

The Fuehrer's Blood

A

Shreyans Zaveri

novel

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The Fuehrer's Blood

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Preface

The World War II remains to be one of the greatest wars witnessed by mankind. No amount of words can describe or heal the pain that it inflicted upon millions and through all of this, the one name that intimidatingly stands out in context is Adolf Hitler. Eons ago, a group of Germans went into hiding and formed the most successful anti – Nazi group, “Blood Moon”. This group remains to be the most elusive secret group of that era and through this story I reveal a rare breed of individuals whose valor has gone unnoticed till date.

As an author of fiction, I am happy to have had the privilege of listening to World War II brave hearts. Thanks to my family and their close business relations with Germany, I have been privy to a treasure trove of first-hand information on this topic. Furthermore, I am absolutely intrigued by the history and social fabric of that era. These curiosities coupled with an endless imagination made me delve deeper into this subject and hence “The Fuehrer’s Blood” was born.

“The Fuehrer’s Blood” will take you on a journey seldom traversed. It is a vivid eye opener to one of the most potent controversies that brewed during the war. With Hitler’s henchman Han mysteriously landing behind enemy lines and Blood Moon converging with him to find Hitler’s personal diary, it is a journey few have heard of before.

The novel has been in active production for five years and has undergone endless refinements to present a well-crafted narrative to you. The following pages will take you behind many forgotten lives and I sincerely hope that you will enjoy reading it as much as I enjoyed putting it together.

Shreyans Zaveri

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This book wouldn't have been possible without the countless inputs, help and hard work of an astounding number of people. It is practically impossible to name each one of them here as it will run into a number of pages. However, the very fact that this book is complete and out in the world is because of the trust that people have shown in me.

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JSZ

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“Where will you be driving to now?”

“To freedom” he replied.

Oblivion

Han was perched precariously on the top most branch of a tall swaying tree. Like an outgrowth from the tree, he sat still and steady. One hand held out his sniper rifle while the supporting arm showed him his watch. Loud thunder claps in distant mountains sent aftershocks across the angry skies. Han's gaze shifted from his timepiece to the skies as he observed momentary lightning streaks pulse through the clouds. They lit up the trees and dark eerie forests at intervals. The light breeze that touched his face was damp with rain as thunder rumbled far above. Yet again he glanced at his timepiece. The glint in his eye was the only give away for he never moved a muscle otherwise. Looking through the eyepiece on his rifle Han took aim. It was an exquisitely crafted rifle, with small intricate engravings of ancient runes running around it. There was a clap of thunder, louder and crisper this time. It was accompanied by a slight drizzle. 'This is it' he thought. 'The storm was moving closer.' His calculations were correct and now he had to be quick. If the rain picked up, his position would become vulnerable. He drew a deep breath and composed himself; bringing his breathing to a near halt. With mechanical precision and a practiced sniper's eye, Han pressed the trigger as his timepiece ticked and the clouds clapped aloud in thunder. Nobody noticed a gunshot or the consequent thud as a guard of the Red army fell within the watch tower. The gunshot was perfectly timed and camouflaged with the thunder clap.

Two massive towers of the Red army camp stood well hidden by forests around them. One tower rose straight up from the ground while the other branched out from the mountain surface. Anyone, from a few hundred feet away wouldn't be able to notice a huge Russian camp hidden in these forests. The tower posts and guards were strategically placed to notice intruders approaching from miles away. One watchtower was closer to where Han was perched and the other diagonally opposite to it. The camp was protected by a mountain range from the other sides, so these two were the only watch towers that had to be cleared. Han could see another centrally placed light tower but it was impossible to know if there were guards inside. The light tower would be an excellent vantage point to spot intruders. He had to make his move before the other guard noticed an empty post at the opposite end. As the timepiece ticked, Han fired a second shot which was easily muffled by the boom of thunder clap. A stray leaf caught up in the line of fire as the bullet seared through it. The leaf appeared fresh green with smoked edges as Han held it in his hands, lost in thought. He could feel life throbbing in the leaf, the tree and the very air around him. His mind wandered back in time and his thoughts weighed down upon him like a great burden. He couldn't come to terms with all that had conspired. An owl screeched in the nearby mountains, startling him back to his senses. He quickly gathered himself and scanned the area; his green eyes glinting with precision. Through the tree cover, he tried looking for disturbances and spotted a lone Red army soldier manning the gate far below.

Stealthily, he climbed down the tree and positioned himself behind a massive boulder, waiting for the soldier to finish his round. 'This does not call for a gunshot' he thought. The rain had now progressed from a slight drizzle to a turbulent noisy downpour while the skies continued to rumble angrily. The soldier turned his back to Han as he took rounds of the periphery. In a swift motion Han pulled out his hunting knife. He covered ground effortlessly sprinting towards the soldier. The soldier turned around & panicked at the sound of sudden footsteps. Han called out mockingly; "hand to hand combat soldier?" and plunged his knife deep into the soldier's heart.

With no time to react, the soldier fell. Warm blood gushed onto Han's hands. He laid the soldier to rest and swiftly took his coat. He pulled over the heavy Russian coat as it covered his torso, hiding a rugged and worn out oval dog tag. Han stood six feet tall and was very agile; he easily dragged the soldier's body into a bush where it couldn't be spotted. He opened the gate leading into camp and slid inside. There were no other soldiers; the watchtowers were empty and the gate now unmanned. Pulling out bundles of dynamite from his backpack, he started plugging in the fuse wires. Han secured one pack at the gate and the other a little away at a tunnel opening. There were huge underground tunnels running in & around the camp which the Russian forces used for storage and other emergencies arising out of severe weather conditions. It was a brilliant design and had proved its worth under extreme war time crisis. These tunnels housed their lighting rigs, power supply and radio equipment. Any attacks on the ground level and they could still function at full force from within these tunnels. The forest lands were originally inhabited by a peaceful population. In the recent war it had fallen under Nazi rule and then to Russian's by tactical infiltration. Han had once studied a map of these tunnel systems procured by the 'Abwehr', which was a primary Nazi intelligence agency. These tunnels were his only chance of getting inside the heart of the camp. Making sure that the dynamite was secure, Han concealed it under foliage. He checked his surroundings once again for soldiers before blending into the dark tunnels and vanishing into them.

The Russian camp was a maze of bunkers, air raid shelters, soldier tents and officer cabins. A massive three storied building christened 'Beast Bunker' stood in the exact center of the camp. The structure was made with reinforced steel and was practically impossible to infiltrate. This entire undercover camp ran across the huge length of ancient woodlands of Bialowieska. They were deep dark forests; one's that could hold secrets and never reveal those until time itself summoned them.

Han was now moving in complete darkness through the tunnels, occasionally he would break into a jog to cover more ground. At regular intervals he secured dynamite at tunnel openings or turnings. He had a small bobbin that rolled out trigger wire as he ran. The tunnels followed a honeycomb pattern, more or less opening into each other at every alternate turn. Anyone without a keen sense of direction could be lost inside these for days at end. Han was laying wired dynamite that was connected to a core trigger in his backpack. The core trigger could be fired with a secondary one that functioned over a short wave radio signal. He was placing and connecting the dynamite as he moved deeper. Han suddenly hit a straight long passage and a narrow endless tunnel was now visible with no openings except a sharp turn at the very end. He could see a faint light at the end of this narrow tunnel and he sensed that he was on track. He looked around the long tunnel checking for disturbances. One side stretched straight into darkness and the other had a faint light at the far end. Drawing a heavy breath, Han sprinted towards the light source. He covered the long dark patch as fast as his feet took him and stealthily approached the turning. Han gripped his handgun as he took a sharp right at the end. A sudden bright light hit his eyes and he saw massive rigs towering in front of him. He was covered in cold sweat and heaved slightly as he lay down his guard. The rigs in front of him were an array of fuse boxes maintaining power supply to upper cabins. The absence of guards in this area came as a matter of surprise to him. He was expecting soldiers to be stationed around these rigs. He carefully walked around and noticed a straight narrow ladder over him, going at least twenty feet above. It went as high as the tunnel and then stretched further into a dark narrow cavity. There was a circuit diagram showing him exact sections connected to the light rig. Studying the light rigs, he figured out the best possible switches to disconnect. Before he could

deal with the lights, he removed the remaining dynamite from his pack and placed it in the center of the chamber. Dynamite here would take out electric supply and radios throughout the camp. Also, dynamite placed at regular intervals of the connecting honeycomb pathways would cause massive damage and chaos in the camp rendering the tunnel system useless. Han hoped not to use the dynamite; he just wanted to accomplish his mission. He rummaged through his back pack; it was empty now except for a battered diary with deep crimson stains on its cover. He tucked it away safely within his jacket and discarded the backpack. Han looked around the room and up the ladder once again. 'It was time,' he told himself. Out came his hunting knife, faithful and blood stained. It sliced through wires and a few fuse clips were undone effortlessly.

Commotion erupted in the completely dark cabin above. Two Russian soldiers were frantically running around trying to figure out the reason for darkness and shouting away check lists to each other. General Igor appeared calm though. He got up, lit an oil lamp, set it on his table and went on with his work. They never usually faced these black outs here and victory was at hand. He didn't want a senseless power cut to dampen his spirit on the war front. The light from the lamp was faint and flickering, casting dark shadows over areas around his writing desk. Igor gave a pathetic look to the fumbling soldiers and went about reading from the files strewn around him. The page read 'First of May, 1945' and an endless list of names followed it. One of the soldiers opened the cabin door and went out to check the cause of electric failure. A draft of cold air gushed in and Igor was so caught up in his work that he didn't notice a gun barrel slipping towards him in the dark. In the dancing shadows, the barrel crept forward to where he was sitting. Igor looked up, alarmed. Han's face appeared, shadows playing on his stern features. The angry glint in his green eyes however remained constant with rage. "Konstantin?" he asked in a hushed voice, barely moving his mouth. The general looked up at Han but remained silent because the gun was a few inches from his face. "Konstantin?" Han asked again, his voice a bit more urgent and angry. Before he questioned Igor further, Han heard footsteps behind him. He swiftly moved into the shadows. Igor got up and made no sound for he knew the gun was still pointing at him from darkness. Igor was contemplating escape; his gun was loaded with poison laced bullets from his personal cabinet. In that instance a soldier barged in and rammed into Han who was hidden in darkness. That was all the time Igor needed. He flung the oil lamp from his table into the dark corner where Han was and shot with his gun. Muffled gun shots rang through the darkness and Igor fell to the floor, dead from Han's swift bullet. The soldier screamed in alarm. The damage was done; the oil lamp had connected well, lighting up Han's right arm in flames. Igor's bullet however only managed to scrape Han's thigh. He turned around punching the soldier in the face and his hand connected with the trigger in his pocket as he activated it. Dynamite exploded somewhere in the distance. It was a small blast, just one of the dynamites that he had planted at the gate from where he entered. Soldiers outside rushed to the explosion site in alarm. Nobody noticed a small fire raging in the cabin through the frost glass windows. Inside the cabin, Han was trying to douse the flame on his right arm; the soldier lay dead with a gaping wound on his neck. Thoughts were racing through Han's head; he still had to find Konstantin and move on to hunt Himmler. Han's hand was singed and bloody as he threw himself out of the door and ran towards the center cabin. The rain felt cold and sharp on his burnt hand, icy stinging pain shot up through his arm and the bullet scrape on his thigh. He had no time to waste. 'This is where Konstantin should be' he thought and ran towards a centrally placed cabin. The map of the underground layout was fixed in his head but the camp was differently setup on ground level. Han kicked open the door of the center cabin. Another soldier sat inside and before the man could react, Han shot straight through the unwary soldier's head. He could

not afford to be quiet and stealthy; it did not matter anymore. The cabin was empty otherwise, just the fallen soldier. Han looked around frantically; it did seem to be a General's cabin. It was well furnished and equipped from inside. He noticed a door with strange multiple locks on it as he scanned the area. He had to act fast, the dynamite was doing its job but that diversion wouldn't last long. The Russian camp was in a state of alarm with soldier's running back and forth from the explosion site. Han looked out from the window of the cabin and his expression contorted in rage. At last he saw his victim, Konstantin.

The menacing Russian warlord flanked by his guards was marching towards his cabin shouting orders and looking mad as hell. He stood nearly seven feet tall. He had cropped black hair and wore a long black overcoat. His physique was reminiscent of a bull, bulky but muscular. He commanded an air of supreme discipline and fear. Konstantin stopped short of the cabin as a soldier came running to him, reporting the blasts. Finally Han saw his enemy, after nearly three years of tracking him. Here stood Konstantin, the notorious Russian warlord. This was Han's chance to take him down. The German sniper aimed from within the half open cabin window as his anger ebbed. "No waiting for thunder claps now" he whispered to himself. His breathing wasn't composed to his usual aiming stance. His heart was palpitating and his body twitched as he aimed and applied pressure on the trigger. The door of the cabin crashed open and a soldier stumbled inside. Han instantly pulled out his Walther hand gun and two shots echoed simultaneously through the air.

The soldier collapsed on the spot as the bullet made contact with him. Konstantin roared in agony and instantly turned around clutching his arm and panting, Han had missed. For the first time ever, his bullet did not find the heart. "Nazi cowards" howled Konstantin. He was now protected by soldiers all around as they formed a human wall and frantically searched for the source of firing. Han dared not shoot now, the soldiers around were too many to take at one go. Instead, he made a dash for the back door. Jumping over the bodies of fallen soldiers, he ran out into the open. The rain was coming down harder than before. Han ran through the back side of the cabins not daring to look behind him. He removed the detonator; 'it was time to rip apart the entire tunnel systems' he thought and pressed the trigger. The radio wave activated the core trigger that was resting near the light rigs. After a few seconds the signal was relayed and a deep rumbling explosion resonated. Han could feel the blow beneath his feet. The reverberations rippled through the grounds and into the forest. The lamps went out; only faint blue early morning light remained and the entire Russian camp was doused in instant darkness. Fires erupted from hatches in the grounds as dynamite exploded throughout the tunnel systems. The soldiers cowered in fear as the iron hatches flew high into the air. Konstantin however maintained his poise as he glanced through the commotion. A stray hatchet flew towards him and without as much as a flinch he punched away the heavy metal. This explosion was another diversion and Han hoped to escape under its guise. But Konstantin was thinking on the same lines. Far away he saw Han running towards the forest boundary. "There he is. Get him" he roared, dousing the sound of rains. He ordered his soldiers to fan out in teams and ignore the explosions. The soldiers fetched their flashlights and dispersed to hunt down the intruder. Han had to cover little more ground to reach the forests and he ran with all his might. The forest was getting closer; the thick and dense trees would hide him from the Red army. "Nazi" Konstantin roared in the distance. Han never once looked back and dashed into the forest. 'He would have to hunt from the forests now. Wait until the commotions settled and attack again' he thought and ran blindly into the trees, constantly changing path to throw his pursuers off his trail. The sound of the wind grew shrill and strong within the trees. He had to get headway and hide in the forest.

He heard distant barks; the Red army had unleashed their hunting dogs. Han's heart was hammering against his ribs and in spite of the cold rain; steady sweat trickled down his forehead and neck. He felt a little uneasy as he exerted his body to the hilt. Han covered ground quickly keeping up his pace, he looked back as the surroundings passed by in a blur and soldiers hadn't caught up yet. He ducked and jumped the unusually thick forest growth, distancing himself from his pursuers. He turned around to look behind and his boots caught a wire on the forest floor; Han stumbled but kept up his pace. Suddenly the noise of wind grew extremely shrill and intense. It grew heavier and before he noticed, a huge bark flew towards him and slammed into his face with bone crushing force. The wind was knocked out of him and his face twisted in a painful bloody mess. He was thrown back by a few feet, his jacket ripped apart and the black diary flew out onto the grounds along with his rifle. The Russians knew these forests well and kept them protected with wire traps. He groaned in pain, not wanting to waste time, Han tried to gather himself and get up. But he felt another collision; his head throbbed in severe pain. 'The Russians had caught up with him?' Han looked up dazed and unfocused. One of the soldiers had connected a baton with his head. His eyes now watering searched for a route while his mind contemplated escape. Powerful hands suddenly lifted him off the ground. The world around him was spinning and his body ached in severe pain. He was exhaling blood from his nose and mouth. The bullet scrap on his thigh was suddenly itching and he heard angry snarls all around him. A powerful flashlight met his face as he squint his eyes. He tried to loosen the grasp of the soldiers but they held on with an iron clasp.

Leather boots met gravel in a thick, slow and sickening sound. Konstantin came to a halt in front of Han. He stood tall and looming as he raged in anger and pain. Two soldiers held Han captive while others kept their guns pointed at him, ready to take him down at his slightest attempt to move. Konstantin's left arm was bloodied with a crude band tied across it. Fresh crimson blood dripped from under the band. "So, you are the dreaded Nazi sniper?" Konstantin asked him, letting his words linger for a moment. One of the guards handed Konstantin Han's fallen rifle. Konstantin looked at it with awe. "You are indeed the dreaded Nazi sniper, the one they call Adolf Hitler's shadow. And here you stand cowering like an insect in front of me, at my mercy." Konstantin was barely an inch away from Han's face as he spoke. Han was hanging a few feet above the ground. The soldiers pulled him up so he could face Konstantin at eye level. "You come into in my camp, blow it apart and think you can run, you Nazi bastard. You puncture a bullet through me and you think you can run?" Konstantin growled in rage. Han looked up. Face to face with Konstantin and spat on him in reply. "Yes I can."

For the huge figure that Konstantin was, he was very quick and agile. Enraged by Han's action, he pulled out his blade and plunged it deep into Han's side. Han screamed in agony, he screamed so loud, it rang disturbingly throughout the forest range. A few birds took flight into the darkness. Han felt blood gushing from his side and heard Konstantin laugh loudly. The world blacked out; there was extreme pain as Han slipped into oblivion.

Berlin Bleeds

Thick black smoke emanated from the devastation as it left nothing untouched. It settled over the once magnificent city, carrying with it a sense of despair and a horrid stench of death. Savage fires took over the city as they turned buildings into rubble and roads to dust. There was debris everywhere, as buildings came crumbling down and shards of glass fell to the ground shattering on impact. The Russians had tactfully targeted major government buildings first, immediately crippling the enemy's decision making system. Soldiers of the Red army could be seen running in and out of ruins, shouting orders and gunning down opposition. Few Red army soldiers were seen celebrating in glee and the relentless firing of battle tanks at intervals shook the very heart of Berlin.

This was the Red army soldier's last street fight with the remaining German army and soldiers fighting from Berlin were now merely protecting what remained of their homes. Red army soldiers mercilessly gunned down opposition as they swept street after street and house after house. By now, most of Berlin had fallen into their hands and evidently Russian ground forces were visible throughout the fallen city. Many civilians and soldiers willingly walked into their own deaths as they saw no definite end to this suffering. One after the other they pressed the hard cold metal to their skins and pulled the fatal trigger. The German army, divided, weak and uncoordinated, was no match for the massive Russian forces. In small pockets within the city, a few generals of the German army tried leading their paltry squadrons and task-forces to attack, but without much success.

General Helmuth Weidling, the last commander and defender of Berlin, was trying his best to hold out and buy more time for those who were fleeing. He had, against his wish, been given the task of defending Berlin. He had urged the Fuehrer to let people breakout but his plea fell on deaf ears. The Fuehrer, Adolf Hitler was in a state of despair and panic as the enemy forces closed in on him. He made no rational choices and asked the men to continue fighting. He seemed to be acting strange and out of his senses which was highly unlikely of Hitler. Finally, General Helmuth Weidling gave in to his fate and took up charge of defending the city. He was putting to use the meager resources he had and divided the soldiers into eight fighting squadrons named A through H. They had no impressive names and no lengthy protocols. The squadrons consisted of army men from the Wehrmacht Heer and Waffen SS divisions. General Helmuth also included young members of Hitler youth, Berlin police force and older members of the Volksstrum. Their orders were straightforward and clear. "Go out and save the people." But Berlin's fate was sealed when the Red army marched in. There was no victory to be achieved; their only hope was to make the loss more tolerable. Russian ground forces had proclaimed that they would unfurl Red flags over Berlin on the first day of May. They were living up to their word and were a few hours away from complete victory as buildings in the heart of Berlin already had Russian flags fluttering over them.

Berlin lay defeated and dead. The streets were piled with bodies of soldiers and civilians alike. Men of different races and nationalities, who fought in opposing armies, lay united in death as

they were heaped over each other. Horrific cries of pain etched on their faces as they embraced death willingly or otherwise. It was an odd assortment of people who now came together to defend their homes and the falling city. The snipers hid inside ruined buildings and took out Red army soldiers manning heavy artillery, while some of the younger members took to the streets and laid mines to blow up tanks. The older and more experienced members tried to take command and lead these teams. Random instances of such small battles were seen breaking out through the city. A mere forty five thousand men fought the onslaught of more than two hundred thousand Russian soldiers. The Red army forces were well coordinated and directed unlike the German units that were confused, low on ammunition and without a leader. The communication systems of Berlin were dead and not many messages were relayed through the city. Groups of civilians took refuge in underground shelters and hospitals. They were lost and dejected at the horrific events that unfolded over past few days. The Nazis collapsed instantly after their leader had disappeared. Now, there was no government or military left to protect them. All they could do was to hide and somehow survive. Slowly but surely, Berliners were inching towards an austere defeat.

A line of busses snaked through the outer city routes. Most of the transport system had fallen prey to the ongoing war and public transport across Germany had suffered a massive setback. What had evolved as the 'Kriegsbauart' or the war time class useful for supplying wartime amenities was now completely destroyed. Hitler's strategy of 'Blitz Krieg' had been modified and used upon his own lands. The opposing forces devised a plan called the transportation strategy. This bombing strategy had rendered transport systems completely useless throughout Germany. It destroyed the main supply links and hence dealt a massive blow to the wartime supply system. Drivers and guards had chosen to keep few busses running on their own accord. These were men who had united under the banner of peace, working in the underbelly of Berlin and trying to protect the remaining people of Germany. The bus moved slowly through rubble covered roads, two guards stood up front clearing away debris and keeping a look out. From a distance the driver saw a small boy strewn on the road. His eyes were open, steel gray in silence and yet wanting to scream out in pain. People from the bus watched quietly as this and many such bodies passed them. The passengers were an assortment of people who pledged peace and sat huddled in the bus. There were wounded people sleeping on the floor. Many of them were bleeding and blotches of blood visible throughout the bus. Few mothers held on to their kids, not wanting to let go of their bodies and horrifyingly true, some of those were just corpses. Lifeless and unmoving they remained wrapped in a protective embrace. The bus wasn't heading anywhere in particular; most people were in it because it provided shelter and a few hoped to get closer to Berlin to find their loved ones.

The clouds in the azure blue sky dazzled with a brilliant mixture of colors, radically pink at places with shades of violet and glimpses of gold. They cast a heavenly glow over the entire field. A fair young woman stood in the farms. She looked away into the endless horizon with her hazel eyes watching a flock of cranes fly into the sunset. Theodor's heart began to race as he looked at her. Her skin was bathed in an unnatural glow; she looked like an apparition bathing in the heavenly light of the gods. A light breeze caressed her delicate features. He wanted to reach out to her, to touch her and be with her. He felt her presence so close to him and yet she stood far away. Theodor began sprinting across the field, running towards her. He called out her name but she did not turn around. 'Was she able to hear him?' He thought and quickened his pace. He ran faster with all his might trying to get close to her. Wind picked up speed from the opposite end as if resisting Theodor from being able to reach Adelheid. An unusual tension built up within him

and there was a sudden blinding flash of light. Theodor covered his eyes and continued running towards her. Somewhere in the distance he heard a scream. Adelheid screamed, shrill and loud it pierced through his thoughts.

With his heart beating against the innards of his ribs Theodor woke up. He was sweating profusely. He sat inside the bus, with his eyes half open and head resting on the window. He was trying to calm down. The war had taken its toll on him, just as it had on countless others. He was in uniform and completely covered in blood and dirt. Had it not been for the fatigue, hunger and devastation of war, he would have been a fine looking German. With bright brown eyes and sharp features he was an otherwise handsome young man. He had never wished to fight in the war but was thrust upon him as it had been upon millions of other citizens. His family had been wiped out by the air bombings from enemy wrath. His love had survived though, his only comfort was the fact that Adelheid lived. Or at least he believed so as he clung on to every last bit of hope. She had written to him; that was his only solace and kept him going through the war. He held on dearly to the letter and somehow found life coming back to him through those words in her letter. Theodor had abandoned his posting and was on the run ever since. He had removed visible effects from his uniform that would hint at his posting and military history. Since he received the letter from Adelheid, his only aim was to reach her. More than anything else, he wanted to find out where she was and be with her. Berlin was where she would be if all had gone as planned but now the news pouring in was grim. The Fuehrer had fallen and along with him, the Third Reich had collapsed. If the news were to be true, then Berlin was wiped out. Theodor felt numb with agony. His head exploded with thoughts of disastrous consequences. The Fuehrer, Adolf Hitler, the man responsible for all of this lay dead and Berlin was left defenseless.

The bus came to an abrupt halt and shrill far away whistles bore through the silence of dusk. Theodor got up and looked around. There was confusion as everyone looked out trying to guess the reason for their sudden halt. He could see fear in everyone's eyes as they remained silent. They looked out expecting to see bomber aircrafts or enemy soldiers. Theodor looked around, a few of his fellow soldiers locked eyes with him but none spoke. Cold silence filled the air. He had come here with the only aim of finding Adelheid and he knew what he had to do next. Taking a deep breath he got up from his seat, moved through the crowd and stepped off the bus. In front of his eyes was the most painful sight he had ever witnessed. The city lay in ruins, completely devastated, burned and razed to the ground. He saw fire being hurled at Berlin from ruthless Red army launchers. Tears swelled up inside him as he tried to control his emotions. Even the little hope he had of finding Adelheid seemed to be vanishing along with the rays of the dying sun but if he were to ever find her, it would be here. With his deepest fears surfacing, Theodor took painful steps towards the city. He knew not if he would find his love here or meet his own end. He was prepared for the worst and held on to the letter as his last dreg of hope. Somehow, the touch of the letter gave him courage and pushed him forward into the bleeding walls of Berlin.

Blood Moon

Deep within the bleeding walls of Berlin was a small forgotten house. Just like many others, it was covered in dust and debris. Outside, the streets were strewn with countless dead bodies and rubble. As one moved inside the house it looked out of order and forgotten over the years with windows covered in brownish black paper and paint. The paper was peeling at places and paint strokes across the windows were shabby. The house was cluttered with fallen objects, paintings, cutlery and cracked wooden panes. Few intact photo frames surprisingly were still hanging on the walls. It was hard to believe that this house was once a place inhabited by peace loving families. Deep within the house where the kitchen and a small dining table lay, was a trap door that led to an underground cellar. The kitchen was a complete mess and the dining table had broken into half. A large wooden beam had fallen right onto it, splitting it into two. The trap door on the kitchen floor opened to steep wooden steps going underground. It led to a small strange space where an odd army of men sat. This cramped space had a door on one side and a thick bunch of wires that ran through the other. There was a radio rig in one corner and weapons stacked on the other. A huge pile of files was stowed away on a small rack and the space beyond it extended into a dark cellar like area.

“None of our informers made it back from the Fuehrer bunker and we still have no communication from Han.” A huge soldier by the name of Ralf spoke to the small group of people. Ralf was muscular and tall. He wore a military uniform with both sleeves of his shirt deliberately torn off, showing his massive chiseled arms. He had messy short black hair and tiny black eyes that stood out from his otherwise white form. He smoked a cigar as he conversed. “In any case, we need to get to Han somehow. We need confirmation on Hitler’s death. The Russians are at our doorstep and if we don’t confirm this, we will not be able to do much for the protection of Germania.” The senior most looking person spoke in a deep authoritative voice. Everyone looked at General Felix as he spoke. General Felix, probably in his late sixties was an Ex – Nazi officer. He had innumerable scars all over his face and his silver white hair gave testimony to his age and wisdom. Felix was dismissed from duty by Heinrich Himmler on account of treason to the Fuehrer and in turn to the Reich. Himmler was Hitler’s trusted man, but since there was not enough proof against Felix, he lived. And since Hitler had trusted Felix’s judgment in past war matters, he was given a fair hearing in court. Felix understood the Fuehrer’s mind and didn’t risk his life further. He went into hiding as soon as he was dismissed. He was sure that Hitler or Himmler would’ve put people behind him and the court hearing was just a disguise. “Gentlemen we always knew that this little group that we have formed was destined to perform terrible tasks. That in turn constantly puts us on the throes of extinction but we have survived. Many other groups had the courage to stand up and rebel but we have been most successful and are now close to achieving what we set out for. With the gift of birth, our death is promised. We might as well go roaring into battle than sitting and warming these chairs.” General Felix always charged up the atmosphere with his talks. “If this be the mission that wipes us out then so be it. We will at least make the change that we are meant to make” Felix concluded and looked at the others. “I have a small concern General” Albert interjected.

“Yes please” Felix replied gesturing Albert to talk. Albert was relatively smaller and wore round rimmed spectacles. His hair was long, messy and unkempt and he always spoke very softly. He opened up a huge map in front of him. “If we are looking at getting to Han, the last coordinates that we have of Konstantin are around this area.” Albert plunged into explaining the location. “Considering the possibility that he has gone after Konstantin and that he is not yet dead.” “Both possibilities considered Albert” General Felix interrupted. “I am sure Han has gone after Konstantin. That is why he broke protocol and went behind him before time. As for his death, either he or Konstantin is dead. There is no uproar from our Russian messengers meaning Konstantin is alive and I know Han. He won’t die before killing Konstantin.” A slight smirk crossed General Felix’s face as he spoke with utmost conviction and trust in Han. Albert nodded and continued talking. “So this area belongs to the Russians” he said and drew out a small circle on the map. “It’s within their territory now and Konstantin or the ‘Minotaur’ as they call him is housed deep in this fortress of a camp that he runs. How do you propose to get to him? And even if we do get in, how and where do we communicate with Han. He could be anywhere.” Albert circled the remaining areas on the map and presented his dilemma as he sat back looking at the people around for some response. “He does have a point General. Have we no communication from the other sources?” asked Falko. He was lean and agile; he sat comfortably discussing this as if they were planning a visit to the movies. “No, there is no news from other sources. We need confirmation on Himmler’s death. We must anyhow kill Konstantin because he has enough information about us. Also, confirming Hitler’s death is of utmost importance as already mentioned. I have been undercover for nearly seven years now. I wish to spend the remaining years of my life in freedom and not exile. And for that we need these three people dead” General Felix spoke, holding up three fingers indicating the priority of killing them. “We cannot trust any outside sources as of now. All of us here are all that we have left” Felix explained further. “Our very success depends on discretion; we have survived so far only because of that one factor. We can attempt to get to Han and probably he has more answers. I understand the validity of your arguments gentlemen but I have no other choice. If any of you have options I would like to hear them” he concluded. An uncomfortable silence fell over the small room and one could hear the breathing patterns of everyone around. Far away explosions were causing the ceiling to reverberate and loose dust kept falling on them. Suddenly, with a disturbing crack and hiss the radio came to life. Albert got to his feet and picked up the receiver. “Please identify yourself” he spoke over the crackle. “General Felix?” A raspy voice urgently inquired. Everyone turned around to look at the radio. General Felix snatched the receiver from Albert’s hands. “Yes” he replied. “The shadow has been captured by the Minotaur. He lives but not for long. The road has been paved for you. All is ready as discussed earlier. Relay coordinates if mission is being undertaken. I will contact again” the voice concluded over the radio. Albert turned down the dial to lower the disturbing hiss. “You all heard that, Han is alive. We must get him out of there. Fabian is well placed within the territory of Konstantin’s camp. His information is true to the last word” General Felix spoke as he settled back into his chair. “Han holds the answers. Himmler, Hitler and Konstantin” General Felix continued talking as he looked at others sitting there with grave faces. “If Hitler or Himmler resurfaces, we will have to go undercover for life.” General Felix was in a grave mood now as he continued talking. “What if Hitler, Himmler and Konstantin live? What help or use is Han to us anyways?” Ralf interjected. “Han went rogue on protocol, he shouldn’t have. If he is acting on his own accord or worse on Hitler’s orders we are all marching into a death trap” Ralf pushed his argument further. Everyone fell silent at his statement. General Felix let out a sigh and moved closer to the group. “Han has known Hitler

from the inside. If there is any plan that Hitler is up to, chances are that only Han knows of it. The last I met Han, he was sure about something that Hitler promised him” Felix explained to the group of people. “Since when do we believe in Hitler and his promises?” Ralf again questioned Felix. Albert tried to hide behind the open map. He was afraid Felix would get angry with these constant interjections. “I understand your concern. Han is important to us and we must get him out of there. Even if Hitler lives, Han can go after him and take him out. He is the only one who can and who will go after him no matter what. He is the best sniper this country has seen; he has protected Hitler for all these years. I personally think Han is our best chance” replied Felix. Ralf appeared a little frustrated at Felix’s response. The mission was dangerous and there were no definite answers. “Traugott on the other hand is trying his best to figure Himmler’s whereabouts” said Felix. “Himmler, we can still tackle. I will personally hunt him down if need be but Hitler is out of my league” Felix abruptly stopped talking. They heard sudden footsteps above them and all of them fell silent as a muffled humming sound emanated. “That old fool” said Ralf. “Can’t he keep it low?”

Above them on the ground floor an old man moved about. He had a long grey beard and as he moved his robe like tunic flapped. He was fixing himself a smoke as he filled tobacco into an exquisitely crafted ivory pipe. He hummed a song that eerily resonated through the broken house. It was extremely quiet and death like but for the steady hum that escaped his lips. As he hummed and moved about the kitchen area, a huge explosion suddenly sliced through the dead silence. The old man looked out to see a massive fire raze the streets outside. A picture frame fell with a disturbingly loud crash as the entire house rattled from the explosion. A huge ball of fire, dust and spent life erupted from the explosion. The old man smiled as he filled his pipe. Through the painted windows, the explosion looked like a huge moon covered in blood. “I can see a Blood moon from my window. What better place to situate the headquarters of Blood Moon” he amusingly muttered to himself and prepared to light his pipe.

Light Flickers

Theodor kept a low profile as he walked within shadows of the ravaged city. The sun was down, leaving the city looming under dark obscurities. He moved with extreme caution so as to avoid drawing attention from enemy soldiers. Tired and battered from the endless journey he dragged himself, his only driving force was the hope to find Adelheid somewhere in this mess. He had entered from the western zone where the battle was less intense as compared to the head on attack from other sides. The south, south-east and northern frontiers were directly under attack from opposing forces. From the area where Theodor entered, it still had big gaps in military ranks from where people were escaping. Civilians and armed personnel alike were trying to get out of Berlin and onto safer grounds. It was only a matter of time though till the Red army closed borders and completely captured Berlin. The city roads were a chaos, half of them ripped apart with gaping holes in the earth and the other half covered with debris and dead bodies. Any dead or deformed body that came in Theodor's way made his heart scream in fear. He was afraid that Adelheid would appear in one of those dead people strewn mercilessly on the floor. He kept moving and dodging through shadows trying to avoid confrontations. He just wanted to get to a city hospital or an air-raid shelter where civilians might be hiding or recovering. His best hope were the hospitals, as it was one place any enemy, no matter how inhuman wouldn't directly attack. Theodor saw Red army soldiers marching towards him from the opposite street. He quickly ducked into a nearby alley and strode away in the opposite direction, getting as far away from them as possible. He couldn't really decipher any streets or addresses. He had been to Berlin once before and what lay in front of him now was beyond recognition. There were obviously no street signs left and all major landmarks that he remembered were razed to the ground. The darkness was enveloping as night approached rapidly and the city no longer had any standing light poles or electric supply to light it up. The Red army soldiers in the alley behind Theodor fired a few rounds into the night air; they were not on guard and were merely making a mockery of the fallen city. With most of Berlin conquered, they had little opposition to worry about. The streets were otherwise deserted for miles together and void of life. Theodor continued his walk, dodging in and out of shadows. His eyes were slowly adjusting to the darkness. He had travelled deeper into the city with no substantial encounter as yet. He did try to move closer to the escaping people to strike a conversation. But he couldn't make any abrupt movements to reach them and at every few steps into the city he would see Red army soldiers fanning out. It was a task not to be seen by any of them. Though the darkness was on his side, it also made it challenging for him to traverse as random bullets were flying through the air making it difficult to move freely.

Theodor now hit a straight narrow ally as he continued forward. Far away at the end of the street he noticed a strange halo emanating from a corner window. He couldn't tell if it was a shop or a house but the light was striking in this darkness. 'Was it a reflection? Or a trick played by some half dying fire?' he thought. Theodor strained his eyes to see better but couldn't comprehend from the distance. The light seemed to flicker as a small fire would. Theodor hesitated for a while, thinking if to change his direction or go towards the source of light. There were chances it

would be the Red army soldiers. 'Who else would openly light a fire in such a situation?' his mind was racing with thoughts. He had to take his chance for he didn't know if he would reach anyone else. Carefully, Theodor inched closer towards the light. Keeping to the shadows he moved slowly trying not to make any noise. His heart was beating faster than usual, 'if he found a fellow German he could hope to find other civilians' his mind calculated the odds.

Theodor sneaked around the place trying to look in through a crack or an opening. Quietly he moved around the periphery, there was no sign of life around and it seemed quiet deserted from the inside. There was however a dim light flickering in the house but he saw no other movement. He nudged the door a little, it remained stuck. Out of fear he looked around the street to see if someone was approaching. It was dead and empty, so he took his chance and tried hard to push the door open. It didn't budge. He glanced below his feet, there was debris piled up along the edge of the door. As silently as he could work, Theodor swiftly pushed away the rubble and tried thrusting his weight onto the door; it still remained as immovable as ever. Theodor took a few steps behind, his heart beat picked up and fear crept into his mind. Yet again he glanced along the street, 'no sign of life' he thought. He moved into a short sprint and rammed into the door, it budged slightly and a chain rattled on the inside. A grunt escaped Theodor as he rubbed his arm. He waited for someone to answer from within or make some movement. A few uneventful seconds passed, there was no answer but the flickering light went out suddenly. 'There was definitely someone inside' Theodor thought to himself 'and if it was the Red army soldiers they would have barged out to kill him by now.' Theodor knocked on the door and waited but there was no answer. He confidently stepped back and ran towards the door. 'They have to be civilians' he thought and launched himself onto the door hoping to break it open. He was waiting for contact and nearly hit the door but the impact never came. Instead, the door flew open and Theodor couldn't stop himself in time given his momentum. Massive hands grabbed Theodor and thrust him towards the corner of the room. The intensity of his sprint coupled with the thrust from unknown hands sent him flying across and he crashed into a kitchen rack. He let out a short scream as he fell flat on his face and the cabinet along with a number of vessels collapsed on him making a colossal racket. He heard footsteps and voices; his heart was beating in panic and his brain working in overdrive. He heard the door slam shut again. "I told you to put out the light." He heard someone order in anger. Theodor tried to shun the throbbing pain that had begun on the side of his head, trying to get up he pushed the mountain of broken kitchen ware off him. He had to gather himself and tell the inmates that he was here in peace. Before Theodor could think further, a massive blow struck his head. He heard more voices and the side of his head throbbed insanely as the world around him began spinning. He tried to get up but instead just collapsed back into the heap of kitchen rubble. Blobs of flickering lights were all he saw as he fell unconscious.