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MUNICH

Saturday morning school classes were always boisterous, but today there was something different in the air. Gertrud was frantic; the school class she'd been teaching had been particularly restless, as if the children knew that something big was happening. She was flustered, thinking about last night's events as she ran down the road towards the market. Hitler's take-over of the election meeting had gone to plan, he had made his speech and the people had been galvanised. She wished she'd been able to stay longer there to discuss the next moves with the Party heads, but to her frustration, her daughter had needed her attention again.

Since her husband had fallen in the 'Great War'; she'd had the odious responsibility of the 'accident' from his last leave; a baby she'd never wanted, which constantly interfered with her political ambitions in the new Party of Germany. Gertrud was out of breath, as she turned the corner to see Ilse, who was waiting for her on the bench in the market hall.

Unmoved at the sight of her daughter happily hunched down counting the carrots in the shopping basket, Gertrud greeted the nanny. 'Has she behaved this morning?' the question more a formality than one of interest.

Ilse was used to the mother's coldness towards her daughter; she scooped the squealing 4 year old into her arms and answered, 'She's been fine, Frau Lehrerin,' while picking up the basket with the vegetables with her free hand. 'Do we need anything in town?'

'Yes, let's walk, isn't what's happening exciting?'

Ilse just nodded, preoccupied with juggling the child and the shopping, before giving up carrying the girl and concentrating on the vegetables. Little Anna was not enamoured and followed them, sullen faced, out into the November cold. Gertrud grilled the nanny for news of anything that had happened since she'd been in school to be interrupted by the sound of distant of shots that made them freeze,

'There's a march on the parliament building, Frau Lehrerin.'

'How many went?'

'Thousands,' Ilse shrugged, 'maybe even more. They are saying that Hitler got them really wound up last night at the beer hall.'

'Thousands? That would be a miracle!' Gertrud considered the news with scepticism, 'A couple of hundred would be more like it', she scoffed. 'Anyway, I need to get some cake for this afternoon,' she turned, leaving the tot in the hands of her nanny to follow as she and headed off toward the baker's shop.

As usual, there was a queue; people buying cake for their traditional Sunday cake and coffee. Gertrud listened to the excited chatter around her, as she queued. She was thrilled; what her father had been discussing with Mr Göring and Mr Himmler behind closed doors was actually happening. The conversation snippets around her seemed to be confirming it. People were telling of how the new Party had stormed the Beer Hall the night before and how Hitler had fired a shot into the ceiling to get attention. One complained that the Nationalists had machine guns to stop people from getting out. Gertrud was pleased to hear another voice mentioning that the Army had defected to join the new revolution. Fantastic, the army is behind us now, she thought with a smile on her face. Anna came running in and tugged her mother's skirt pointing excitedly at the sweets on the counter. 'We have to wait our turn.' Gertrud's tone was sharp; she was annoyed at the interruption. Anna snivelled, on the verge of tears as Ilse pulled her close for comfort.

The commotion caused the man in front to turn, 'I thought you may have been out with them this morning, Frau Lehrerin.' He said recognising them.

Gertrud failed to tell if there was sarcasm in the comment or not, as the queue moved forward, and the man was served. He turned clutching his half-loaf and doffed his hat politely as he passed her on the

way out. She wanted to call out after him to ask why he wasn't out there with the revolution, but then she remembered that he was one of them, a Jew.

'Mummy!' Anna's impatient call brought her back to the fact the assistant was waiting to serve them. The cake bought and a piece of broken biscuit for her daughter in hand, the three picked up their bags and left for their usual coffee at Schmidt's café; Gertrud was hoping to hear more news about the revolution there. The Cathedral clock was striking 12:45 as they made their way down the street. The sounds of shooting was nearer now causing them to speed up. Suddenly, they were startled as a woman rushed, panic stricken, round the corner knocking little Anna off her feet. The collision left the young girl to crying on the ground as Ilse screamed abuse after her. A brown uniformed horde running towards them from round the same corner, threatened to trample them. Ilse dragged Gertrud and her howling daughter into a doorway for protection. They could hear shouted bits of conversation as the men sped past coming up from the Regentstrasse, away from the parliament buildings.

'They had cannons and machine guns waiting for us, did you see that.' one said breathlessly.

'Yes, Max was shot in the face, he can't have survived.'

'.. it's the damn Jews behind all this....'

'Watch out, there are more soldiers in the Cattle Market! We have to split up!'

The disjointed snippets faded into incoherency behind the departing men, as a bullet hit the stonework above Ilse's head. She screamed in alarm and Anna started crying again. A wall of uniformed soldiers approached, jogging after the fleeing rabble with their bayonets fixed.

'That's the 1st Bavarian Infantry, the Army betrayed us!' Gertrud snarled as the realisation hit her, that the Army had not joined them. Ilse had her hands over her head for protection and Anna buried in the folds of her dress, sobbing with fright.

'We should get home.' Gertrud said finally, setting off briskly. 'Anna,' she said, turning to her daughter, 'stop snivelling, you're not hurt, so get up and get on.' Little Anna pleaded to be carried, 'You're old enough walk on your own,' Gertrud snapped. They sidled along the building allowing more running soldiers to pass and slipped into the side street.

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The house door slammed behind the two breathless men.

'Damn, the army should have been on our side. Last night, Prime Minister Kahr gave us his word. Hitler and Göring were relying on them.'

'Get your coat off,' Peter ordered, 'if anyone asks, we'll say that we've been here all morning.'

The drapes were open and the grey day shed its little light into the dimness of the salon. Peter was pleased to see that the maid had taken off the furniture covers and had set the coffee pot in its place on little porcelain stove. He pulled the curtain back, checking anxiously for signs that they may have been followed, 'Seems like we've escaped. What a victory!'

There was a discrete knock on the door, Gertrud calling, 'Papa, may I come in, I have news.'

'Come in,' Peter called back, 'you don't mind, do you, Hans?' He addressed his companion.

Gertrud rushed in, gave her father a kiss on the hand and curtsied to their guest, and then waited for her father to finish his conversation.

'Turning the Prime Minister's political meeting in the beer hall into our own was genius, a great opportunity to spread the word.' Peter waxed lyrical about the events in the Beer Hall the night before.

'Hitler's speech was a rhetorical masterpiece.' Hans replied, 'He completely transformed the mood of the people. I have rarely experienced anything like it.'

'We have to stop the Berlin Government bowing and scraping to the French.' Peter added, 'Stresemann and the rest of his government should be hung for treason. The country is in terrible shape, our people are suffering. Paying even more war reparations to France will be like admitting that we were wrong in the Great War.'

Hans nodded, 'Hitler is right about the Jews. They have profited from the hyper-inflation and are cashing in on every level, while Germans are starving. The other territories that are rightfully ours are full of scum, gypsies and worse. We need to take it all back for true Germans.' He finished with a flushed face.

'What have you heard?' Peter demanded of his daughter as if she'd just arrived.

'There's been killings, at least one anyway, someone called Max.' She stood in the cloud of smoke from Hans's cigar.

'That's a shame, Max was a good man,' her father said. 'The war and the influenza epidemic have killed off millions, too many many of them ethnic Germans. There just aren't enough of us.'

Hans took another pull on his cigar, 'We need to change public opinion, adjust peoples' attitudes towards our vision of the new Germany.'

'That's exactly Hitler's point. How many 'Party' members do we have now?' Hans waved the smoke away.

Peter paused, '55,000, or there about.'

'Too few and too old as well,' Gertrud interjected, 'no disrespect Papa, but we should teach more children about the 'new politics', that way you could get younger people for the cause.'

Her father bristled, he was used to his daughter being opinionated, but this was going too far. He was about to chastise her when his friend interrupted.

'Go on Gertrud, this could be interesting.'

'I'd guess that the members are mostly men, Herr Sondheim?' He nodded, wondering where this was leading, 'How many have children?' she asked.

Hans looked stunned, 'Are you suggesting that we tell them to breed more?'

Gertrud cocked an eyebrow at the thought, as an aspect dawned on her, that she hadn't considered before. 'Actually, I'd thought about correct education for their children, setting up schools to educate them in the spirit of the Party.' Her frown showed that she was deep in thought. 'But what you have just mentioned gives me an idea. How about a program for real Aryans? Yes,' her voice was excited now, 'let the Party breed the right kind of Germans. We can educate the children from the cradle.'

'You are suggesting indoctrination.' Her father looked taken aback at his daughter's concept and the speed at which ideas were developing.

Hans nodded sagely, 'We could teach them properly, the boys to be strong and fearless and the girls to be good mothers, teach the girls to choose the proper fathers for their babies and not to mix with the impure.'

'Now that is something,' Gertrud's father agreed, rubbing his chin, causing Gertrud and Sondheim to look at him in anticipation, 'from birth; they wouldn't be tainted with anything else but our way of thinking.'

Gertrud looked thrilled, 'We'd make a centre for education and breeding.'

'That would be a breakthrough,' her father interrupted, Gertrud's excitement contagious now. They'd go and do a year's service for the Reich and come back after having had a baby.

'Then there would be no stigma of babies out of wedlock,' Hans conceded, 'they could leave their babies at the centre for upbringing.'

'But, it's never going to happen,' Peter said scornfully, looking at his own daughter, 'you think the daughters will just volunteer for the job?'

'Daughters don't volunteer; they do what they are told to do by their fathers and dutiful daughters obey. We can instruct loyal Party members to put their daughters at the disposal of the Party.' Gertrud said.

'It's a sacrifice some will be glad to make, and when the word spreads, the families will be more than happy to send their girls to us.' Hans proffered.

'It would need financing though.' Gertrud added bringing the conversation back down to earth.

'The Party could give a sort of 'marriage premium', a bonus for the right girl marrying the right party

man,' her father said, thinking out loud.

'We have to get the ball rolling. Let me talk to Göbbels on this.' Hans continued, 'Can I use the telephone?' he asked.

Gertrud could see the waves of doubt crossing her father's face as he stood transfixed in front of the window.

'Telephone?' Hans asked again, as if her father hadn't heard.

'Sure, in the hallway outside. I thought Göbbels was with Hitler?'

'He didn't come out this morning because of his foot, he's a cripple; I'll phone him now.'

Gertrud couldn't believe that her dream of an education in line with Party doctrine was looking to be possible. She'd been despondent since her husband had died in the trenches, but now it was looking like her life had a purpose again. Her thoughts were interrupted as the door opened revealing Hans Sondheim's beaming face.

'Good news,' he announced, 'Hitler was wounded but not seriously injured, and he escaped. Göbbels agrees with the idea of babies for the Reich; he will find us a place to start, Munich is too hot for now.'

'I'm glad our leader is well,' Peter said.

Hans pulled his pocket watch from his waistcoat. 'I think it will be safe for me to leave. I'll catch you tomorrow.'

'I want to run it!' Gertrud stated emphatically, causing him to stop. 'Tell Herr Göbbels that I want that job!'

'Well, there are worse people I suppose,' he said over his shoulder, shutting the door behind him.

'It was her idea after all!' her father called after him to the already closed door.