PG
9049
.12
I7Y4

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

http://www.archive.org/details/yeticeboundriver00birzuoft

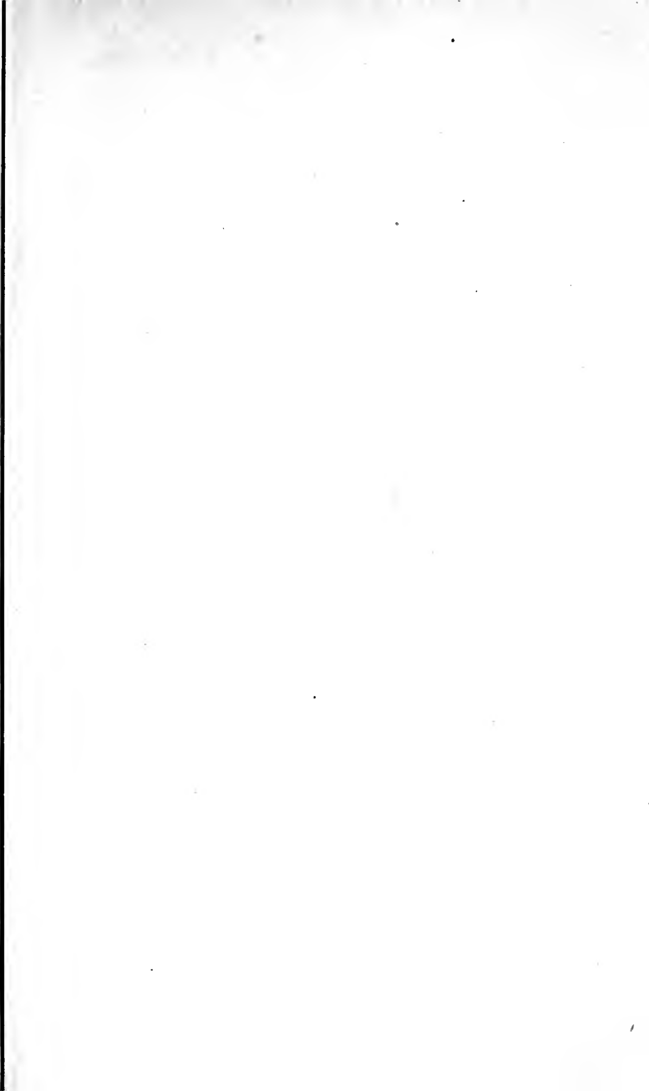
YET ICEBOUND RIVERS FLOW

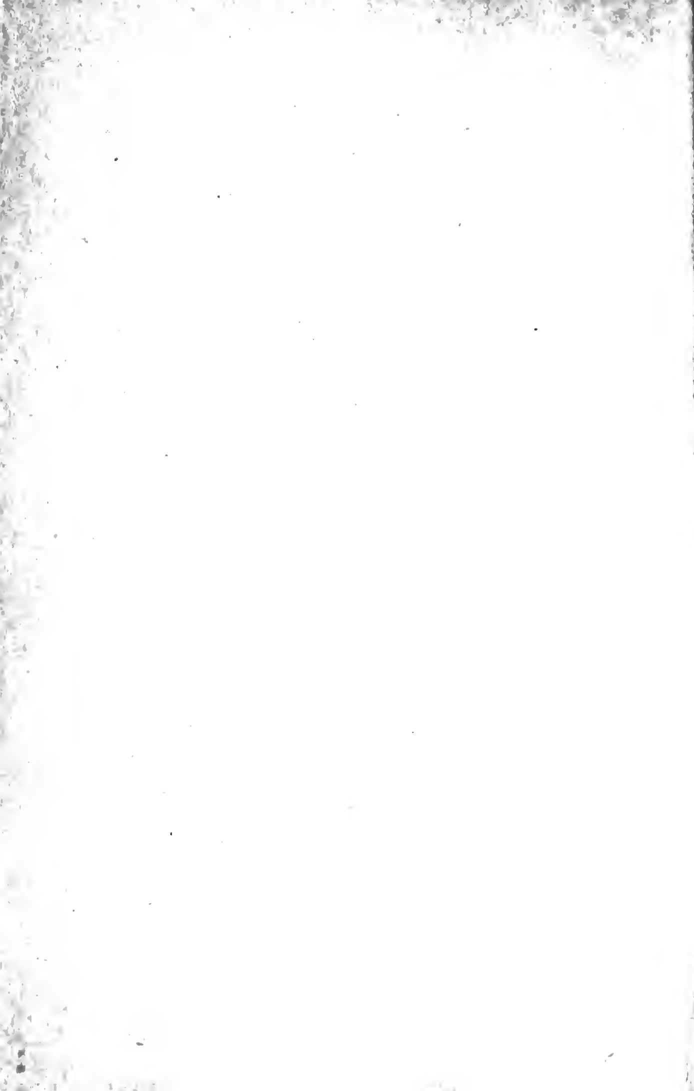
MIERVALDIS BIRZE

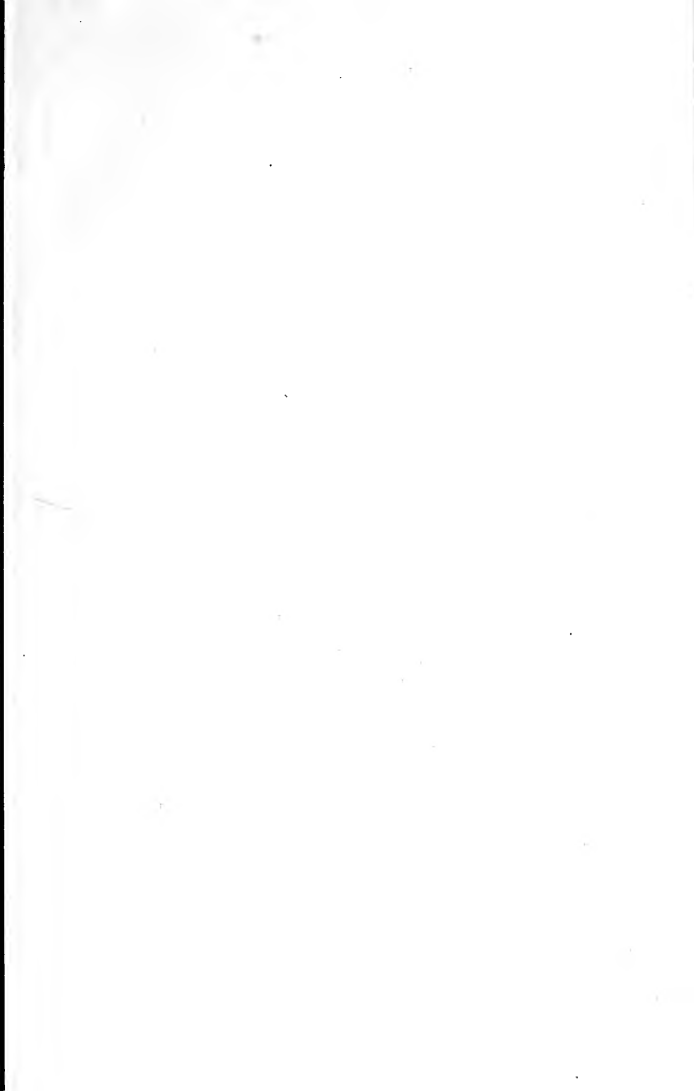
I took to writing when I was in my thirties. By then, I had finished secondary school in Valmiera on the lovely Gauja River, had been a medical student in Riga for two years, had spent four years of the war in various concentration camps in Latvia and in Germany, Buchenwald included, had resumed my medical studies, graduated, and been a doctor for several years. My first short stories and humorous sketches were published in 1953. In 1957, I discarded humour and wrote *Yet Icebound Rivers Flow.*

Why did I touch once more the wounds inflicted on the Latvian people by German fascists? Does not every human being, like you and me, yearn for sunshine, for peace, for kindness? Is it necessary to bring back to mind pain and sufferings? Yes, it was necessary to write this book. First, because I knew all the people in it, good and bad, and was present at the funeral of those two whose bodies were burnt. Second, because it would have been unjust to allow the heroism of true enthusiasts to slip into oblivion, to forget those who gave up everything for the happiness of their people. Finally, this event has to be recalled so that what happened then may never reoccur. I did not succeed in rendering the event in its entirety. But who has been able to paint the ocean in all its fathomless grandeur? I only hope that the events described here will never repeat themselves, so that I may continue to live in Cesis, a little town on the Gauja, and cure people with weak lungs, and write humorous short stories.

Miervaldis Birze







MIERVALDIS BIRZE

LIBRARY OF SOVIET SHORT STORIES

MIERVALDIS BIRZE

YET ICEBOUND RIVERS FLOW

FOREIGN LANGUAGES PUBLISHING HOUSE
Moscow

МИЕРВАЛДИС БИРЗЕ
И ПОДО ЛЬДОМ РЕКА ТЕЧЕТ...

TRANSLATED FROM THE LETTISH BY T. ZALITE

DESIGNED BY V. ALEXEYEV

PG
9049
.12
I7Y4

Roses bloomed for all in gardens,
Not for me the roses bloomed,
I was born to be a soldier,
And my roses never bloomed.

From a Lettish folk song

Remember—there were no nameless heroes. There were men and women; and each had his own name, his own face, his own hopes and aspirations. And the sufferings of the most insignificant among them were no less than the sufferings of those whose names will go down in history. May those who fell in the struggle always remain as dear to you as your friends—as your next of kin—as you are to yourselves!

Julius Fučík

One day in September, when they were storing potatoes in the cellar of the Gauri farm, a patch of plaster crumbled off the cracked wall, and a small brown-paper package dropped to the floor. The Gauri farm-house is now the kolkhoz kindergarten, so the package was turned over to its director. When she had acquainted herself with its contents, she called me up in hopes that, since I

hailed from these parts, I might tell more about the discovery. I lost no time in going down to Gauri.

In the spacious verandah where the kolkhoz children played on rainy days, on a low white table I saw a piece of sodden brown wrapping paper, and on it a small sheet of still shiny silver foil that had evidently preserved the dark-grey Komsomol membership book inside. The pages were stuck together in one corner, and I had to turn them over carefully. Here and there the black ink had run, as though a tear had dropped on it, but the words were still legible. The book had been issued in January 1941, by our local Darzciems District Committee. The dues had been paid last in May 1941. Surname—Apenajs; first name—Reinis; father's name—Eduard. Born 1921. The small photograph showed the face of a boy with wide forehead, a thick mop of dark hair, and lips firmly compressed, proud and gently ironic.

How did this document find its way into the Gauri farm-house cellar? The former owners of the place had fled to the West. There was nobody left to answer our question. The next day the kindergarten director took the Komsomol book to the Darzciems District Committee of the Komsomol, while I set out to make inquiries about Apenajs, whose name sounded vaguely familiar to me. The

old pagast* files had been partly destroyed during the war and furnished no information, but the secretary of the Village Soviet recalled that an old man, Sniedze, had once told him something about Apenajs.

I met Sniedze at Ezerliči, a little farm-house on Zintene Lake near a small, nameless creek. There was something childlike and gentle about his face, with its pointed chin and protruding forehead. He was bent with age, but the yellow carpenter's rule sticking out from the pocket of his blue blouse showed that he still lent a hand in the builders' brigade.

Yes, he knew a great deal about Apenajs. Though I had heard some of the facts, most of his story was new to me. Together we climbed into a boat. I did the rowing. Working our way through a stretch of thick-growing reeds, we crossed over to the boggy bank opposite. We waded through the bog and came upon a little hill. At its foot grew some aspen trees. On top there was a clearing in the hazel-nut grove, fenced in with cut birch and strewn with yellow sand. In the centre rose a little mound, fringed with stiff-leaved irises and carpeted with a scaly stonecrop—traditional graveyard plant. A pole had been driven into the ground

* Small district in bourgeois Latvia.—*Tr.*

at one end of the grave, with three little wooden boards nailed to it forming a triangle and bearing the name, date of birth, and date of death—the kind of memorial that used to be common in the Latvian countryside.

"Here lies one of those lads I told you about," Sniedze said.

Old Sniedze advised me to talk to his youngest daughter who knew more about it all. I found her in the Darzciems forest nursery. As we wandered together through the streets of the town she added a good deal to her father's story.

The Brauskas, the Vinauds, Elzin, and everything I had heard in the Darzciems prison about the episode came back to me. I decided to tell the story of what happened in August 1943 on Zintene Lake and in Darzciems. This proved no easy task. A story needs a leading hero—but I could not find one for mine. Neither could I trace a crucial event, because it was a time when every day brought such events in Latvia. In those days life was like the Gauja River when spring comes after a severe winter, and the powerful current strains against its fetters of ice until the sparkling waves burst forth to greet the downy willows, alder bushes and yellow catkins of hazel.

* * *

It was midnight, the darkest hour. Helena slipped out of the shed and stopped to listen. Silence everywhere. A dark shadow glided noiselessly from the forest towards the roof of the house. Not even the whisper of a wing could be heard. She guessed it was an owl. Presently the dog, Bosis, came running up to her; he must have heard the faint creak of the door. Like Helena, he listened suspiciously. He looked puzzled when she shut him up in the shed. But on that night she did not want him to bark.

At the back of the shed a flight of stairs, dug into the sloping bank, led to the river. A boat swayed gently on the black water. Helena shoved a little bundle of clothes under the bench and pushed off. A sluggish current carried the boat into the lake. She had to punt her way through thick rushes along the lake's edge before she could row properly. Helena had no fear of the lake, even by night. She had often accompanied her father fishing, and had herself set many a wicker creel for crabbing. The reeds rustled drily as the night breeze brushed them against each other. Helena dipped the blades of the oars in expertly, without a splash.

She soon found the two tall willow trees on the other bank, where they had last met a few years ago. There she abandoned her boat, lingered a

while, and then threaded her way through the wet brushwood. The dew-covered branches felt unpleasantly cold against her shoulders. When she struck the path, she put on her shoes and walked back home. Before turning in, she let Bosis out of the shed. She had thought of everything. It had to come off well. The cock in the shed flapped its wings and uttered a shrill, triumphant cry, as though proud that he, of all the cocks, heralded the dawn. In a little while others echoed the call from distant banks of the lake.

* * *

Apenajs fumbled deliberately with the sheaf, carefully picking out a handful of long stalks. He straightened his back and began twisting them into a braid. It couldn't be long now. The horses would take another two or three turns along the edge of the forest, snorting as they dragged the harvester, and the field would be cleared.

The guard was in high spirits. Frickalns, the owner of Gauri, had promised a reward for this field—a coupon for a bottle of vodka. Leaning his rifle against a loose stack, the guard picked up two sheaves and stacked them. Then he pushed back his green forage-cap and mopped his wet brow. In the sweltering heat the field smelt like a vast

corn-dryer. He could do with a smoke. There was a tin box in his pocket in which he kept his packet of "Sport" so as not to waste a pinch of the precious tobacco. It was going up every month, he thought, recalling with a pang the broken cigarettes he had thrown away in previous years. By force of habit he ran his eyes over the forest edge. Then he looked again and suddenly snatched up his rifle, hardly knowing what to do with it. Four prisoners were bending over their sheaves, straightening them with ostentatious care. The fifth was gone.

"Where's Apenajs?... Apenajs, Apenajs! Back! I'll shoot!" Was it fury or panic that rang in the voice?

"Where's he gone?"

The guard made a dash for the prisoner who stood nearest him, poking the muzzle of his rifle into the striped back.

"We've been busy with these sheaves, sir...."

"Cut it out! I'll shoot the lot of you if we don't get him."

But threats were of no avail. The forest stood silent too. A gaily-coloured jay, swaying on the bright-green twig of an alder tree, broke into chatter as though mocking the guard, who pressed the rifle butt to his shoulder and fired blindly into the forest. The echo came rolling back across the field,

but to the guard's chagrin it brought no cry of pain with it.

Apenajs crouched so low, as he ran through the alder wood, that his knees almost knocked against his chin. Then he straightened up. There was no path. The thin willow branches cut into his face. Here it was cool and dark, though out in the field the scorching harvest sun had beaten down upon him. It was long past noon but the grass, waist-high, was still wet with dew. He crushed it underfoot as he ran, and his linen pants clung clammily to his knees.

Apenajs heard nothing but the pounding of his own heart. He had left his fear at the forest edge. The very air that he drank in so avidly seemed different. He had not known before that you could actually taste air, as you taste bread. The heavy iron hand that had held him in its grip for two long years was gone. Freedom! He had a pair of strong arms, and he could fight. If you've once known the feel of fetters, you know that struggle is happiness.

When the five shots rang out in the field, Apenajs was already nearing the lake. His pastalas* were scooping up muddy water. Soon he was pushing through a thick willow grove. This was the place—

* Bast slippers worn by Latvian peasants.—*Tr.*

two tall willows on the water's edge. The ground at the foot of one was strewn with crushed, dry reeds such as were often washed up along the shore. Apenajs raked them up and came upon a forked peg stuck into the sand. To this was fastened one end of a cord that lost itself in thick reeds. He gave a quick pull, and the nose of a boat emerged.

The rushes and reeds grew thick on this part of the shore, taller than a man. Kneeling in the boat, he strained every muscle to penetrate the dark-green wall that parted before the boat's sharp prow and closed behind its stern.

Suddenly, he started! A family of wild ducks rose noisily from a little pool where broad lily pads and creamy water-lilies floated on the still surface. If this happened again, a chance observer might guess the direction of his flight. This was something he could have neither foreseen nor prevented.

For half an hour he rowed steadily, drenched in sweat. The guard with his four prisoners would have reached Gauri by this time, he thought, though the men would certainly do their utmost to drag it out. Now he would be ringing the security police. It was twenty kilometres from Darzciems to Gauri, and the last part of the road was bad. It would take the police half an hour, so he had another half-hour to go.

He pulled off his striped brown clothes, threw off his pastalas and foot-cloths, wrapped them all round a stone which he found in the boat, and let it sink to the bottom. Little white bubbles bobbed up and burst on the surface. No dog would smell him out now. With his clothes, he cast off two years of prison. In the boat he found a bundle which turned out to be a blue blouse and a pair of linen pants. He put them on and proceeded to pole the boat through the keen-edged reeds.

Finally the lake opened out before him. Here a small stream poured into it, and on one of its steep banks squatted a little grey shed. In a yard to the right, stood a tiny farm-house with crooked roof and one chimney. Its plain log walls, discoloured with sun and rain, set off the heads of bright-yellow sunflowers that grew in front of it. A field stretched beyond this cottage, walled in by thick forest where tall cone-covered pines and firs towered high above the willows. An apple tree grew in the middle of the yard, its branches heavy with greenish-yellow fruit.

"Ezerliči" lay dozing in the afternoon sun. Now and then a dragon-fly darted through the still air, soared up and hovered, poised, droning softly as though listening and watching, as Apenajs listened and watched from the rushes.

All was quiet. A white board stood propped

against the wall of the shed. He rowed his boat into the stream, fastened the chain about the trunk of an alder tree, and stood up straight, listening into the hush. An upright, slender form, resolute mouth, alert brown eyes with not a trace of fear in them—this could not belong to a prisoner of Germany, which he still was according to his documents. Only the dark hair, cropped so close that it bristled stubbornly, bespoke the prison barber's hand. He entered the shed.

* * *

The cottage door, set in the national criss-cross pattern, opened. A girl stepped upon the flagstone outside the threshold and stood still, also listening. The sun played on her wavy hair, lending it the colour of lime blossoms. A thick braid lay across one shoulder. The firm body beneath her red-flowered cotton dress was a young woman's, but the face with its broad, childishly prominent forehead and wide blue eyes seemed a self-conscious schoolgirl's, called to the blackboard to solve a difficult problem. There was joy in these blue eyes now, and anxiety.

For a moment she stood twitching at her narrow belt as though she could not bear its pressure. Then she stepped off the flagstone and turned into a footpath leading to the shed, past a bed of

marigolds. Her legs were sunburnt, her bearing as upright as though she carried a vessel in her hands filled with precious nectar and dared not spill a drop.

All was quiet as before. Helena came to the water's edge, where the boat rocked lazily in the shade of the alder tree as though relaxing after an adventurous trip. She passed back and forth along the damp bank until the little imprints of her feet had covered others that were there. Then she gathered an armful of bulrushes, took them to the shed and, pulling them into fine threads, scattered them on the ground in front of the door. Opening the door, she threw a handful on to the floor there too. No dog will smell the stranger through their pungent scent, she thought. And if they asked her why she had scattered rushes on the ground, she would tell them it was to keep fleas away. Then she went back to the house.

* * *

Sniedze tied a bit of cord twice about an armful of wooden chips for roofing, slung his burden over one shoulder, and climbed the ladder to the roof. This was quite a feat at his time of life, for he was nearer sixty than fifty. But he was an old hand at the job. Slight of build, tough as a juniper tree of which whip handles are made, he deftly

moved his pastala-clad feet from rung to rung until he reached the top. Depositing his burden on the saw-horse that stood balanced on a rafter, he pulled a black tobacco-pouch from his pocket. As he rolled himself a cigarette, he remembered that as soon as he got home he should look to see whether the lower leaves of his tobacco-plants were turning yellow. The tax was a kilo and a half, and the pagast authorities had allowed him to grow one hundred plants this year, plus an extra ten according to regulation as some were likely to perish.

On the roof he could feel the fresh, cool breath of the lake; although the afternoon sun was still high, he did not take off his waistcoat. For thirty summers now he had worn the same kind of working clothes: a pair of bluish linen pants, a white shirt, a usually threadbare old waistcoat and a straw hat. During the last few years he had sometimes added to his outfit a blue working blouse purchased in a shop. It had a deep pocket, into which he could conveniently thrust his carpenter's rule, flat pencil and other essentials.

Zintene Lake lay spread out before him. From above, it looked like a giant goblet about five kilometres across with a green brim of woods and bushes. Just below him lay the rich Gauri farm. The house looked new and clean, its walls cased

with yellow painted boards, while its wide, inviting windows glittered in the sun. In front, on the southern side, were flower-beds of many colours; in the middle of the smooth lawn grew a silvery-blue spruce. A hedge of neat, pruned fir trees ran between the house and court, the latter adorned by groups of slender lime and maple trees. They had been planted by Frickalns' grandfather, with good reason too; if one of the buildings should catch fire, they would stop the flames from spreading to the rest. The gravel paths were swept so clean you would never find a wisp of straw or the smallest twig. Yes, Sniedze approved of the order in which Gauri was kept.

The house was enclosed by wide, flat fields, through which the Darzciems highway cut like a thin, yellow band. A man was coming along the lane, lined with apple trees, that branched off the highway and lead straight to the farm-house. Sniedze soon recognized him. It was Frickalns, owner of Gauri. The old man climbed off the roof, gathered up another armful of chips and began to tie them up with his cord.

Frickalns approached him, breathing heavily, and leaned his tall, gaunt body against the shed wall. He removed his light cap to let the wind dry his damp forehead and mouse-coloured hair cropped

short like a German soldier's. A streak of grey showed at the left temple.

"Sniedze, old friend," Frickalns said in his low, level voice.

"Yes, sir?"

Even when Frickalns' tight lips curled into a civil smile, his grey eyes remained tense as though probing the secret thoughts of the person he spoke to. His sharp, protruding chin gave him an air of arrogance.

"Pretty hot, isn't it? Thursday today. You'll finish this roof about Saturday, won't you?"

"Doubt whether I can, sir," Sniedze said, shaking his head.

"Next week we've got to bring in the rye," Frickalns continued unperturbed, rubbing his dusty sandals on the grass. "When that's done, you'll see to the roof of the hayloft. Then there's the partition for the pigsty, don't forget."

Sniedze took off his straw hat and scratched his head. "Well, I was going to do some reaping, sir, to earn something extra. They pay a sack of rye for a third of a hectare. I've got to put in some food for the winter."

Frickalns, who was in his early forties, looked down from his superior height and smiled quietly. With his small features and incongruously broad

forehead, the old man looked like a child who was being scolded.

"I don't think you should put it that way. I pay you according to the rate fixed by the Reichskommissar. You get your sixty-five marks a month. The pagast secretary himself gets only one hundred and twenty. If I stuck to the law, I could deduct twenty-one marks for food, but I don't, do I? Nobody's going to stop you if you work for yourself in the evenings. All I ask is ten hours a day and no more, strictly according to law."

"What's sixty-five marks, sir? Why, a kilogramme of butter costs sixty on the black market. . . ."

"If you bring that up, what about nails? Todt's men take almost half a pig for a box of nails. We're all in the same fix." Frickalns tucked up the sleeves of his shirt and produced a newspaper from his pocket. "I hear the wounded Germans recuperating at Liči want servant-girls. Maybe your Helena would like to go?" Frickalns looked down at Sniedze again, and this time a smile flickered in his cold eyes too. "Since she doesn't want to come and work at Gauri, she could try the Germans. The front needs help. . . ."

Sniedze drew in his head. Helena, his own girl, to serve at that place! . . . Everyone knew what that kind of service meant.

"You ought to read the papers," Frickalns said judiciously, as he handed the paper to Sniedze. "You'll find here something about work in the fields and factories of Germany, if Helena were willing. . . ."

The old man's eyes almost disappeared behind his ginger eyebrows. His fingers sought the tobacco-pouch in his pocket. Frickalns had no doubt that his roof would be ready by Saturday night.

"War's war. What's the good of these chips for roofing? It'll want mending in ten years, and in fifteen I'll need a new roof. But you try to get slate these days!" Frickalns said placatingly. He put on his cap and stalked off, his shoulders hunched as though weighed down by joyless thoughts—where to get another lot of nails, for example.

Sniedze lit a cigarette and, following his master's advice, spread out the *Talavas Tauretajs* (*Herald*). His eye was immediately arrested by an announcement Frickalns had marked in red pencil: "Young women!" he read. "The Führer offers you an opportunity to make friends with young German women. Gauleiter Sauckel says: 'Good food, clean homes, and treatment in the German spirit of absolute justice are guaranteed to each of you. . .'," etc. Signed—*Oberfeldmeister Bernevics.*

He read further: "Labour victory. Twenty-two peat workers earn bonuses of 14.1 litres of vodka and 1,410 cigarettes in one week." What a labour victory for a worker! Sniedze thought. "It is prohibited to cut off straps in railway carriages for shoe-soles; to remove plates from doors to obtain screws."

No, his Helena, his own little girl, wouldn't have to experience "absolute German justice." He'd see to it that she never did. The shed would have a new roof by Saturday, and the pigs would have their partition. Frickalns was a rich man, a powerful man, and most important—he was on the pagast council. Sniedze did not want Helena to go to Germany, neither did he want her to be a servant at Gauri. It was no secret in the neighbourhood why Mrs. Frickalns had begged and implored Austra Visgale to give notice last year. Evil tongues whispered she had paid the girl two hundred marks to leave.

Sniedze began to fit chip into chip, dropping those that had loose knots. Frickalns was no friend of his, to be sure, but a job was a job, and it was not his nature to do it badly.

Five shots rang out in the field beyond. The old man's heart almost failed. They were after somebody! He looked towards the lake, but thick reeds along the bank hid it from view.

Presently, four figures in striped clothes appeared on the path leading to the house. They were followed by a guard prodding them on with his rifle, trying to make them go faster. At last he hustled them into a barn, locked it behind them and rushed to the house to telephone. A few minutes later he reappeared, accompanied by Frickalns, who had invested himself in his aizsarg* uniform and top-boots. Since the Germans had permitted reinstatement of the aizsarg organization the previous summer, Frickalns again wore the platoon commander's star on his shoulder-strap. He was not particularly fond of wearing his uniform, but the present occasion obviously demanded it as high-ranking officers were expected on the scene.

"Apenajs, of all people! Why the hell didn't you keep an eye on him? I talked to him this very morning..." he was saying.

That morning Frickalns had for the first time entered the kitchen while the prisoners were being fed. Catching sight of Apenajs, he had exclaimed in genuine amazement: "You still alive?"

The prisoner had raised his calm brown eyes and replied with an obvious sneer:

* Paramilitary fascist organization in bourgeois Latvia.—*Tr.*

"As you see."

It had annoyed Frickalns to see that the lad showed neither fear nor deference.

"Still full of pride, aren't you!"

"They didn't take it away when they searched me."

"All right, you'd better do some work, otherwise you may starve in your stone castle when winter comes."

Now that same Apenajs had bolted.

The guard, an elderly man—one of those who had hoped for a comparatively quiet life and better food in a prison job—stood sullenly watching the barn door, rifle on the ready.

Half an hour later, a dull grey limousine came speeding into the court, followed by a lorry from which a number of SD men, with tucked-up shirt-sleeves, jumped to the ground.

Frickalns obsequiously held open the door of the limousine. Out stepped SD Untersturmführer Brenner, chief of the German security service in Darzciems, a small man, brisk and alert. He was followed by a tall, stout man, dressed in grey, whose movements were amazingly quick for his heavy build, and who sharply surveyed the surroundings. Frickalns recognized Elzin, chief of the Latvian department of the Darzciems security police.

Brenner called the guard up to him and thrust a fist under his nose. The old man jerked back his head in fright, so that his Adam's apple stuck out. If this had happened a year before, Brenner would have surely hit him. Now, he merely hissed, "Come on!" and entered the house.

The calm mirror of Zintene Lake reflected the after-glow. From above it looked as though wine had spilled into it and not yet mixed with the water. Sniedze, who had again been working on the roof, now climbed down and was about to mount his bike when an SD man summoned him into the house.

"Me?" he muttered, his mouth going dry, and followed. Had they caught Reinis Apenajs?

His legs were stiff, as though he had been crouching on the roof for a whole week. They'll arrest Helena, he thought, and Mother too, and that's the most terrible thing....

I'll say no one else knew except me....

A map was spread on the table, before which Brenner sat with Elzin and several other men in uniform.

"Did you know Apenajs?" Elzin asked.

"Well, I used to see him about, of course. He worked as a shepherd boy at Gauri, later on as a farm-hand," the old man said falteringly. "Everybody knows him here. Once—must have

been 1940—I met him in the gravel pit, he was carting gravel for the Gauri people, and I. . . ."

"All right, all right," Elzin interrupted him. "Don't talk so much."

Detecting a note of impatience but no anger in his voice, Sniedze fetched a sigh of relief.

"Look here," Elzin went on, "if you notice any trace of him out in the fields or on the lake—you live out there, don't you? Well, he may come to your house asking for bread. If he does, let the women feed him, while you slip away and inform the police. You'll get your reward. An old man like you can do with a drop of something proper." A stiff smile appeared on Elzin's lips. "But if we catch you knowing and not informing us," he went on, "you'd better beware. We'll burn your shack and lock you up in the clink or transfer you to the graveyard."

For all these threats, Sniedze could hardly suppress a broad smile. Rubbing his prickly chin, he walked out into the kitchen. It was full of people, but he was not afraid of them. Even if one had seen him offer a smoke to the prisoners, what of it? Everybody did. Eduard, the farm-hand, had given them all his tobacco-plants, first the leaves, and then even the stalks. The shepherd boy always took their letters to the post-office surreptitiously.

Ha-ha, a reward! They'd give him a reward!

A reward for extra peat, a reward for . . . for a man's life. It's all rewards these days.

Brenner called in Frickalns and summed up the situation:

"Gentlemen, today we have to admit failure. I suppose he managed to reach the lake, and got away either by swimming or, what is more likely, by picking up some old boat, though people say there's no boat missing. Maybe he's hiding in a boat right now, somewhere in the rushes. We haven't been able to comb the lake today, and tomorrow is too late."

He put a finger on the map and traced a road that skirted the lake, branching off westwards a few kilometres from Ezerliči to Darzciems. "We blocked all the roads on our way here. There are aizsargs in ambush at every point. He can't have slipped through. But it isn't so much Apenajs that matters. It's the principle. We'll get him." He lit one of his fragrant Memphis cigarettes, and added: "We'll get him, because reeds on a lake aren't jungles where a man can find all he needs. Man must eat, that's his dawnfall. It's going to be Apenajs' downfall, too."

The guard took his four prisoners into the lorry alongside the SD men, to return them to their cells and then report himself at the guardroom. Before his high-ranking visitors left, Frickalns

managed to cadge more prisoners for the harvest. It was urgent, he explained, the rye on his other field was overdue. They saw his point. The front needed more bread for one thing, and besides they had glimpsed the two covered baskets which had been placed on the floor of their car.

"The roof of the barn must be seen to, Frickalns. And a new lock is needed, too," Elzin said as he waved farewell.

* * *

Sniedze was pushing along on his bike, pressing the pedals with slow, rhythmical movements. The imprints of car tires on the road were the only indications of the day's events. Twilight was drawing in. The drooping ears of rye along the roadside brushed Sniedze's feet as he cycled past. A little bird shot up from the green potato field, stopped for a moment suspended in mid air and dropped down again.

The old man turned left into a narrow lane leading through the forest. The prosperity of a farm-house can be judged by the road that leads to it. This one did not show the trace of a vehicle, and it was evident that even horse and cart hardly ever came here. Sniedze had to jump off his bike and push it across the gnarled roots that stretched across.

Two men stepped out of a thicket, pointing their rifles at him.

"It's only Sniedze," said one, he recognized the voice of the owner of the Gerki farm. They slipped back into hiding.

The forest road ended in a tiny field that belonged to Ezerliči. A black dog with white eyebrows and a white mark on its throat, like a necktie, came running up to Sniedze.

"Quiet, Bosis!"

Keeping close to its master's side, the dog trotted into the yard with an air of having also toiled all day to earn its supper. But he was not admitted into the house.

Sniedze entered the kitchen. Coals were glowing in the range. Through an open window came the slowly gathering summer twilight, filling the corners with soft shadows, though a scrubbed, white pine table in the centre and rows of dishes and cutlery on the shelves could still be seen.

Sniedze's wife was sitting at the table waiting for him. She was sturdier than her husband, her hair was brushed back straight and smooth. Leaning forward eagerly, she spoke in a voice that trembled with anxiety: "Gustavs, they've been searching our house, and other houses too. There are aizsargs on the roads. Gustavs, was the shooting at

Gauri? I was out gathering berries, when all of a sudden—five shots. Did they kill anyone?"

"Did they find anything?" Sniedze asked very quietly by way of answer.

She shook her head. He told her that Apenajs had escaped, and that people had been questioned, including himself.

Helena finished milking the cow, placed the pail of milk in a bucket of cold water outside the window, rinsed her feet and entered the house. The three of them sat down to supper.

"Why isn't anybody eating? Helena, what's the matter with you, dear?" said her mother. "They say Apenajs hasn't been caught."

Both father and daughter had helped themselves to milk soup, and sat stirring it absently with their spoons.

No wonder Helena's mother was worried. "No cockroaches in it, you know!" she added.

Helena cast a sidelong glance at her father. He pushed back his plate and said to his wife in a low whisper: "Listen, old girl! Apenajs is here, in our place." Giving his spoon a push, he sat quietly waiting for an answer. Helena was nervously braiding and unbraiding her hair. Her mother's eyes grew big with fear.

"In our . . . Lord Almighty, we'll all be arrested and shot!"

"They'll never find him. He's underneath the shed floor. And the Germans won't last long," Helena blurted out.

"No, no, you can't do it. . . . Give him all the food we have. I'll give up our last ham, only make him go. If they put you in prison, Helena, child. . . ." Mother's eyes were brimming over. All the stories she had heard about the Darzciems prison passed through her mind, about hundreds of people shot in the Gauja valley, about how they broke people's limbs at the security police. She remembered the warning she had read in *Talavas Tauretajs*—capital punishment for harbouring Communists and Jews. The more excited she became, the calmer Helena grew.

"Apenajs has a mother, too," she said.

"And I've got a daughter and two sons."

Sniedze rolled one of his coarse cigarettes. When he inhaled the smoke his bristly cheeks drew in, forming deep hollows beneath the cheek-bones.

"We may easily lose that daughter of ours," he remarked, and told them what Frickalns had said. The acrid smoke forced him to interrupt his speech with long fits of coughing. The hoarseness of his voice lent a menacing note to the words.

"What if they take her away from us, and drive her to Germany? To make friends with German girls, as they put it in their papers? Make her

work for some German Frickalns? Will you have a daughter then, I wonder?"

Helena suddenly raised her head, pushing her heavy braid across one shoulder, and looked straight into her mother's eyes.

"What's the good of living, Mother, if I'm always at somebody's mercy . . . if I know they may make me do. . . they may make me go to work where there's no shelter from bombs, no matter where you are. And look at Father! Why, he works for next to nothing because of me. I haven't even enough money to get myself a book to read."

"So it's you! It's you who thought it all up," the mother said, shaking her head, with reproach in her voice, and bitterness.

"Ah, our Helena's a clever girl, she is! All I did was pass on their notes and letters," Father said, and for the first time that night his face was lit by a smile.

Seeing this, Helena could hardly keep from smiling back and throwing her arms about him in a big hug. What a darling he was! There was nothing you could not confess to him! He might laugh at you and tease you, but never would he refuse to help.

But she only squeezed his hand and said, "I couldn't have managed without Father's advice."

Mother said nothing. She was worried for them, and piqued at having been left out of it all. She rose from the table. "Are we through our supper?"

Helena hastily jumped up and cleared away.

"Don't be angry, Mother, please," she begged. "I was afraid you'd stop me."

"I certainly should!" Mother made for the door, then turned back and asked, "What about food? Has he got anything to eat? Have you thought of that, you two?"

"We have, Mother dear, we have."

The old man took off his shoes and picked up a blanket.

"Tonight I'm going to sleep in the shed, child. You never can tell. . . ."

The shed door opened with a creak and the inside bolt grated and clicked—a sound unusual in Ezerliči. Before the war people rarely locked their sheds and cellars.

Of the four who went to bed at Ezerliči that night, not one closed an eye.

Next morning, Father ordered the women to follow their usual daily round as though nothing were changed. For all they knew, somebody might think of watching the house. Mother was to go and pick mushrooms; they paid ninety pfennigs a kilogramme at the collecting centre. Helena

would take the cow to pasture and then start reaping corn on their little plot. The old man himself would get on with his roof at Gauri.

* * *

Helena tethered her cow at the edge of the field and set to work. But after a short while she stuck her little rake into the ground, hitched the scythe on to it and returned home. Glowing with excitement, she stood in front of the mirror, braiding and unbraiding the long hair that almost reached her waist. The mirror reflected the image of a very agitated young girl. Why were the lips so rosy, as though touched by a kiss? Why the blue harebells pinned to her breast? Why this air of joyful pride, as she drew herself up straight, standing in the middle of an empty room, head slightly tilted back? Was it to admire her own reflection?

She filled a little bowl with cottage cheese, removed the maple leaves wrapped about a fresh loaf of home-made bread and cut a thick slice, then made a little paper bag for the late raspberries, gathered that morning, which still held all the sweetness of the early sun. Having made a neat white bundle of all this, like a lunch you would take to the field, she put it into a wooden pail and stepped out of the house. Crossing the yard, she picked a golden marigold blossom and

dropped it in, too. Anyone might have thought she was taking food to the pigs. Shed and sty formed one outhouse. A trapdoor in the sty led to the loft, and from there you could get into the shed.

The little shed was lit by a tiny window, just wide enough for a cat to sneak through. In one corner stood a brown wooden bed with a white pillow. Haphazard on the floor were sacks of coarse flour, bundles of fir-cones and bales of flax. Helena put down her pail, moved the bundles to one side and, going on her knees, whispered, "Reinis!" And again, after a pause: "Reinis, Reinis!"

A wide board in the floor was pushed up, revealing one of those hiding-places to be found in almost every farm-house in Latvia in those days. They would contrive it in an outhouse, covering it up with chaff; or build it into the wall of a barn or into the floor; or make it sometimes deep in the forest. People had to find ways and means of stowing away an odd sack of grain, a chunk of meat, a bit of butter or whatever they could, to hide it from covetous eyes. Who didn't? The neighbours would think you touched if you gave the pagast house an accurate account of what you possessed.

Reinis emerged from his hide-out, blinking dazzled eyes. Here he stood, looking even taller than

he was, because old Sniedze's blue blouse was far too short for him and the pants barely reached his calves. There was the same old mocking flicker in his eye that used to scare her at times, making her think she had said something wrong. Yes, he looked his old self but for two deep lines that prison had traced along the corners of his mouth, and the close-cropped hair that bristled up so oddly.

Helena had also grown up in those two years, and her feelings had matured. She had been like a catkin, encased in its brown bud. Now spring had given it the strength to burst through and it gleamed soft and white in the sunshine.

Reinis reached out for her.

"Helena, dearest, thank you, thank you..." he whispered, stroking her soft hair. They stood close together in the twilight of the shed. Through the window slit, they could see the yard flooded in sunshine and the apple tree with its ripening fruit, but all this seemed very far away.

Friday passed, and Saturday. Father continued to sleep in the shed, while Helena went out to the field each morning to reap the rye; when her hands were tired she would stop and gather raspberries. Every so often she would return home, pick up a pail and go to the shed. Meanwhile the aizsargs combed all the farm-houses near the lake for suspicious persons. Once a police officer turned

up at Ezerliči, allegedly in search of hidden separators, and snooped about in every nook and corner. Helena met him in the yard, addressing him as "Mr. Policeman" in a ringing voice. She repeated this courtesy several times as she followed him up to the loft and down to the shed where he rummaged through the bales of flax that might well have been hiding somebody. It did not occur to him to move the bundles of cones that lay carelessly about. Helena had been duly warned by Bosis; nobody could approach the house unannounced.

On Saturday, Father finished the roof at Gauri and took over the reaping, doing the more difficult part of the field along the forest edge where the rye had been beaten down by rain. Mother sat outside the house, sorting out mushrooms she had gathered. Meanwhile, Helena and Reinis spent all day sitting side by side on a bunch of hay in the loft. The view from the low skylight, unmarred by prison bars, seemed like a wonderful landscape painting to Reinis. A drooping willow branch reached into its left corner, and across it lay the sedge-covered near bank of the lake, divided by a blue band of water from a thick belt of reeds and rushes. Beyond lay the glittering mirror of the lake, purled now and again by a gentle breeze as though some invisible hand were drawing

crinkly little lines over the reflected blue sky. The western bank, on the right side of the picture, was edged in by a thicket. The brown trunks of fir trees glowed auburn where sunbeams touched them. All this was canopied by blue skies, through which fluffy white clouds were floating.

They sat very close, Helena's head resting on Reinis' shoulder. They would stop their talk to day-dream, to watch a little bird light on a reed, swaying it to and fro, to observe the rushes at the small creek's mouth bow and stretch rhythmically as though the hand of a giant water sprite were at their roots.

Helena was impatient to know what had happened to Reinis since they parted under the two willow trees in the first days of July 1941. Helena had rowed back to Ezerliči, while Reinis, who was a member of the Komsomol, had shouldered his rifle and made his way towards Gauri where he had been working at the hiring-point for horses and agricultural machinery. His plan had been to pick up his rucksack from his little room and proceed to the pagast house, gathering place for all those who intended to evacuate to Valka. But when he crossed the threshold, three men fell upon him, wrenched the rifle away, tied his hands and pushed him into the cellar. Frickalns himself had not been one of them. He always avoided the act

of physical violence, leaving this to his neighbours Gerkis, Krasnieks and Kabuls. Reinis lost no time freeing his hands. Behind a patch of cracked plaster in the cellar wall he hid his Komsomol book, so that it should not fall into enemy hands. He had bought some bars of chocolate for his journey, and now used the wrapping paper from one of them to protect his book—first silver foil, then ordinary paper. He was kept hidden away in the cellar for three days. Presuming he had gone to say good-bye to his parents, no one thought to look for him at Gauri in the general confusion and hurry of those days. Then Gerkis and Kabuls took him to Darzciems and handed him over to the so-called Latvian security police. That was how he became a prisoner of Grossdeutschland.

"I was worried to death about you," said Helena. "For a whole year I didn't know where you were. Then I heard from Velta that somebody had seen you at Darzciems among the prisoners who loaded trucks at the station every morning. So I took a basketful of food and went there. The guard chased me away twice. Then they brought the men, but not you. I cried, and put down the basket where they were working. There was some bread in it, and some meat. I left it and went home. . . ."

"I was cleaning the barracks that day."

"Then another year passed. I started knitting socks for you. . . ." Helena checked herself, and blushed. "One day Father told me they'd brought you to Gauri; we thought and thought what to do, and Father took my letters to you. I longed for you so, I was so afraid I might not manage everything in time. I almost decided to pray to God that your harvester would break down and delay you for a day or two. Well, when the day came I was in such a flurry, just like a frightened, broody hen! Have you ever watched a hen when the ducklings she had hatched dive into the water? That's what I was like. . . . When I heard those shots, I thought they'd gone straight through my heart." She pressed her hands to her breast, and a heavy sigh came from her lips, followed by another one of happiness and relief. "Now you're here . . ." she cried.

The wind stirred the willow tree branches behind the skylight, swaying them gently and noiselessly. The sun slanted upon its oblong leaves, turning pale green to gleaming silver.

"Now you're here, and you can stay as long as you please," she wandered on dreamily. "Father hates the Germans, and he hates people like Frickalns. In 1940 they gave us two more acres of grassland. After Father had cut the grass and made hay, he was told to take it all to Frickalns.

It was the law, they said, because we didn't have a horse. . . . Father says the war'll be over by next year. So you won't have to hide very long. . . and I can come and sit here with you. . . ."

"Helena, I'm going to Darzciems tomorrow night," Reinis said quietly, but very firmly.

She started, taking his hand. She had risked so much for the happiness of being here by his side. Was it to be over so soon? "But why?" she cried. "Why? You're free. You mustn't move from here. I'll let your mother know somehow, and perhaps we'll arrange for you to slip over to see her. You must stay!"

"Yes, I'm free. But what about those four they took back to prison? Are they any worse than I am, just because . . . because they don't have a Helena to help them?"

"But you've had two years of prison. You need a rest," she whispered entreatingly.

"For two years my hands were chained. I lived like a rabbit in a hutch—they could slaughter me any time they pleased. You watch your friends go, one by one, and wait for your own turn to come. . . ." Reinis paused, his eye wandered across the lake. "I'm not a rabbit. I've got a head on my shoulders, and now I've got a pair of hands too."

As though to stave off an evil power taking him from her, Helena pressed his hand. They

were so secluded in the twilight of the loft, so happy together. She said lamely: "You could stay here. Why must you go?" And she tenderly stroked the palm of his hand. She was very young and bewildered.

"No, darling, no. . . ." He shook his head. They stretched out on the straw side by side, gazing at the lake. Their shoulders were touching, and they yearned for each other. Reinis put his arm about Helena's waist and drew her closer. She nestled up to him, as though the contact of her body might keep him there.

A boat came in view. The sight of it brought them back to bitter reality. They watched the distant oarsman with tense anxiety. When they saw he was just an angler, Reinis spoke again:

"I'm thinking of my mother too, darling, and of all my folks."

In the last two days he had worked out a plan of action. He would start out for Darzciems on Monday. Of course, he could only walk while it was dark and, if he didn't reach town by dawn, he would find a hiding-place for the day. Two weeks earlier he and some fellow prisoners had been building a new cattle-shed for the slaughter-house in Darzciems. When they had a decent warden, he would let the workers hand their dinner over to the prisoners. There was always plenty of

meat. One day Reinis noticed Vinauds' wife working in the office. He had met her in the summer of 1940, when she had been with her husband, Girts, who was on the Komsomol District Committee—Girts and he had known each other before, in Ulmanis' time.* The day he saw her, she pretended not to know him. That didn't mean anything—it was general practice not to greet a prisoner you knew the first time you saw him. One day she found an opportunity to talk to him, and he gathered that she was prepared to help him escape because she told him that she lived in Plava Street, and how to get to her house. He began looking around for other clothes, but then they stopped taking prisoners to the slaughterhouse. However, he had heard enough from her to realize that she had left a lot unsaid. He felt that if he got to her house he might find other comrades. He wanted to make sure of that first, and later on try to see his parents. Not right away, because their house was bound to be watched. At least he would try to send them word that he was alive, to set them at ease.

"You see, I'm telling you everything, Helena, even what I shouldn't be telling at all. Because you are the one person I trust, darling, and who

* Latvian fascist dictator, came to power after a coup d'état in 1934.—*Tr.*

knows—anything may happen—and it may be important for you to know. A man must have somebody he can trust. If anything happens to me. . . ."

"No, Reinis, nothing can happen to us two!" Helena broke in, shaking her head vigorously. A shaft of light from the afternoon sun strayed into their little garret; one sunbeam caught and lingered in Helena's hair. At that moment, she felt the strength of a mother defending her child. "If we're together," she thought aloud, "there's nothing in the world to match our strength."

So they talked, and dreamed, and gazed at the lake until in the lucid pool of water at the creek's mouth the fish started up their evening game, snapping at gnats that touched the surface. They both felt very happy, as though the warmth of their young love would shelter them from evil.

That evening, Helena stood before the mirror slowly braiding her long hair. The blue eyes that looked back at her were radiant with happiness. But why the painful sigh from her breast? You said nothing could happen to you two. Is there a secret fear in your heart? You want to keep him here with you, yet you know he will leave; you know he is right and loves you none the less for it. . . . What sudden thought lights up your eyes? Have you resolved to go with him? Helena, Hele-

na! You don't even know that a bullet is a bullet; you have never seen a man die, you have never seen his hands tied, you do not realize how helpless he can be. Do you still want to go with him? Do you think you can help?

At supper she said, keeping her eyes on her plate:

"Reinis is going to Darzciems tomorrow night. He may come back—he may go on from there. I'll see him off a little way."

Feeling at a loss for words, Father pulled so furiously at his crude cigarette that his cheeks disappeared completely, and his bristly chin stuck out. But Mother cried out bitterly:

"You're crazy! They'll catch you and arrest you. Why can't he go by himself?"

"I'll only go part of the way. He may have to stop over somewhere for the day, and he'll need help. . . . I'll be back."

Father and mother exchanged a look and sighed. Neither said a word. Even a withered flower was once a bud. They remembered how young Gustavs Sniedze met Milda, the young maid from Gerki farm. Their Helena would come back, leaving part of herself behind, and that part would belong to Reinis. Suddenly they realized that Helena had grown up. The apple clings to its branch until ripe, but then it will sever itself no matter

how it hurts the tree. Helena was only twenty, but wartime is to youth what a sudden, hot, ruthless swelter is to plants. Flowers blossom faster, and many are blighted on the overheated earth.

"It's all wrong, all wrong," Mother muttered dully; and she looked at her daughter almost in wonder, reluctant to believe how grown she was.

"Best plan would be to take the path through the wood, then skirt Janitens' meadow and cross the high road there," was all Father said. Her mind was made up, he could only help her with advice.

* * *

On Monday night, Helena made up a little bundle for Reinis. Her two elder brothers, both of whom worked in Riga, had left clothes at home. She selected a couple of shirts and some handkerchiefs. Sugar was so scarce they had just a little of it for an emergency like illness, but she filled a bottle with dark-brown syrup. Matches were strictly rationed, so Father gave her his lighter. She added a pinch of salt from the tin where meat was cured. They had been using it for three years now, since salt was rationed in the shops and speculators sold it at exorbitant prices. Finally, she packed in a pair of old laced boots. She herself put on her pastalas, for it was dangerous to walk

through the forest barefoot at night because of snakes.

First they sent Bosis to run along the edge of the wood, but he did not bark, so there was no stranger anywhere near. Helena did not take leave of her parents—she would be back in a day. Mother did not come outside, feeling that whatever happened she could maintain with a clear conscience that she had not seen Reinis once.

Reinis waded through the creek to the edge of the wood, where he was met by Helena and old Sniedze.

Small and slight, so that Reinis had to bend down to shake hands with him, the old man still looked commanding and dignified, though clad in his threadbare old waistcoat.

"Off you go, Reinis! I'm nothing but a bag of bones now, so you'll have to do the fighting!" he said, trying to be light about it. "So that you two never eat the bread of servitude! It's bitter and hard. Of course, I tell them my two sons are working at the VEF factory in Riga, but for all I know you may meet my Peksis. . . . What a pity that old muzzle-loader I've had since the last war is all rusty. Here, you'd better take this." He handed Reinis a well-sheathed, broad-bladed hunting knife with a white bone handle. There were no officers in smart uniform to witness this solemn moment—

nobody at all, except, perhaps, a little bird perched on a pine tree branch. Yet it was as memorable as the presentation of a sword.

As Helena and Reinis turned into the path, the old man cried after them in a muffled voice: "We'll be waiting for you, Helena, Mother and I. I'll do that difficult bit on the field while you're gone. . . ."

Darling Father.

* * *

It was nearing midnight when they entered the forest, but the August sky was not dark; it was as blue as though the day had merely lost its sun and glamour. Helena walked in front, warning Reinis if she came upon a thick root. The scattered pine-needles lying on the ground seemed to exhale the sun's heat they had taken in during the day. The warmth and quiet of night calmed the two travellers. When they had walked for about half an hour, they no longer suspected a man with a rifle behind every heavily drooping branch; the firs looked like little old women, wrapped in shawls, waiting wearily for the day to dawn. They walked for an hour before the gentle forest came to an end and they reached the highway.

A road is not so friendly as a forest. While they were resting, Reinis told her their whole country

was entangled in a maze of cobwebs. In pagasts these were woven of the green yarn that goes for aizsarg uniforms, and in towns it was grey, made up of Schutzmanns and German soldiers. There was one more kind, of a cold, bluish green edged with brown—those were the gendarmes. Across all this was spread a greyish-black web, woven of hangmen's ropes—this was the Gestapo, security police and SS. That was why the road was less friendly than the forest. People walked the roads, and people could be good or bad.

There was a meadow on the other side of the high road, and the path across it was riddled with deep, black holes where horses' hoofs had sunk into the peaty soil. Sometimes Helena would stumble into them. From near-by pools came the long-drawn, monotonous croaking of frogs, breaking the night silence. It was a winding, meandering path, and by the time they reached the next forest Helena was breathing hard. When Reinis asked if she were tired, she said no. A ditch lay across their way, filled with big branches. Reinis gathered her in his arms like a little child and carried her over. Then he put her down saying he was tired himself.

It was almost solid pine forest, and the path was sandy, indicating they were approaching the Gauja River.

"Helena darling, you know the way, don't you? Hadn't you better go back?"

"I? Not yet. We'll walk through this wood together," she said, pressing close to him as though chilled by the cool night air. They listened into the silence. Bears and wolves have long since disappeared from the Vidzeme woods. All they had to fear was man.

At the far edge of the forest, the path dropped down to the Gauja valley, where mist lay in thick clouds over the meadows, swathing clumps of willow trees. Some barked logs lay on the river bank.

"The Dukuri timber-yard," Reinis said. "Darzciems is only eight kilometres from here along the river bank."

He took her hands to say good-bye. His face was turned eastward and reflected the faint glow of approaching dawn. She could see much better now.

"You can't reach town before dawn, Reinis. You must wait for evening here." She tossed the braid over a shoulder and lifted her head to look once more into her friend's eyes. Yes, he had to go. She knew it, and she wished him good speed; but oh, how hard it was to take her eyes from his! How dark they were, as dark as the thicket through which they had just passed. Suddenly

there was no fear in her, not while he was by her side, he so big and strong, who held his head so high.

"I'll put up in the forest for today. Now go," he said, bending towards her till his face touched her hair.

"You ought to find a thick fir tree now, and a bit of hay," she said, surveying the surroundings.

"You must go. If anything should happen, I'd rather be alone," he said firmly.

Helena took hold of his hands.

"Nothing can happen. But... I'm afraid to go now." Who had taught her to lie like this? She could readily have crossed the forest by herself three times over. The same courage stirred in her, the same dauntless love that those flaxen-haired women displayed who, hundreds of generations back, had marched side by side with their husbands through this very Gauja valley as their friends and comrades-in-arms, making a resting-place when they were weary, putting a shoulder to the wooden carts through the deep sand; when threatened with the yoke of serfdom, accompanying their men into the depths of the forest and, with strong hands, helping them turn up new fields.

When Helena said she was frightened, Reinis did not urge her to go. He found a little barn from where he gathered some hay into his blouse

and carried it to the river bank, careful not to drop a single stalk on the way. They selected a tall fir tree that grew in the midst of brushwood, with thick moss-grown branches slanting down to the ground. Here they arranged a perfect shelter. Helena brought a bottle of water from the river. They covered some dry twigs with hay and stretched out to rest. They looked up at the green canopy above them, at the branches that seemed to taper into nothing towards the tree-top. There were big drops of coagulated yellow resin on the trunk, like pale blood from wounds. Tiny ants scurried over the grey bark. Dawn was about to break.

Sleep would not come although they had walked all night; they lay talking in low whispers.

"I must let my mother and father know I'm free, and that I want to hear from them. I'll go to see them later when their house isn't watched any more."

"I'll find out for you. Tell me what to do," Helena said resolutely. "I'll help your friends too, if you'll trust me. Tell me about your folks!" Raising herself on one elbow to see his face, she looked down upon him, chewing at the stem of a sweet hair-grass.

He had told her a little about himself when they first started going out together. She was seven-

teen then, a little thing with heavy braids who was attending her first school and pagast dances. Reinis' parents had been farm-hands, and later tenant farmers. They were ordinary country folk. Only one farmer out of ten in a pagast was independent. They lived near Cempi, about ten kilometres behind the Gauja River. Reinis had a brother and a sister, both younger than himself. When he was ten, he hired himself out as a shepherd boy for the summer, as was the custom. In later years he helped his father lay drain pipes. Once they worked at Gauri, and Frickalns saw Reinis, eighteen then, haul a three-bushel sack into the barn. He hired him as a labourer. In Darzciems, Reinis made friends with Vinauds, the one whose wife he was going to look up.

"We did a lot of talking. His father was a raftsman on the Gauja. I realized how little I could expect from life. Year in, year out, I'd be nothing better than a labourer. I'd bought a bike for myself. Well, I might save up enough to get a bed of my own, and perhaps a wardrobe. Was that all a man could ask for? And when I became old, what would happen to me? Would Frickalns feed me? If I had children, they couldn't help me any more than I could help my father. Frickalns is the same as the rest of them, neither better nor worse,

and nobody feeds his workers when they're old and useless. So in 1940, when everything changed, I went along to the pagast house. It was the first summer in my life I was free to do what I pleased in the evenings. I learned to play volley-ball. I was as free as Frickalns himself. Of course he didn't like this a bit. He gave me the sack, but I stayed at Gauri where they had set up a hiring-point for agricultural machinery. I learned to shoot. Well, you know the rest."

Something dropped upon them, making them start. But it was only a cone, green, and hard, and resinous.

"My life hasn't been much different, Reinis. My elder brothers went to Riga and I stayed with my parents. After leaving school, I hired myself out to different farmers digging sugar-beets, stacking hay and picking potatoes. In winter I had more time and should have liked to go to school again, but how could I? We didn't even have the money to buy a newspaper. Next week I'll have to work for Frickalns—sow his rye for next to nothing. If I don't, they'll send me to Germany."

"That's just why we've got to drive Frickalns out of the pagast, darling!"

"That's true, of course," she agreed, "but I don't want you to go. . . ." She stretched out on her back

and sighed deeply, like a mother whose son has suddenly become grown-up, more grown-up than herself, and she gently stroked his dark, bristly hair.

Is wartime love only a sudden flare? No, Nature herself brings forth the aster just before autumn frosts begin as though intending to carry life and beauty into the winter.

The fir tree spread its drooping branches about their wedding-bed. They were equally innocent in love, and their caresses held the shyness of two curious children and the heat of a mid-summer sun that ripens the corn too soon. A warbler, a woodpecker, and the wind rustling in the pines composed their wedding march.

When Helena raised herself up to disentangle some stalks of hay from her hair, with lowered eyes, there was girlish modesty in her face but not regret. She smoothed down the hay and with a gentle pressure of her body made Reinis lie down once more.

"I'll keep watch. You have another night's walk ahead." She stroked his forehead and he fell asleep, while she remained sitting by his side.

Even a young girl's love has something of a mother's. There was a strange weariness in her. Picking up a small, dry twig, she brushed away a green spider trying to dive into Reinis' sleeve.

They rested till evening came and the birds fell silent; the darkness of night crept into their bower.

"Your 'room' in the shed will always be ready for you. I'll help you. There's a lot I can do.... I'll wait for you on the highway at midnight for three nights," Helena said.

A last embrace on the Gauja bank, and Reinis walked off with his springy stride. Helena turned back into the forest.

A narrow path followed the steep, rugged bank of the Gauja River. Where hops spanned the path from bush to bush, forming a green vault, he passed as through a gate of honour. After wading the river, he struck a rapid pace. Sometimes he would stop dead, holding his breath, listening into the hush of darkness, but there was no sound except the faint splash of sand slipping down a sheer bank into the water.

The forest fell behind. Ahead, the Gauja sand-banks gleamed white, and beyond a meadow he could make out the houses and gardens of the Darzciems suburbs. The house closest to him was framed on three sides by rows of slender aspens. This was where Girts Vinauds used to live, and where his wife lived now.

Reinis stopped to catch his breath. At this point he was to walk a new road, a road that might cost him his life. There was still time to turn back to

Ezerliči, to a warm and loving heart. But he recalled what had weighed most heavily upon him in prison, the painful realization that his life was ebbing away to no purpose. He had likened himself to a pebble cast wilfully into the depths, remaining buried there for ever. He had been haunted by the thought that he had done so little in his life, and could do nothing in prison. He had felt the throbbing of his hot blood thirsting for struggle. Now his hands were free!

Reinis' fingers sought the knife that Sniedze had given him. Let's see who will win!

The house was perched on the bank of the river. From a little cellar built into the sandy bank, a flight of stairs, secured with boards, led up to it. In the faint gleam of the summer night, Reinis could see the plain outlines of the building, noting attic windows at both ends of the roof. A little outhouse hid among the aspens. There were apple trees in the garden, and potatoes planted beneath them.

A dog, chained near the shed, began to bark as Reinis approached a window facing the Gauja. He knocked twice, and twice again. A window, on the floor above, opened and a woman leaned out.

"What is it?" she asked in a loud whisper. He recognized Zenta Vinauds' voice.

Would she trust him? His heart beat fast, as fast as during his escape. What if she didn't? He wasn't trying to get into a grand mansion—all he wanted was to be admitted into this simple house and to find comrades. Ah, he was strong enough, but with one comrade he would be ten times as strong.

"It's Apenajs . . . from prison. . . . I escaped on Tuesday from Zintene. . . ."

Zenta strained her eyes to see his upturned face. "Wait!"

He shrank back into a lilac bush. The moments of waiting seemed terribly long. The dog had fallen silent. At last a ground floor window opened, and Zenta whispered, "Come to the back door."

Reinis slipped noiselessly into a small narrow hallway that was pitch-dark. Somebody turned a flash-light on him and examined him carefully from head to foot. Presently he heard a voice that sent a thrill of relief through him, like the sensation when his prison clothes sank to the bottom of the lake. It was the voice of Girts Vinauds! Low, always a little hoarse.

"I'll take you to my study," the voice said, "the only place where we can have a light."

They lifted some boards off the floor of the hallway. Reinis stepped into the opening first. Girts followed him and struck a match to light a

small petrol lamp. The walls of the little cellar were faced with plain boards. There was a broad, low bunk in one corner that had apparently just been slept on. A crude pine table and a couple of simple stools made up the other furniture. When Reinis turned to look at his companion, expecting to see Girts, he gave a start.

He saw a stranger. The short, sturdy frame was the one he remembered. So were the powerful arms, folded on his chest in a familiar attitude. But the face! He remembered Girts' long brown hair, almost touching his shirt-collar, and the clean-shaven face. This person wore his hair very short, neatly parted in the middle, and had a foppish little moustache on his upper lip. The stranger was visibly enjoying Reinis' open-mouthed amazement. Suddenly the corners of his lips curled in the old, familiar smile, and Reinis realized that it was Girts, greatly changed, yet the same old, lively, optimistic Girts!

"Aha, I've given you a surprise," Girts remarked happily. "That's good. So I haven't laboured in vain."

They sat down on the bunk, and Reinis told the story of his escape, his conversation with Zenta in the slaughter-house, and the purpose of his night visit.

"But people in prison told me they'd seen you near Tallinn, on the other side," he added with a note of surprise.

"What if they have," Girts muttered evasively. "I'm here now, am I not?" He told a little about himself, but Reinis could feel that more remained untold. He did not mind, realizing that conditions of struggle were different now from what they had been four years ago, when he and Girts first met.

Girts said casually he was still "active" in a way, but there was plenty of time tomorrow to talk it over. He produced a hunk of bread, a mug of goat's milk, and handed them to Reinis. Reinis, in turn, opened his little bundle and took out the food he had brought, which Girts put aside for the morning. It was this tacit acceptance of his contribution that made Reinis feel part of a new community, feel that he belonged. Girts left him and went upstairs.

There were three of them at breakfast the following morning—Zenta and the two men. Reinis was in his blue work blouse, his chin bristly with a dark growth of beard; Girts, neat and trim, in a carefully pressed brown suit, looking the image of an office clerk.

When Zenta rose to get ready for work, Girts got up too and came close to her. She was as tall as he, but his sturdy frame made her appear girl-

ish. Zenta looked almost smart for wartime in her short, checked skirt, white silk blouse and the pin-striped navy-blue jacket made of English cloth. Tossing back her dark, neatly set hair, she brought her face close to Girts'. It was not a beautiful face, having little freckles showing through the dark powder and a slightly uptilted nose that lent her an expression of permanent wonder. But there was a quiet dignity about her whole being, a self-assured calm.

"Well, Girts, till dinner, then. . . ."

"I'll see you off a little," he said. Hand in hand, like two children, they walked into the hall, Zenta's yellow clogs clattering against the floor. Reinis felt that they were close friends.

From the window he saw an elderly woman leading two goats to pasture. Girts' mother, he thought. Beside her tripped a curly-headed little girl dressed in blue overalls.

Girts returned. "Did you see? This is my little daughter. She came into the world while I was far away. She hasn't learned to talk yet, so it's safe to see her. Soon I'll have to hide, so she doesn't blurt it out. What a problem! One more reason why we must get rid of the Germans quickly! I want Ziedite to say "Daddy" to her father. Go on, eat. Plenty of eggs and milk in the house. Sometimes

Zenta gets a bit of meat, too. I don't believe in saving up. What I've got inside me, the Germans won't get." He grinned.

What a fellow, Reinis thought, this raftsman's son. Like flint! Strike him with steel and he'd give out sparks.

After breakfast Girts tore a strip from his newspaper and rolled himself a crude cigarette, then pushed the tobacco tin over to Reinis, who shook his head.

"No? Lucky devil! It's twice as easy for you to stand the war as for me!"

As he smoked, Girts watched Reinis closely and his face grew serious.

"You still have a chance to leave without anybody noticing," he suddenly said.

Reinis started. "Why?"

"You aren't any safer here than anywhere in the Darzciems district, you know. If the Gestapo come, they won't spare us."

"I know," Reinis said, stressing each word like a soldier giving his oath. He looked firmly at Girts. "And I know how it feels to have your hands tied, Girts."

Girts finished his cigarette.

"All right, I'll show you the house, or what you ought to know about it. If we've got to make ourselves scarce, this is where we go." He lifted

some floor boards and led the way to the cellar where Reinis had spent the night. "It's just an ordinary cellar, built in the ordinary way. Only I've boarded up the entrance from the hall. And if we have to shoot. . . ." He whipped out a tommy-gun.

"I've been in the auxiliary service. I can handle any kind of fire-arm," Reinis replied, reaching for it.

"Just a minute! I want to use this myself. You can take these for the time being." He removed a board in the wall and revealed his arsenal, from which he chose two revolvers for Reinis. "And cartridges."

Reinis took off the cartridge clip, loaded the empty pistol and examined the safety lock. "A German Walter," he observed.

"It is. I suppose you can guess how I came by it. I don't want to frighten you, but you've got to be prepared not only for peaceful breakfasts. Courage isn't my strong point, you see, so I've arranged an emergency exit while I've been staying here with my wife." He revealed an opening in the wall, leading into a narrow passage fortified with props of boards and branches. One at a time, they squeezed through. It was dank inside, and their feet sank into wet, red sand. The passage ended at a sand bag.

"You can't guess there's a passage here, even if you knock from outside. From here you enter a little potato cellar on the Gauja bank. Now we must go back and earn our dinner."

They returned; Girts produced a typewriter, paper and carbon, and started copying a leaflet with the report of the Soviet Supreme Command.

"Paper, that's the problem. I got some, together with this typewriter, but it's all used up. Almost got myself into trouble last week. It was in Staicele at the paper-mill. A Schutzmann wanted to make my acquaintance. Here, read the *Tevija*,* the *Talavas Tauretajs*,** and the communiqué of our Command, so you're in the run of things."

"Don't worry, there's somebody on guard," he added, when Reinis looked perplexed and a little apprehensive at his recklessness.

While Girts rattled away on his Continental, Reinis eagerly read the newspapers and the communiqué which was being typed.

There is always a chink in the thickest prison wall, and sometimes Reinis had managed to get hold of a newspaper. He knew that heavy defensive fighting had been going on in the Kursk region

* *Motherland*—a fascist newspaper published in Latvia during the German occupation.—*Tr.*

** Local paper published during the same period.—*Tr.*

since July, and had spread to Orel, to Belgorod, and finally to Kharkov. Yet the announcements of the Soviet Supreme Command were a revelation to him. The crude typescript seemed like a real Moscow newspaper. It told him what was happening where the Nazis did not ride roughshod over his native soil; it made him aware that he was not alone, but part of a vast front line stretching from the Arctic Ocean to the Black Sea.

In the *Tevija* he read an article on "antisocial people," in which someone tried to justify the Nuremberg law on racial purity, demanding that bad Aryans be prevented from propagation. The same paper advertised coupon-free wooden shoe-soles imported from Germany.

"D'you want to know the price on your head?" Girts asked, passing him the latest *Talavas Tauretajs*. It carried an announcement in bold type:

LATVIANS!

"The enemy is forming bands in the rear of the fighting forces and on your land, destroying supply stores and important military objectives, terrorizing the population. I command everyone to do his share in exterminating these bands and recapturing escaped prisoners.

"A reward of RM 3,000 is offered for each returned prisoner. Support of the bandits will be treated as a capital offence!

"Der Befehlshaber"

* * *

At the cross-roads just outside Darzciems, SD Hauptsturmführer Adalberts Vizemanis suddenly bid his driver stop the five-seater cabriolet. Three lads stood leaning on their bicycles reading a leaflet pasted on the trunk of an old lime tree. It had struck Vizemanis as suspicious that his approaching car created a sudden stir among the boys, as though they were eager to make off. Nine years of service, first in Latvian, then in German security organizations, had trained his eye.

"Halt!" he cried, jumping out of the car and clapping a hand on his revolver. "What're you doing?" he continued in German, coming up to them. Then he read: "The Germans continue their retreat all along the front. According to the Red Army Command. . . ." That was enough.

"Did you stick it up?" he asked, again speaking German. It was a stupid question, but the Hauptsturmführer was very much excited.

One of the lads, whose face was tanned a deep brown while his hair was bleached almost white by the sun, replied with a shrug of his shoulders, *"Nix*

verstehen," and added under his breath in Latvian, "Thank God!"

Vizemanis stiffened, then inclined his thin body towards the boy. His white face, which he seemed to have been carefully sheltering from contact with the sun, blanched even more and his loose features contracted. Only the nose remained red, that fleshy, triangular nose that, like its owner, was neither really Latvian nor really German. Were these locals still so ignorant that they could speak mockingly in the presence of the skull-emblem on his cap? Pulling on his brown glove deliberately, he took a sudden step towards the boy and slapped him in the face with all his might.

"Say 'Thank God' again!" he roared in pure Latvian. "Don't you know an SD, you idiot?"

The chauffeur rose to his feet and loosened his revolver in case of emergency.

Administering a blow invariably cooled Vizemani's blood. He took down the boys' addresses and their bicycle numbers, and asked them a few questions. He knew beforehand it would get him nowhere. They said they had noticed the leaflet on their way, they had seen a similar one the week before, which some Schutzmann had soon removed. The chauffeur then got the leaflet off the tree, not without damage to the bark, and Vizemanis carefully slipped it into his brief case.

5—1479

The Darzciems SD headquarters occupied a two-storey white building in the main street, with a row of neatly pruned lime trees in front of it. As Brenner, chief of the security police, was out, Vizemanis went in to see Elzin who was in charge of the Latvian section. He was sitting at a huge desk looking over the large sheets of *Das Reich*. The room was in the northern wing of the house, decorated in dark colours—mauve wallpaper, black bookcases, dark-brown furniture—against which Elzin's light-grey summer suit stood out in vivid contrast. He rose to meet Vizemanis. They were of equal height, but Elzin was broader in the shoulders, and altogether smoother, more corpulent and of healthier complexion. His sleek fair hair was brushed back flat, making his head appear very small. There was an expression of lingering amusement and cunning in his slightly screwed-up eyes. The two men shook hands.

"Hello, Vitauts!"

"Hello, Adis!"

Tête-à-tête, they ignored distinctions of rank, though one of them was head of a department in the Riga Gestapo and the other subordinated to some low-ranking German officer in Darzciems. Both men were under forty, Vizemanis being slightly older than his friend. Together they had passed through all the usual stages of a political career,

and this had created a natural affinity between them. They had studied law, worked at a procurator's office, and later for the secret political police; they could look back on happy, care-free years when they had both belonged to the students' Corporation.*

Both came from the Darzciems District. Vizemanis' father used to own a country pub there and deal a little in flax, while Elzin senior had been proprietor of the Veca Zvaigzne chemist's. After his father's death, Adalberts Vizemanis was brought up by his uncle in Riga, in a family that was no longer just pseudo-German, but almost the real thing. His uncle had married a pure-blooded German girl, and was chief representative of a German firm dealing in optical and medical appliances, hence quite comfortably off. Truth to tell, the question of nationality never entered his considerations, it was pure business interests that induced him to keep to German social circles. Thus Adalberts grew up without any national feeling, drifting naturally into the German security police. Elzin sometimes felt a pang of envy. Try as he might, he could not get himself accepted by Brenner and the other Germans as one of them. Even for their hunting expeditions, they would choose

* Bourgeois students' organization.—*Tr.*

a couple of forest keepers for company in preference to him.

Elzin and Vizemanis stepped outside for a personal chat. A sprawling building stretched along the far end of the courtyard, comprising garages and prison cells. In front of it, Brenner had had a little garden laid out with flower-beds and white, sand-strewn walks. Every time he went there, he would point at the houses, with their old-fashioned tiled roofs, and say this was his little patch of German soil. Now Vizemanis told his friend about a recent trip to Stockholm, where life flowed smoothly, provided you had currency, of course. His visit had been connected with the escape of some Ostland Jews to Sweden, and the discovery of correspondence, via Stockholm, between a Russian prisoner of war in Daugavpils and his relatives. The city was teeming with Anglo-Saxon agents, he observed, but did not comment on the subject. Elzin resolved to bring it up later.

Back in Elzin's room, Vizemanis produced the leaflet he had picked up on his way. A curt, official tone entered his voice as he rasped, "How long have you been wool-gathering here, eh?"

"Ah, it's the same again," Elzin replied calmly, with a cursory glance at the sheet. "The sixth I've seen of this kind. Don't get so worked up over it!

Where did you say you found it?" And he marked another point on a map before him.

Vizemanis had come for information on subversive literature, and Elzin told him what he knew in a quiet, reluctant voice, as though talking to himself. The trouble had started last autumn. He wouldn't be surprised if the men had been specially trained and sent across the front line, or dropped by parachutes. One evening in September, two armed men had forced their way into the Akmene pagast offices and had got away with a Continental typewriter, a supply of white paper and all kinds of printed forms. No traces were left, except for some Walter cartridges. The intruders had fired at the tardy guards, in making their retreat. A short while before this incident two soldiers, guarding a railway bridge between Strenči and Valka, had been shot. The rails had been dismantled, but luckily the intended accident had been prevented. Since, leaflets typed on a Continental, on Akmene paper, had been appearing in the Darzciems district and elsewhere. There had been a short spell of quiet in the winter, then again policemen had been wounded in two pagasts, and a pagast house set on fire. The main trouble was those leaflets. They occurred more and more frequently, spread over a wider territory. This indicated that the organization was growing. As a result, most undesirable

rumours were abroad with regard to the army. There were other minor instances: at the Dzerves farm, oats had been soaked in petrol while a cavalry unit was stationed there; two SS men had been killed on a railway line. Elzin had it all carefully recorded. In March, when the voluntary legion was being mobilized, the number of leaflets increased. Same type, but different paper. They started checking paper supplies from the Staicele Mill. Recently, strangers were noticed there. Once it was a man with a little moustache, but the Schutzmanns failed to detain him. It was difficult to locate the leaflets now. They appeared in Darzciems itself, near Staicele, even around Lejasciems and in the Valka District. They had turned up most frequently at the slaughter-house in the beginning. The personnel were thoroughly questioned, but nothing was gained. Four or five had relatives on the other side of the front line; two had next of kin who were shot, five had distant relatives shot, and any number had been heard grumbling. Soon, however, things began to sort themselves out. It became obvious that the starting point was on the other side of the Gauja. For some months now the paper allocated to each institution had been specially marked. Cut with a little flaw, for instance. Like that leaflet on the table. This particular ration had been handed out to the

municipal administration, to the labour control and to the slaughter-house. They had watched the supplies of carbon-paper, too. Again, there was something wrong at the slaughter-house. Other little things pointed the same way. The upshot of it was that Brenner had set an organized raid for 7:00 that evening.

They went in to see Brenner. To make up for his lack of height, this brisk little German had acquired the habit of thrusting back his head. He jumped to his feet at the sight of Vizemanis; his hand shot up.

"*Heil Hitler*!" he cried, and gave them a hearty welcome.

When they had finished discussing details of the evening's campaign, they proceeded to their club for dinner. Vizemanis had many amusing stories to tell about his escapades at the Riga brothels, and Elzin expressed a desire to visit the city. However, there was a lot of work on their hands, much more than last year, although officially all Marxists and Jews had been exterminated for the past two years. In fact all approaches to the town of Darzciems had been marked for two years by notice-boards inscribed *Judenfrei,* a practice introduced by Medem, Commissar of the Zemgale District.

* * *

Zenta came home on her lunch-hour to eat and play a bit with her daughter. She picked some late clover blossoms and made a wreath for the child, then waved good-bye to her as she left the house.

At about six o'clock, just as they were finishing for the day, three men entered her office, two in civilian clothes, one in an SD Oberscharführer uniform. One of the plain-clothes men spoke Latvian, but Zenta did not need an interpreter. She felt composed. It was not the first time. The slaughterhouse was an important catering centre, and officials of all sorts often came to check on it.

"Who uses the typewriter here?" snapped the uniformed German.

"I do, and Mrs. Vinauds," the book-keeper replied.

Zenta realized it was serious. She had never had anything to do with the police as yet, and though she had often tried to visualize this moment she felt her strength ebbing. Where was Girts? Was this the beginning of the end? What would happen to Ziedite? Her agitation did not escape the three men. After a perfunctory search of the premises, they turned their attention to the unused sheets of paper. Zenta was asked into the adjoining room where a woman in a green uniform searched her carefully but found nothing.

Then in her handbag they found two sheets of carbon-paper. The three men were visibly cheered. Smiling sweetly, the German asked her what she needed it for.

"I . . . I do work at home sometimes . . . if I can't get through during office hours. The book-keeper knows. . . ." Zenta's voice trailed off. She knew she must not show agitation, but not everyone is made of flint.

With good humour common to security workers after a lucky strike, the SD Oberscharführer agreed: "I'm sure you do work at home." He picked up the receiver and informed somebody at the other end that Zenta Vinauds had been detained.

They took her away in a closed car. It has come, she thought. How often had Girts warned her. He had not wanted her to be in it, for her own sake and for Ziedite's. But she had long ceased to be the romantic young girl in love with a revolutionary, yet not his cause. Was she, was her child, were the whole Latvian people, to live for ever oppressed by these modern Crusaders? Were her people to be exterminated together with the language her father and forefathers had spoken? How happy we could be, she thought, Girts and Ziedite and I, if that power had not coveted slaves and other people's lands. . . . We should be sitting on the bank of the Gauja, Ziedite would be scooping water into her

little pail and baking sand cakes; my only worry would be that she should not wade in too far. But this was not to be. She hadn't even taught her child to say "Daddy," lest she betray him.

The car turned into Plava Street and stopped outside a temporary SD station. Soon Girts' mother was brought in also, with Ziedite in her arms, and the two goats trotting behind her. Zenta flew to her daughter and held her close, drawing strength from this contact. She was allowed to keep the child in her lap while she was questioned the first time.

* * *

Girts spent the afternoon initiating Reinis into the particulars of "his own New Europe." Reinis soon gathered that Girts was not fighting alone.

"Remember, if we suddenly have to get down the Gauja, but fast, you'll find some logs on the bank. Push them in first and swim behind them. They'll screen you from bullets. And here's something for your Walter—water isn't too good for it." He handed Reinis a little oilcloth bag.

Girts made inquiries about his comrades in prison, about prison conditions and the possibilities of escape.

"Many would have tried to get away, but for two considerations: one, where could they stay

with all these policemen about, and two, what would happen to their people."

"We'll see to number one—you too!" answered Girts. "You'll be our expert on questions of escape from jail. Have you ever been to Staicele? I've got a good friend there, but I can't go to him. I'm afraid I'm not popular there at the moment—they'd meet me with pointed guns. But no, I can't send you there either. We must wait till your hair is a little longer."

At six o'clock, Zenta was not back. But then, she often worked late. Suddenly, there was a knock on the ceiling from the floor above.

"Alarm!" Girts said hoarsely, leaping to the front door and bolting it. "Load your gun!"

They hurried to the upper floor, where the windows commanded a full view. This room was probably Zenta's and Ziedite's. There was a couch covered with a plaid rug, a little cot with a white blanket, and a small table holding bottles of scent with an oval mirror above it.

A young boy in a blue sports suit, whose presence Girts had never mentioned, pointed silently to the window showing Plava Street half-hidden by a line of aspen trees. The second window offered a view of the far wooded bank of the Gauja. Two lorries, loaded with armed men, were tearing down the sandy street, their motors roaring and clattering.

At the same time, a cordon of aizsargs emerged from the wood across the Gauja and spaced themselves along the water's edge.

The men in the room exchanged glances. No one uttered a sound. No shot had been fired, but the battle had begun. As to its outcome—who can predict? Battles are fought by men, and only in the course of struggle does man prove his strength.

Girts' voice broke the deep silence. "I'm commander of this fortress," he said. The fair-haired lad whom he called Elmars lit a cigarette.

Greenish-grey uniforms gleamed behind the aspen trees that fringed the garden. A carelessly raised head appeared here and there beyond the steep bank of the Gauja.

Reinis was facing his first encounter. It was a few days since he had escaped, and again they were pointing their guns at him. He was twenty-two ... but anything rather than march between prison guards shouting "Go!" or "Stop!" at their own pleasure. Here he was a human being. He had been yearning for action. Now was his chance! Yes, this was his chance.

One glance through the open windows was enough for Girts. He must have thought it all out before, and he was not the person to show excitement at such a moment.

The clouds that had veiled the sky from early

morning seemed to have drawn closer to the earth, giving the impression of twilight though it was only seven o'clock.

"We'll keep up a smart fire till dusk, then we must try to reach the Gauja through the cellar. That's our only course. Zenta's probably been arrested.... Elmars, get the tommy, cartridges, some grenades too!"

Elmars dived downstairs to the cellar. By the time Girts and he had checked their guns, and Reinis had loaded his second Walter, the house was completely encircled. A group of SD men entered the yard from Plava Street. Four made for the front door, pistols on the ready, while four slipped behind lilac bushes to watch the windows.

"Open the door!" came harshly from below.

Girst strode to the open window, hiding a grenade behind his back.

"What is it?" he asked politely, looking down at the men.

Disconcerted by his calm inquiry, the four men raised their heads. Two of them had ensigns on their caps with the letters SS zigzagged across. The other two wore the epaulettes of junior officers. One of the privates pointed a gun at Girts and cried, "Hands up!"

"Pardon? What are you talking about?" Girts frowned.

"*Schafskopf!*" one of the officers pounced upon the impetuous soldier. "It's a routine check-up of documents. No need to run." The other officer translated into Latvian.

"Just a minute, I'll open the door for you," Girts' voice sounded almost bored. He stepped back, pulled the fuse, waited a few seconds, then with one leap reached the window and hurled the grenade down to where the four stood waiting for the fortress to surrender. Almost simultaneously, he flung himself on the floor, for the explosion that shook the whole wall was followed by a burst of fire from below. Bullets broke the upper pane to smithereens, and glass splinters showered down upon the three men on the floor.

But none of the four outside would ever try again to break into other people's homes.

A short silence ensued. Since July 1941, no shot had been aimed at a German uniform in Darzciems. Those who wore the uniform had come to believe that danger existed only at the front and in Russia, while in Vidzeme the German eagle was enough to inspire horror and awe in "the natives." It was a well-founded belief. There was a place in the wood just outside town where five hundred bodies lay buried. The execution had been carried out openly, as a public performance. Yes, the shooting of Communists, Marxists and

Jews was made to reverberate in every home and echo in the minds of all, bringing the spectre of terror. For the two years anyone who wore a German uniform could walk with his nose in the air. "Proud as a cock on his own dunghill," the locals would say. The more simple-minded presumed that this outward arrogance reflected that magic power which enabled the Führer to rule over Europe. Hence, it was only natural that no arm was raised against a German soldier.

And now this grenade! Its report must not reach the town. It must be smothered by the clatter of German fire-arms.

The house bordered on three sides by aspen trees and on the fourth by the Gauja River was soon subjected to methodical fire. First it was directed at every window in turn on the upper floor, then at those on the ground floor. The bullets dug deep holes in the opposite walls, littered the floor with fragments of glass, stucco and wooden splinters. Any window might be the next target; it was dangerous to move. They gathered on the staircase for a moment's respite—Girts, Reinis and Elmars.

"The cellar's safe. Anybody want to go down?" Girts asked in a toneless voice.

The others shook their heads. The battle had started. The cellar would be a place to die in, a

coffin, and a live man does not of his own free will lie down in a coffin.

"We'll go down when there's nothing left of the house," Girts said.

In the intervals of silence, they heard a voice yelling from below:

"Surrender, and we won't touch you. You'll be treated as prisoners of war."

Crouching and crawling, they moved from window to window, flattening themselves against the window frames, firing a well-aimed shot whenever a target exposed itself from behind a tree-trunk or on the Gauja bank. The enemy was kept in breathless tension. Later, when Brenner wrote his report to Lange, SD and SP commander of the Latvian territory in Riga, he tried to justify his losses by stating that the house had harboured six or seven partisans with a light machine-gun.

Reinis spotted two of the four men who had slipped behind lilac bushes in the garden. Flattened on the ground, they were afraid to retreat or to advance towards the house. He went downstairs to the ground floor and entered the pantry. There was a chink in the wall by the narrow window, a few inches wide, where a volley of fire had struck. A bullet had blasted the milk jug, and milk was running over the shelf. Supporting the revolver on his left palm, Reinis took sight

very carefully. Suddenly it seemed to him that those two underneath the lilac bush had levelled their tommy-guns at him. In a fraction of a second he must decide whether to duck, or else. . . . He fired. One German fired too, but as he did, a sudden pain convulsed his whole body, his fingers twitched and the gun emptied itself into space. A year of prison avenged! Never again would this one arrest a man, or hit him, or make him tremble. The other had taken to his heels. Aiming hastily, Reinis pulled the trigger twice in succession. He saw his enemy lurch forward, head foremost, left hand clutching at the long-pinioned eagle on his right shoulder-strap.

The firing grew more furious. Once again the three met for a moment on the staircase and dropped down panting with exertion and strain. The staircase was comparatively safe but for an occasional ricocheting bullet. The blast from that first grenade had crashed in the door, so that twilight streamed into the hallway below. Two long boards lay across the floor, ripped off the entrance door like splinters, and an old coat had been blown off its peg. When they breathed calmly again, Girts and Elmars reloaded their tommy-guns, rested them on their knees and lit cigarettes.

"It'll be dark in half an hour, boys, then they'll have only an empty house to fire at," Girts said

encouragingly. But his voice sounded huskier than ever. Thoughts of Zenta and his little daughter, whom all their heroism could not save from the Germans, flooded his heart.

"My own little one. . ." he murmured, as a tear dropped on his torn shirt. "Blast this tobacco!" And he averted his face.

The tension of battle relaxed for a moment, and it seemed to Reinis as though the shots came from somewhere far away—far away in Life. Whatever Girts might say to encourage them, they were balanced in a fragile boat on a stream whose one bank was life, the other death.

Was it blind hope alone that spurred them on? It is not true that hope expires only with life. Hope may be buried, the smell of pine already on its grave, yet man lives on and fights. So powerful is man's spirit it can outlive hope's death and uphold the torch of battle to the last beat of his heart. Surrender they would not. Not because they hoped that some giant hand might miraculously screen the sun and give them the blessed darkness to escape. Not so! Free men are born to defend freedom. This is their heritage from generations immemorial. Life and its beauty were to be passed on as in a relay-race. They fought to make men equal in life as in birth and death. They fought to guard the flower of life from the looming

gallows and noose that the German eagle carried in its hooked beak.

Girts and Elmars did not long outlive their cigarettes.

A deafening volley of fire came from outside. They seized their weapons as three men broke in at the door, under cover of fire, shooting in all directions. The first who swung his tommy-gun at them from the bottom of the stairs was hit by Girts. Simultaneously, Elmars, with an acrobat's agility, cleared the banisters and leaped through the gaping door. For a split second he stood there alone and upright, his brow furiously knit, his fair hair dishevelled—a proud challenge to superior forces. Before enemy rifles were turned on him, he spotted two who had first attempted to force their way into the house. As they tried to dodge around the corner, he fired, hitting them in the legs; they went down and remained sprawled on the ground.

While bullets showered the place where he had just stood, Elmars was already back on the steps. A proud cry broke from his lips. Breathing hard, he ran to the top and flattened himself against the wall, straining to see what was happening on the Gauja bank. The bullets got him in this position. As his body slid to the ground, his fingers still

clutched at something, seeking support from the smooth wall.

Girts, watching Plava Street through the gap under a window, noticed him fall.

"Reinis, quick!" he cried. Reinis, who was stripping a fallen enemy of his weapons, rushed to his side. Together they dragged the limp body and laid it on Zenta's couch.

"Watch out there," Girts gasped, pointing towards the stairs and throwing himself on his knees at his friend's side. The bullets had caught Elmars in the neck and chest. Blood gushed darkly from a throbbing vein. Girts snatched a sheet from Ziedite's bed and ripped it in two for a bandage. Just then, Elmars opened serene grey eyes and looked at him. His lips moved, forming a word.

"Tell. . . ." But breath failed him, and all the world's air could not restore it.

"He was my friend, we studied together," Girts cried out with unexpected fury. "We fought at Tallinn and got across the front line. We. . . ." His voice suddenly dropped. "Oh, well, you don't know all this. . . ."

That little word— "Tell. . . ." They never knew what they were to tell, or to whom. Perhaps a mother or father, that he loved them, that they should forgive him for rushing to the front with

the university Komsomols without their consent? Or a girl, that his young love had been pure as a white narcissus plucked in spring? Or his comrades-in-arms, that he was with them in struggle, and would be with them unseen, in their victory march when the last shot had been fired? Elmars' last words remained unspoken, like millions of words buried in Latvia's soil in those years.

Now there were only two left. Through a gap in the wall, Reinis shot one of those whom Elmars had wounded.

Suddenly they noticed a woman enter the yard from Plava Street. The firing ceased.

"Zenta!"

* * *

Yes, it was Zenta. Her eyes riveted on the smashed windows where this morning she had watered the red and white fuchsias on the ledge, she walked unsteadily towards the house, past the SD men's bodies, and stopped outside the front doorway. Girts rushed downstairs and caught her in his arms.

"There's no danger, darling," she said. "We've got fifteen minutes.... They won't fire now...."

However, Reinis was posted in the hall, gripping Elmars' tommy-gun.

Girts took Zenta's arm and led her to the first floor.

Not a shot, not a voice from below. The sudden silence seemed immense.

Zenta stopped and looked about her. The door to her room was open. She had left the floor so cleanly scrubbed that you could see the grain of the unstained pine boards. Now it was littered with fragments of glass, chunks of plaster, and blood was spattered all over it. She had covered the couch with a rug, brown with a green pattern, that she had woven herself in 1939, her last year at school. Now Elmars' limp body lay across it, his lifeless fingers touching the ground. Large drops of blood stained the white pillows. Death had drained the boy's face, leaving it white. The little cot, in which Ziedite had lain of an evening babbling the few words she knew, was tumbled, and had been pushed against the window so that its white head-end was riddled with bullets. Only one corner of the room remained intact. Zenta's neatly polished dressing-table stood there, with little scent bottles on it and three photographs: Zenta, in her white confirmation dress with a bunch of white lilies in her lap; Ziedite, a tiny thing on a rocking-horse; Girts, a broad grin on his healthy face, his shirt-collar open, taken in the summer of 1940 just before their wedding.

Zenta walked up to the table, took Girts' picture from its frame and pushed it into her dress pocket.

"I have Ziedite. Her picture can stay with you. But you and I . . . we may not meet so soon. Yes, here's what they sent me for." She handed him a sheet of paper, in one corner of which the German eagle spread its wings, holding a wreathed swastika in its talons. "They said I should tell you to surrender, then you'd. . . ." Her eyes searched her husband's face, but he was reading the narrow, angular characters of the letter, which said in Lettish:

"The Commander of the German security police admits that you have fought like gallant soldiers. To discontinue further bloodshed which, on your part, is utterly futile and hopeless, I suggest that you surrender. In acknowledgement of your courage, we shall treat you not as partisans, but as prisoners of war. You know the privileges this implies. Your kinsmen will be set at liberty.

"Should you fail to surrender, the house will be razed to the ground, and your relatives shot for supporting bandits.

"Ustuf. Brenner."

"You've read it, haven't you?" Girts asked. Zenta nodded slowly.

"Zenta, it's not me they need, but what I know. When they question you, put everything on me. They . . . they'll never get me." He put his arm

about her, and they sat down on the old chest by the window overlooking the Gauja and the pine forest on its far bank.

"I will, Girts."

"Where's Ziedite?"

"They kept her. To make sure I come back."

"Are you . . . are you taking me back with you?" He was stroking the palm of her hand, while his eyes looked deep into hers probing for an answer. Her lids were red, she must have cried a lot that day. But in the wide-open eyes that looked back at him he read understanding and deep sorrow.

"Would it help, Girts? Don't worry, they're not going to shoot us. They always threaten. . . ."

"I know. When it's dark, we'll slip out through the cellar. . . ."

"Yes, Girts." They were comforting each other and knew it, the way friends do.

"D'you have a pencil?"

Zenta found a pencil in her pocket, and Girts wrote on the other side of the paper:

"1. If you touch a single one of our relatives, you will be shot by our partisans in the near future, or come before our lawful trial."

He stopped to think, and for an instant his face was lit by the faint glow of a smile, reminding Zenta of her old fearless Girts. He added:

"2. I request that you lift the siege of this house without delay and withdraw from the territory of Soviet Latvia in the immediate future. Otherwise we shall be forced to make mincemeat out of you.

"G. Vinauds,
"Sergeant of the Red Army."

"I can afford this. It's.... I suppose it's my last joke."

Zenta hid her face on his breast and wept bitterly.

"Don't ... we'll get out through the cellar.... Zenta, sweetheart, don't cry, we've got another ten minutes..." he whispered, while she felt hot tears drop upon her forehead.

Together they turned their eyes on the Gauja. It looked leaden grey in the dusk, yet it was alive and flowed on ceaselessly; it would continue its course for years and years to come, even if....

Suddenly, the dusk was no more. A light burst into the room, as though the morning sun was darting its shafts through silky green birches. And the bullet-riddled ceiling was no more. Above was a brilliant blue sky—deep, corn-flower blue. Their hearts and minds melted into one.

... Zenta was seventeen, and Girts nineteen. She was wearing her navy-blue school dress and black

pinafore. Girts had on a grey suit that was too short in the sleeves. They seemed to walk across the Gauja with huge strides and through the whole town till they came to a yellow brick building enfolded in an old garden. It was their secondary school.

"Our graduation dance..." Girts whispered.

"I remember, Girts...."

Blue lilac was in full bloom in the gardens of suburban Darzciems; heavy fragrance of white lilac filled the air. On that night in June, Girts and Zenta Brauska, a merchant's daughter, wandered through the slumbering streets till the small hours. They stopped on the banks of the Gauja, and their first kiss was as pure as the morning sun rising from behind the forest.

"Remember that summer? We would come a long way to meet...."

"I remember, Girts...."

That summer Girts worked with his father in the woods. In the evening, he would mount his bike and race townwards to meet a slender girl in a flowered, silk summer dress. They left their bikes by the road and walked in the forest until the girl's white slippers were sodden with dew.

In the autumn, Zenta entered the Economics Department, while Girts continued to work, saving up for his future studies. His muscles grew taut

and strong. He understood well why he and Zenta could not go the same way. That autumn, in Zintene, he met Reinis. During Zenta's winter vacation, the three of them would take their skis and thread their way through the woods, while startled squirrels dropped fir-cones on their heads; or else chase hares over the snow-clad fields.

"And then the next summer ... when we met by the willows outside the church. . . ."

"I remember, Girts. . . ."

The next summer saw great changes in Darzciems. Girts was active on the Working Youth Committee. Zenta's parents scolded her for accompanying him to meetings. Sitting under the willows on the river bank in the evening, they watched the Gauja pursue its age-old course. Life, however, had entered upon a new one.

"Then the autumn, when I came to you. . . ."

"I remember, Girts. . . ."

In the autumn, Girts entered the Chemistry Department. He had nowhere to stay in Riga. But Zenta was a plucky girl. Girts moved to her room, where they studied together under the yellow standard lamp until deep into the night. When Zenta announced she was going to marry Girts, there were fireworks at home. He was not the sort of son-in-law the Brauskas would have chosen. There

was no wedding celebration. They simply went to the registry. After a while, Zenta made up with her parents.

She was a real comrade to Girts. She did not try to enter the Komsomol for fear of being rejected because she was a merchant's daughter; she sometimes went to church with her parents, and loved Christmas, and Easter with its swings, coloured eggs and catkins.

"You saw me off to the front. The socks you put in my bag lasted the whole winter. I kept looking back ... watching you grow smaller and smaller.... I felt like jumping off the train."

"Yes. I remember, Girts. But you came back to me."

When the Red Army was retreating, a group of Komsomol students, including Girts and Elmars, passed through Darzciems. They spent one night there. Zenta was not in a fit state to go with them. Her pregnancy was difficult and she was confined to bed much of the time. She stayed with her parents. Ziedite was born at the end of the summer. It was painful for Zenta to watch Darzciems fall under medieval rule. Then a year ago, Girts' mother brought her a message. Zenta moved to this house on the Gauja banks to help Girts.

"We've been good friends, darling. You've no grudge against me, have you?"

"No, oh, no!"

With death hovering over them, they had traversed their lives within a few minutes. When you scan a meadow, standing on its fringe, you see only its brightest flowers overlooking the fine stubble and narrow blades. Your eye is arrested by the white and golden daisies, the blue harebells and the purple lychnis. Girts and Zenta saw with their mind's eye what had been beautiful and worth while in their lives.

"Don't cry when you go. It's almost dark, and it may rain, so we can get away through the cellar."

"Yes, Girts. . . ."

"You must stay with Ziedite, and if I . . . if I don't return so soon—anything may happen in war—you'll tell her everything . . . everything. . . ." Now Girts' shoulders were twitching as he choked down his sobs.

"No, Girts, you'll be back. You'll be back yourself. . . ." Zenta was gently stroking his face.

"Of course I will. . . . If you're in Darzciems prison, we'll set you free. The war won't last much longer. They'll know what's been going on here. Yes, I'll be back. . . ."

They absorbed each other with their eyes, and the pictures imprinted on their minds were with them until their hearts stopped beating.

"Ziedite will never have to go through this. . . ."

"No, Girts. . . ."

Suddenly the twilight descended upon them again, and they grew aware of the intermittent tick-tack as blood dripped to the floor in the room adjoining.

A hoarse, drawn-out cry from below:

"Time's up. One more minute, and we fire!"

They started, and their lips met in a last kiss, their bodies merging into one.

Again that drawling voice: "Your child is crying."

They drew apart, painfully.

"You must go to Ziedite."

"Yes, Girts, Ziedite. . . ."

She walked down the stairs as in a trance, her eyes still turned upon Girts.

"Don't cry, you can't see me through tears. . ." he breathed.

She turned again in the middle of the yard, trying to lift a hand in final farewell, but her strength failed her. It seemed to her that Ziedite was whimpering in the street, and she walked on till the aspen trees hid her from Girts' view.

He sat motionless on the old chest, breathing heavily. His hand went to his shirt-collar, as though it were strangling him, and ripped it open.

"I can't bear it," he groaned.

Rising to his feet, he walked over to the stairs, where Reinis still stood. When he spoke, his voice was steady again.

"They'll blow up the house any moment. Go down into the cellar and get ready. Take all the ammunition. We'll fight on the bank. I'll give them a last salute, so they'll think we're still up here. Hurry!"

Reinis slipped into the cellar where the petrol lamp was burning as they had left it. He fixed his revolvers and filled the oilcloth bag with cartridges. Where did they keep the grenades? Perhaps he'd better take along what he could find on the German who lay in the hallway.

Two explosions burst from above. The flame in the petrol lamp dwindled and flared up again. The ceiling trembled, clots of earth dropped off the walls, and soon the acrid smell of burning seeped in.

Brenner and Vizemanis had deemed it wiser not to wait until night, which might spring some new surprise on them. As soon as Zenta returned with the answer, a group of SD men stole up to the front door in the gathering twilight, set fire to the stairs and hurled two grenades inside. No shot came back in response. They concluded that the last enemy had been exterminated, so they quickly removed the body of their man from the

hall. But despite the darkness, this cost them one more casualty, for an unexpected burst of fire came from the top window.

Reinis could not understand what was happening. After waiting vainly for his friend, he ventured out, only to see tongues of flame licking the walls all the way up the staircase, and the steps from top to bottom ablaze. To get to the first floor was out of the question. Then he noticed that the body of the German had disappeared. Had they taken over the house? He dared not call Girts lest an enemy bullet reply. Were they to part without a word?

The smoke was beginning to choke him, unbearable heat was closing in upon him, thick and tangible. His eyelids felt scorched, dimming his sight. He backed down into the cellar again.

Girts is upstairs, dead. I could not help him. I cannot help him.... The house will burn down, and they'll find the cellar and passage. They'll trap me and one grenade will do for me. I must go. Elmars is gone. Girts is gone. Now it's my turn.

He had longed for battle and had fought, but death had not come to him. Even death must be fought for.

Picking up the lamp, he entered the passage. When he came up against the sand bag, he blew

out the light, removed a board and stepped across into the potato cellar. For a moment he stood very still, pistol in hand, listening. In the faint reflected glow that shone in at the open door he saw a dark figure, rifle in hand, silhouetted in the doorway.

Suddenly, the twilight thickened into darkness and a hollow rumble broke the silence. The rain had come, a downpour. The rain Girts had told Zenta about, but did not live to see. It might be over as suddenly as it had started.

Reinis drew out Sniedze's knife. He leaped. The man in the doorway whirled round, seizing his rifle, but the knife was already thrust into him, sending him reeling against the door jamb. Reinis wrenched the rifle from his helpless hand, threw himself on the ground and crawled carefully riverwards, keeping close to the little clumps of osiers. He dropped the rifle into the water.

Behind the steep bank blazed the mounting fire, which not even pelting rain could quench. Suddenly, from the flames came a burst of fire followed by a brief silence. And then a single shot.

Reinis froze to the spot as though transfixed by a bullet. This was Girts' salute to life and struggle, the shot that delivered him from slavery.

Reinis found two pine logs that had run aground on the shallow bank. Casting off his blue blouse and boots to make swimming easier, he

waded into the water and set the logs afloat. The rain was still coming down in torrents. He placed the bundle containing his weapons on top of the logs, gripped one end and with vigorous leg movements propelled them to midstream. If they drifted towards either bank, it would arouse no suspicion. Drifting logs were common on the Gauja.

The burning house soon looked like the blurred view of a campfire through a steamed-up windowpane.

At times the rough black logs he was clinging to seemed to stand still, while the water lashed by the heavy rain appeared moving towards him. Its unceasing, powerful flow extended to him a strange, momentary sense of calm and security. There were only fish to share the water with him. The first act was over. Little as it might be, yet he had done something. Death had rejected him. His every limb was weary with the strain and excitement of battle, but the yearning for life and more struggle gave fresh impetus to his pulsing blood. He felt strong, even though his body was chilled by the water.

When he had passed the town, he dragged the logs ashore. It was not worth wringing out his clothes while the rain continued pouring down. He was suddenly aware of a smarting pain in the calf of his left leg, and remembered feeling it first when

Girts and he were carrying Elmars. There had been no time to think of it then. A bullet had ripped through his linen trousers, grazing the flesh. Now a slight wound showed red in the soaked pale skin, as though someone had pressed a bloody finger upon it. He tore a strip off his shirt and bandaged the leg. He could limp along. Giving the town a wide berth, he proceeded towards Zintene through woods and meadows, carefully avoiding the main roads. His parents' house might be a trap for all he knew: he could not go there before he had heard from them.

The rain abated. He stopped for a rest in the woods. Under thick branches, the pine-needles on the ground were quite dry. There he inspected his bandage which was stuck fast to the open wound. Then he wrung out his wet clothes and sat down. He was overcome with such utter exhaustion that he could have dropped off to sleep there and then, and slept till the morning sun sent the ants scurrying over his face.

But he was a quarry, pursued day and night. He picked himself up and walked on. From a heap of dry branches, he selected a stick for himself. Leaning upon it, he did not limp so badly. Drops of rain held in the thick branches came showering down upon him, and his clothes were soon soaking wet again.

Reinis was sure of his direction. Presently he came upon a small clearing with a garden, a plot of land and a forest-keeper's hut not far ahead. White window ledges gleamed in the dark. From an open window, a lamp shed its yellow light on the pink phlox blossoms in the flower-bed below. He shrank against an aspen tree at the edge of the forest, afraid a dog might bark, but nothing happened. How exquisitely cosy the room looked with its warm light streaming from the window! How wonderful to have a home! Helena and he would have a home of their own after the war.

In the wood on the Gauja banks, which he had gone through with Helena only twenty-four hours ago, the sandy path was dry. It had probably not rained here. From a pool in the meadow came the prolonged croaking of frogs.

He struck the high road. On the other side lay the path to Ezerliči. Suddenly a figure detached itself from a fir tree. Reinis' hand gripped the butt of his weapon.

"Reinis, it's you!" Helena's muffled voice was charged with joy. It was like sudden spring, when the first dark mounds emerge from the thawing snow, and people say, "The spring sun!"

"I told you I'd be waiting for you!" They were in each other's arms.

The cock's crow accompanied Reinis across the threshold of the Ezerliči shed, which was again strewn with fresh bulrushes.

* * *

It had stopped raining when the last of the house in Plava Street was consumed by flames. A desultory tongue of fire leaped from the glowing logs, a gust of wind flung a handful of sparks into the air, but the house was no more. The firing had ceased. They picked up the bodies of eight SD men, and took their wounded to hospital. The last man they found was outside the potato cellar. Stabbed in the neck, he was unable to utter a word. When he had recovered a little in the hospital, he wrote a brief statement that somebody had pounced upon him from the empty cellar. This only served to deepen the mystery of the whole affair. How many people had been harboured in that house? Perhaps all of them had escaped? It was too dark to search the debris and the neighbourhood, so they merely planted a cordon around it.

The cross-examination would bring some facts to light. There was Zenta Vinauds in the security police prison, with her child and mother-in-law. Pity the kid was too young to talk. Old Vinauds,

who was a rafter and owned the house, had been sent up the Gauja by the labour control commission a week before. They had dispatched a car to get him back while the house was still ablaze, but a call came through that the old man had gone. Someone had rung up the forest-keeper, with whom the workmen were billeted, to say that some relatives of Vinauds' had arrived from Riga. They ascertained that the call had been made from the Gerini exchange, four kilometres from Darzciems.

This complicated matters. Vinauds had been warned, which meant some unknown person was at large who had given the warning.

Zenta and her mother-in-law must be questioned again. All they had got out of Zenta on her return was that her husband was there. While the fighting was going on they could not put her through a proper cross-examination.

* * *

That Wednesday night was spent by Mr. and Mrs. Brauska at their home, a red brick building consisting of three flats and a shop on the ground floor. It was not far from the centre of town. The house had been restored to them, that is, denationalized, only a month before—the district commissar, Mr. Hansen, had in person handed Mr. Brauska the document certifying that he was once

more its rightful owner. It had been nationalized in 1940, with the goods shop run by Brauska himself and one assistant. This was the second war in Brauska's business experience, and one of many government changes, so that he knew how to make necessary provisions. Shortly before nationalization had taken place, he sent part of his stock to his brother, who was a teacher in the country. This stock consisted of strong sole-leather, nails, odds and ends essential to the building trades, all sorts of oils, cotton, soap and other indispensables, the true value of which you realize only in wartime. What's a hundred yards of cotton thread? A trifle that you can buy for twenty santimes. But now that ration cards allowed only a couple of spools a year, a woman who wanted to alter an old cotton dress would have been happy to collect all those ends of thread she used to snip off and throw away in the good old days. Who would have thought, under normal conditions, of taking the trouble to straighten a bent nail, except the over-thrifty and the very old? Now a peasant would gladly buy those crooked nails by the hundred and make his farm-hands work through their dinner-hour to get them straight. It would have been inconceivable in pre-war times to mess around with the stinking entrails of a pig and cook them with soap-stone to produce a revolting-looking green-

ish-brown cake of soap. But now a tin of soapstone was worth a tin of silver lats—for money was worth nothing.

The Brauska couple were relaxing in their spacious room. There were only a score of families in Darzciems who had rooms like this. Its two windows were hung with lace curtains; the furniture included a heavy oak sideboard with rows of coloured liqueur glasses glittering behind its glass panels, a round table, a three-forked metal candelabra and a couch on which husband and wife were now sitting.

They were eating luscious late cherries, Mr. Brauska reading the *Tevija* and his wife the picture magazine *Die Woche*. He put down the newspaper and inclined his bald head, looking at her from above his reading-glasses.

"They're returning all private property now, just as they returned our house," he pronounced in a voice incongruously high-pitched for his bulky frame, to which long years behind the counter had added a velvety touch.

"Rather late in the day! We've been fighting for them for two years, Lonija, and now they've suddenly bethought themselves to return our houses to us. D'you realize what it means? It means that the grand old firm is going bust, so they are casting about for promissory notes, even from piddling

little shopkeepers like myself, who were beneath their notice in palmier days." He paused, and added moodily, "It's not because they're generous they gave me back my property. Nor because they're flush. Why didn't I get it last year? Because some Feldwebel or other still coveted it for after the war. The moment they let me reopen my shop, I'll know they've had their day. Just listen! Fancy writing such things in a newspaper!" He poked his finger into the *Tevija*. "For coupon K-5, period 15, you can get 2.5 litres of skimmed milk." He popped a few cherries into his mouth.

Seeing that her husband would not let her read, Mrs. Brauska closed the magazine from whose cover smiled a lad of the labour service, stripped to the waist, with a shovel over his shoulder. She was younger than her husband. Small and delicate in build, she could well afford to wear that white dress, horizontally striped, that would have been unbecoming on a more corpulent woman. Her deeply tanned face was framed with natural little curls, almost black. She always dressed very neatly, even when doing chores or tending her garden: the labour control would not let the Brauskas keep a maid.

"There's no pleasing you!" she said. "The Russians nationalized our shop and house. Now the

Germans give it back, and all you do is grumble! What is it you want?"

"I want to live in peace, Lonija! I want to go on selling my herrings and chimneys for petrol lamps another ten years, and then pass the shop on to Zigurds and the house to Zenta, while we two sit back and eat cherries." He smiled dreamily. "Let's go to the flicks."

"Wait, I'll see what's on tonight." She picked up the local *Talavas Tauretajs*. Here, it's *Ungeküsst soll man nicht schlafen gehen*—no, that was last night. Today they're showing *Wenn die Götter lieben*. Don't let's go! You'll see more of those naked German ladies than is good for you."

"All right, let's stay in. It's going to rain, anyway," he agreed. He rolled himself a cigarette and leaned out of the window so that the biting smoke should not irritate his wife. An explosion was heard in the distance, followed by a report.

"Training," Brauska observed. "Whether they train or not, once they've returned my house it means they're getting the worst of it. The English dither too much, that's the only trouble."

They went into the kitchen. Mr. Brauska lit the fire, and Mrs. Brauska put a good dollop of margarine on the frying-pan to cook the pike.

There was a knock at the door.

"Who's there?" asked Brauska.

"It's me ... Girts," came a muffled voice.

Both Brauskas went white. They stared at each other.

"It can't be ... he's over on the other side," Mrs. Brauska murmured. The pike was burning in the pan, sending up a cloud of smoke.

"It can't possibly be true. And if we ... we can't just. . . ." Brauska's eyes grew dim with fear. Then he pulled himself together, put his lips close to the keyhole and said:

"What do you want? I don't know you."

"It's Girts. I've come from Zenta," the voice persisted. "Let me in!"

"I said I don't know you. Will you please go away!" Brauska said emphatically.

Suddenly the voice behind the door rose to a command.

"Open at once! Gestapo!" Somebody started rattling the handle with all his might.

"Open. . ." Mrs. Brauska said tonelessly, and Brauska turned the key in the lock.

Three security officers entered. After a perfunctory search, one of them remained in the hall while the other two took the Brauskas to headquarters. There they were separated, and Mr. Brauska was ushered into Elzin's office.

In the half-dark room, two men sat by a large table. One wore an SD uniform with brown shirt

and black tie, the other was in civvies. Since Brauska could speak German passably well, the uniformed German did the questioning without the interpreter's help.

The lamp threw a circle of light upon Brauska, who sat with his head pulled in between hunched shoulders, his fingers nervously twitching on his knees. The German contemplated him in silence, wondering what method to apply in order to extort all he knew. Presently he put his revolver on the table and said:

"You are in the hands of the German security police. You know what it means. You are charged with supporting the partisans. I suppose the implications are clear to you."

"But I never . . . I never. . . ." Brauska's thin voice quavered.

"It is a capital offence," the German went on. "If you make a clean breast of everything. . . ."

"But I've no idea. . . . Ask your questions, I'll. . . . It's just absurd, all this. Ask me anything. . . ." There was such panic in his face that the officer felt no doubt he would soon know everything this man might know.

"Where's your son, Zigurds?"

"In Germany. Near Magdeburg. He wanted to study, so he joined the labour service. Here's his address. . . ."

"When was he here on leave?"

"It's almost a year since he was with us last. He was on his way back, but the road was bombed. He'll be home for good quite soon. I had a letter from him. . . ."

"We'll check on this. And where's your daughter Zenta?"

"At No. 14, Plava Street."

"Why doesn't she live with you?"

"Ah, I never wanted her to go, sir, but there you are," Brauska cried with genuine dismay. "I couldn't get her to see my point. . . ."

Zenta married that man, Vinauds, in 1940, he told the officer, in Riga. Just like that, without a wedding. When their shop had been nationalized, he had finally quarrelled with his son-in-law, but had felt sorry for his girl. The last he had seen of Girts was on July 2, 1941, when he had brought Zenta to stay with them. They had placed her in the Darzciems Maternity Clinic, and Vinauds had left. After the child was born, Zenta had come to live with them. Last summer they had urged that she resume her studies at the Economics department, but she had waved them away saying what was the good of it in wartime. She might have resumed anyhow, but in August she suddenly told them there was something wrong with little Ziedite's lungs, that the doctor had advised goat's milk

and country air, that Darzciems, with its stone buildings, was bad for the child. So Zenta had moved to the Vinauds' place in Plava Street. She had always been wilful and far too independent. They'd tried to argue, but what could they do? He had got her a clerical job at the slaughterhouse through the labour control. Zenta came often to see them, and they helped her as best they could, especially with food, so the little one would recover.

"Is that all you know? If you keep back the slightest detail, you'll never get home," warned the German with his hand on the revolver butt. The muzzle reflected the lamplight, and Brauska gazed at it spellbound till his eyes ached.

"Yes, sir. I've told you everything."

Further questioning brought nothing important to light.

"Think it over till tomorrow morning. Couldn't there be something your daughter Zenta was keeping from you? Did you never suspect that she was meeting somebody?"

A terrible apprehension came over Brauska. His shrewd business mind quickly added up the facts: Gints, Zenta's sudden removal to Plava Street, all the money he had given her, and the food. Once she had taken a radio valve from home because one of the Vinauds' had blown, but he remem-

bered the Vinauds did not have a radio before the war. Then she had asked him for a shirt, to alter into a blouse for herself, though they had plenty of material to choose from. And why this comedy about Girts tonight, when the agents wanted to enter?

He broke into a sweat, his fingers clamping themselves tightly about his knees. What he had told the German was all true, absolutely true; but nobody could make him string these details into a story that would be perfectly feasible, and extremely dangerous to Zenta.

Zenta, darling girl. Damn those Communists if they've roped you into their affairs!

"No, my Zenta is a good girl. She goes to church with us," he said aloud. "I swear that I have told you the whole truth." His voice rang with pitiful despair.

"We'll check on it," the German replied curtly. He was irritated; he had found out nothing and, moreover, felt convinced that this frightened little shopkeeper really knew nothing more.

"You'd better think it over once more, until tomorrow."

Brauska was conducted to a solitary cell.

A few minutes later, Mrs. Brauska was sitting in the same chair, while the German was looking over her svelte figure and distinguished face. Her

papers showed that she was forty-five, but she was still very attractive with her firm body, soft brown tan, the natural curl in her short, black hair and the proud look in her grey eyes. However, if that shrewd husband of hers knew so little, there was certainly not much to be got out of his wife, he thought regretfully. She looked anything but timid, sitting very upright, one leg crossed over the other, hands folded in her lap. Her fingers did not twitch as her husband's had done. No use playing with the revolver.

"Love from your son-in-law, Girts," he said by way of an opening.

A look of real surprise came over Mrs. Brauska's face.

"Where is he?" she asked in German, very slowly.

"If your daughter Zenta knows—we have no doubt that you know, too."

"Zenta knows no more than we do. They parted at the beginning of July, 1941," she said with conviction.

"Zenta is charged with keeping contact with partisans, that is, with her husband. You realize this is a heavy charge. Fortunately, she has made a full confession; now we ask you to tell us all you know or guess, so we may get a clear picture

of the whole story and save your daughter from severe punishment."

Mrs. Brauska's tan was washed with pallor, the slightly turned-up nose seemed to sink into her face, and the provokingly pouting lips sagged.

"Like a startled hen," the German thought, seeing there was hardly any hope of obtaining information.

She had realized immediately that Zenta was arrested, perhaps Girts too; they had probably been meeting, and Zenta had moved to Plava Street for that purpose.

Without taking her eyes off the green shade of the table lamp, she told him all she knew. The story tallied in every detail with what he had just heard from Mr. Brauska. All his questioning was not even rewarded with the name of a friend or acquaintance of their daughter's who might have been sounded for further information. Mrs. Brauska was no fool, she could well imagine now why Zenta had taken home every bit of medicine she could lay hands on, and why she had been so thick with her former schoolmate, Ozolina, who worked at the chemist's. "We're doing a bit of speculating together," she had told her mother. Well, these days speculating was a matter of credit rather than otherwise. But why had Zenta taken such keen interest in those German security police

officers across the road? Why should she have been so curious about their wives, mistresses and their Latvian friends, if she herself refused to have anything to do with them? Then—the money she had given Zenta, though she had all she wanted and had never been inclined to extravagance!

With a shock of horror, Mrs. Brauska admitted to herself that the German might well be right.

She had been dismayed with Zenta's choice of a husband. He was not the sort of son-in-law who would fit into Darzciems society. But as time went by, she had adjusted herself to the inevitable; she had even grown to like Girts' happy disposition and his great energy. In her own youth, she might have acted like her daughter. She observed with a note of pride that Zenta had inherited her own wilful, independent nature. But what should she think of Girts now? If what the German said was true, was not Girts a real scoundrel to have pushed Zenta into this terrible misfortune? While keeping to the truth, Mrs. Brauska was aware, as her husband had been, that Zenta's safety must come first. What could be closer to her heart?

"Zenta has knitted three pairs of gloves for the National Aid Committee," she added irrelevantly, and fell silent, tightening her lips. She determined to weigh everything she said.

The German was beginning to believe that Zenta really had been too clever for her parents, whose own trustworthiness stood beyond any doubt.

"Is Zenta here?" Mrs. Brauska asked.

"She is, for the time being, until we get everything straight. That's why we want you to help, so that your daughter may be released. Think it over. If anything enters your mind, come and tell us."

They allowed her to go home. The police agent remained in the hall of her flat till the following evening.

* * *

When the house went up in flames, Zenta, her little daughter and Girts' mother were hustled into a car and rushed to town. From the bridge, they caught a last glimpse of the mounting fire behind the aspen trees. That was all there was left of their home ... and of Girts. The two lonely women would have to continue the struggle themselves as best they could. At the security police quarters, they were separated, each left to carry on alone.

Zenta was called in at about midnight. Her child remained sleeping on the thin straw mattress. She was ushered into Brenner's office. A chandelier shed its brilliant light over the warm brown furniture. Vizemanis sprawled in a deep

armchair in the corner by a round table, his head, with its sparse blond hair, resting against the chair back; he seemed completely absorbed in the business of exhaling clouds of smoke from his cigarette.

Little Brenner was seated at his desk, turning over some papers, jerking his head from side to side as he read them. When Zenta stepped into the room, he turned his large brown eyes upon her. A secretary in uniform was sitting in front of a typewriter table.

Zenta's chair was placed to one side, so that Brenner could watch her more conveniently. The pallor of her exhausted face was enhanced by neat dark hair, rolled up above her forehead as was the fashion. Her grey eyes, under very black eyebrows gazed unseeingly as though all thoughts were turned inwards.

She sat with hands quietly folded, aware of her position, yet feeling miles away from the brightness of this room. She knew with her heart what had happened to Girts. He had left her alone.... The glaring electric light reflected by the glass plate on the desk dazzled her eyes, yet she felt wrapped in darkness, as though standing exhausted on a little mound in the middle of a mire through which she had waded endlessly. Wherever she looked there was boggy water, and nowhere to find a firm foothold. Zenta had no belief

in superior powers guiding her life, but suddenly a childhood memory came to mind—a vision of her grandmother teaching her prayers. While waiting for the first question, she repeated to herself, as though praying to her own will-power, "Give me peace and calm ... give me peace and calm ... make me calm. . . ."

"We can manage without an interpreter, can't we?" Brenner asked in a clear, high-pitched voice that befitted his height.

Zenta nodded.

"Your crime is a heavy one. Supporting partisans is punishable with death. Your husband is dead. All you can do under the circumstances is to save your own life. There's nothing more you can save. You haven't told us others were in the house. Yet we have proof that other people were there. You can save yourself by speaking the truth. It's your only chance."

So it's true, it has happened. Give me calm. She was weeping. "Don't cry, you can't see me through tears. . ." Girts' words came back. But he was no more, the one person who could give her comfort. Give me calm. You knew you might find yourself here in this room one day, didn't you? What is he, this Brenner from Königsberg? This is not his country, he wasn't born in it, he wasn't bred in it, and now he has come here to set him-

self up as your judge. No! Those others are still alive, and they must be saved, they must be saved....

"Who else was in the house, apart from your husband?"

"I saw nobody... maybe there were others, but my husband told me nothing, and I saw nobody."

"You're lying! Your husband turned up last August. You knew he was a Communist. Yet you joined him. Why did you do it?"

"He was my husband."

"If you had informed us, he would be alive now, and you would be free."

"He was my husband, and I knew he'd done nothing wrong."

"In your opinion, there's nothing wrong in rising against Germany? Did I get you right?"

"You invaded us."

"Hm-m," Brenner drawled. "And if, say, the British or the Swedes had conquered you, would you fight them?"

"I would ... against all invaders...."

Brenner did not raise his voice, and this gave Zenta the strength to reply. She did not consider her words. Too late to hide her convictions. She must hide what they did not know.

"I respect your patriotism, but you are under a misapprehension. No one has invaded you. The

German army is fighting against Communism, which deprived your father of all he had acquired in honest labour. You can still atone for your mistakes. I think we can close this argument." His voice hardened. "Who else was in the house, apart from your husband?"

Give me calm.... If I betray Girts' comrades, I betray Girts. They are alive, they are fighting. The Germans have no right to be their judges!

"I saw only my own husband."

The glass-topped desk suddenly seemed red to Zenta, as though stained with blood. This must be the place, she thought, where hundreds of death sentences had been signed. She had been keeping a record of all the murders perpetrated in Darzciems since the Hitlerite army came to rule there. In July 1941, on the third day of the new order, came the first eighteen. Then nineteen. Then one hundred and thirty, and in August, forty-five. Then there was a group of people every week. And one day in April 1942, a hundred and eighty. Tied together with a rope, they were driven across fields outside the prison to a large grave in the middle of the forest. A volley was fired. Not all were hit, but fastened to each other as they were, those who fell dragged the others with them into the grave, which was quickly covered up. Later on, Brenner introduced a strict regime.

Executions took place on Friday mornings. Let me see, isn't it Thursday today? They shoot on Fridays.... She saw blood wherever she looked: blotches of blood on the table; bloody fingerprints on the black fountain-pen; the red flower design on the green carpet was worked in blood. The room was filling with pale, lifeless faces whose unseeing eyes and lips were frozen in expressions of pain.... That one with the loose, long hair was her friend, Gita. They shot her because she was head mistress of the school. That little flaxen-haired kid was Vitolin, the shepherd boy. His mother used to sweep the street outside the Brauskas' house. The boy was shot for showing militiamen the shortest way to retreat through the forest. The room was thronged with shadows of the dead, and from behind the wall came the weeping of their next of kin.

Give me calm.... When Zenta raised her eyes, it seemed to Brenner that her face had frozen to a mask of indifference. After an hour's cross-examination, they only knew she had moved to the house in Plava Street on account of Ziedite's health, and that one night her husband had come to her. He had lived in the cellar and had not initiated her into any of his secrets. Sometimes he would disappear for the night. Of course Zenta had fed him and looked after him. Wasn't he her hus-

band? She had been afraid to notify the police. He had asked her to get him paper, but had not told her what he wanted it for. Perhaps he kept a diary—he used to write stories once upon a time.

"If you persist in lying, you'll be shot tomorrow morning," Vizemanis remarked from his corner, sounding infinitely bored.

When they brought her back to the cell, Ziedite was fast asleep. Zenta stretched out beside her and gave vent to tears. "We are both orphans, you and I. You poor little orphan...."

As she listened to the child's quiet breathing, a terrible thought struck her. Would she be equally steadfast if they brought Ziedite in while she was cross-examined? Oh, don't let it happen....

* * *

It was Mother Vinauds' turn to sit in the chair before Brenner. She was a woman about fifty, wizened and hunched, with a white kerchief tied round her head. Her face was buried in her calloused hands—a warder had hastened to tell her gleefully, though he himself did not know for sure, that her son was dead.

Her heart was an open wound, and however important it might be for the examiners to get information, she showed no response. Time and

time again they yelled at her, first Brenner, then Vizemanis:

"Who was in the house? Come on, out with it! We'll shoot you if you don't talk! Who are your husband's friends?" How unfortunate that the old man had been warned!

"I gave food to my son," she repeated monotonously.

A simple person wants simple methods, they decided. The secretary called in an SD man.

He was a lean, lanky youth, in a much creased grey uniform. His aspect was strikingly sullen and his eyes puffed, which, added to his slouching gait, created the impression that he slept just outside the door and was roused whenever wanted.

Pointing to the old woman, Brenner said in German, "She won't confess. Go ahead, Harry, but remember we want to question her again today."

"Come on," said the lanky youth in Lettish. Taking the woman by the shoulder, he led her into an adjoining room. The secretary followed.

A narrow leatherette-covered bench stood on the brown linoleum floor. Before she could notice anything else, a punch in the back threw her prone upon the bench. Her arms went up as though to protect her head against blows.

They beat her with rubber cudgels, stopping

now and then to ask whether she would confess. But so great was the ache in her heart for her only son that she rarely felt the blows. It was as though salt had been sprinkled on a gash in her breast, and the burn of it dulled all outside pain. Girts, my little one, playing in the sand near the Gauja! How I would scold you, so that you shouldn't wade in all by yourself where the water sprite could snatch you away. Go ahead, beat me! It's nothing to the hurt inside me! Oh, Girts... you were quite a big boy already; but when Father came home tired from the forest you would still polish and grease his top-boots for him. And when you earned your first money chopping wood with him, you bought me a chequered handkerchief. I still have it. It's in the top drawer. No, I haven't. It was burnt in the same fire that consumed you.... Hit me, hit me hard, so I can feel nothing else....

"Ready to confess?" the lad asked, a little weary from his efforts.

There was no answer. Mother Vinauds had lost consciousness. They examined her. Must have been shock: a rubber cudgel couldn't knock out a person so easily. The two men carried her back to the cell to let her come round.

Mother Vinauds opened her eyes. It was dark in the cell. In the barred window square, she

could see the shadowy outline of a tree. Its rain-heavy leaves were rustling in the wind.

The pain in her body stirred her memory. Girts, my own little boy, you are gone.... Why should we live, Father and I.... Girts, you could have crushed those brutes, you were so strong. You are no more, but I shall do as you told me. I shan't say a word. They won't know where you went. They won't know the names of your comrades from me. They won't know that one of the closest was your own father; that you two dismantled the railway track; that your father took the leaflets Zenta typed and passed them on to other comrades in Lejasciems. Girts, you once told me never to say a word. You were a good son. That chequered handkerchief got burnt along with you. What if they beat me again? If I have the strength ... speak at all ... what if I say something wrong? Girts, where are you? Father will understand. You're strong, Father. We've had a hard life, but you've been good to me. I must not say a word.

Sitting up made her whole body burn and smart. Quick, before they come again....

When Harry arrived an hour later with some assistants to conduct the old woman to Brenner—an hour should be long enough to think matters over—they found her sitting peacefully on her

bunk, as after a hard day's work, hands folded in her lap. Her head in the white kerchief was tilted to one side, and she did not raise it even when they shouted.

"Come on, up you get! We're not going to beat you!"

She did not stir. They approached her, a little apprehensively, to pull her up by the shoulders; then they noticed the strip of twisted white cloth that led from her neck to the window bars.

It was beyond the power of the security police to extort anything from Mother Vinauds.

* * *

Early next morning they made a careful search through the debris of the house and found the remains of two bodies. Girts Vinauds' health certificate was produced from the archives of the Darzciems secondary school. A pedantic school doctor had made meticulous entries after every examination, and a description of the teeth enabled them to identify one body as Girts'. The other body remained unidentified. They came upon the ruins of the cellar, the battered typewriter, and finally upon the underground passage to the Gauja. An investigation of footprints showed that one person had escaped. On the river bank, they

picked up a blue work blouse and an old pair of laced boots. These were handed over to the chief of the district police, and for several days Schutzmanns, pagast policemen and aizsargs came to look at the things. Frickalns of Gauri came along too, examined the boots, the blouse and the contents of the pockets comprised of two nails and a square bit of newspaper torn out of *Talavas Tauretajs*, apparently for rolling a smoke. But the same sort of blouse with faded shoulders was worn by hundreds of men in every pagast, and it gave no clue to its possible owner.

The toll of the siege was four Germans of the local gendarmerie, one SS man and three of the special Latvian SD company. From their reserve stock, the Darzciems undertakers supplied eight coffins with crucifixes nailed to the tops. However, five of these crosses were immediately draped with swastika banners, which seemed rather a waste of scarce goods. The Germans were interred in the German military cemetery, outside Darzciems New Cemetery by the birch drive. A military clergyman, in uniform and shiny topboots, dwelt on the struggle of Grossdeutschland and, as a member of the Nazi party, concluded with references to the Teutonic sword and Valhalla where Germanic gods resided.

Driving back from the cemetery, Brenner said

to his chauffeur, "It wasn't bad at all, really. The coffins looked quite presentable, like in Germany. On the battle-field they'd be given brown paper bags."

The coffins were made of resinous Latvian pine, and it would take a long time before the tiny inhabitants of graveyard mounds could eat their way into them. But they were doomed to eternal destruction along with the earthly remains, because they were not adorned with real glory. When the flowers on the wreaths had wilted, they were never replaced by fresh ones.

* * *

That same day, the carpenter's workshop of Darzciems prison received an urgent order for a wooden box, two metres by seventy centimetres, which was immediately dispatched to town. The figures 3 and 4 were inscribed on a little board. A warder and three prisoners walked out to the spinney near by known as Stag Park, since some thirty years earlier a Darzciems baron used to breed stags and deer there. A hunting lodge built of crude logs and several overgrown tracks still bore witness to old times. The day was bright and sunny, the air washed fresh by last night's rain. They came upon a little clearing enclosed by

thick raspberry bushes, from which the sun drew their full fragrance. These were interspersed with small beady brambleberry bushes. The clearing was hemmed in by a dark-green, velvety wall of fir, whose intertwining branches were tipped with the soft, bright shoots of this summer.

At one end of the clearing were two fresh mounds, with little boards at their heads showing the figures 1 and 2. It was the cemetery for those who died a natural death in Darzciems prison and had no relatives.

While the men dug a new grave, a cart came jolting and clattering along the forest road. The prisoners lifted out a newly-made box, and the cart made off.

"Is it those?.." a prisoner asked the warder quietly.

"It is," the warder replied. They understood each other, for last night's battle was on everyone's lips. News of the eight coffins had spread as swiftly as the reports of the shots.

They knew all about it in prison, too. News like this was borne on the wings of birds, to whom the highest barbed-wire fence was no obstacle. The little bird who brought it to the Darzciems prisoners inspired them with new joy and strength. The battle for their freedom continued! It was fought

not only at the front, but right here, and throughout the country. They must endure.

This warder wasn't a bad fellow. Though he did stick to his jailer's job, he never tried to profit at the prisoners' expense.

They finished digging a grave in the red sand. The little clearing lay perfectly still in its seclusion. Sometimes a bird whirred up from a branch. There was a smell of woods and meadow in the air. Each drop of resin, each overripe crimson raspberry, each birch leaf so glossy green it seemed to perspire in the sweltering heat, each little blade of grass, each pine-needle sent up its own fragrance. This was the breath of living nature.

They lined the grave with creepers and fir twigs and brought up the box with the remains of their fallen warriors. Somebody made a wreath of bilberry branches and put it on top. The three prisoners stood with bent heads, holding their striped linen caps in their hands. The warder stepped aside and removed his cap too, on pretext of wiping his wet face.

These two comrades had given their lives, never asking whether their struggle would be acknowledged with as much as this crude pine box. They had towered above the others, they had seen farther into the future. It is the tallest trees that the tempest breaks first.

Their coffin was lowered into the grave, with the little wreath of Latvia's evergreen bilberry as its sole token of reverence.

* * *

On Thursday afternoon, Vizemanis and Elzin sat in the dark office discussing further steps. The operation was not completed. They had quenched the fire, but there was no telling where the sparks had dropped.

Towards the end of their talk, Elzin remarked he saw no point in keeping Brauska any longer, and that Brenner agreed. This man was, after all, one of them. So why get his back up?

Gazing thoughtfully at the white carnation in the buttonhole of Elzin's light summer suit, Vizemanis observed in a non-committal tone, "You know, Vitauts, I need money. Very badly, too. I've got plenty of it in Riga, of course, but I happened to meet a very beautiful and very expensive lady here. I could do with a ring or something. As far as I know, Brauska does a bit of speculation, doesn't he?"

This was said in a matter-of-fact way, but it made Elzin jump. Who could have nosed out those parcels which he, at the request of his father, the old chemist, had taken to Riga and delivered

to various friends of Brauska? Of course Elzin was clever enough to guess they had contained butter. Did Vizemanis also know that he, Elzin, had helped hush up matters when a man of the Todt building organization was caught selling soap to Brauska at twenty-five marks a kilogramme?

"Maybe he does. Everybody speculates," he grunted, pulling nervously at the drawer of his desk.

"I think I'll start an action against him for speculation. The facts are easy to provide. Yes, I think I'll take him to task. I'll get Brenner to agree."

"Will it be worth it..." Elzin said, puckering up his face in what could be either a smile or an expression of displeasure. Brauska was easily cowed: might give him away.

"Worth it? Of course it will." Vizemanis stared at his friend provocatively.

They parted without deciding upon anything definite. It was fortunate for Elzin, however, that Mrs. Brauska soon announced herself, asking to be received.

She had been waiting in vain for her husband's return and, as she knew what had taken place in Plava Street the night before, she decided to come in person to inquire about Zenta and to help her

if possible. It was her nature to act resolutely in moments of crisis.

She entered, neatly dressed in a blue tailor-made suit, but dark rings shadowed her eyes since the night's interrogation.

"May I ask why you are detaining my husband?" she asked very deliberately, with an effort to speak clearly, as though afraid of saying a wrong word. She was well aware that in this institution every word, every smile and every sigh were duly appraised.

"Umph," Elzin growled. "We have suspicions that your husband has been engaged in illegal traffic with rationed goods."

Aha, so it's speculation, Mrs. Brauska thought, relieved. That's not the worst. She remembered that they had discussed it once and decided that, if the Germans got at them for it, they would find the right person to pay off.

"May I ask who is in charge of his case?" she asked without beating around the bush.

"Ah, yes, certainly, it is Hauptsturmführer Vizemanis from Riga."

"Adalberts Vizemanis?" Mrs. Brauska knew all the important people of Darzciems and the neighbourhood.

"That's right."

"Where could I see Mr. Vizemanis?"

While they were settling this matter, Mrs. Brauska's voice was calm and suave. Now it suddenly broke and quivered, as she asked, "And . . . and what about my daughter?"

"Yes, your daughter," Elzin drawled. "I can't tell you anything about her yet. She is still under examination. But don't worry, our institution deals fairly with people."

Risking the previous method, she asked bluntly, "And who . . . who is investigating?"

This time it did not work. Elzin stopped her rather abruptly, saying that he could furnish no information, the procedure of investigation must not be interfered with. Mrs. Brauska finally prevailed upon him to let her send some clothes to Zenta and the child, Brenner's assistant permitting. As to food parcels, Elzin remained adamant.

An hour later she was back at the security police with some underwear, a couple of freshly ironed blouses, and children's clothing that she had hastily borrowed from a neighbour. All Ziedite's belongings were lost in the fire.

Back home, she dressed with special care, selecting a fashionable frock with large shoulder-pads, a little longer than austerity fashion, to befit her age, although her slender legs were worth exposing. Mrs. Brauska knew the advantage of a

chic, slightly flirtatious appearance in an interview with an influential man.

When she had made the best of herself, she proceeded to the detached house in Bastion Street which Vizemanis had made his residence. It was a modern building with wide, triple-paned windows; on the smooth lawn outside grew bushes of lovely, long-stemmed roses. Its previous owner, a textile manufacturer called Cimbulis, had left it to his sister and her son, Harry, who worked in the security police.

Harry was alone at home; suppressing a yawn he asked Mrs. Brauska into the drawing-room. Like all merchants in a small town, the Brauskas and the Cimbulises were well acquainted.

"Harry, do you know anything about Zenta?" Mrs. Brauska asked timidly. He and Zenta had gone to school together in Darzciems.

The young man's mind was still rather fuzzy after a hard night's work and more drinks than he could hold in the morning. His hair hung loose over his ears, his face was haggard, and the heavy lids were dropping over his inflamed eyes. He lit himself a cigarette and coughed violently as he inhaled.

"All Communists must be bumped off," he coughed out.

Mrs. Brauska felt a twinge in her heart.

"But Zenta ... Zenta couldn't hurt a fly...."
"What do I know? Ask Vizemanis. Here he comes."

The tall Hauptsturmführer with the fleshy nose was indeed coming up the path.

He ran an approving eye over the pretty, well-dressed woman. What beautifully tanned hands! A rare sight even in Riga!

"I have come about my husband..." she said as soon as Harry had left the room.

Vizemanis promised her to look into the matter and have a word with Brenner.

"Couldn't you ... couldn't you do something in behalf of Zenta, Zenta Vinauds, she's my daughter...?"

At this, Vizemanis' face froze as though, instead of Mrs. Brauska's imploring and trembling voice, he had heard a murder threat.

"The case is being investigated. I can tell you nothing." Then, after a moment's hesitation, he added, "Perhaps in a week."

That evening, Mr. Brauska returned to his flat, and Vizemanis, having finished work about midnight, went to see his beautiful and expensive lady, carrying in his pocket a gold emerald ring.

* * *

Some relatives of the Vinauds' who lived in the neighbourhood were detained on suspicion; some people who had known Zenta or worked with her were questioned, all to no avail. Staicele and the wood by the Gauja where old Vinauds had worked last were kept under permanent observation. However, Zenta still remained the only possible source of information, and so far she had only added trivial details to her original statement. Her husband used to listen to Moscow Radio, she told them; sometimes he disappeared for days on end, saying he was visiting friends but never mentioning their names. She spoke convincingly, and it was difficult to prove she knew more.

She always looked neat and trim in the blouses and frocks her mother had sent her, and her dark hair was always carefully arranged. Only her face was paler every time, and her eyes more sunken, veiled by a lingering mist of tears that dimmed her vision of grim reality, helping her shrink back into an inner world to which investigators had no access.

Every time the questioning began, Zenta would send up her silent prayer for calm. It became a habit with her, like those moments of deep concentration at school parties when she sat down at the piano to play. Now the music was a sombre requiem. The sublime chords of heavenly tunes

could not enter here. The echo of hand-grenades blasting the house in Plava Street still trembled in the air, accompanied by faint, far-away tolling of funeral knells. No, no, these were not funeral knells, but the autumnal sighing of rain-heavy pines that stretched their feathered branches across the long dunes on the Gauja banks.

"If you don't tell us everything, you will be shot," Vizemanis drawled once more, in the same impassive tone that indicated her case was a very ordinary one and she was not to expect any lenience.

Zenta ran a listless eye over the bald patch on his crown fringed with thin, fair hair, and his grey eyes, half-concealed by a receding forehead, deeply set and very close to the prominent nose.

Straightening the black tie worn with his brown regulation shirt, he added, "You'll be shot, and I, for one, will live. It is so much nicer to live than to die, don't you think?"

"I doubt whether you will find it very nice . . . whether they'll let you live here. . ." Zenta uttered quietly, as though talking to herself.

"Aha, so that's where the wind blows. Well, there are plenty of places on the map. Many towns are marked. Darzciems isn't the only one. The main thing is that I shall live, and you'll be shot. Unless you speak up!"

"The wolves in the woods also live, until. . . ."

"Next time we're going to beat you," he said, as she was leaving the room.

But they remembered Mother Vinauds, and were not at all sure beating would be of any use. So they did not touch Zenta, but thought up other methods instead.

Prison was hard on little Ziedite. Although they allowed her a daily ration of skimmed milk, she was pining away. Zenta could hardly bear it when the child pattered over to the door, groping with a puzzled look for a handle that was not there, and then looked back at her mother, demanding: "Mum, walk. . . ."

Zenta lifted her up on her shoulder and took her to the high window. Clasping the bars in her tiny fists, Ziedite babbled all the words she knew.

"Blossom, sand," she said. "Mum, walk!"

Zenta stood by the window until her feet could not bear the weight any more. Then she stretched out on the bunk and tried to lull the child to sleep. For in her sleep, Ziedite did not demand to be delivered from prison.

Following the second cross-examination, and every time after, Zenta asked them to let her mother, Mrs. Brauska, take the child. Though the prison cell, and all that was left to her, would then seem void, her daughter must live—this was

one of the things she and Girts had been fighting for.

They refused.

"A mother is irreplaceable. You agree, don't you?" Vizemanis said sympathetically.

Once, returning from Brenner's room in utter exhaustion, she threw herself down on her knees by the bunk where she had put Ziedite to sleep a little earlier. Her eyes could not at once adjust themselves to the semi-darkness of the cell, and thus it took her some minutes to realize that only Ziedite's little coat was lying there. The child was gone.

With frenzied haste, she tore the rug off the bed, then flung herself on the floor to see if the child had perhaps hidden underneath. There was nowhere else to look in the cell.

"My child. . . ." Clutching the little coat, she rushed to the door and collapsed.

A pair of cold eyes, set deep beneath arched brows, watched through the spyhole in the door.

When she came to, she was conducted to Brenner's room, the warden supporting her. On his table stood a vase holding red carnations.

She slumped down on the chair, very frail, and utterly broken. Her hair fell in tangled waves about her ashen face. Throwing her head back, she pressed her hands to her heart and gasped:

"Where is my child? Give me back my child!"

"As soon as you tell us everything you know, we'll return her to you. If you don't, you'll never see her again," came Brenner's thin, clear voice.

Zenta suffered agonies. Her child was all her life now. No, they were using this to threaten her. It was merely a threat. Don't let me talk.... They're brutes to use a threat like this. I must fight back.

"I've told you all I know. Give me my child! My mind is empty.... I'll go crazy...." This was all she said.

Why speak of the night she spent crouching on the floor of her cell, her ear pressed against the door, hoping to hear Ziedite's voice outside?

They brought the child back a day later, having achieved nothing. Ziedite had spent the night in the women's cell, where six prisoners, remembering their small sisters and their own children, had taken care of the little girl as though she belonged to them, and had watched over her in turns.

Ten days later, Zenta and Ziedite were put into a closed car and taken away. The car dashed through town at full speed, and only when it jostled into a side-road did Zenta manage to see the surroundings. Green fields of late clover extended on either side. She felt dazed after the

half-light of the prison cell. What a lot of green still existed in the world, and what a lot of life and freedom! How the swallows darted to and fro above the fields! When they soared up high, they disappeared from her view. Truly, the field was like a carpet of green velvet, with a pink pattern of clover blossoms woven into it.

They were taken to Darzciems prison and locked in a tiny cell, just the two of them.

Brenner, Vizemanis, Elzin and the rest acknowledged with genuine regret they could not extort further information from Zenta. Nor were they convinced, for that matter, that there was more to extort. She had said so little, they could not involve her in contradictions. They had no use for her, for the time being.

"This is a sign of real depravity, if people from our own circles—yes, from our own circles —behave like that Brauska girl," Elzin said ruefully.

"There's no more serious offence than desertion, and it must be punished accordingly," Vizemanis added judiciously.

* * *

On Mr. Brauska's return, husband and wife were overwhelmed with joy at freedom regained. True, they were short of a ring and one thousand

marks, but this did not exceed what Mr. Brauska had shrewdly bargained for. He had been keeping the money, hidden in the hollowed-out leg of a table, for just such an emergency.

They now started considering how to help Zenta. All Mrs. Brauska had achieved so far was permission to send her clothes and underwear. They were well aware that "assisting partisans" was a far cry from speculation. The crime was considerably greater.

"It's a sin to talk ill of the dead, I know, but why did Girts lure her into this? Couldn't he live in that house by himself?" Thus Mr. Brauska complained to his wife, heaving a deep sigh, as they sat together on their couch on Friday night.

"Don't you think Zenta may have joined him of her own accord, just as she married him?" Mrs. Brauska asked thoughtfully, stitching away at a little vest for Ziedite. When a mother makes baby clothes, she is imbued with the deep love of generations of mothers, and at this moment Mrs. Brauska could not hate anybody, not even Girts.

"Even if she did," Brauska remonstrated, "even if Zenta wanted to join him and do these things, Girts shouldn't have let her. But these fellows never consider other people. Incidentally, I saw old Spelmanis today about those nails. He's an old customer of mine, and he just shook his head over

our son-in-law. He was almost too scared to talk to me, as though I, too, were. . . ."

"Ah, but when I was fetching the milk from old Muspertene, people there were also talking about it. They say all Darzciems is buzzing with how Girts and his boys made mincemeat out of the Germans. They say twelve were shot, and not eight, but the Germans are trying to hush it up. I'm sorry that . . . that Ziedite will grow up without a father. But Zenta . . . if the Germans have any sense of justice at all, they'll keep her in prison and leave it at that. Come to think of it, what harm has she done?" Mrs. Brauska put aside her sewing.

She rose and walked to the window, where a little bee, entangled in the curtain lace, was buzzing desperately. She opened the window and shook out God's little creature. Since Zenta's imprisonment, she had developed a strange obsession: she could not bear to hear their Alsatian, Zultan, tug at his chain at night. She would go down into the yard to let him off.

"Justice? I wouldn't trust them an inch," Mr. Brauska cried with asperity and started rolling himself a cigarette. "Money, that's all they want, money!"

When the acrid smoke had dispersed they sat down to take stock of their property.

A few days later, Mrs. Brauska again donned the dress with the large shoulder-pads and daring neckline, put on some lipstick and betook herself to Bastion Street.

That night a gold bracelet passed into Vizemanis' possession. Presuming that the Brauskas probably had more to give, he said to the wife:

"The investigation is still proceeding, Madam. Leave it to the efficiency of our institutions. Perhaps you could call again early next week. Ah, but on Tuesday I am going to Riga for a couple of days. A friend of mine is having a little celebration. Incidentally, strictly between you and me, do you know where I could get some butter, for example, or any other victuals?"

Mrs. Brauska took the hint, and for two days her husband visited the countryside where he had numerous friends among the farmers. The supplies he kept at his brother's place dwindled considerably. On Monday, when darkness was setting in, a cart drove into the back-yard of Cimbulis' house, and from it was conveyed to Vizemanis' cellar a juicy Vidzeme ham, tenderly smoked, several brown clay pots brimful with butter, golden as dandelion blossoms, and a box of eggs carefully packed in chaff.

In return, Mrs. Brauska received the promise that investigation of Zenta's case would soon be

brought to a close, perhaps with favourable results; in addition, Vizemanis would do what he could to get Ziedite handed over to the Brauskas, though usual procedure was to send such children to a home in Riga.

The Brauskas were very happy. They already fancied Ziedite's laughter in their garden, returning them at least part of their daughter.

Vizemanis' friend in Riga had a grand celebration, and the guests were particularly delighted with the ham, served country-fashion—baked in dough on hot coals.

Zenta supped that night on swill made of wheat bran, and later hummed a lullaby to her little girl who crooned the tune with her. Songs and caresses were all she could give her daughter. Cooped up as she was, the child could not add many new words to her vocabulary, for there were no new objects to point her little finger at and ask, "What is it?" But she memorized many airs, and the Brauskas were afterwards much surprised to hear her sing, "Lullaby, My Little Bear" and "The Sun Rose and Ran Its Course." With tears glittering in her eyes, Ziedite told them her mummy had taught them to her. She still remembered the "songs Mummy taught her."

On a Thursday night, two weeks and a day after her arrest, an SD officer entered Zenta's cell,

accompanied by the prison warden. She remembered having seen him once at a cross-examination.

"We've come for your child," the officer announced. "Your parents will take care of her." He undid a little bundle in which was a blue-chequered coat for Ziedite. Zenta recognized the material—it used to be her mother's woollen dress. Darling Mother, how kind she was. . . .

Zenta realized each day in prison sapped the child's life-blood. But with Ziedite gone . . . with Ziedite gone, she would be utterly abandoned. Her husband was gone, her strong friend, who an hour before his death had ordered the German army out of Latvia. Calm, sweet Mother Vinauds was gone, who used to take the goats to pasture by the willows on the Gauja bank, little Ziedite trailing behind. And Elmars was gone, so alive, so agile, living quietly in the attic room from which he slipped out by night as noiselessly as a weasel to go about his night errands and disturb the peace of the pagast administration.

But when Ziedite went, part of herself would regain freedom, for a child is part of its parents, the growing part.

Zenta kissed her little girl, distracted with passion, and pressed her close, tears wetting the curly brown head. Then she lifted her child to the

barred window to take a last look at the pale little face from which blue eyes gazed back at her, uncomprehending.

"They're waiting for me," the officer said, calling her back to reality and taking the child's hand.

"You're going to Grandmother. . . ." Zenta's teeth dug into her fist to stifle a cry, as Ziedite went out with the officer.

But she slept better that lonely night, knowing her child was safe, and in the light of freedom.

In the security police office, Mrs. Brauska was waiting for the child, and she was indeed permitted to take her home.

A few days before that happy Thursday night, anxious about their daughter and grand-daughter, the Brauskas had decided to appeal once more to Vizemanis. After all, in their last interview he had implied there was some hope.

They went over all their rings and brooches. Putting no trust in German marks which they earned in abundance from successful business transactions, they always invested them in valuables. They had known wars before. Brauska still had the gold watch he had been given in 1918, in German-occupied Riga, for two loaves of bread. But perhaps Vizemanis had no need of valuables? Rumour was that he had even got into trouble over dia-

monds having indirectly assisted some rich Jew to get away to Sweden. Then, Brauska decided to play his trump; he had been saving it for a special emergency. Husband and wife went down to the cellar and lifted a certain brick from the floor. Even if a fire destroyed the house to its foundations, this reinforced cellar would remain intact. Beneath the brick was a small compartment containing a little metal case.

They telephoned to make arrangements, and when darkness fell Mrs. Brauska again entered the now familiar house. With a fluttering heart she placed on Vizemanis' table two hundred dollars.

Not a muscle moved in the Hauptsturmführer's face, but a warm glow came to his deep-set eyes.

"You'll come to the security police on Thursday at 8 p.m. and take the child. As you see, Madam, things are beginning to take shape."

He told Elzin Mrs. Brauska had implicit faith in their institutions, that such people were rare these days and ought to be appreciated; that was why Ziedite should be brought over from the prison by eight o'clock sharp.

So that was how it happened that on Thursday night Ziedite was sitting at a richly-laid table eating as much strawberry jam as she could hold.

"It isn't so terrible as we thought, after all. Of course they've got to investigate. They keep their

word, anyway." And to Ziedite, "You see, they promised you to us, and here you are. . . ." Old Brauska gave her a big hug, and the child snatched his dark horn-rimmed spectacles from his nose.

* * *

The cats could safely prowl the deserted sandy streets at midnight: all but pure-bred dogs had, for reasons of economy, been delivered long ago to the slaughter-house where their bones were processed to speed victory. A curfew had been imposed, only here and there could you glimpse a desultory couple hiding in a corner or in the shade of a lilac bush, proving that love defies the harshest orders.

At No. 14 Plava Street, the aspen trees encircling the garden and what was once the house rustled their leaves gently. Shrinking against one of them stood a broad-shouldered old man. He listened into the silence, then moved carefully towards *his* house. He wandered about among the debris, lifting a charred piece of rafter, shifting a brick here and there, as though looking for something or someone he had left behind that morning he went to work in the Gauja woods.

But everything had been raked and sifted, time and time again. Even the chimney had been brought down in an effort to find out something

about those men who had fired volley after volley and whose bodies had been reduced to ashes, or about those who had vanished like sparks of fire borne by the wind.

The hunched figure dropped down beside an eglantine bush. A few scorched leaves still clung to the branches and, if you touched them, crumbled to dust. He crouched there, motionless, his eyes fixed on the charred ruins that had been his house. They had felled and hauled trees, log upon log, his brother and he, to build this home for their families. Finally, he took a handful of ashes from the remains and strode off.

Turning into the yard where the police had set up their headquarters during the battle, he knocked at a window. It opened, and a grey-haired old man leaned out of it. He and old Vinauds used to raft logs together.

"Thanks for warning me, Edvards."

"Couldn't do no more." The old man then told what he knew about the fighting, and old Vinauds listened with smarting eyes.

Keeping close to some brushwood, he walked towards the outskirts of Darzciems. In his pocket were the ashes of his house, maybe his son's ashes too . . . but in his heart he bore a flame of exultant fire. As did many others in those days.

* * *

At six o'clock on Friday morning, there was a knock at Zenta's cell door.

She was pulling on her skirt, and was still numbed with sleep, when the warden entered.

"That'll do. Just step into the corridor as you are."

Zenta wrapped the striped brown prison overall about her, thrust her feet into wooden clogs and followed the warden. All her belongings were left behind, the few blouses, jacket, even her shoes. This was, of course, intended.

In the corridor stood two men clad in grey SD uniforms, whom Zenta had not seen before. When they tied her hands, she knew this was her last morning on earth, the moment she had shut out of her mind to keep death from casting its shadow over the final days of her life.

Two hefty men on either side of a frail little woman, whose white face was framed by soft dark waves of hair, stepped into the prison yard where a closed van stood waiting for them.

Zenta knew all was over. Life had come to an end. Some blades of grass sprouted by the wall of the prison yard. Green grass . . . grass is green . . . green grass grows. . . .

Snatches of meaningless phrases flitted through her mind. Her legs felt wooden carrying her body, as though they did not belong to her. The wardens

pushed her through the narrow door of the car. She noticed more people inside. The door slammed behind her.

The drive was short, along a bumpy road, but long enough for all the brightest moments of her twenty-one years to flash across her mind—as they had done a hundred times during the last fortnight. All her thoughts were turned upon the past. There was no future.

The door was flung open and the convicts ordered to step out.

There was a small clearing in the forest. An open grave, banked with yellow sand, gaped. From it came dank air, as from a cellar. A man was placed on either side of Zenta, hands also pinioned. One was short, like Girts. Comrades even here.

Girts, I am starting on the long journey, just as you did ... just like you. I am joining you. Wish we were the last ... the last! Someone will be the last. Yet it is hard even for the last. It is very hard.... What lovely branches; there will be many cones on the fir trees this year. If the leaves cling long on the oak trees in autumn, many young people will die. How soft and silky the moss feels. I must shift my foot. I mustn't step on the little bilberries....

Some ten paces away stood Vizemanis, an assistant of Brenner's, another German and three other

men in uniform. They read out the sentence: order must be observed. Behind them stood Kalmelis, medical officer of the prison, blinking large eyes. He would sign a certificate stating that these people had been shot dead, then he, as well as those who did the shooting, would get a bottle of liqueur. He rarely drank, but he would change it for tobacco, as he smoked a good deal.

Vizemanis' eyes were turned on Zenta with a look of cold curiosity. You see, they seemed to say, I told you it was nicer to live.

Through wide-open eyes, Zenta was drinking in the light. Light! The life of a human being must be worthy of humanity. A creature without conscience is not a human being. You, Vizemanis, are not a human being. Like a beast of prey, you will soon be afraid of everyone in the world ... you will be afraid of people ... you will run amok to save your hide, like a mad wolf. You won't be haunted by your conscience, because you haven't any—you will just be terrified.

The three men in green uniform took up their positions.

Let me have peace and calm. I am coming, Girts, my friend. Zenta was weeping because she was seeing Ziedite—a dark curl had slipped down on the child's forehead and her eyes were so blue, so blue ... and she stretched out her little arms.

"Don't cry, you can't see me through tears!"

Slowly, the sun rose out of the morning clouds, like a huge red poppy unfolding its petals. The three raised gun barrels could not screen its glory.

* * *

Reinis had been sleeping long and heavily in his retreat at Ezerliči, when he was awakened by a voice calling his name. His hands automatically jerked to his pillow, where he kept the two pistols.

Helena was kneeling at the trapdoor.

"You must eat something. You'll lose all your strength," she said anxiously, producing from her basket a bowl of crisply-fried bream.

"We caught them only yesterday," she added.

They climbed up to the loft, stretched out on the hay and lay gazing at the lake with its ever-changing colours. Today it reflected a very blue sky with flecks of clouds, that looked like white dandelion puffs, floating on its surface. The water held the depths of the sky itself. Little wagtails hopped along the banks, their long tails bobbing up and down.

Helena took Reinis' hand.

"Didn't I tell you nothing could happen to you!" Her voice was almost triumphant with joy.

"And what if I'd been upstairs instead of Girts?"

"Then . . . then you'd have acted like Girts."

They lay there a long time, happy to see the sun. Presently, Helena rose to her feet, tossing her thick braid across one shoulder, and said: "Stay where you are, and rest. I'll go tidy up. Tomorrow I start with the stacking at Gauri."

"You'll work for Frickalns!"

"I have no choice. It's the only way of staying here. You know how important it is that I stay. I must look after you."

Reinis saw her wide forehead and pure eyes bending close to his face. Her lips were pursed with self-importance and pride in the greatness of her task. He smiled.

"Darling, you make me feel ashamed when you talk like this."

"Don't. You do the fighting, and I shall take good care of you. That's the way it's always been. Very soon you'll be taking care of me, and you'll be doing it for many, many years." She smiled happily.

"Just a moment! On Friday, I'm going to Trikata, then I'll know about my further moves. And if anything should happen. . . ."

"I told you nothing can happen while we're together," she interrupted him impatiently. She

knelt down by his side. Her arms looked strong. Her golden braid had dropped upon her breast. "Don't talk, now," she said, placing the palm of her hand over Reinis' lips. And again they could not tear themselves apart.

The wind swung a willow bough against the skylight, as though to remind them that the fragrance and dim twilight of the loft was not all the world. Reinis began to talk, so that she might know "just in case things did not go according to plan." He told her that forty-one kilometres from Darzciems, to the left of a little wooden bridge, a man would be sitting in the willows, angling, every Tuesday and Friday night until seven o'clock in the morning. It was Thursday today, so tomorrow morning he would go there. Reinis was aware that his task had only begun, and impelled by a new sense of urgency, he wanted to contact new comrades. Yesterday's events had shown him that even three could be a tremendous force.

Yet Reinis did not go, either on Friday or the following Tuesday. Thursday night, the pain in his left calf grew very bad. Helena soaked the dressing with warm water until it came off. The seemingly slight wound had festered, and the leg was badly swollen.

"Good God! Like a snake bite!" she cried, throwing up her hands in despair.

"A snake only bites you if you step on it. This is a bullet wound. Bullets are far more vicious than snakes."

The pain made walking difficult. He could not hobble all the way to that bridge.

In vain they tried all the remedies Helena's mother knew—first whey-bread, then crushed onion poultices. Finally, Helena went to the chemist's in Zintene and told him her mother had gashed her leg, it had become infected and was so bad she was running a temperature. Before telling all this, she handed him a basketful of mushrooms, and inquired about his wife's health. The chemist was used to treating people without seeing them. He had been doing it for years. So he explained to her minutely what she should do, sold her some medicine, then asked whether there were any burbots in the lake. Helena promised to bring him the first catch.

The medicine soon brought the festering abscess to a head. Helena changed the dressings and nursed the wound. She was sorry for him, because it hurt so badly, but happy too, because only she—and she alone—could help.

Reinis was ill for about two weeks. He lay watching his favourite view of the lake, held like a picture in the sun-bleached, crudely-hewn window frame of the skylight which Sniedze had made

long ago. The wood had cracked here and there, so when a sunbeam lit the chinks Reinis discovered he had a myriad of little neighbours: all sorts of tiny creatures came crawling out, wagging whiskers, some long, some short. A few were minute things, about flea-size, others were large and carried colourful wing-cases on their backs. Reinis studied his little neighbours and learned to distinguish them by their attire. He also listened to birds hopping about on the roof and tried to guess whether this was a crow, or that a jackdaw looking for a stray cherry, or if a wagtail was balancing on the ridge.

The lake itself lay calm and serene till a breeze sprang up, bending and swaying the lithe and slender willow withes so that the trees themselves looked like old men with grizzled hair blown by the wind. Sometimes it curled back the dark edges of the lily-pads so that they seemed like so many frogs with huge, gaping mouths. Early in the morning, all one could see would be a thick wall of reeds in the foreground, the rest blotted out by mist. Then a glittering disc appeared in the left corner, and the sun seemed directly behind the misty veil. The white mass thinned to swirling wraiths, evaporated, and presently the smooth, silken-grey surface of the water was revealed. Then it seemed a giant suddenly blew on the lake,

as though it were his drinking-vessel, sending the last puffs of mist up in the air. Meanwhile, fluffy cloudlets had gathered in the sky which by breakfast-time rolled themselves into shapely little balls like sleeping white cats; at midday these cats would slowly extend a grey paw here and there sending down a shower upon the fields.

Reinis drank in the shifting scene as though quenching a thirst of two long years. What did his four comrades see, those who had been taken back to prison? At this thought, he felt like grasping a Walter in each hand and rushing into Darzciems.

When Helena came in the evening, they read the newspapers together and marvelled at the German communiqués. Their retreat from the Uman district was interpreted as a victory.

"The invincible German armies in the East have inscribed a singular feat in the world's history of wars by accomplishing an unprecedented strategic master-stroke—a planned withdrawal on a broad scale. The enemy found himself in deserted territory."

"Frickalns said he'd pay me twenty marks a month from September on for work at Gauri as a servant. Otherwise ... otherwise ... it means working for next to nothing, just for my daily bread. As though I couldn't earn more than that. I'm so strong! There isn't a girl in the neigh-

bourhood who can come near me in binding sheaves," Helena told him dejectedly one night. "And there's nothing we can do about it, until. . . . I'd like to go to school. . . ."

She sat gazing at the lake, hands clasped about her knees, head tilted back. All her usual confidence and high spirits seemed gone. Frickalns had told her father he would have to come and work for him, because the war prisoners would be moved. Then he had said Mrs. Frickalns would bring some yarn next week and Mother, who was very clever with the loom, would have to make sheets and towels for the Frickalns.

"I suppose they're going to make us close up our own house. . . . He'll pay us whatever he chooses. Where can you go and complain? If you don't obey orders, they put you in camps. . . ." Reinis knew all this only too well. "When the war is over, we'll stay here, won't we?" she went on. "We'll plant a new orchard: there's a place at the edge of the wood just flooded with sunshine, and the wood protects it on the north. I found two crab-apple trees that never got frost-bitten, not even that winter when it was bitter cold. You see, there are some trees that no frost can kill . . . like ourselves. We could take grafts from these crabs and start more. Only I must learn all about it first."

"You will," Reinis agreed. "The first thing we need here is a proper road. After all, we're not going to live cooped up in our home. We'll go to the cinema and to the theatre. Of course, we'll clear away the roots and cart in some gravel."

"Yes, and we'll get a radio, that is terribly important," Helena declared. "We'll listen to music together in the evening. The wind will be howling on the lake, but we'll be snug and warm." She put her head on his shoulder. They decided definitely to spend their evenings listening to music after the war.

* * *

The three members of the Sniedze family sat down to supper together. Through the open window they watched Bosis trot along the bed of marigolds, guarding the yard. Now and then he would bare his white teeth and spin round, snapping at his tail where a flea had settled.

Mother put a dish of fried mushrooms on the table. An appetizing smell rose from shiny little new potatoes. Folding her hands beneath her apron, she stood there in front of them.

"I'm so worried! It's three weeks now since I've been sleeping like a hare, with my eyes open." She sighed deeply.

Helena and Father bent their heads over their supper plates, neither one venturing to answer.

"His leg's almost all right, now. He ought to leave before . . . before the damage's done."

"No damage will be done. If a bullet hits you in the war, people don't call it damage. They say, 'That's just war,' " Helena said quietly, putting another helping on her plate. "His leg will soon be all right, and he'll leave, but I'll . . . I'm going to help him all the same."

Mother clasped her hands. Her plump face had changed during the last few weeks. Worry and anxiety had painted deep shadows under her eyes.

"Helena, Helena, war is a man's job."

"Mother, I can't live like this. They can send me wherever they choose, whenever they want. Let them all get the hell out of here, all those Fritzes and Frickalns. I'm sick of living in fear."

Helena had raised her head, and her voice rang out loudly.

"Hush, speak quietly," Father cautioned her, raising his spoon.

"That's all you have to say to her, Father?" Mother shook her head reprovingly.

Bosis hurried up to the yellow laburnum bush outside the window, hoping to cadge some supper.

Helena put down her spoon, went over to her father and pressed her face gently against his.

"I've grown up, Father."

"I'm afraid you have, darling," he replied with a wistful note in his voice, at the same time letting his lips curl into a mischievous smile.

Helena blushed.

Mother put some supper for Reinis into a dish and said sternly, "Mind you don't forget to send a letter to his mother. It would be a terrible sin not to do that."

Next morning, Helena found a sheet of paper, a pen, and some ink that had almost dried up in the bottle. Handing these to Reinis, she said very gravely:

"I hid the ink away after I finished the sixth form. But what's there to write these days? As soon as the war's over, I'll enter horticultural school. If you only knew what beautiful eglantine there is over there!" She waved a hand towards the western edge of the lake where the forest almost touched the water. "I'd like to graft it."

Reinis wrote three almost identical letters to different people, asking each to look up Reinis' parents, to tell them their son was safe and sound, but not in a position to visit them for the time being. They needn't worry, they would see him very soon, before the year was up. Meanwhile

Father and Mother should take care of themselves.

In her lunch-hour next day, Helena rode her father's bike to Darzciems to buy some envelopes and twelve-pfennig stamps. She addressed one letter to an aunt of Reinis' on his mother's side, who lived not far from Darzciems, a second to his cousin in Valka, and the third to a friend in Darzciems whom he had seen in the street a month ago.

A week later, Reinis' people were visited by the Valka cousin; they were overjoyed to learn that Reinis had escaped, was alive and still at large. To crown the family happiness, that very day Reinis' father was released from Darzciems prison, where he had been detained on suspicion of having a hand in his son's escape.

The letter addressed to Reinis' aunt fell into Elzin's hands, disproving the version that the second body found at No. 14 Plava Street was that of Reinis Apenajs. So the man was either in Darzciems itself or somewhere in the neighbourhood. Several thefts had occurred in the district, but they did not point to him. This meant that somebody was keeping him. Two people were as good as an organization. Reinis was only the third convict in two years to have slipped through the fingers of Darzciems' security police. The officials

and institutions concerned were duly reminded that this was a slur on the professional record of the SD.

A meeting of aizsarg commanders was called, to which Frickalns also was invited.

When he returned from this meeting, Frickalns went straight to his room, which was furnished with a heavy oak desk and bookcase with a glass front. On the walls hung a framed diploma, issued by the Zintene Cattle-Breeding Society for the Latvian brown cow, together with group photographs, the largest of which showed a gathering of the Baltic Agricultural Society. On a polished fir branch pegged to the wall hung a withered wreath of oak leaves and a gun. Frickalns hastily took off his aizsarg uniform, folded it on a chair and slipped into his ordinary grey suit. For a while he stood thoughtfully, stroking his long jaw. That faded blue blouse, found on the Gauja bank after the battle, had come to his mind. There had been two nails in the pocket, thin nails such as were used for roofing and very scarce these days. His eyes turned inadvertently to where the freshly-made, bright-yellow roof of his barn glittered in the brilliant sunshine.

Who had made this roof? Sniedze. Hadn't old Sniedze been wearing a faded blouse? True, there were hundreds like it in the pagast. Still....

Frickalns was thinking hard. Sniedze . . . a beggarly peasant. Certainly no friend of his. He couldn't have forgotten the meadows taken away from him and added on to Gauri, or the ostmarks he received for his labour. Of course, there were many more in the pagast who bore Frickalns a grudge. Such was the sad fate of every rich farmer. Still . . . Sniedze had a daughter, Helena. Hadn't it been a standing joke among the Gauri farm-hands that Reinis Apenajs poled out on the raft to meet his girl? True, there were many girls who lived by the lake. Still . . . there might be something in it. He ought to check on it, quietly and inconspicuously.

"The reeds aren't jungles. A man can't find food there. Man must eat, that's his downfall. That's going to be Apenajs' downfall, too," Brenner had said. Brenner was a clever man—he had caught all the Communists in the district.

It was slow work, rowing noiselessly through the reeds and bulrushes, but Frickalns managed to reach Ezerliči without attracting attention. He lingered a long time in the thick reeds, resting from his exertions of rowing and punting, and watched the house.

There was nothing to arouse suspicion, but the distance was too great to see details.

Presently, he saw Helena walking along the

path by the lake on her way home from Gauri after a day's work. She entered the house and immediately reappeared carrying a pail, which she took to the single outhouse that was both shed and pigsty. Nothing unusual about this. Sniedze had two pigs registered at the pagast house, Frickalns knew. Helena spent rather a long time in there. Cleaning up, he thought.

Frickalns returned home that night no wiser than before. On the following afternoon, he moored his boat in the reeds, waded ashore and made a wide detour to the other side of Ezerliči to watch from the forest.

Helėna appeared again, immediately picked up her pail and entered the outhouse where she remained for a long time. Suddenly the dog began to bark towards the forest, and Frickalns sneaked back to his boat. From there he presently saw a woman's white body, taking a bath in the lake. Must be Helena! Pity he had only the Colt on him, instead of his binoculars.

Back home he went to see how Sniedze was getting along with the partition in the pigsty. A woman was feeding the pushing, jostling pigs. Though never left hungry for long, they crowded about the trough squealing for all they were worth. Such was their nature, their piggish nature. Frickalns watched them thoughtfully, scratch-

ing the back of an enormous sow who gave him fourteen piglets twice a year. How did it happen that the pigs at Ezerliči gobbled their food in utter silence when Helena took it to them? Eh? Pure chance, of course, still... it ought to be checked upon... ought to take a good look at that little outhouse. And above all, he must see the girl bathing. That alone would be worth another trip.

He could easily arrange her work so that she should leave a little earlier, by herself. Then he could have a talk with her at Ezerliči tête-à-tête. Yes, it might be a very pleasant talk indeed. Oh, yes!

A few days later, he made careful preparations for the trip. He loaded his Colt, a pre-war one, and fastened it under his jacket. A fine weapon, the Colt, you can sight accurately from a long distance. Then he slung his binoculars over his shoulder. He used to carry them around in his youth. At first they would only cause trouble to the stags, bringing their secret pastures within close range, whereupon he would round them up within shooting distance. Later on, it was the Gauri hands who were distressed by these binoculars, when their master told them with a sneer how much time they were spending on smokes. Peksis and Aleksis had been smoking by the third

clover stack from the left for twenty minutes, hadn't they?

Chin stuck out, looking down upon the world in his habitual attitude, Frickalns stalked into the yard. Having told his wife he was going angling, he bent his steps towards the brushwood by the lake. His passion for hunting and fishing was generally known. Much to his wife's satisfaction, he was seen more frequently in the woods or on the water than in the Zintene bar. Sometimes he would leave his farm in the very throes of harvesting in order to "take a look at the stags." Well, hunting and fishing had been the birthright of the earth's masters since time immemorial.

On this Thursday, Helena came home from work earlier than usual, before evening, as they had finished stacking on the oat field. She sat in the twilight of the loft, her head on Reinis' shoulder.

"So you're leaving tomorrow," she said. He was closer to her than ever, yet she no longer tried to dissuade him from going. Listening to the pagast people discuss the big Darzciems battle, she felt proud to know one of these fighters, and to belong to him. Now it was clear that he must go.

"Yes. And if I don't happen to come this way, I'll write to you through my brother." They arranged how to communicate and what to write.

"I may not be able to write for a whole month, but I'll be all right. It's just a matter of circumstances. You know I couldn't even let my parents know until now."

"I won't worry . . . but you will write, won't you?" she begged. Then, taking his face in her hands, she turned his head from side to side. "I must take a good look at you before I let you go. Your hair's rather long. You must find a barber somewhere."

His hair had grown since prison; when brushed back it no longer bristled up stubbornly.

She would go and wash in the lake, she told him. Walking toward the house, she noticed the dahlias she had planted on either side of the door had grown very tall, almost touching the overhanging edge of the roof, whose broad eaves could shelter a man against the rain.

Spread out on the table were things she had prepared for Reinis to take with him, and she gave them a final once-over. It was only August, but before long morning frost would nip the leaves of her dahlias by the door, turning them black, and wild geese in their flight south would huddle up in the reeds at night. She picked up a pair of white mittens, knitted with a green star pattern, and pressed them to her face; then touched once more the two pairs of thick grey socks.

Helena flushed. This was part of her dowry. Her mother held the old belief that a girl must make a dowry for herself. This had given her many a headache. Their two sheep and one lamb provided just enough wool for the family's socks, gloves and working clothes. She had to think twice each time she put aside a skein towards her dowry. When old Sniedze combed flax for his master, he sometimes cadged a bit for himself too; their own little plot of land had to supply their daily bread; anyhow the soil was too poor and sandy to grow flax. The flax Father earned was spun, and Mother taught Helena to weave towels. Like a little mouse that lays by grain upon grain, Helena put aside her meagre skeins. Her dowry was not much to look at.

Take that girl she went to school with, Zuze Gerkis! Her father had a farm on the other side of the lake—sometimes you could see the cow-shed's gleaming white wall. Well, her father had already given his Oldenburg pedigreed horse and two prize cows for her dowry. The whole pagast knew about it. And Zuze herself? She had finished secondary school and was now just sitting at home waiting for a husband!

The bottom shelf of their old brown wardrobe contained everything Helena had acquired. There wasn't much to show, but it was all her own

work, of many a long winter evening, and her love was in it.

To-night she was giving these mittens to Reinis. But soon she would meet him again. Love is as warm as the sun itself. Wrapped in their love, Reinis and she were as warm and close as his fingers would be in the mittens she had made for him.

She picked up her towel and walked down to the lake.

* * *

The gunwale of Frickalns' boat was painted dark green, the same shade as the rushes. Old Sniedze had gone through stacks and stacks of boards to select the smoothest and most pliable; he had made the boat slender as a pike and easy to handle. But today, as on the previous trip, Frickalns avoided open water, where the fish were already engaged in their evening frolics, and pushed through the overgrown southern bank. Carefully, unhurriedly, he allowed the nose of his boat to slowly bend down the slender stems, whose tips already showed little brown tassels. Sometimes he stopped and peered through the reeds, scanning the bank for some familiar landmark, a pine tree with a distinctive crown or a willow into which kids had burnt a hollow.

Presently, the broad belt of reeds receded from the bank, and Frickalns knew that Ezerliči was not far off. He chose a spot where the boat's green edge would merge with the green water plants when viewed from shore, then lay down flat, propping his elbows on the seat, and got out his binoculars.

Rather a long way off, but clearly visible behind a tall willow tree, was the Ezerliči outhouse. Before he had raised the binoculars to his eyes, he saw somebody approach the bank. It was too far to make out features, but Frickalns knew it could only be Helena, as old Sniedze was still at the pigsty and his wife was lending a hand with potatoes that had to be taken to Darzciems tomorrow. He had come just in time!

Helena threw her towel over a little willow bush and began to undress. Frickalns quickly put the binoculars to his eyes.

His trip was not wasted, whether or not he would find out anything about Reinis Apenajs.

He watched with rapt attention as she hitched up her tight blue dress, holding it by the hem with both hands, and slowly pulled it over her head.

Damn this war for thwarting his peaceful life. He used to go to Darzciems twice a month and spend the night there at a cost of fifteen to twen-

ty lats, including a bottle of wine. He did not smoke, he drank rarely, and these little night escapades added up to no more than four hundred lats a year. Others smoked and drank away more than that. But now every dame in the Darzciems bars was engaged by the Germans, and he must depend on chance for his pleasures.

Helena's body was beautifully tanned all over. She probably worked in the nude in that little garden of hers tucked away in the middle of the forest. Why on earth had he never thought of coming to watch? He would take her to Gauri for permanent work immediately, he wouldn't wait until September. He wouldn't let them send her to Germany, or to Liči, to work for the Germans. Enough for them to get bacon and flour from this pagast! Helena would stay here. It wasn't like the days of the Crusades, when armed knights broke into people's homes and carried off their women, along with other booty, placing them on the saddles before them.

His lips felt hot and dry, though the sun was already declining behind the woods at the water's edge. If it wasn't for his binoculars, he wouldn't have a chance to relish the sight of this lovely girl. Fully stripped, she lingered dreamily on the water's brim against the bank that sloped gently up-

wards, overgrown with alder trees. Like a forest maiden!

She waded in waist-deep, then, throwing out her arms, began to swim. The water enveloped her body, hiding it from Frickalns' view. While he waited for her return to shore, so as to watch her dress, Frickalns turned his binoculars on Ezerliči.

On the window ledges stood flowerpots with rosy geraniums. A dog lay sprawling outside. Two rakes stood propped against a corner of the outhouse. And . . . was it not a man's head showing in the skylight of the loft, bending forward as though he were reading?

Frickalns looked more sharply. The two old folks were at Gauri, Helena was in the lake, so this must be a stranger. The man raised his head, and a shudder ran over Frickalns, as though he had sighted a rare animal, a lynx for example—for it was Reinis Apenajs!

He lowered his binoculars. Helena was swimming, sometimes lifting a leg to bring it down with a splash. But this was more important than a beautiful woman's leg. She wouldn't escape him, especially now. A man's job is fight, and woman is the reward. He must act quickly.

Frickalns cast one more glance where, among broad lily-pads, the calm surface was stirred into concentric circles with Helena's golden braids, twist-

ed about her head, in their midst. He had a clear, momentary vision of the girl's nude body moving under water, and simultaneously it occurred to him that the convict up in the loft had already held this body in his arms. Such a lovely woman, too! Now jealousy quickened his hatred of Reinis Apenajs, and his fear turned to a frenzy of rage.

His mind was made up. Leaning over, he noiselessly pushed himself deeper into the thick reeds and slowly, cautiously, with one oar, directed his boat to the mouth of a little stream not far from the outhouse. A clod of earth, torn from shore, swayed in the reeds ahead. A few dwarfed alder bushes grew on it. Frickalns stopped his boat to see whether or not his enemy had come down into the yard, but it was difficult to see anything clearly. Two black-headed gulls swooped down over his head, and he was worried lest they attract attention to his vantage-ground.

At last his boat struck the clod, and it rocked to and fro. It was overgrown with tall sedge-grass. Now he could safely straighten his back. The alder trees' leaves caught slanting rays of the setting sun; it was cool and peaceful. The dank smell of water plants filled the air.

He picked up his binoculars, but after glancing through the alder branches towards the outhouse, he laid them aside. He could see Reinis' head

with the naked eye. He was still reading, stopping from time to time to turn over a page. Frickalns had planned it all on his way there from the spot where he had lain watching Helena's lithe body caressed by the water. If he tried to detain Reinis single-handed, he would be taking a chance. He feared Reinis, he feared him more than anybody else, for Reinis was sure to know that he, Frickalns, had had a share in his arrest. By the time he found a Schutsmann and notified the aizsargs, his quarry might escape. The Germans would understand.... So the thing to do was....

Never had he pointed a gun at a man before. Now the moment had come. If they gave you the right to carry fire-arms, they said "a"; and you, in self-defence, had the right to say "b." He would make up a good story so that people should never know the truth. Helena would keep her mouth shut: she'd have to think of her own security. What actually happened was nobody's business. All sorts of things happened in real life.

He pulled out his revolver. He had no fear, except that the target might prove too difficult to hit, although his marksmanship was infallible. He wished he had his long army rifle! But there was no time for doubts: he had to make it. Raising himself on his knees, he supported the revolver on an alder branch, waited till the boat had regained its

balance and, looking past the dented edge of a green leaf, focused his sights where the open shirt exposed Reinis' chest.

Reinis was reading. Helena had brought a pile of books from a friend, and he was going through them, one by one. Now he was holding the *White Book** on his knees, a book he had not opened since school days. He was reading about Rite's enchanted forest; he could almost smell the grass redolent of honey in the midday heat and hear it snap in his hand, almost see the rosy blossoms of eglantine. He remembered Helena telling him of the eglantine that grew in the woods at a far end of the lake. Raising his head to look, his eye was held by the green crowns of tall pines gleaming in the setting sun. Two gulls swooped down upon the lake.

Suddenly they soared up again into the air. Did they hear the report? Reinis did not . . . he dropped down by the side of the *White Book*, to read the Book of Eternity.

When the shot resounded, Helena, dried and dressed, was walking homewards along the bank. One single shot. It sounded from the lake, but this must be an echo . . . something must have happened to Reinis' weapon. She quickened her steps.

* Autobiographical novel by J. Jaunsudrabiņš, written in the 20s of this century.—*Tr.*

Bosis ran through the yard, barking lakewards but unable to discover his enemy. Helena climbed up to the loft.

Reinis sagged in a limp heap beside his open book. The white pages were stained red with blood that gushed from his mouth.

"Reinis . . . love . . . ." She felt utterly helpless. Sinking down on her knees, she stroked his forehead, her left hand clutching the towel she had brought from the lake. But what could she bandage? Maybe he found it hard to breathe?She took his head in both hands to put it in her lap. It swayed like a broken reed. A shiver passed through his body, and then it relaxed, the shirt that stuck fast to his chest heaved no more.

"Reinis . . . no, you can't. . . ." She did not know what to do. How could it be that she was left alone at Ezerliči—alone in the whole world! She dared not stir. What if he were still alive, and the invisible wound opened again, and blood poured from it!

Frickalns saw Reinis' hand appear in the skylight and remain there suspended on the ledge. So he hadn't missed! The man had collapsed, though he might not be dead yet. He sat up in his boat and rowed it through the reeds towards the bank a little distance from Ezerliči. Through woods, he

approached the small stream, crossed it by way of a fallen tree and came upon the outhouse.

He'd better keep away from that skylight looking out on the lake. You never could tell. There was another window at the other end, and luckily a ladder close at hand. He stood it against the wall and began to ascend. As he did, the dog barked furiously, but what could it do to him? However, when he had almost reached the top, he suddenly broke into a cold sweat. He had been so bent on hunting down Helena and Reinis Apenajs that it had never occurred to him somebody else might be hiding in the house. In recent years life had been quiet enough, but after that Darzciems battle you couldn't be sure. Worse luck....

Now Frickalns performed the greatest feat of heroism in his life—he continued to climb the ladder, his right hand firmly clasping his revolver. On the last rung he peeped through a crack between two boards. The skylight admitted enough light to give him a full view of the loft. He heaved a long sigh of relief and grew more daring. Replacing his revolver, he drew out a knife and tried to unhitch the hook on the inside.

Helena had heard the dog barking, and now heard somebody fumbling with the second skylight. Half of her was dead, the other half ready to die—to die in struggle. She saw a pistol butt

protruding from Reinis' pocket and took it. A treacherous bullet had killed her friend. Now she understood! A bullet had terrible force. Somebody was pulling open the skylight. But she was so utterly shaken it did not occur to her to turn the weapon against the stranger who was stepping inside. She had never raised a hand against anybody. Knowing that fire-arms were prohibited, she quickly wrapped the pistol into her towel and pressed it close to her.

Stooping a little, so that his grey hat should not catch in the low rafters, Frickalns walked towards her. Reinis' head slipped from Helena's lap, and she pushed a handful of hay under it so he might not lie on the hard floor. Having fully regained his self-possession, Frickalns stuck out his chin and said:

"Too late to bother."

"You . . . you shot him. . . ." Helena was weeping, for now she heard it confirmed that Reinis was dead.

"He wouldn't have given himself up, would he?" Frickalns said, and added thoughtfully, "But what are we going to do about you, that's the problem. You've been keeping him! Yes!"

Helena did not care. Reinis was dead.

"Don't try to escape. If you do, they'll arrest your parents. There's nothing to cry about. Now,

try to listen to me and be reasonable. You can save yourself and your parents too. I'll tell them I was chasing him through the forest, he slipped in here, and I. . . . So you and your people had nothing to do with the matter. They're sure to take my word for it. But you'll have to come to Gauri and work for me. Well, what about it?"

He spoke very brightly, pleased with his own ingenuity. The Sniedzes wouldn't be arrested and could continue to work for him under strict supervision; Helena would be in his hands; he would spread the rumour that Reinis Apenajs had attacked him and he had shot in self-defence.

"Now you must come with me. You're too upset to stay here. We'll go to my place, and I'll make the necessary calls. These books ought to be removed, though. . . ."

Helena wept more bitterly, pressing her face against Reinis'. Why had she left him alone? She could have averted this. . . .

"It's getting dark. Come along! You must think of yourself now, and of your parents." A touch of irony crept into his peremptory voice.

Helena rose, gathered the books into the basket in which she had brought Reinis his meal, and also slipped in the bundle that was still in her hands. In the yard, she silenced the dog and asked, casting down her eyes, "May I not change into an-

other dress? There's blood on this. I won't run away."

"Well, be quick!" Frickalns remained standing at the corner of the house. He did not really expect her to run away, but preferred to keep an eye on the closed windows with sunflowers in front of them. True, Reinis Apenajs was dead, and a dead man didn't frighten him; still . . . he'd rather be out of this place as quickly as possible. Who would have thought that Ezerliči, this little shack, was such a hornets' nest! What scoundrels!

Helena emerged from the house, having changed into a chequered dress and brown canvas shoes, carrying a woollen jacket rolled into a bundle.

"We'll take the path along the lake. You walk in front. My boat can stay here till tomorrow," he said curtly.

She obeyed. Her head, which she always carried so high and with a look so confident, now drooped under the weight of her grief and growing awareness of her loss. Like an invisible web, sorrow enmeshed her whole frame, dragging down the shoulders, hampering the progress of her feet. She walked unsteadily, stumbling over each little stone or dry twig.

If only they won't touch Father and Mother! It's all my fault. If only I could take it all on myself. . . . Her thoughts trailed off, reverting to the

loft where Reinis' blood was growing cold on the hay-strewn floor. He shot him. I'll work from morning to night, if only they don't touch Father. What a terrible man he is, Frickalns. I'm afraid of his eyes....

The path receded slightly from the bank. On one side of it was a belt of green sedge that breathed misty moisture into the early evening twilight. On the other, the bank sloped up, overgrown with alders, and behind them rose the placid firs.

All was shaping well, Frickalns decided. For one thing, Reinis Apenajs no longer loomed over them. Gerkis, the one who had tied Apenajs' hands and beaten him at Gauri back in 1941, had been carrying around his pistol during hay harvesting. Then, the German security police would be grateful, and this gratitude could be turned to advantage when he wanted to get something out of them for his farm. Ought to get a good new stallion from the Kreislandwirt. Finally, that lovely body underneath the chequered dress in front of him! He pictured it again as he had seen it through his binoculars a little while ago. Quickening his step, he came up to Helena and, being much taller, casually placed one hand on her shoulder, sliding it, as though inadvertently, upon her firm breast.

Helena recoiled, trembling with fear and sud-

denly aware of her destiny. Her legs went stiff, she was unable to run.

"All right, all right," Frickalns muttered, withdrawing his hand.

A meadow was wedged between forest and bank, on one side of which stood an old hayloft with a dark thatched roof, under the thick foliage of a spreading oak tree.

"Let's go inside and have a rest," Frickalns said, putting out his long arm and sliding his hand around her waist.

She shuddered, as though these hard, quivering fingers had the forcible touch of fate, and had torn off her clothes, leaving her naked, exposed to everybody's view. That's going to happen, that's going to happen to me.... Her blood seemed frozen in her veins, and only her thoughts still throbbed.

The door stood ajar.

"Wait here, just a minute.... I want to get myself straight..." Helena breathed. Frickalns understood; thrilled with victory, he agreed kindly.

"Certainly," he said, walking up to the corner of the shed.

Helena pushed the door open and slowly crossed the threshold. So that's how I'd have to serve him.... He thinks he's got me like a dog on a leash....

It was snug and warm inside. The air was sweet

with the varied fragrance of hay. Frickalns had selected a charming love nest indeed.

In the soft twilight, she became her old, fearless, resolute self again. In a flash she realized why she had taken the revolver along. One Helena—whose sweetheart's life had flown like white dandelion fluff in a gust of wind—had wept. But the other Helena, who had wanted to follow him to Trikata, had taken his revolver. She unrolled the jacket and took out Reinis' weapon. "This little gadget is the safety catch," she heard his dear voice whispering in her ear. "If anything should happen. . . ."

Nothing can happen to me. Tossing back her braid with her habitual gesture, she stepped back across the threshold. Her heart pounded so violently that she could feel a throbbing in the fingers that gripped the pistol. But her eyes were steady as she looked ahead.

Frickalns stood in the same position, with his back to her. If he turned, would not those hard grey eyes sap the strength from her fingers and bend the weapon to the ground?

She took a few quick steps, so that the dark muzzle almost touched his grey jacket—and pulled the trigger twice. The report seemed to come, not from where she stood, but from somewhere way out in the forest. A strange hand must have fired the shot. Or had *she* really brought this tall man

down to his knees, and to the ground? God Almighty, there *is* a man lying here, shot dead! He needs help! Help! With the grey jacket in one hand, and the gun in the other, she dropped on her knees beside his body.

But who had done it? A strong smell hit her nostrils. Was it powder? Yes, it was she. She herself had shot him....

A wild black-currant bush grew by the shed. From a drooping branch hung a few shiny berries. Like tears. Black tears. Frickalns' one arm was thrust forward, his fingers clawing a tuft of grass.

Jumping to her feet, she ran homeward, as though afraid the dead man might rise, run after her and order her back into the shed. Only when she reached home did she come to, stop and wrap the gun up in her jacket before entering the yard.

Groping her way in the dark shed, she climbed up the ladder. Through the skylight, an evening glow fell on Reinis' cold pale face. The blood had drawn red lines down his chin.

She got a bowl of water and washed his face. This was her duty, her duty as a wife. It had probably been performed by those women whose remains had been excavated on the opposite bank of Zintene Lake, their bones clasped by bronze bands, fragments of brooches adorned with pendants by their sides. When she had finished, she

crouched down by his body, her chin pressed into her knees, her eyes turned upon the lake. The calm of nightfall was slowly descending upon it, and as tears flowed she thought of the short story of her happiness. The weeping willow behind the skylight bowed deeper in sorrow, the rushes at the small stream's mouth leaned down to the water's surface.

Bosis gave a bark. Helena heard her father's voice silencing him. She went down into the yard. Father was sitting on the flagstone by the door undoing his pastalas.

"Helena, darling, we thought we heard some shots, Mother and I, as we were coming along. Did anybody. . .?"

"Daughter, why are you wearing your new dress?" Mother looked at her closely. "Are you going out?"

Helena threw her arms about her mother, breaking into sobs. They sat down by Father's side.

"I'll have to . . . I'll have to go from here. . . ." Helena told them what had happened in the last few hours. How she had heard the shot, how Reinis had died in her arms, that Frickalns had shot him; how he had started to take her to Gauri, and what had happened by the shed . . . how she had shot him in the back to escape.

"But his hand was still twitching when I ran

away. . . . I'll never let him . . . let them lay their hands on me. . . ." It was no longer only Frickalns she was afraid of. Now she saw the danger in all those green-uniformed men who had attacked Reinis, those who had guarded the prison when she tried to find him in Darzciems, those who had encircled the house in Plava Street.

Mother's smooth head dropped on her chest, and her eyes filled with tears.

"I told you it would end badly. I told you it would. . . ."

Helena did not at once grasp her meaning. Which of the two men was she mourning? Ah, no, Mother was mourning Helena.

"They won't get me," she said quickly, raising her head. "I'm going away. Nobody will be looking for me tonight."

"Why didn't he leave at once. I told you. . ." Mother murmured.

"Mother, they haven't got me yet."

"And what about us?" Father asked quietly.

Helena's whole body sagged. Yes, her parents. They would take her parents. How complicated everything was. Had it ever occurred to her this morning that she was going to kill? How did it all happen? She would have to think it through.

"I didn't mean to, Dad . . . I really. . . ."

"I know, darling. I know," he said, stroking her hair.

He rose, and Helena looked at him in utter misery. Why had she inflicted such suffering upon her parents? Her father looked so frail as he stood there in his linen pants and patched waistcoat, more hunched than ever. His knees were sagging, his arms hanging limp along his sides, as though relaxing from strain. He was like an old pine trunk that had clung to the earth all its life, straining its roots to draw sap from the poor sandy soil for its branch to grow firm and strong, unlike its gnarled and knotty self. Now this trunk had been wrenched from the earth.

He rolled himself a cigarette and puffed at it in silence. It was dark now.

"There's nothing we can do now, darling, except try to save ourselves . . . all three of us. Reinis wanted to go tonight. Well, that's that. You'll have to go instead. You'd better stay for a week with your uncle, Mother's brother. He's an old forest-keeper, lives well out of the way. I'll think of something to tell them. . . . Go indoors now and get ready. Frickalns told them at Gauri he was going angling, so they won't start looking for him too soon. Anyway, no one would suspect you! Go indoors. And don't put on the light. Come on, Mother."

Helena entered the house. On the table lay a bundle with the mittens and socks from the wardrobe, from her dowry. She gazed with unseeing eyes at these little things whose owner was gone.

Mother entered, took a clean sheet from the wardrobe and stopped in the middle of the dark room, her attitude one of infinite sorrow. To Helena, watching her from the bed, it seemed as though she were growing taller and taller until her head touched the low ceiling.

"Why is it that we old folk so often bury the young. . . . We bury the young so often these days. Child, child, don't you know the hearts of the old ache for the young much more than young hearts ache for the old? What times we live in. . . ." Then she left.

Old Sniedze moved about in the dark, unhurriedly but with assurance, as though he had thought of this moment ages ago, and had decided exactly what would be needed in such an emergency. There were two large wooden hooks in the attic, supporting birch trunks, stripped of their bark, to be used for shafts. Choosing two of them, he tied them together with a cord. Then he walked down to the bank, found Frickalns' green boat and, tying it to his own, rowed as far as the plank wharf by the shed. Into Frickalns' boat he put two spades, a rake and a length of rope. He selected two large

stones from a heap by the edge of the rye field and, having tested their weight, hauled them into the boat too. Then he found two broad boards and propped them against the skylight in the loft. Reinis' heavy body, wrapped in a sheet, was placed upon the boards and lowered into the shed; using the two birch shafts for a stretcher, they carried it outside. Mother picked some of Helena's red dahlias and put them on Reinis' breast.

"Come, daughter, take a last look..." she said to Helena.

They had placed the stretcher underneath the willow by the shed. Mother lifted the sheet, revealing a face that looked serene now. Helena flung herself on the ground, stroking his hair. She put a dahlia by his face, and Mother covered him up again.

The thick reeds parted before the two boats. Helena remained on the bank, sitting motionless like a grey stone. Stones are ancient witnesses of many events. Helena was young, but she had already experienced a great deal. Stones do not weep, but Helena was weeping.

Sniedze put all his strength into his arms, yet the boats made slow progress until the reeds fell behind and little water bubbles rose before the leading prow. They glided swifty then over the still black surface that mirrored a silver moon

above and was speckled with broad, still-floating lily-pads.

On the swampy western bank overgrown with brushwood and trees, Sniedze knew of a little hill that rose from the bog and was covered with hazel bushes. To this he directed his boats.

The elderly couple waded ashore. Under the hazels, they dug a grave into which they lowered Reinis' body, facing east, as in a churchyard.

When they had filled in the grave, they gathered dry twigs and wilted leaves to cover the fresh mound. These were times when even a grave had to be concealed.

They stood in front of it, hand in hand, their thoughts bent on life and death. Mother's lips moved as though in prayer.

She was exhausted and breathed heavily, leaning on her spade. Now it was all over, she thought of Reinis' mother, so far away from her son; she could see a whole procession of mothers, old women like herself, clad in coarse grey skirts and blue linen aprons, stepping slowly and wearily along the path by the lake, leaning heavily on their sticks. They entered Ezerliči, dropped down on the bench by the kitchen window, where dahlias grew, and asked, "Have you seen my son?" "No, I know nothing about him." They rose and walked on. When they came upon this mound, they asked, "Is

it my son who lies here?" There was no answer. Only the gulls uttered their cries high in the air. "Maybe this isn't my son? Maybe he isn't dead?" No answer. They walked on. Maybe, maybe . . . . They would wander on for years like this. Maybe. . . .

"We ought to make a little cross," Mother whispered through her tears. "And his name. . . ."

"Not now, Mother, not now." Father shook his head and, taking her arm, brought her through the swamp back to the boat, smoothing out their footprints with his rake. By tomorrow, the lake breeze would sweep the ground, and they alone would know who had been there.

They rowed diagonally across the lake to the little hayloft under an oak tree. Sniedze went to it by himself, stepping very quietly and carefully. Frickalns still lay outside, by one corner.

The boat, in its second trip, stopped at the opposite bank of the lake, not far from Gerki farm. Two heavy stones sank to the bottom of the lake, dragging down the master of Gauri. In his lifetime, this man had thought and acted as though his grandfather—who had bought his farm from the Zintene baron—had acquired with it hunting rights, fishing rights, rights over the lives of those people who lived near the lake, and the privilege of the first night as well.

They abandoned the green boat not far from Gauri, where the water was deepest. Cold underwater currents were there, forming a whirlpool in hot weather; not a single water-lily grew in this part of the lake. It was a very deep spot indeed, and old people believed the legendary Zintene church stood at the bottom.

The boat swayed gently, deceptively empty.

It was midnight when Sniedze rowed into the little stream, the darkest hour. Tall alder trees bent over so that the water seemed to spring from a deep cave. When he climbed ashore, his shoulders were hunched as though the shafts he carried had grown into enormous trunks, trailing heavy branches that swept away his life's path. Mother carried the spades and rake with difficulty.

Helena was still sitting where they had left her. Mother stroked her hair and felt it damp with little beads of night dew.

"Let's go indoors, child. You'll be frozen!" she said; all complaint and bitterness had gone from her voice.

Bosis rose from the threshold, pushing his muzzle into his master's hand by way of joyful welcome.

Helena changed into a skirt and jacket of grey homespun. They arranged to keep in touch. Perhaps Father would inform the police that his daughter had drowned, and he would have her

death announced in church. She hastily took leave, confident that she would soon be back. Father and Mother stood at the edge of the rye field watching her go along the forest path.

They lay down to rest a little until daybreak when they would go over the house, removing any traces of blood, and then proceed to the Gauri farm as usual. Though its master was gone, the old order of things would be maintained for some time.

* * *

Helena walked briskly along the highway, counting the kilometre markers. It was about twenty kilometres to her uncle's place, the Lejasrenči, and after every five she allowed herself a rest. When she paused the second time, darkness was retreating before dawn. Whenever she came upon a large farm, perhaps a house with a verandah, or outhouses built of stone, she bypassed them through fields and meadows. But the little houses that stood huddled up in a bend of the road like little hedgehogs, held no fear for her. The larger a farm, she thought, the more room there is in it for evil.

Toads that had been hopping on to the road in the night dampness to catch gnats, withdrew. By the time she reached the woods, birds, refreshed by early morning dew, were beginning to twitter.

She stepped into a grove of pines, planted not so long ago, whose pale green tops pointed skywards in straight, orderly rows.

Soon she would come upon a road to the left that would lead to Lejasrenči. She was approaching her journey's end. Her thoughts, too, had reached a deadlock. They had passed over beautiful memories, ending in sorrow and smarting pain. How was she going to live now? Why had everything become so complicated?

The wood that had offered her shelter, fell behind. A meadow spread out before her, crossed by a small river fringed with alder bushes. On this side of a bridge she could see the rutted road that turned into Lejasrenči. She approached, then stopped, as though afraid of stepping into the wet, overgrown road where heavy dew-drops almost flattened the hair-grass to the ground.

By a little eddy in the river, sat a man holding a fishing-rod. He turned towards her. He was wearing the grey, green-edged cap of a forest-keeper. It was her uncle!

"Uncle, I've come to you!" And slipping her bundle into the crook of her arm, she ran towards him holding out both hands.

"Helena, you!" He dropped his fishing-rod on the grass and clasped the proffered hands. "You've been crying. . . ."

"I'll have to stay with you for a little while . . . so nobody sees me. I'll tell you everything. . . ."

Wading through the wet grass, they approached the little bridge. A splash came from bulrushes on the river bank.

"A pike! I want to catch it. I always go angling in the morning."

Helena shifted her bundle from her left arm to the right. The hidden pistol among her clothes was pressing into her side.

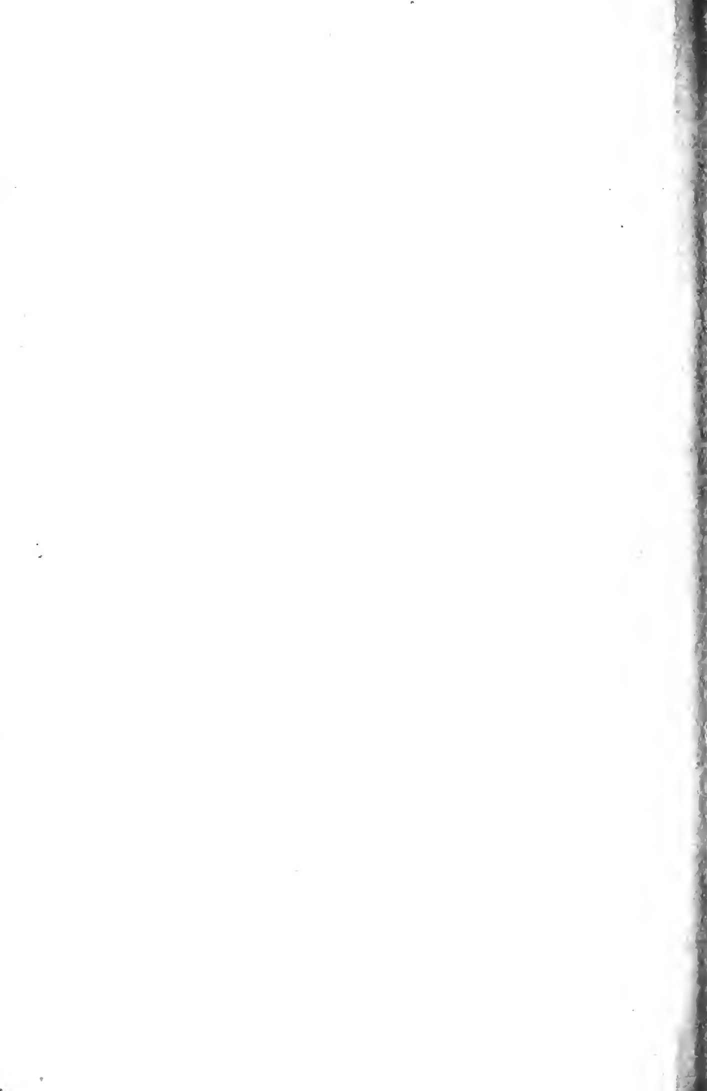
They turned into a path that meandered along the winding river and then passed into the wood. The sun had reached the tops of the pine trees and sent beams down through their branches, like silvery-green shafts, piercing the misty morning air.

TO THE READER

The Foreign Languages Publishing House would be glad to have your opinion of this book, its translation and its design and any suggestions you may have for future publications.

Please send them to 21, Zubovsky Boulevard, Moscow, U.S.S.R.

Printed in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics



PG
9049
.12
I7Y4

Birze, Miervaldis
Yet icebound rivers flow

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY