he spoke in a tight voice, “Move, comrade.” When Otto just laughed Frederic pushed him hard and Otto stumbled backwards several steps. The second he regained his footing he lunged forward towards Frederic, and they began to grapple and fight until Otto stepped back, pulled his right arm back, and punched forward towards Frederic’s head, but Frederic lithely ducked and punched back landing his fist squarely on Otto’s jaw. As Otto reeled backwards, several men rushed in, and everything became a blur as they separated both men.

“You will pay for this!” Otto spat the words as he was pulled away back out through the doors of the dark shed.

CHAPTER 8

Fort Stanton, October 1941

When the rains came late that summer Frederic welcomed them. They were a reprieve from the warm weather they'd had and reminded him of home. As he walked along the banks of the Rio Bonito one Sunday afternoon, he could see how swollen the river had become, nearly double its size, and there were dark rain clouds gathering to the East. He glanced toward the hospital side of the river and wondered about Elizabeth. He hadn't seen her since that day by the pool, but he knew she hadn't been ill when the sickness had broken out at the hospital. He could still see her face lit up for one bright moment when he surfaced in the pool, then she had disappeared. Did she ever think about him? He couldn't stop thinking about her, as much as he had tried.

As he watched the river the water moved swiftly down through the bends and curves of the bank. The current was rough with debris, and he noticed an old leather boot being swept along with the current. Fat raindrops started to sprinkle down, and he decided he better make his way back to the barracks before the next rainstorm hit.

When he got there Josef and two other men were huddled over Paul, a young man who'd been a porter on the ship. He had a slight, delicate build and brown curly hair that made him look even younger than he was. Now he was slumped in the chair with his head tipped back, holding a cloth to his nose, trying to stop the blood that was pouring from his nostrils.

"What happened to him?" Frederic asked as he rushed into the room.

"I had a run in with Otto, but I am alright." Paul raised his head up as he spoke, and Frederic saw that his left eye was beginning to swell and painful looking bruises were starting to appear.

“They cornered him in the dining hall when they knew he was the only one left.” Josef looked somberly at Frederic. “They are getting bolder. Anyone that they think is not one of them, Jew or not, is vulnerable to their attacks.”

‘We need to be more careful, stick together, don’t turn our backs to anyone in their group.’ Frederic felt a helplessness knowing he hadn’t helped his friend, and the anger that he always tried to keep under control seeped out. Frustrated and not knowing what to do, he turned on his heel and rushed back out the door, slamming it behind him.

He rushed out as the rain began to pour down and a clap of thunder rumbled in the sky overhead. Walking in a blind rage he rushed to where Klaus and his friends had built their little adobe hut along the riverbank. He jerked the door open hoping to find someone to take his rage out on, but the inside of the hut was empty. The silence hit him like a slap in the face and blinking hard to clear the water from his eyes, he looked around the empty room. Empty beer bottles littered the wooden table that sat right in the center of the room along with a pack of cards and an empty sardine tin that had turned into a makeshift ash tray filled with cigar and cigarette butts. The walls were mostly bare but hanging on the wall next to a small window was the swastika that had hung on the wall during the Hitler birthday celebration, and above it was the portrait of Hitler staring back at him in the dim light. Without thinking he rushed forward and ripped the swastika from the wall. He pushed open the haphazardly hung shutter that partially blocked the window, knocking it off the hinges, and threw the swastika out the window. Then he grabbed the portrait and threw it on the floor, stomping on it with his foot until the shattered glass lay in a hundred pieces. He turned and wildly swept out his arm across the table knocking everything to the floor, and as he stood, finally drained of some of his burning anger, an ear shattering thunder bolt sounded above him, and almost instantaneous lightning lit up the

landscape outside the hut. The smell of burning wood made him rush outside, and he saw that an old cottonwood had been struck by the bolt and the upper half of the tree was cut in two. Broken branches hung down so low that they were dangling into the water like a giant oar fighting the current. The river was flowing higher and faster than he had ever seen before. He trembled inside knowing that his rage was just as powerful as the storm and felt ashamed and helpless at the same time. He glanced back at the adobe hut as the water began creeping higher and higher up the bank and realized he needed to get back to see if everything was alright. The rising water would affect more than just the adobes along the riverbank.

As he approached the barracks, he could see that several of the men along with a few border patrol agents had formed a human chain moving sandbags from the back of a pickup truck to the small building that housed all the electrical wiring for the camp. They were forming a barricade around the front three sides of the building as fast as they could. Without hesitating he joined in as the rain came down harder and the wind picked up. Suddenly dime sized balls of hail were pounding his back.

“Faster! We’ll get the first barracks next after this,” shouted one of the agents as everyone worked together to protect the camp from the pouring rain.

When the first drops of rain had started something had compelled Elizabeth to go outside. She was only halfway through her shift, and it was unlike to her to slip away even for a moment or two, but she couldn’t seem to help herself as she grabbed a slicker from one of the maintenance rooms and ran out the back door of the hospital. She crossed the street and went down the trail to the bridge that spanned the river, and as she stood on the muddy bank Elizabeth realized she had been holding something back. She stood rooted to the spot as a deafening

thunderclap sounded from farther upriver, and as she watched the widening river running swiftly downstream filled with large branches from cottonwoods and other trees floating through the rough current, she felt a terrible feeling of claustrophobia and a tightening in her chest. She could see that the water was beginning to rise and wash over the wooden planks of the bridge.

She was trapped on this side, separated from a man she barely knew, but thought about constantly. What would her mother tell her if she were here? Her mother had gone with her heart when she had chosen Elizabeth's father. It would have been easier for her to choose to marry a man with her same background, the same race, the same religion. *Stick to your own kind.* Her family had told her mother before she married a man who had unknowingly been a wedge between her and her family, taking her away to live with people who didn't look like or even talk like her. But they had made it work, and Elizabeth had a good childhood before her mother passed away. Then she'd had the people who had grown to care about her at the hospital. Wasn't that enough? Tears began to stream down her face only to be washed away by the rain that was soaking her despite her rain jacket.

"Elizabeth!"

As someone called to her, she was confused. She kept looking across the bridge half expecting to see Frederic on the other side.

"Elizabeth!"

Hail began to pound down from the sky and suddenly became aware of someone running up behind her.

James had been checking on the horse in the stable when he saw Elizabeth dart across the street towards the bridge. At first, he had been hesitant to follow. He knew she didn't want to have anything to do with him. He didn't deserve to have anything to do with her, but the storm was

getting worse every second, so he followed her. When he saw her just standing there, rain pouring down on her, he felt all the guilt of what he'd done like a punch in the stomach. She looked lost, and it was partly his fault. He called out to her, knowing that she needed to get back inside to the dry warmth of the hospital, but she just stood there. As he called out to her again with no response, he slowly approached her from behind and gingerly reached out and touched her arm.

“Elizabeth, you need to get back inside.”

His touch jolted out of her trance, and she turned around slowly to face him. When she saw his face, she almost didn't recognize him for a moment. Then as it dawned on her who it was, and his words sunk in. How strange that she had wanted his touch only a year ago, but everything had changed. He couldn't tell her what to do anymore. He didn't have that right.

“Don't touch me,” she said as she jerked her arm back, so his hand didn't lie on it anymore.

“You need to come in out of the rain Elizabeth, you'll get sick.” The rain was coming down so hard that she could barely hear his words as he spoke softly to her. This man had seemed so strong and intimidating to her after that night, but now he seemed different, somehow smaller, and sad. As she looked into his eyes, she could see that he was sad and she almost imagined that he felt regret for what had happened between them. She sighed, she suddenly felt so tired. Without saying another word, she brushed past him and began plodding through the mud, back to the hospital.

Frederic awoke the next morning to see that the rain had stopped. The morning air was still and calm as the sun broke over the hills in the distance. He rose and dressed quietly trying

not wake his fellow bunkmates, he hoped for just a few minutes of peace and quiet before the day's work started. As he stepped outside the air was fresh and cool, and in the distance, he could see a hatchling of mayflies rising up into the breeze, their wings white and translucent in the faint morning light. The sandbags had kept the water out, but there were still pools of standing water everywhere. Here and there he could hear the sounds of other men waking for the day. His peace would soon be over, so he decided to head over towards the bridge. When he got there, he saw that Captain Daehne and the captain in charge of the Border Patrol agents were already there. The bridge was completely submerged in the swollen river. In several places the bridge had broken loose, and planks of wood were mixed in with tree branches and other debris making it impossible to cross.

Slowly more and more men joined the crowd of people looking at the bridge. The flash flood of the night before had been like nothing Frederic had ever seen before, and he understood why so many of them had come to look at where the bridge had been. Their road to the outside world had been washed away and it just reinforced the feeling of isolation that he had been carrying around for months. As he looked across the river, the hospital felt just as lost to him as his home in Germany.

CHAPTER 9

Fort Stanton, October 1941

Elizabeth knew that she was happiest when her days were busy, her work gave her little time for personal reflection. It was easiest to just keep pushing back her feelings to deal with later. She sat resting for a minute on one of the benches that sat right outside the front doors of the hospital. She was drenched in sweat from the exertion of rearranging hospital beds now that so many of the patients were back to normal, but now the cool fall breeze gave her a chill that sent goosebumps along her skin. Pulling her sweater tight over her uniform she looked out over the square at the changing leaves trembling in the breeze, and she felt a sense of peace. The cottonwoods and ash trees were a canopy of gold and orange leaves that glowed in the sunlight.

Except for a few lingering symptoms, all the patients had recovered from the trichinosis outbreak at the hospital, and the bridge over the Rio Bonito had been rebuilt. And although she kept away from the German camp, thoughts of Frederic still slipped into her mind when she least expected it. For right now she was happy to just focus on today.

From somewhere nearby a squirrel chattered in a tree and she could hear the faints sound of a horse neighing from the stables that were kept behind the hospital. The border patrol agents kept their horses stabled there, and she suddenly wondered if James were working nearby. She was surprised that the thought of him didn't upset her like it had just months before.

Right as she was about to go back in Dr. Hammond came out the front doors and spotted her.

“Elizabeth. I was looking for you.” He frowned as he sat down beside her, and she could see that something was bothering him. He was always a solemn man, but something had been troubling him, she could see it in his eyes when he looked at her.

“I’ve been worried about Cook lately. Helen hasn’t been the same since the outbreak.”

He seemed to struggle with how much to tell her.

“I know she blames herself, but what happened was just an accident,” Elizabeth had seen how upset Cook had been, but she didn’t know how she could help the older woman.

“I can’t betray any confidences, and I’m not even sure of anything myself, but I have reason to believe that she might need medical help. I think there might be more to what happened than just simple absentmindedness.”

“I’m not really sure what to say.” Cook was such a strong woman that the thought of something being wrong with her was hard to grasp.

“I was just hoping that you might talk to her. See if she might confide in you. I’ve asked her to come in, but she keeps putting me off. I know she cares about you, so maybe she would listen.” Dr. Hammond reached out to touch her hand, “we all care about you. I hope you know that?”

“I do,” Elizabeth smiled back. Despite everything that had happened, Fort Stanton always felt like home. “I’ll talk to her tonight at the social. I’ve volunteered to serve punch duty.” Serving punch would feel safer than having to participate herself in the social.

At some point one of the doctor’s wives had decided that it would be good for the morale of the hospital staff to hold social events for the nurses. Just like the tuberculosis patients had arts crafts, the nurses would now have movie nights, where in the small theater a projector would play reels of last year’s movies, and socials where the hospital staff, border patrol agents, and locals that lived near Fort Stanton could socialize and make the most of their lives. Many of the nurses looked forward to these nights in the hope that they might meet a potential future

husband, but Elizabeth dreaded them. She much preferred the movie nights where she could get lost in the story of someone else's life and for one night imagine she was the heroine of a mystery like Joan Fontaine in Hitchcock's *Rebecca*. She didn't want to attend tonight's event, but instead wished she could withdraw to the peace and quiet of her bedroom, but to do so would require pleas and explanations that would be just as tiring, so she accustomed herself to the idea of going.

When she arrived at the meeting room that was used for nurses' trainings during workdays and for parties during holidays and socials, she immediately went to stand behind the drinks station. Carol and some of the other nurses had decided it would transform the room to decorate it with crepe paper streamers and fairy lights. As Elizabeth looked around, she felt that the decorations had worked a little bit to brighten the room and make it feel a little festive. When she saw Carol, she would have to remember to compliment her on the decorations. She knew these nights meant so much more to Carol than they did to her.

As the notes of Ella Fitzgerald singing "The Starlit Hour" drifted through the air more and more people arrived and slowly here and there a couple glided across the floor arm in arm. As she poured cups of punch and arranged cookies on the silver tray that had been brought out for the occasion, she couldn't help to wonder what the Germans were doing across the river. Although she hadn't seen him in months, she found that her thoughts drifted into daydreams about Frederic whenever she wasn't working. The last time she had caught a glimpse of him had been one day as he helped to repair the bridge that had been washed away with the big storm. She was trying to picture the way he had looked that day, so solemn and quiet as he worked in the sun, when something caught her eye from across the room. James had walked through the door arm and arm with Cook. He looked freshly bathed and his hair was slicked back with the

comb marks still sliced through his dirty blonde hair. He glanced her way, but when she caught his eye, he looked away quickly as if embarrassed. He led Cook to a seat along one wall and stayed chatting with her. Elizabeth wondered what they could be talking about and remembered that she needed to try to talk to Cook tonight as well.

One of the younger doctors approached the table. “Would you like to dance Miss Walker?” He was a nice young man, shy and quiet in general, and Elizabeth had spoken to him a few times before.

“No, thank you Dr. Harris. I promised I’d help with the refreshments tonight. Maybe another time?” Although she knew if he ever asked again, her answer would be the same.

“Another time then,” and he tipped his glass of punch in a sort of salute to her.

She continued on in the same way observing rather than participating until she saw Carol enter the room. Carol was dressed in a new light blue dress that Elizabeth knew she had been saving up for. Elizabeth waited until she caught Carol’s eye and then waved her over with a smile. Carol made her way over, but something in her manner was reserved and odd to Elizabeth. She looked as if she were keeping a secret.

“Good evening, stranger. It feels like I’ve hardly seen you the last few days. I’ve missed you,” Elizabeth held out her hand towards her friend.

“I know, I’ve just been busy.” Carol clasped her hand and gave it a gentle squeeze. “I see your doing drink duty as usual.” She winked at Elizabeth and the tension seemed to drop.

“I like helping with drinks.”

“Not me, I want to dance tonight.” She smiled and gave Elizabeth a slight hug before she walked away to scan the room.

Elizabeth was hoping the night would end soon so she could go back to her room. She never did have a chance to speak to Cook, and she was tired and drained after the long day. Her thoughts were starting to wander off, and she was beginning to drift into a sleepy trance as the soft notes of Tommy Dorsey came on the phonograph/radio. *I'll never smile again, until I smile at you. I'll never laugh again, what good would it do?* She closed her eyes for just a moment and Frederic's face appeared. He was smiling at her, and his face was lit up like that first day she had seen him when the internees arrived. What would it be like to have him hold her in his arms, even if just a moment? She would never know though, because their lives and beliefs were too different. He would be going back to Germany one day, and her home was here, wasn't it? She shook her head to try to push his image away out of her head. What good would it do to imagine what might be when she had a good enough life right here?

She sighed and glanced up at the dancers and was startled out of her reverie to see Carol arm and arm with James. They were swaying gently side to side as the music drifted through the air. Carol was smiling shyly up at James as he talked to her as if he was telling her a story or joke. Carol laughed and tossed her head back for a moment, and as she watched them, Elizabeth felt confused and slightly sick to her stomach. *Within my heart I know I will never start to smile again, until I smile at you.* Did finding a husband matter so much to Carol that what he had done meant nothing to her? Elizabeth quickly began to tidy up the table leaving the crystal punch cups filled with orange jubilee lined up neatly in a row, grabbed her coat, and quietly slipped out of the dance to escape to the quiet of her room.

CHAPTER 10

Fort Stanton, December 1941

When Elizabeth first heard about the bombing of Pearl Harbor she felt as if time were standing still. Now several days later as she automatically walked through the rounds that were so familiar to her, she thought about how they had all stared in shocked silence at the radio as the news broadcast cut through the regular programming. She remembered Cook's face most of all. Silent tears had rolled down the older woman's face. Suddenly what had felt so far away, was now a threat to their country. Why would the Japanese have done this? In her mind it seemed unfathomable, but what she could understand was that this one event was going to change their lives forever. She had woken up that morning determined to talk to Cook to see if there were some way she could help her friend. At least she still had some control over the events in her own life.

After checking in on all the patients in her ward she walked back through the main entrance of the hospital on her way to the dining hall. If she could catch Cook before the lunch rush, she might be able to discover what was going on or if there were something she could do to help her. Along the front hallway of the hospital, she passed the recreation room where patients were working on handy crafts to pass the time and keep busy. Although there hadn't been any snow yet this season it was too cold for most of the patients to go outside, so she knew that craft time was a welcome entertainment for most and a chance to talk and socialize. As she paused in the doorway for a moment and looked in, Elizabeth could hear that the conversation mostly centered around Pearl Harbor today.

"So many deaths."

"Roosevelt signed the declaration of war already."

Her stomach started to turn just listening to them, but she kept going on down the hall because she knew she needed to talk to Cook.

When she got to the kitchens behind the main dining hall, she found several men and women working on the lunch preparations, but there was no sign of Cook. She approached a young man who was busily chopping a pile of cabbage and asked, “Is Cook in today?”

“She’s taking a break out back,” he said as he pointed towards the rear of the kitchen with his knife. Puzzled at the information, she went out the back door into the brisk cold and found Cook bundled up in a coat and sitting on a bench that faced out towards the stables. She looked deep in thought and when Elizabeth called out to her, she seemed to take a few minutes to realize who it was. Then she smiled and patted the seat next to her. As Elizabeth sat down, Cook turned to her. “Have you come to check up on me?”

“I’ve been a little bit worried about you. Dr. Hammond said – “

“Dr. Hammond should mind his own business and not be blabbing about mine.” Her cheeks heated up with color and her shaky breath came out in small puffs of smoke against the cold. Despite the sunny sky the temperature was hovering around 20 degrees and Elizabeth could feel the chill through her nurse’s uniform. Cook reached for a cup of tea that was resting on a small table beside the bench, and Elizabeth could see that there was a tremor to her hands.

Despite it though she diligently brought the tea to her lips and drank.

“Stone cold. I must have been sitting out here longer than I realized.” She set the mug down and turned to Elizabeth, “You’re worried about me, and I appreciate that. What did Dr. Hammond tell you?”

“Not much. He just hinted that there might be something amiss. Are you alright?”

“I’ve always taken pride in being tough as nails, but I guess I won’t always be. Palsy. The doctor says I have palsy. Besides my body being affected, it’s affected my memory. That was why the venison didn’t get cooked long enough. All of those people got sick because of me. Now I don’t know what I’m going to do. If I can’t work, I can’t stay on here, and I’ve lived here so long, I don’t know where else I’d go. Most of my family is spread across the country now. My sister passed a few years ago.”

Elizabeth put her arm around Cook and held her tight. “You’re my family too. We’ll figure something out.”

As the news of the attack spread through the German camp Frederic had seen and heard the effect it had on the other Germans. How would the Americans treat them now that the country was at war? Would they ever return to Germany? The sun was getting low in the sky as he walked towards the dining hall. He had his collar turned up to protect his face from the bitter cold and his hands were jammed into the pockets of his wool coat. He walked slowly and watched the activity around the perimeter of the camp. Several border patrol trucks were lined up against the western boundary of the camp that had always just been an imaginary line before, a border that existed by an honor code, but now about ten agents were hard at work constructing a physical barrier. The wooden fence posts were wrapped in barbed wire and there was a guard tower in the process of construction. Its wooden frame jutted up into the sky high enough to make a good watch tower. He estimated they’d be finished with it in a few weeks.

Inside the dining hall the men seemed somber and the usual laughing and boisterous bragging after a long day was gone. He quickly passed through the line for food, not even noticing what he was served. Tray in hand he walked by Klaus and Otto sitting smugly with their

gang against the far wall and noticed that Otto watched him sideways as he walked towards the usual table where he sat with Josef and his other friends. As he sat down, he glanced at his tray finally and saw the usual cabbage stew that they had been having all week. He had a small satisfaction that although he was tired of the vegetable, he knew that most of the cabbages had been nurtured by his own hands.

“They are making good progress on the fence,” Josef stated simply.

“I heard that Captain Daehne will be speaking to us soon about the changes,” Frederic said as he started to pick at his stew.

Paul had been eating with a hearty youthful appetite, but he suddenly put his spoon down and looked at them with unusual gravity. “I can take the restrictions they are going to impose. No more walks in the countryside, huts by the river, games, or rodeos, but what I cannot stand is being stuck here with men like Klaus and his friends.”

Josef placed his hand on Paul’s shoulder, “I understand you. They watch us all the time, just like back home in Germany. I do not feel safe, but all we can do is bide our time and stick together.”

“Is that really all we can do?” Frederic looked around anxiously. His chest felt tight as he began to feel impotent with anger and frustration. Again, he felt helpless to act, helpless to prevent more harm coming to people he cared about.

Later that evening Frederic was reading by the light of a small oil lamp beside his bed as his roommates slept. He had tried to sleep, but every time he dozed off, he woke again from a terrible nightmare. He could never remember it, but he always woke with the awful feeling of being trapped. When he heard a light tap on the door he jumped and lost his place in the book. Irritated he flung the book on his bed and got up to see who it was. A middle-aged man of

average build and height was standing meekly outside. He wore a black wool coat bundled around him and a plain grey scarf wrapped around the bottom half of his face. Frederic didn't recognize him, and when the man held out a note to him, he took it without thinking.

“What is this?” Frederic asked him. The man shrugged his shoulders, “I do not know. I was leaving my shift at the canteen when one of the men that works with Daehne brought it to me and asked if I would deliver it to you on my way back to the barracks.

“Which man?”

Again, the man shrugged his shoulders but with a hint of irritation this time. “Who knows? I am tired. If you want to know, read the note,” and with that the man turned and disappeared in the darkness.

Frederic opened the note. *Very important. Must meet with you tonight. Go to the back of the recreation hall. Captain Daehne.* The simple lines printed in neat handwriting seemed odd to Frederic. Why would the Captain need to speak to him tonight? But his curiosity and restlessness made him step outside and start walking towards the recreation hall. Frederic glanced up at the night sky and could see there was no moon. Somewhere in the distance he could hear the lonesome hooting of an owl making the hairs on his arm rise. As he rounded the corner along the back side of the recreation hall he heard a twig snap nearby, but before he could think twice, he was grabbed by the collar of his coat by a dark figure wearing thick work gloves. He was roughly yanked forward and thrust down so hard that he tumbled and just barely regained his footing. When he glanced up, he saw that he was surrounded by four or five men wearing dark wool caps low across their foreheads. But even in the darkness he could make out the face of Otto as the man who had thrown him down.

“You will not get away this time *Jude!*” Otto spat at him as the circle of men around him began to close in. For an instant fear raced through him and he didn’t move a muscle, but as the first punch from one of the men hit him squarely on the jaw he was struck out of his stupor. The anger that had been welling up inside him for months began to break loose and he let out a yell as he blindly rushed forward and charged the closest attacker. Frederic had no idea who he attacked, but he lunged forward, grabbed the man by the collar, and with all his strength hit the man hard with the top of his head. The man instantly crumpled to the ground, but before Frederic could spin around and attack, two men grabbed his arms and had them pinned behind his back. Frederic tried to swing around in vain, and the other two men began taking turns pummeling him from the front.

After a few moments his pain soon gave way to an awful numbness and before Frederic passed out the image of another dark night came to his mind, and he saw his mother’s tearful face as a Nazi truck rumbled off in the night.

He woke sometime around dawn. He could hear more than feel his teeth chattering. His body felt numb, and he had to will himself to try to move his limbs and come to a sitting position. An awful feeling of *déjà vu* came over him, only this time he was laying on the bitter cold ground behind the recreation hall instead of the alley behind his home. As the full realization struck him of what had happened, he feared for his health most of all. He knew he had to find the strength to get back to his barracks where Josef and Paul could help him.

He thought of the men that had done this to him and he used what was left of his fury to will himself to his knees. He couldn’t rise for a moment but rubbed his stiff hands up and down over his arms trying to warm himself just a little. Shakily he rose first up off one knee and then

the other to stand. His barracks weren't far, and he hoped he could get there before anyone saw him. If he reported what had happened things might only get worse for them.

When he stumbled into the barracks Josef was just rising from bed. He saw Frederic and quickly got up and rushed towards him.

"God, what happened? Klaus?" he asked Frederic,

"Not Klaus, but his men." Frederic stumbled to his cot. With stiff fingers he fumbled to pull the blanket down, but Josef quickly helped him, taking off his shoes and helping to stretch his legs out onto the cot. He pulled the wool blanket high up over Frederic's shoulders and got a fresh cap for his head.

"We must get you warm and then I will go get a medic from the infirmary."

"No," Frederic quickly called out.

"You need medical help." Josef told him firmly.

"I do not want anyone to know. It will only make things worse."

Josef huffed out his breath. He knew that as kind and levelheaded as Frederic was, he could also be very stubborn sometimes. "Let me build up the fire, get you warm, and then we will see." He went to the small wood burning stove near the entrance of their barracks and added wood, building up a warm fire.

Later that day Frederic shivered slightly as one of the German medics examined him. He was still chilled despite the warm fire and the warm fresh clothes they'd help him change into. He knew he wouldn't tell the men in charge who had done this to him, because it wouldn't help anything. If anything, it would make things worse. They were a group of four hundred men living in tight quarters and telling everyone what had happened wouldn't help the situation. He

would just have to wait it out, but with the fence under construction and barbed wire going up he was beginning to feel trapped.

“You need to be more careful,” the medic said quietly as looked at Frederic with a frown. “They say we are no longer ‘distressed seamen,’ we are ‘enemy aliens’ now. Who knows how long we will be stuck here now.”

When the medic left Paul sat beside him. “You are lucky you are not seriously hurt.” He continued to sit quietly beside Frederic and stare out the window. The young man looked so pensive to Frederic. He couldn’t remember ever see him look so depressed as he just stared out the window. Then Paul glanced back at Frederic, “I think this changes everything.”

“What do you mean?” Frederic was beginning to worry for his friend. He was trying to concentrate on what he was saying, but the pain in his chest was excruciating and his head was throbbing.

“It might take them two or three weeks to finish the fence, but not much longer.” He glanced around the small barracks as if someone might be watching. “If someone were to escape, now would be the time.”

CHAPTER 11

Fort Stanton, December 1941

For a week cold, bitter wind blew down the hills across the valley and slowed down the work on the fence. Frederic's wounds were beginning to heal, and as he sat drinking his morning coffee, he thought about what Paul had said. Klaus and his friends were never going to change. The war was just beginning and there was no way of knowing how long they would be kept there. He wouldn't be able to see Elizabeth now and maybe never would again. The hospital across the river felt farther away than ever, and as he glanced out the window, he could see clouds beginning to form in the distance.

Since the night of the social Elizabeth had done her best to avoid Carol. She couldn't understand what Carol had been doing dancing with James. She had volunteered to serve extra shifts and had even traded shifts with other nurses just so she wouldn't have to talk to her friend, at least for now. She felt she needed a little time to figure out her own feelings.

As she ate her breakfast in the hospital dining hall alongside Cook and several other nurses she was lost in her own thoughts and didn't notice when Carol sat down quietly beside her. When she spoke, Elizabeth jumped in surprise.

"What do you all think of all the new border patrol agents that have shown up since the bombing?" Carol asked the group but then carefully glanced at Elizabeth. Elizabeth quickly glanced her way, but then continued eating her eggs.

Cook was quick to respond when she noticed the tension between the girls. "It was bound to happen. They can't take any chances that some of those men might be Nazis. I warned you girls all along that it wasn't a good idea to go near those men." She looked pointedly at Elizabeth as frown lines appeared between her eyes.

Elizabeth finally glanced up at the other two women. “I think they’re still just regular men, even if they are Germans.” She glanced out the window at the barbed wire fence in the distance, “it’s still strange though seeing that fence go up.”

Cook smiled, “I’ll agree with you there. It’s very strange,” then she sighed. “Well, I better get back to work. I still oversee the whole kitchen staff and it’s time for me to get back to it. It smells like snow, and if a storm moves in, I’ll have everyone crowding this place for dinner all at once.”

Carol got excited about the mention of snow. “Do you really think it’s going to snow? We haven’t had a good snowstorm since I got here two years ago.”

“The mountains are so beautiful when it snows,” Elizabeth said. “Maybe we can build a big fire in the nurses’ quarters tonight.”

Cook stood up carefully stretching out her legs. “We should probably all check the firewood supply just in case. I’ll go ask one of the boys in the kitchen to help.”

“Maybe we should check on the hospital supplies too. The last time there was a good snowfall the hospital supply truck was delayed by a week.” Elizabeth got up to take her tray to the counter where the dirty dishes were stacked and didn’t say a word as Carol followed her.

In silence they walked out of the dining hall and crossed the short distance to the hospital. When they got inside, they walked quietly side by side along the west wing of the hospital where the supply closets were, passing patients and nurses as they went. As they looked over the shelves at the medical supplies and equipment Carol suddenly stopped and turned towards Elizabeth. Even though she could tell Carol had something to say Elizabeth couldn’t bring herself to glance her way, but she felt like she needed to break the awful tension. “I think we’re low on kerosene. I wonder where they keep it?”

Carol smiled hopefully, “I think they keep it in that shed near the stables. Do you want me to show you?”

“No, I can go by myself.”

“Elizabeth,” Carol reached out and touched Elizabeth on the arm. “I’m sorry.”

And although Elizabeth hated being angry with her friend, she didn’t feel ready yet to talk about it, and instinctively jerked her arm back. “You don’t have to be sorry.” And before Carol could say anything else she quickly left the room.

Outside the wind was starting to pick up and the cold air was sharp against her cheeks and burned her nose. She noticed several bluebirds low to the ground under the junipers and gambel oak, a sign she had learned meant cold weather was coming. She pulled her nurse’s cloak close around her and jammed her hands inside her pockets as she hurried around the corner of the hospital towards the stables. As she cleared the building and glanced across the road towards the stables, she noticed a figure out of the corner of her eye. Turning her head, she got a closer look and realized the tall, slim figure disappearing through the stable door was Frederic. He was wearing a heavy, black coat and he had a leather satchel flung across his shoulder. Her heart skipped a beat as she crossed the street just a minute behind him and approached the door.

She couldn’t just turn around and return to the hospital empty handed, but the thought of seeing him was too much for her. She was breathless and her hand shook as she reached for the door handle and gently pulled the door open just enough to enter. The inside of the stables was musty and dark, and the smell of hay tickled her nose as she entered. Before she could step more than two feet inside, she realized Frederic wasn’t alone. She heard muffled voices and realized one was Frederic talking in an urgent tone. Not knowing what she had walked into and afraid this might be some sort of confrontation with one of the Border Patrol agents, her first thought was

that she would appear to be eavesdropping. She should just leave now before she was seen. Embarrassment and nervousness held her in place. As she stood still and caught her breath, she realized the male voices she heard were speaking German and there was an urgency in Frederic's voice. In her indecision she took another step towards the side wall and almost fell as her foot caught on something stacked up against the wall. She caught herself just in time and managed to catch a hayfork before it slapped her in the face. One of the horses suddenly huffed out a breath and whinnied. Faster than she could react, one of the men rushed forward from the back of the stables and grabbed Elziabeth by the shoulders.

"What are you doing here?" The young man looked more scared than she felt and as she looked at his gaunt face she saw he had bruises in various stages of healing across his eyes and jaw. In the hazy darkness of the stables, he almost looked like a ghost.

"Paul! Let her go!" Frederic rushed over and grabbed the young man, pulling him off Elizabeth.

"She will tell them, ruin our chance," he hissed at Frederic. Elizabeth could hear the desperation in his voice, but still couldn't quite understand what was happening.

"I don't understand Frederic. What's going on? What are you doing here," but as she saw the guilt on his face she began to understand. She saw that both men were wearing thick boots, heavy winter coats, and each had a small bag filled with supplies strapped to their back. Paul looked from one to the other for a moment and then brushed past them towards the horses.

"I am leaving now, before she reports us," and with shaking hands he finished strapping the saddle onto a young palomino horse.

"Don't do this Frederic." Elizabeth grabbed the lapels of his coat, and Frederic flinched as if in pain. Standing so close to him she noticed for the first time that his face was also bruised

and battered. His eyes were so sad and gaunt that he seemed like a different man than the one she kissed beside the bridge just six months before. “They’ll catch you Frederic, you won’t be able to get away!”

Paul heard this and stopped what he was doing to look at them both. “They will know if you tell them,” he looked pointedly at Elizabeth, but Frederic’s expression changed and the worried lines on his forehead softened as he smiled.

“No one will know. Go back to the hospital. Pretend you never saw us,” and he gently touched her cheek with his gloved hand. She felt frozen to the spot as she looked up at him, and the only thought that registered in her head was that he was leaving. If he left, she might never see him again.

Then there was a noise from behind her, and the door to the stables was pushed open from the outside. Instinctively, Frederic grabbed Elizabeth and thrust her behind him as James walked through the door. His breath was coming out in small puffs of smoke from the cold, and he stopped short when he saw them. For a moment his eyes lit up when he saw Elizabeth, but then his expression changed to confused.

He looked from one to the other and said, “What the hell’s going on here?” and he instinctively moved his hand to his rifle. Then he glanced towards the back of the stable and saw Paul in the middle of saddling his horse. “Don’t move,” he shouted out at Paul, but in a panic, Paul hurled forward and ran towards James, ramming his head directly into his chest.

“Go Frederic!” Paul yelled as he wrestled with James and both men fell to the ground. Paul had James in a head lock and was using all his strength to hold him down on the ground. Frederic hesitated, but when the horse gave an anxious huff he ran to it, cinched the belt, and

grabbed the reins. He started leading the horse out the door, but Elizabeth followed him. She couldn't just let him walk away like that.

“You can't go!” She jerked his arm down as he was trying to mount the horse.

“I have to.”

They had caught the attention of another agent across the road, and Elizabeth felt a panic rise up in her chest as the agent started running across the street towards them. She suddenly knew what she wanted.

“Then take me with you,” she said as she pushed him back a step and grabbed the pommel. Hoisting herself up by placing her foot in the stirrup, she threw her right leg up and over and sat as far forward in the saddle as she could.

His instincts seemed to take over, and he jumped up behind her in the saddle and grabbed the reins. The horse was ready as if he sensed their urgency and needed little prompting to start. The other agent ran up, breathing hard, but they were already galloping down the road headed south towards the mountains as snowflakes began to float down through the air.

James finally wrested Paul off him by bringing his elbow down hard against Paul's ribs. He got up, grabbed one of the other horses, and immediately led it outside trying to see which way Frederic and Elizabeth had gone. The other agent ran up to him, and James yelled “One of the Germans is inside. Don't let him escape! Damn!” Torn between immediately chasing after them or reporting it, he jumped onto the horse and rode towards the nearest border patrol guard shack.

CHAPTER 12

Lincoln County, December 17, 1941

They had been riding for hours as the snow fell steadily in fat, white flakes. He was so tired he could hardly hold himself upright in the saddle, so he knew Elizabeth must be exhausted too. She leaned against his chest to keep from slumping over as she dozed off from time to time. The horse was showing signs of fatigue and its breath was coming out in large white clouds of vapor that blended in with the falling snow. If he had been alone, he would have felt a sense of liberation as he rode south away from Fort Stanton, but feeling Elizabeth start to sag against his chest with fatigue caused him to feel a sense of panic instead. He needed to find shelter before nightfall. The temperature was dropping and if the snow continued at this rate, they wouldn't make it through the night.

The horse slowed his pace and trod along as the snow on the ground became thicker. The junipers started giving way to Pinon and Ponderosa pine as the horse picked his way through the increasingly rocky landscape. As they entered the woods, the air sparkled with falling snow, and a sudden gust of wind blew the snow from the trees and showered them in white powder. It made Elizabeth jerk awake and she wrapped her scarf around her head now with one hand and pulled it down tight around her face.

We can't go on like this he thought and regretted that he hadn't just surrendered when James found them. He scanned the forest ahead but could see nothing but dark green pine and snow when the horse suddenly let out a small whinny and shook his head. The tired animal started to veer off to the right and for a moment he thought to pull him back in the way they had been traveling, but instinct stopped him. After several yards he thought he could see something up ahead and strained his eyes to see what the horse was leading them towards. To his relief, a

small weather-beaten cabin suddenly appeared in a clearing. Elizabeth sat up suddenly and he knew that she saw it too.

The horse ambled up to the cabin on shaky legs and Frederic helped Elizabeth dismount. The front door was swollen shut from moisture and disuse, but a few hard shoves with his shoulders had it swinging open, and as he stumbled through the doorway a shower of snow fell down on his head.

Inside they found all the bare necessities of survival left in a neat display. Except for a fine layer of dust, it looked as if the owner might return at any moment. In the far corner near the fireplace was a small wooden table with two chairs propped upside down on top of it. In the corner nearest the door a small bed was neatly covered with an old wool blanket and a black bearskin throw, and directly across from the door was a fireplace with a stone hearth. Above the mantel a stuffed buck's head with a full rack of antlers had been hung, and it looked like the long dead animal was standing guard over the cabin. Beside the fireplace a small stack of firewood was piled neatly, and a black cast iron pot sat on the grate. Frederic was overwhelmed with relief that they had found such a perfect shelter to wait out the storm.

Elizabeth stepped around him and took the snow-covered shawl from her head.

"We need to start a fire." She moved towards the pile of wood and started picking up logs to arrange in the fireplace, but Frederic rushed over and took the wood from her hands.

"Let me care take of the fire. Then I will find shelter for the horse." The glance she gave Frederic made his heart sink. He hadn't meant to put her into this situation, but now he could see the anger in her eyes.

As soon as the fire was burning strong enough that he knew it wouldn't go out, he stepped back out into the blowing snow to see if he could find a place to shelter the horse. Dusk

was beginning to settle in, and the snow was already piling up in thigh high drifts around the small cabin as he slowly made his way around back. He found his way slowly fighting against the strong wind for each step as the thick snow swirled around him making it hard to see. It reminded him of the winter storms when he was a boy. His mother had always said that Frau Holle was shaking out her bed sheets. *But you must be sure to make my bed properly and shake it out thoroughly, so that the feathers will fly – then it will snow the world over.* But this wasn't a Grimm's fairytale. Was it snowing in Germany? He wondered what his mother was doing now. Was she even alive? He felt his heart sink as he realized he hadn't even thought of his mother in days. He'd lost his mother and now he'd put Elizabeth in danger. Grief and anger were warring inside of him as icy crystals of snow started to melt and slip slowly down the back of his collar and down his neck, startling him out of his reverie. He shook his head to clear his thoughts as he finally made it around to the back of the cabin and found a small, enclosed lean to, just large enough for the horse. An iron hook hung from the ceiling, and various knives and other hunting tools lay on a small table against one wall. It was small, but he could make do. Relieved but feeling more hopeful, he laboriously made his way back through the thickening snow to get the horse.

After he secured the horse in the small shelter he went back inside, and found the cabin was already warming up as Elizabeth knelt beside the hearth. She'd already filled the cast iron pot with snow and had it hanging over the fire to melt. Beside her was an old tin pail filled with water.

“You can take that one to the horse,” she said as she glanced at the pail. “There's a bowl on the table we can use for our water.” She looked back at the fire with her back to Frederic. Without saying a word, he took the pail and headed back outside.

Later that night they ate in silence as the fire crackled in the hearth. The can of beans he had hastily packed the night before were a welcome treat after the long day. And he was grateful he had thought to pack a small jar of instant coffee. The dark bitter liquid tasted awful, but it warmed him as they sat and ate their simple meal. He had thought about her so many times over the past few months, that sitting here next to her felt peaceful, but surreal. Without thinking, out of habit, he pulled out the photograph of his mother that he kept in his pocket. The edges were worn and soft like velvet and in places the thin paper had cracked causing lines to criss cross across the likeness of his mother.

“Who is she?” Elizabeth quietly asked, speaking to him for the first time since they had begun their meal. Her soft voice startled Frederic out of his reverie. He realized he had been thinking about a conversation he had had with mother last year. She had teased him about getting married and having a child. She wanted to be a grandmother she had said and told him that there were several young ladies in their neighborhood that would make good daughters in law for her. Now she might never have a chance to be a grandmother. He blinked as a single tear slipped out of his eye and down his cheek.

“My mother.” The simple words were hard for him to say. Holding his feelings in seemed easier than speaking about what had happened.

Elizabeth could see the grief and pain on his face and a familiar pain throbbed in her chest. “Where is she?” she asked even though she could see the answer in his eyes.

“I am not sure. She was taken to a labor camp. I hope she is still alive.”

As the meaning of his words sunk in, Elizabeth remembered the wounds on his chest and face when he had first arrived at Fort Stanton and the bitterness she had heard in his voice.

“I’m so sorry.” She felt like her words were powerless, and now she felt terrible thinking he had been a Nazi. Frederic had always seemed so strong to her that now seeing his bowed head and stooped shoulders as he gently wept broke her heart. She reached her hand out across the table and wrapped her fingers around his hand that was clutching the photograph. Without looking up he brought his other hand up and around her hand, completely enveloping it in his warmth grasp. She felt the rough skin of his palm on top of hers and instantly felt better as a warm sensation of safety and security came over her. How could he comfort her so much with such a simple gesture, yet somehow, he had. She smiled suddenly and realized her heart felt lighter for the first time in months. Frederic continued to grasp her hand, but slowly looked up. His grey eyes looked dark in the firelight, but she could see that he looked more hopeful too as he looked intensely at her.

“My mother always said that everything happens for a reason. Right now, I do not know why terrible things are happening to my people in Germany, but I am grateful that I am here safe with you.”

“So am I.” Elizabeth didn’t know what would happen tomorrow or the next day, but in this moment, she felt at peace. She was warm from the fire, and they were safe from the storm. For tonight that would have to be enough.

Frederic woke with a start. He was drenched in sweat from another nightmare, and now the sweat began to sting and chill his skin as a shiver raced down his body. He blinked to clear his eyes, but instead of the old, faded wood of the cabin, he was looking up at a skyful of stars. And instead of the constellations he had grown familiar with these past months, the stars were scattered and disordered. The air was still and bitterly cold and sitting up he strained his mind to

try to think of why he was outside, but he couldn't clear his thoughts. His mind was in a fog. Then suddenly, from somewhere behind him he could hear the low, primal growl of a wild animal. The low vibration emanating from the animal grew, and glancing over his shoulder, he could see two large, glowing eyes looking directly at him from the shadows beneath the pine trees, only yards away from where he sat frozen with fear. Move! he ordered his body. Run! but his body felt frozen. He watched in desperate silence as the steam from the animal's mouth slowly travelled through the night air in great clouds of smoke. Finally, he could move his body and rose to a crouch, ready to run, but it was too late. With a hissing scream, a mountain lion, muscles rippling and fur slick with sweat, leaped out from beneath the pine boughs right towards Frederic.

He let out a choked cry as he woke from the nightmare. This time the sweat that drenched his body was real and calmed and cooled him as he slowly realized where he was. The low flames in the fireplace beside him were a comfort, and he looked around to reassure himself that everything was fine. Elizabeth was sleeping peacefully in the single bed across from him, and he watched her chest rise and fall and tried to match the rhythm of his breathing to hers. It had taken all of his will power to not climb into bed with her the night before, but he knew he didn't have the right. What kind of future could he offer her?

The fear from the dream still lingered with him, and needing to reassure himself that they were safe, he rose to check to make sure the wooden latch that bolted the door was still in place. Feeling slightly more reassured he walked to the window, parted the curtains, and glanced out. The snow was still falling steadily, but the wind had died down. The moon cast a gentle glow across the snow and forest, so peaceful in contrast to his dream and his racing heart. It seemed as if not a soul existed, man or animal, other than him and Elizabeth. He was somewhat satisfied

and moved to her bedside to take a last glance at Elizabeth. Her dark hair was fanned out on the pillow above her head, and she held both of her hands together under her cheek. One loose strand of hair lay across her cheek and taking ahold of it, he tenderly moved it back to lie with the rest of her hair. She looked like an angel, and as he watched her, the rest of his anxiety finally died down. Finally satisfied, he moved back to his spot in front of the fireplace, lied down, and tried unsuccessfully to go back to sleep.

Elizabeth woke to the smell of coffee wafting through the air and the comforting scent of wood burning in the fireplace. She turned in the small bed and quietly watched Frederic as he boiled a small pot of oatmeal over the flames. She waited quietly until he was done, enjoying watching him for just a moment. He was so intent on the job that she wondered what else he was thinking about.

Finally, she sat up slowly and stretched her legs. “Good morning.”

“Good morning.” Frederic had been so deep in thought that he had forgotten she was there for a moment.

“Your thoughts were a long way away.” She noticed that his eyes were sad again as he nodded his head.

“I was thinking about Germany.”

“You’ll be here until the war is over.” Her simple statement was more to reassure herself, and as soon as she said it, she felt guilty.

“I was planning on going to Mexico. Travel south to El Paso and then cross the border.”

“Mexico? What would we do there?” When she jumped up on the horse with him and rode away, she hadn’t thought past the moment, just acted. Now the reality struck her that they

had to think beyond the snowstorm and this small cabin in the woods, but with the snow falling steadily outside, the rest of the world felt far away.

“We cannot go together. I need to find a way for you to get back without being caught,” he said calmly and slowly. She suddenly felt panicked at the thought of going back without him.

“You don’t want me,” she stated with quiet anger.

He just looked at her for a moment, studying her face. “I have nothing to offer you. I am a fugitive, a citizen of a country that you are at war with.”

“We could go to El Paso. I have family there. They would help us.” He didn’t say anything in response, and the quiet, pitying look he gave her irritated her. He looked at her as if she were a child.

“The oatmeal is getting cold. We should eat.” They sat in silence eating the bland oatmeal. A little sugar would go a long way she thought as she ate the mushy meal. It made her think of Cook and the molasses oatmeal she cooked at least once a week. What must she and Carol be thinking? They must be so worried for her. They wouldn’t have any way of knowing she had left of her own free will. It hadn’t occurred to her that Frederic might get into trouble. She suddenly regretted the way she had left things with Carol. She should have found a way to talk to her closest friend.

When they finished the meager meal Frederic rinsed the dishes in a small bucket of melted water and then dried them off with a towel. The snow was still falling steadily outside, and as she stood looking out the window, she could see that the drifts around the cabin were getting deeper. Since her father’s death she had always had to be practical to survive, and now she worried about how much food they had.

Frederic watched the changing emotions on her face. He wished he could do something to make her feel better.

“I do not think the storm will last much longer. Do you?” he asked her with a hopeful smile.

She remembered back on the storms she had experienced since moving to Fort Stanton as a girl. The magic of sitting snug inside a warm house as the snowflakes drifted down outside had been one of her joys as a child.

“No, I don’t think it will last too much longer. Once, when we first moved to Fort Stanton it snowed for four days straight, right before Christmas, but that doesn’t happen very often. That was before my mother passed away.” She smiled as she remembered how her mother had made *champurrado* for all the children living at Fort Stanton. The sweet hot chocolate with cinnamon, corn meal, and brown sugar had been a special treat. Her mother worked in the kitchen then, and Cook had even let her make *tamales* and *biscochos* to serve on Christmas Eve. A few had complained that they didn’t want Mexican food, and only ate the turkey and stuffing, but she didn’t care because the familiar, comforting food had warmed them all as they played in the dining hall and talked about whether Santa Claus would make it through the snow to bring them gifts.

What would it be like to spend Christmas with Frederic? Warm in front of the fireplace in the dining hall with all her friends around her. Children playing and wondering what Santa Claus would bring them. Then she shook her head as she realized how silly the thought was. He wouldn’t even celebrate Christmas, and he was a fugitive of the internment camp. She turned to look at him and found that he was quietly watching her with his deep, solemn eyes.

“How did you come to live at Fort Stanton?” He asked her quietly. The question was so simple, but she hadn’t talked about it in years. Everyone that knew her knew that her father had been a merchant marine until he had gotten ill, and how her mother had worked in the dining hall so that she and Elizabeth could stay and be near him. To tell him now seemed like re-opening an old wound, but as she told him about how suddenly her mother had gotten ill, keeping her illness to herself until it was too late, she realized that maybe the wound had never healed.

“Then it was just me and my father. As soon as I was old enough, I began volunteering in the hospital, and when the time came, I began my nursing training.”

“Your father must have been very proud of you,” Frederic said after listening quietly to her story.

“I think he was. He passed before I finished nursing school, but I think he would have been proud. And I’ve lived at Fort Stanton ever since.” She thought about her room in the nurses’ quarters and wondered if she would ever see it again. Fort Stanton was her only home, but now being with Frederic meant more to her. She needed to convince him that they could make it work somehow.

“If you went to Mexico, what would you do there?” She asked him with a hint of desperation in her voice. She hated that she could hear it, but if he would only go to El Paso, they might find some kind of future together.

“There is always a job for a man who is willing to work hard.”

“Will you try to go back to Germany?” He had asked himself the same question. If he went to Mexico, he would have to work for a long time to make enough money to travel back to Germany, if he even could. He couldn’t imagine how long the war would last. If he had stayed at

Fort Stanton, what would the United States government do with them? Would they return them after the war? In the meantime, how would he survive with Klaus and his men after them?

The day he had decided to escape he had felt like he couldn't take it anymore, but he wondered now how much harder it would be for Josef with one less man on his side. Maybe he should have stood up to them and dealt with the problem, rather than run away.

"I need to take you back," he said with determination. The sudden realization made him feel better, so he was surprised to see the look of anger on her face.

"What if I don't want to go back? You can't decide that for me." But even as she said the words, she realized she wanted to go back, but only if Frederic were going back too. A log suddenly sparked and sputtered in the fireplace as it burned and slipped down from the pile, startling them both. Frederic quickly prodded at it with the iron poker and got the fire back under control.

"What will they do with you if you go back?" Elizabeth asked.

"The border patrol agents do not worry me. There are other dangers." How could he tell her about Klaus and his men. How his own countrymen had been harassing them just because they were Jewish. It suddenly felt humiliating, and he was torn between wanting to return with her and just running away to Mexico.

"I should go check on the horse," Frederic said as he got up and sprinkled several handfuls of oatmeal into the tin pan. They wouldn't have enough left to feed the horse and themselves if the snow didn't stop soon.

While he was out, she went through all the cupboards, hoping to find something that they might have missed when they checked before. The owner of the cabin had left only the bare necessities, but in the back of one cupboard behind an empty coffee tin she found a small jar of

canned peaches. She was happy to see that the jar was sealed tight and glad they would have a small treat for their dinner.

CHAPTER 13

A Cabin in the Woods, December 18, 1941

She woke early the next day as the first light of dawn began to seep through the crack in the curtains. As she lay in the bed with the blanket pulled up around her chin, she slowly let her senses awaken to the room around her. The fireplace was crackling as the last embers of last night's fire died down, the air in the room was cool against her cheek, and she could hear the slow rhythm of Frederic's breathing from his spot on the floor in front of the fireplace. She sat up slowly and gathered the blanket around her shoulders to ward off the chill. Sitting in the peaceful silence of the room, she watched Frederic sleep. He was curled up into a ball with his back to the fireplace. His sandy brown hair was too long on top and covered his eyes. Strange that she had never noticed before how long it was but seeing it now, she thought he looked almost like a teenage boy. She got up and went to the single window along the front side of the cabin. Peeking out the crack in the curtains she could see the sun was just beginning to rise, leaving pale blue shadows of snow under the pine trees. The snow was beginning to sparkle in the pale light as the first rays of the sun came up in the clear, blue sky.

"The storm stopped." Frederic had gotten up so quietly she hadn't heard him come up behind her, but now as he stood just inches behind her a chill ran down her spine.

"Yes, it must have stopped sometime during the night." She thought for a moment that he would reach out to her, hold her like that night beside the bridge, but the moment passed in silence, and he turned away. She sighed and glanced over her shoulder and watched him as he went back to the blanket on the floor and begin to pull on his boots. He glanced up at her with a shy smile, "I should go check on the horse." Could he guess what she had been thinking? Maybe it would be better if he could. Frederic moved slowly to the door and picked up the

bucket of water he had left there the night before. As soon as he left, she dressed and begin to build the fire back up in the fireplace.

Outside Frederic breathed deep and filled his lungs with the cold, fresh air. It reminded him of Germany to see the ground blanketed in snow, waist high in some places. The horse was happy to see him and neighed in greeting. He watered him and brushed him down as best he could with an old piece of burlap he found in the corner of the lean to. He had packed a small bag of oats before his escape, but he knew it wouldn't last much longer. The sun was out, so that was a hopeful sign that the snow would begin to melt before too long.

Miles away, carefully making his way through the thick snow, James rode his favorite horse, a feisty pinto that he took out on patrols. He was bundled up in the thick shearling coat that was standard for border patrol agents in the winter, but still, he was grateful that the sun had come out. He was tired and cold, but most of all furious at Frederic for putting Elizabeth in danger. What the hell had he been thinking running off with her like that? When he'd reported it, his boss had asked him to stay with the rest of the search party, but when they decided to head towards Lincoln instead of heading South, James knew he had to head out on his own. Heading towards Lincoln made no sense. The people there already knew the Germans were under lock down. No one there would offer him a place to hide, especially with Elizabeth in tow. The people there didn't know her, and she would stand out.

Hadn't he had doubts himself about getting involved with a woman who was half Mexican? The other agents had teased him at first, but he knew how to handle them. Besides, he didn't really care what they thought. He only knew he needed to find Elizabeth and Frederic. Even if everything was over between them, he couldn't stand the thought of her and the German

together. Even if Frederic and the other men worked hard and hadn't caused any trouble the past year, they were foreigners. Hadn't Roosevelt said we needed to be the great arsenal of democracy?

As he and the horse trodded along he daydreamed about what he would do when he found them, and he kept alert looking for signs and markings that would show which way they might have taken. Tracking had always been his strength, being able to see the subtle signs of passing that others overlooked. He had only made it this far on their trail because he knew where most of the hunting lodges were. He had spent the night in one of the lodges that Cochise, the old Mescalero who helped with the horses at Fort Stanton, had shown him. He was grateful now that the old timer had taken him hunting, even if the elk they had brought back hadn't been prepared properly. It hadn't been his fault.

As he made his way through the snow-covered pines, he noticed a snapped twig low down on a Ponderosa pine that had broken off, fallen down, and been covered by snow. He was relieved to see he was headed in the right direction. Yesterday's snowfall had covered any tracks they might have left. His horse was getting tired though, so he brought his heels in and kicked him gently urging him forward.

Something from behind him caught his attention though, and he quickly glanced around to see what it was. There was no one in sight, neither man nor animal, but he had the distinct feeling that he was being watched. He stopped the horse for a moment to listen, but all he heard was the cry of a raven far off in the distance. He squinted his eyes and scanned the forest, but he couldn't see anything but snow and trees. Despite not finding anything, the skin on the back of his neck prickled as his hairs stood on end. Silly, he thought to himself and laughed, it wasn't like him to get spooked out in the woods. He wouldn't come across any bears this time of year,

and he didn't think a mountain lion would stalk him while he rode horseback. Besides, he had his gun with him, and he instinctively laid his hand over its holster. Satisfied that there was nothing out there, he turned his horse back to the trail and spurred him forward.

Always keeping at least a hundred yards between himself and the border patrol agent, the man on foot followed as stealthily as he could. He was tired and cold but determined to follow him until they found the fugitives. God knows they couldn't have gotten far in this snow. When he had escaped, he had first thought it would be better to head towards Lincoln or Capitan. He thought if he could hole up somewhere he would be able to get word to Klaus, let him know he was going after the Jew. With all the commotion after the first escape, no one had even noticed him slip out. The fools were too busy organizing search teams to notice him slip away. He had thought himself clever when he didn't take one of their horses, they would have noticed that right away. Instead, he had hidden overnight in the back of one of the trucks they used to transport supplies for the fence. The empty trailer was a perfect place to hide, and when they drove it out the front gate, he just rode out unnoticed along with it. The supply trucks came and went every day to El Paso, and at first, he had been tempted to just ride it out. Maybe he could ride to El Paso and then cross the border, start fresh, but about ten miles down the road he had caught a glimpse of a man on horseback atop a hill not far off the road. Squinting he could just make out the brown, wide brimmed hat of a border patrol agent. When the truck slowed down a little to cross an icy patch in the road, he swung his legs over and jumped. The snow was still high in places, but it was melting quickly. Besides, he was used to the cold. As a boy in Germany there had never been enough coal to warm their small home. Hitler promised them a brighter future though. Once all of the Jews were deported, they would be better off, and if he could just

catch up enough to follow the agent without getting caught, he might just find Frederic. Then the Jew would see. Now he walked with a renewed sense of purpose and daydreamed about how Klaus and the others would be proud of him when they found out. They would all celebrate together in the main hall over a beer and a good laugh. With a maniacal smile and a determined look in his eye he continued trodding through the tracks left by the agent and his horse.

The day passed slowly as James followed the trail. He thought about the horse that Frederic had taken. It was one of the older mares that had been used at Fort Stanton for years. A horse like that might remember the trails it had been on, the paths it had taken. As he ambled along up and down hills and ridges, he tried to search his memory for what trails might be nearby. His horse was breathing hard and began to froth a little at the mouth, so he stopped to rest him a few moments.

They were at the top of a trail that had switch backed for a mile and as he scanned the horizon, he noticed how beautiful the forest looked against the blue sky. There were only a few clouds here and there and he could see the top of Sierra Blanca in the distance. The highest mountain top in the area was blanketed in white, and he could see why they called it white mountain. Ever since he had first been sent to Fort Stanton, one of his favorite things to do had been to go out into the woods. The peacefulness he felt when he was out all alone helped calm all of the other chaos in his mind. The stress from work and his family back home in El Paso. His brother-in-law had left his sister high and dry, and now James was helping to support her by sending money back home.

When he first met Elizabeth, he had felt at peace with her, but as he sat resting with the horse, it was Carol's face that came to him. The night of the dance he had seen the way Elizabeth

had looked at him as he danced with Carol. Maybe he had only gotten involved with her at first to make Elizabeth jealous, and yet Carol always made him feel better. He could talk to her about his sister, and she understood. She laughed at his jokes, she seemed to understand him. Why was he out here chasing after Frederic and Elizabeth? He could have let the other agents handle the search, just stayed behind, and help secure the fences before anyone else escaped. But something had compelled him to come. He didn't know if it was guilt or affection for Elizabeth, but at this point it was too late.

He lifted the reins and urged the horse forward, and they continued on the south easterly course they had been taking. Every once in a while, he had the same odd tickle on the back of his neck that made the hairs stand up and gave him an uneasy feeling, but whenever he looked around, he never saw anything. The Mescaleros talked about spirits in the woods. He was right in between the four sacred mountains, and he didn't know if he believed in God, but here in the woods it felt like anything was possible. He shook himself and shrugged off the odd feeling, now he was sounding like the old Mescalero. Maybe he had been in this part of the country too long. Might be better to forget he had ever known Elizabeth and request a transfer back to El Paso. At least he would make his sister happy that way.

He decided to let the horse take the lead, and the pinto rambled on at a slow pace through the thickening pine and gamble oak. After a while James was broken out of his reverie when the horse sniffed and snorted. He glanced up and, in the distance, he could just make a thin column of smoke and he could smell the welcoming scent of burning pine. If that were them, he was only a few hours away. His heartbeat quickened in his chest. He didn't know if finding them was a good thing or a bad thing now. But he kept thinking of the look on Elizabeth's face as they had ridden away, and he wasn't so sure now that she wanted to be found.

The snow was melting quickly as the sun lowered in the sky, and as Elizabeth glanced out the window, she realized they wouldn't be in the cabin much longer. She guessed that by tomorrow they would be able to make their way out in the forest again by horseback.

"The food is ready," Frederic called to her from the fireplace. They had so easily slipped into roles over the past two days. Frederic cooked the food and cared for the horse, and she boiled the water and tidied up the small space. It felt as if they were separate from the rest of the world, and it was strange to think that her friends might be worried about her back home at Fort Stanton. Back home, and yet this cabin had been home to her for two days. Frederic watched her and she knew he was waiting for her to accept the idea of going back.

"This is the last can of beans. By tomorrow the snow should be melted enough for the horse to graze." She saw how he glanced at her waiting for her reaction, but she didn't feel like she was ready to talk about it yet. Tomorrow would come soon enough.

"How did you end up on the *Columbus*?" she asked him, hoping to lighten the mood and get him talk a little bit. She liked listening to him speak. As he talked about life aboard the ship and how they had waited in harbor off the coast of Vera Cruz, she tried to imagine what it would have felt like for him, alone so soon after losing his mother.

"You must have been so scared!" She cried out after he told of her of the British torpedoes. Her chest suddenly ached for him. She couldn't imagine how awful it must have been for him, so uncertain of his future, and not knowing his mother's fate. When her parents had passed away, as awful as the pain had been, she had had Cook, Dr. Hammond, and her friends at Fort Stanton to help her get through it. But maybe his mother was still alive. He would never

know if he lost ties with Germany, and as the thought settled into her mind, she felt like she was losing choices.

They ate in silence, and as Frederic watched her, he searched desperately in his mind for a solution. He knew he needed to take her back and get her safe. She deserved better than a life on the run. He had no guarantee that he would find a job right away, and he didn't even have enough food to feed her another day. He wanted to protect her, but how could he do that imprisoned at Fort Stanton? The peace he had felt the last two days was slipping away from him, and he was beginning to feel as trapped as he had at Fort Stanton. There was no good solution but sitting across the table from him was Elizabeth. Her hair gleamed in the firelight and her eyes were like brown pools as she watched him intently. He reached across the table and gently, tenderly stroked her cheek. She leaned into his hand, eyes closed, for just a moment, then slowly pulled her face away.

"Frederic," but before she could say anything else there was a bang and a thud against the front door. As Frederic jumped to his feet, James burst through the front door, pistol in hand.

"James!" Elizabeth cried out in shock.

"Stand back Elizabeth!" he ordered her as he stepped in and slammed the front door shut behind him. A cold gust of wind came in with him causing the flames to sputter in the fireplace. Frederic put his hands up in the air and held still. His only thought was for Elizabeth and her safety.

"Don't move!" James said as he pointed the pistol at Frederic. Frederic could see the frantic look in James' eyes as he desperately thought of what to say to calm James down. After everything that had happened, he couldn't stand it if Elizabeth were hurt now. If he could stay calm, maybe James would too.

“The gun is not necessary,” Frederic said quietly as he looked James directly in the eyes.

“Don’t tell me what’s necessary. Elizabeth, get behind me,” he ordered her as he turned slightly in her direction.

“No, I won’t get behind you. You shouldn’t be here.” She stood her ground surprising James into lowering the gun slightly.

“Shouldn’t be here?” he asked her incredulously. “I spent the last two days tracking you through a snowstorm, just so I could save you from him, and you tell me I shouldn’t be here.” He pointed the gun in Frederic’s direction again. “He’s a fugitive! There are men all over Lincoln County looking for the two of you!”

Frederic felt like he needed to do something. “It is my fault. When she jumped on the horse I should have turned back.” James was shocked, he wasn’t sure what he had expected, but it wasn’t this. He wasn’t sure anymore what any of them were doing there, but he knew he had a job to do. He lowered his gun and put it back in the holster, but he kept his hand resting just on top of it. His eyes scanned the room taking in the bed along one wall and the blanket and pillow folded on the floor beside the hearth. Letting out a deep breath he walked over to the bed and sat down. Frederic and Elizabeth instinctively sat down too in the chairs on either side of the table.

Frederic glanced at Elizabeth and searched her eyes. “We were going to head back in the morning. I am going to turn myself in.” Now that he had said it, he felt more confident about his choice. He would face the consequences and Elizabeth would be safe.

James turned to Elizabeth, “Is that true?”

“Yes,” now that it was said the reality was sinking in. They would return, and life would go back to the way it was before. Her whole body felt heavy, and she suddenly wished she could be alone. Tears welled up in her eyes, but she held them back.

“Then we’ll head back together in the morning.” James looked at them both. He thought he would be happy to find them, but now that he had he discovered them, it didn’t really make him feel any better. He went to secure his horse outside and then returned to find another blanket laid down beside the hearth, opposite from where Frederic’s lay. Frederic stirred the fire and brought the flames back to life while the three of them sat in silence. Finally, defeated and tired and without saying a word, Elizabeth laid down in the bed with her back to both of them and tried to go to sleep.

By the light of the half-moon the man followed the last leg of the trail. He saw the small cabin up ahead with a muted light coming from the lone window in the front. He felt an excitement knowing he was almost there. He tried to imagine what the border patrol agent had done when he burst in on them? Had he beat the Jew? Maybe tied him up? Everyone knew that the agent and the nurse had been an item. He smiled thinking that the Jew would be punished. His mind raced as he tried to decide what to do next. In the excitement of the chase, he hadn’t thought beyond the moment. Better to catch them unaware he thought, and that would be easier after they had fallen asleep or maybe even at first light. He stealthily circled the cabin, careful not to make any noise, and found the lean to out back. One horse was stabled inside while the other was tied right outside the door, up against the back wall of the cabin. As he entered the makeshift stable the horse snorted nervously, so he ran a gentle hand alongside her flank. He had always loved horses. Such a beautiful creature, it wasn’t her fault she had abetted his escape. The horse calmed down and it occurred to him that he could just take one of the horses now and take off. He could head south, towards Mexico, start a new life. But he had never been one to make decisions alone, and the uncertainty of what he would do when he got there made him abandon

the thought right away. Instead, he found a saddle blanket and pulled it around his shoulders, up over his head, and bundled himself up as best he could, and settled in to wait for morning.

Elizabeth had a restless night, and as she woke, still tired from the night before, her first thoughts were of Frederic. She dreaded returning to Fort Stanton. The uncertainty of what would happen to him made her stomach feel sick. Even though he would be returning as a prisoner with James, she hoped that they would at least be lenient towards him when they heard that she had left of her own free will. How would she explain this to Cook and the others? She glanced towards the fireplace and saw both men, still sound asleep on either side of the fireplace. Frederic's golden, brown wavy hair half covered his eyes as he laid on his side facing her, his head lying flat on the hard floor. She was surprised to see he was tied at the wrists, but despite the rope his long, strong limbs looked ready to spring into action, even in sleep.

In contrast to him James was lying on his back, his short straw blond hair lying flat in every direction. His large chest rose up and down slowly as he gently snored. As she looked at James, she realized that he didn't have any power over her anymore. Even if he had never found them, she knew that she and Frederic would have gone back anyway. Running away wouldn't solve any of their problems. Then as if he could sense her thoughts, Frederic opened his eyes and glanced over at her. They locked eyes for a moment, and then a wide smile spread across his face. She smiled back not even knowing why.

As Frederic opened his eyes he glanced up and saw Elizabeth framed in the weak sunlight coming through the curtains in the window behind her. The diffused light haloed her head creating a soft glow, and again he thought she looked like an angel. He started to sit and stretch and then remembered he was tied at the wrist. A precaution, James had said the night

before. Even though running didn't feel like an option anymore it irritated and angered him to be tied like an animal. Elizabeth was sitting up too now and he wished desperately that James had never found him, and just the two of them were headed back to Fort Stanton. If he had returned of his own free will, they might have been more forgiving. Now he didn't even know if he would be able to see Elizabeth again once they got back.

When Elizabeth got up to start water to boil, James finally woke with a start. "What are you doing?" he asked her suspiciously.

"I'm getting ready to make coffee, that is unless you don't want any," she said as she filled the teapot with water and hung it on the hook over the fire. She might have to put up with him, but she wasn't going to let him tell her what to do. She turned away from him and going to the bed, found her shoes and her shawl and headed for the door.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"None of your business," and she went out into the cold morning.

After she took care of her needs in the outhouse, she carefully retraced her steps back to the cabin, careful to walk in her own footsteps to avoid getting her shoes any wetter than she had to in the melting snow.

When James had woken up in the cabin the whole situation had started to irritate him. He felt ridiculous here in this cabin with Frederic and Elizabeth. If Elizabeth had just stayed in Fort Stanton like she should have, they would never be in this situation anyway. For that matter, if the German hadn't just run off, they would all be happily back at home going about their normal business. His hostility continued to build as he poured the boiling water into a mug with a just a teaspoon of the instant coffee that was almost gone. He glanced at Frederic sitting cross legged,

peacefully by the fire and sighed. He grabbed a third mug from the shelf above the table and measured out another scanty spoonful of coffee.

“You know eventually the war will end, and you’ll be going back to Germany. I don’t know what you thought you were doing anyway.” He walked over to Frederic mug in hand. He angled the handle towards Frederic and waited patiently while Frederic lifted his bound hands to grab a hold of the mug.

“At least I could have given Elizabeth a decent life here in New Mexico. Or we could have moved back to El Paso, she’d fit in better there anyway,” he continued.

It was as if he were doing her a favor Frederic thought. Like she was a child or a stray off the street. She didn’t need a man like James. Elizabeth didn’t need him either he realized, but he loved her, and he believed she loved him too.

“Who are you to say what Elizabeth needs?” Frederic finally responded as the anger started to build up inside of him.

“You don’t understand, even though you should, considering what your country is doing. Elizabeth would be lucky to have me as a husband!” James regretted saying the words as soon as they came out of his mouth. He also realized that he didn’t even love Elizabeth. He had cared about her, and maybe even imagined they would have a good life together, but that dream had already died. He realized it too late as Frederic jumped to his feet and hurled himself at James. As he tackled James, they both fell to the ground knocking over a chair and the cup of coffee with them. Even with his hands tied Frederic managed to pin James to the ground and swung his bound hands up to the side and down in a swift motion to pummel James across the cheek.

James saw stars but his instincts to fight kicked in and he bucked up to throw Frederic off of him and to the side. Both men started grappling and wresting across the floor of the cabin, taking out their frustration on each other.

As Elizabeth made her way back towards the cabin, she stopped for a moment to look up at the clear blue sky. There wasn't a cloud in sight and the air was crisp and clean, it almost seemed to sparkle in the light. She breathed in deep and let the cold air fill her lungs. Then the peaceful moment was broken by the squawk of a raven. She looked up and saw the shiny, black bird fly up from its roost in the treetops and fly north, it looked magnificent in the sunlight with its wings spread wide. North, back to Fort Stanton, she thought.

She sighed and continued to make her way back through the trees when she suddenly had an odd sensation. For a moment she felt as if she were being watched and a chill ran up her spine. She glanced back over her shoulder just as a man came out of hiding from behind a tree trunk. Before she could even scream, he was right up against her. He grabbed her around the waist with one hand and covered her mouth with the other. She could feel the rough, calloused skin of his hand against her face and her stomach began to roil and for a split second she thought she might gag. Through her terror she still felt the instinct to fight, and she tried to thrash his arm loose from around her waist.

“Stop it!” he hissed in her ear, and she heard a distinct German accent. Her mind began to race trying to think who this could be and why he was here.

“Be quiet!” With one swift movement he kicked her legs out from under her, so that she fell on the ground. He got on top of her, straddling her around the waist, and took a rag out of his pocket.

The breath had been knocked out of her with the fall, so she couldn't make a sound as he shoved the cloth in her mouth and shoved her head to the side to tie it at the back of her neck. "Get up!" he ordered when he was done. When she didn't immediately rise, he yanked her up by grabbing onto her hair with one hand and jerking her up under her arm with the other. She had never been handled in such a hateful way, and the fear that had been building in her stomach turned to anger and she began to shake all over. He recognized the change in her and laughed as he pulled out a dagger from the waist of his pants.

CHAPTER 14

Journey Back, December 20, 1941

Frederic gave one final hard push to thrust James off him. Both men were exhausted, and James fell back down winded and drained. Frederic sat back on the hard floor of the cabin with a thud. In the struggle, the rope had come loose from his wrists, and he glanced at James to see if he would do anything about it. When James just stared back at him, he untied the loose ends and took it off. He didn't think he even had the heart to fight anymore if James decided to tie him up again. James was staring at him without hostility and it surprised Frederic when he finally spoke.

"I never disliked you." Then he stood up and straightened out his uniform. He started straightening up the chairs and table that they had knocked over in the fight.

"You do not deserve Elizabeth," Frederic said quietly. As he waited to see how James would respond it suddenly occurred to him that too much time had passed since Elizabeth had left. He went to the window and looked out at the snow-covered ground, now sparkling and melting in the sunlight. She was nowhere in sight, but he could see her footsteps that had veered off to the left into the trees in the direction of the outhouse. He immediately grabbed his jacket from the hook by the door and started walking out.

"Hey, where the hell do you think you're going?" James called after him and rushed to follow him. He caught up to him on the porch and grabbed a hold of his shoulder, but Frederic just jerked loose of his hold.

"She left a long time ago. Too long ago." He was starting to feel panic rise up from his gut as he glanced back at James. "I need to go find her." It was still possible for wild animals to be a danger this time of year. Too early for bears, but a mountain lion might come out after a snowstorm looking for food.

“Hold up, just hold up there! If something happened, you can’t just go out unarmed like that. Let me grab my pistol,” and James dashed back inside the cabin. When he came back, he was wearing his coat, hat, and had his pistol back in its holster.

Frederic just turned without saying a word and started following her footsteps in the snow. Her small steps were even and sure and led them straight into the forest. When they got to the outhouse, he saw that there was still a single line of tracks, but now more rounded out, so he knew that she had retraced her own steps back, but when they reached a point halfway back to the cabin, there was a deep impression in the snow and the slushy snow had been scattered in every direction. His heart was thudding in his chest as he looked up and saw another set of footprints in the snow. He could see that the second set of prints had come up from behind hers at a close angle.

“What the hell?” asked James. “Who else would be out here?”

Frederic was suddenly filled with a dark rage. “You brought someone here with you! You lied to me! And to her!” He threw himself at James and grabbed him by the front of his jacket, shaking him.

“Where is she?” He knew he shouldn’t have trusted James. Now Elizabeth was in danger in the forest with God knows who.

“Stop it!” James hissed as he thrust Frederic back. “I didn’t bring anyone. I was alone, I swear, but someone is out there, and they’ve got her. We don’t want them to hear us coming though, do we? Be quiet.” As the logic of his words sunk in, Frederic looked around desperately in the direction of the footprints. In some places they blurred and blended together as if there had been a struggle. “Let’s get the horses.”

Now on horseback and quiet with anger, but determined to find her, Frederic followed the tracks into the woods with James right behind.

Elizabeth kept quiet as the German pushed her along through the woods. They were headed North, and she wondered how long it would be before Frederic would realize she was missing. She didn't think they were on the same path that they had been on when they found the cabin, but she wasn't sure because with the melting snow the landscape looked different.

Otto knew the men wouldn't be far behind. His only chance was to set up an ambush, and he remembered a small opening in a pile of boulders that he had passed on the way to the cabin. If he could get them to follow, he had a chance of catching them off guard.

As they approached the opening, he shoved Elizabeth inside. When she struggled, he shoved her hard against the rock, "Be quiet!" Then he followed her in and prepared to wait.

As Frederic followed the trail, he saw the two sets of footprints even out and felt relieved that Elizabeth was at least walking at her own. As long as she was still safe, he could handle whatever else followed. As he approached the outcropping of boulders the hairs on the back of his neck stood on end. He halted his horse and quietly held up a hand to James to stop. As he swung down from his horse, James followed, and they stealthily approached the boulders.

Elizabeth saw the German tense up and realized he must of have heard their approach. When she saw the man reach down to his belt and grab ahold of the dagger handle, she screamed, "Frederic!"

With a grunt the German hurled himself out of the opening straight towards Frederic. His arm was held high with the dagger point facing downwards as threw himself against Frederic. In an instant he grabbed Frederic by one shoulder and brought the knife down with the other.

Without thinking James pushed Frederic aside and before he could even reach for his gun, Otto had brought the knife down into his shoulder.

“No!” Otto yelled and backed away; eyes wild. Frederic got to his feet and grabbed Otto around both shoulders and held him tight, throwing them both to the ground in the struggle. Despite his wound James managed to grab his pistol from the holster and aimed it at Otto.

“Elizabeth, get the rope from my horse!” James called out to her. She got the rope and took it to Frederic who was now straddling Otto as he lay face down on the muddy ground. With shaking hands Frederic tied Otto’s hands behind his back, then he rolled him over and tied his feet. Otto’s eyes were wild and uncomprehending. He looked in every direction as if trying to find some explanation for what had gone wrong. Then he looked at Frederic and his eyes glazed over even more. “This is all your fault! Filthy Jew!” Frederic got up without saying a word. He realized Otto’s words couldn’t hurt him, as long as Elizabeth was alright. He looked at her to reassure himself that she was alright. He held her for a moment and realized she was shaking just as much as he was. After a moment he let go and went to James who was still aiming his pistol at Otto.

“Let me check your wound,” he said and took the pistol from his hand and gave it to Elizabeth. Her hands were steadier now and she aimed the gun at Otto as Frederic found a shirt from James’s saddle bag and wrapped his wound to stop the bleeding.

When the bandage was secure enough that they felt it would hold, they quietly mounted the horses, Frederic and Elizabeth on one, and James and Otto, still hog tied and draped across the front, on the other and made their way north in the direction of Fort Stanton.

CHAPTER 15

Fort Stanton, December 24, 1941

Elizabeth stood in front of the fireplace in the dining hall of the hospital. Cook had made spiced apple cider and champurrado for old times' sake. Carol and Elizabeth had spent the afternoon making cookies together, although they had never really had a chance to talk about what had happened. When Elizabeth had returned with James and Frederic everything had happened so quickly. She hadn't even had a chance to say goodbye to him as he was led away back to the German camp. James had been kept at the hospital for two nights, but then he had been released with orders to rest. Now he was spending Christmas Eve with Cook, Carol, and the rest of the hospital staff, her family.

She was staring into the flames as James approached her. She glanced up and saw that he held an envelope in his hands. "I went to check on Frederic this morning. He wanted me to tell you he's doing well. They have him working extra duty, but I don't think he minds at all. He gave me this to give to you," and he handed her the envelope. Written on the outside was her name in neat letters.

"Thank you," she said and waited until James had gone back to the table where Cook and Carol were tying pine boughs into swags to hang up around the hospital. The women were chatting happily, and Carol smiled at James as he sat down, and then glanced at Elizabeth. She smiled at her old friend, and then looked at the envelope she held in her hands. Delicately she opened the envelope and pulled out a single sheet of paper and began to read:

Dearest Elizabeth, I want you to know that I am safe and sound. Captain Daehne and the Border Patrol were more than fair when they decided my punishment. I have never been afraid of hard work, so my extra duties help the days to pass more quickly. Since Otto was taken into

custody, Klaus and his men have been quiet and no longer cause us trouble. I pass the days dreaming of you and remembering our time together in the cabin. It is not fair to ask you to wait for me, so I will not. Only know that I love you and I am well. Yours truly, Frederic

Elizabeth brushed her hand across her cheek to wipe away the tears that fallen. She carefully put the letter away into her pocket and then grabbed her coat from beside the door. Wrapping it around her shoulders she stepped out onto the porch outside the dining hall. The sky was clear with a thousand stars and after gazing up for a minute she looked out across the square towards the new wooden bridge that spanned the river. She was content to know that just on the other side Frederic was healthy and well and thinking about her too.

EPILOGUE

Fort Stanton Cemetery, Autumn 1945

There was a chill to the air as Elizabeth walked past the changing trees, a canopy of red, orange, and gold on her way to the cemetery. She carried a small bunch of wildflowers, the last remnants of summer that she could find. When she got to the quiet cemetery she walked to the familiar spot where her parents' graves lay side by side. Carefully, she divided the flowers into two groups and tenderly laid them at the head of each grave. Then she carefully sat down on the grass at the foot of the graves. She closed her eyes for a moment and tried to picture her mother's face, always so pretty and kind. A feeling of peace came over her, and as she sat there, perfectly content, she could hear birdsong in the distance and the wind gently blowing through the trees.

"Elizabeth." She heard Frederic's voice and for a moment she thought she was just dreaming, but then she opened her eyes. Standing beside her mother's grave stood Frederic. He was wearing a dark, wool coat and his hair was combed neatly back from his face in shiny waves. He smiled gently at her as she slowly got to her feet. Then he held out his hand to her, and overcome with emotion, she rushed into his arms.

As he held her tight, he remembered that night at the bridge, but this time he wouldn't have to let go. He pulled back just enough to look into her eyes.

"I was released this morning. Free to go back to Germany or apply for a work visa here in New Mexico. I thought that I would stay and work, but after six months or a year, I would like to go back to Germany to see if I can find my mother." As he searched for an answer in her eyes, she began to cry tears that she had been holding back for years.

"Oh Frederic! I love you!" and she turned her face up to his, and they kissed with all the passion that they had missed for four years. After waiting for so long she knew she didn't want

to be parted from him again. “Here or Germany, it doesn’t matter to me as long as we’re together.” Time seemed to hold still as they embraced and somewhere in the distance two ravens gently cried back and forth to one another.

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