Tales From the Tracting Book

Donna Christine Allen Ackerson

Brigham Young University - Provo

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TALES FROM THE TRACTING BOOK

A Thesis
Presented to the
Department of English
Brigham Young University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Donna Christine Allen Ackerson
December 1977
This thesis, by Donna Christine Allen Ackerson, is accepted in its present form by the Department of English of Brigham Young University as satisfying the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

Douglas R. Thayer, Committee Chairman

John B. Harris, Committee Member

August 17, 1977

Date

John B. Harris, Graduate Coordinator
DEDICATION

To Elouise Bell, who got no credit for the hours of help she gave me; to Doug Thayer, whose suggestions I foolishly ignored; and, of course, to Chucker, who shared the kitchen table with a typewriter for five years.
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INTRODUCTION

One dark winter morning in Mannheim, about four months into my mission, I was riding a streetcar in downtown rush hour, pressed into the ribs of my companion, trying to memorize Galatians 1:6-8, when I suddenly thought, "Gosh, nobody at home knows what this is really like!" I hadn't known, although I'd heard the homecoming talks, most of them the best-two-years-of-my-life, or best-mission-in-the-world variety. But nobody had told me about the streetcars, the bäckereis, the endless talks with your companion, the hours of useless travel time . . . .

And so I decided to tell them. Of course I realized that it might have been done already, but then, nothing in literature is new. Anyway, I was certain I could do it better--write the great Mormon missionary novel, and tell the story definitively, once and for all.

But after I returned home I lost my enthusiasm for the project, and might have abandoned it completely, except that occasional dreams of streetcars, graveyards, and bombed-out buildings gave me the feeling that something important still needed to be done--that I somehow hadn't been released yet. These dreams have continued to haunt me, during the five years it has taken to write this book, but they are less frequent now, and less unsettling. At least I have been able to come to grips, on paper,
with my mission experience, and I feel more secure about it now.

My original idea for the book was to do a picaresque-type novel, with chapters that would practically be short stories in themselves. But as I got into the writing of it, I decided to pursue one main theme--Sister Harper's conflicts regarding her missionary calling--working them out to a climax and a resolution. I still intended to give the book a picaresque flavor, however, by embellishing it with the digressions, sidelines, and banalities that are always a part of missionary life.

These embellishments, in fact, almost ruined my project. As I started writing, I was possessed with a mad desire to tell everything--to recreate my mission in the mind of the reader by flooding him with details and drowning him in philosophy. Chapter one was thirty pages long--all about tracting. Chapter two described every elder in the district, explaining how Sister Harper felt about each one of them and how they felt about each other, etc., etc. Chapter three was more tracting. Luckily, I soon realized that I couldn't possibly take the reader to the mission field simply by transferring all the details lodged in my brain directly to his. He simply wouldn't stand for it. At best, I could transmit the essence of missionary life, with just the right detail here, the most telling anecdote there. I went back and shortened the first chapters drastically, and then, as I continued to write, it became easier to say less--to give the
reader suggestions and let him figure the rest out for himself.

A second major problem I encountered was my thorough, personal involvement with my subject. There was no distance between Sister Harper and myself, and it was very difficult for me to have her say or do anything I wouldn't have said or done myself. I did place her in a few situations that were more or less fictitious, but I had a difficult time making them convincing, and they are still, to me, the least satisfying parts of the book. (Naturally, Sister Harper is the only intelligent, perceptive missionary in the whole group, and I was therefore shocked when a friend, after reading the book, commented, "what got me was, they were all so dumb!" "Even Sister Harper?" I asked. "Yes! Especially Sister Harper!'"

A final problem that assailed me, as the book neared completion, was what to call it. The theme seemed to be Sister Nord's final proclamation, "You still gotta put in your time," but that hardly made a catchy title. I solicited suggestions from my family and friends, and got everything from Each Passing Day to An Unbelieving People to How to Come with the Best Two Years. (The worst candidate was unquestionably A Miss on a Mission.) I originally rejected Tales from the Tracting Book because it sounded like a collection of short stories, but finally, considering the still-picaresque nature of the book, I decided it was perhaps apt enough. And I liked the symbolism of the tracting
book—the objective correlative, if there is one, for all the
European missions—unglamorous, unpromising, and unproductive, but
still containing that thousand-to-one hope for success. I would
feel honored if my own book fared half as well.
Chapter 1

TRACTING

"We don't seem to be having much luck this morning,"
Sister Crane gasped as she followed me up the stairs. "Do you
still think this street's golden?"
"Yep. Don't you?"
"Anything you say." She smiled brightly. "I'm so green
I can't tell yet."

We pulled ourselves up the last flight. I always did the
stair-climbing first and then tracted the house from the top floor
down, so the people on the bottom couldn't tell us there was
nobody home upstairs. These German hausfraus had a way of knowing
each other's business, even though they usually weren't on
speaking terms.

When we reached the top landing I slumped against the
railing, breathing hard. In my fourteen months as a missionary
I still hadn't gotten used to climbing stairs. And maybe now . . .
I was never going to. Well, just one more illusion down the
drain.

Sister Crane gave me a smile of encouragement as she
positioned herself by the first door.

I let her stand there a minute while I finished recovering
my breath. These top landings all looked the same, with their
piles of old magazines, crates of empty beer bottles—and this one had a folded up baby carriage. Morning sunlight filtered in through a thick, opaque window, and bits of dust swam in the light—dust, however, that would never be allowed to settle. There was never any dust on the railings, or on the gleaming wooden floors, or on the beautifully waxed stairs. The only place the Germans allowed dust to settle was in their minds, and it had been collecting there for centuries.

Sister Crane gave me still another bright smile. She was too eager. I'd made the mistake of saying I thought we'd find a golden on this street, and now she thought we had to find him before noon, or he'd evaporate. Well, you never knew. We might as well keep plugging along.

I joined her at the door. "Let's trade off," I said. "Want to take this one?"

"OK!" She pushed the buzzer resolutely and stood back.

We heard a shuffle behind the door, and the clink of keys in the lock; then the door opened a crack. I could barely make out the face, gray in the dimness. Was it male or female?

Sister Crane's thin mouth stretched tighter in its fixed grin. "Guten Morgen. We're two representatives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints . . . ."

The face dissolved back into the dimness and the door closed. The key turned twice in the lock.

Sister Crane turned the bright smile on me, holding up its corners. "I guess that wasn't the one."
"Guess not." I glanced at my watch. "Well, there's still time. It's only twenty to twelve." We were meeting the elders for lunch at twelve thirty.

She nodded absently as we stepped over to the other door.

"Why don't you take this one, too," I said. "That didn't count."

"OK. Thanks."

Sister Crane rang the doorbell now, like always, as if the success of our efforts depended on the firmness of her push. Then she stepped back and renewed her smile.

That smile was inevitable. The bright red lipstick on her wide mouth, stretched around large yellowish teeth—I wished she could look more normal when we tracted. But then, it probably didn't matter. She managed to get us into as many doors as I did.

Nobody answered here, though, so we started down to the next landing.

Sister Crane was the type I never would have gotten to know at home. We might have nodded to each other in the coatroom at stake young adult functions, and she would have said all the right things to me, and I would have said them back, and then I would have gone and found my own friends, feeling slightly guilty. But it bothered me, the way she wore her skirts so long. And girls like her were always too skinny, and they all wore rhinestone earrings and bright red lipstick, and their hair was too frizzy and stuck out too far on the sides. And your mother was always asking why you didn't invite them over.
I'd always felt sorry for girls like her, and yet--it seemed to me now--they never felt sorry for themselves.

Sister Crane had rung at both doors on the landing, with no answer, so we went down another flight.

I was glad we'd been made companions, though--we worked very comfortably together. And I was proud of myself for liking her as well as I did.

On the next landing I took over, ringing at the door on the left. There was a grating rasp and a shuffle behind the door; then it opened and we faced a thick old woman, her hair done up in a collection of cottony brown rats. Her dull red face was as passive as clay. But--we had to give her a chance.

"Guten Tag," I said brightly. "We're from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints."

"Have my own church," she mumbled at the floor, shaking the cottony rats. She moved to close the door.

"May I ask you a question, then?"

She looked at me blankly, and then, was I only imagining--with a flicker of interest.

"Here's the question," I said, concentrating on that flicker, trying to bring it alive. "Suppose you'd lived at the time of Christ. Would you have belonged to His church?"

"Of course."

"That church has been restored to the earth today, through a living prophet." I said it clearly, trying to pour its meaning
through her eyes, into her brain. "You can belong to the true Church of Jesus Christ right now."

For a split second she understood—or she might have. Then her expression dissolved away into fat. "No interest," she mumbled, closing the door.

I marked an X by her name in the tracting book and handed it back to Sister Crane.

Glockenstrasse had been this way all morning—dense old hausfraus, crazy old men, and nobody else at home. But what did I expect from tracting? Was it ever any different? Why had I thought we'd find someone good today? And why had I ever mentioned my feeling to Sister Crane? Now she was giving me a smile of such trust and encouragement that I couldn't help simpering back. Well, maybe we'd find somebody reasonably intelligent and then she'd be satisfied.

I watched while she rang the other doorbell and stood, brightly poised, awaiting the recipient of her message.

The girl who opened the door was heavily made up, her lashes sticky with mascara, black eyeliner sweeping across each lid and up on the sides, and her hair twisted up in a French roll, but she still didn't look over twenty. She held a cigarette in one hand and batted at something behind her with the other. She looked at us sharply.

Sister Crane smiled. "We're from the Church . . . ."

The girl was already shaking her head. "No thanks. I won't give a thing." She turned to push away a tangle of legs—
there was a thump on the floor. She glared wildly under her mascara. "What has the church ever done for me?"

"We're not collecting . . . ."

"Let me tell you something. Three weeks ago today my husband lay down on the railroad tracks. When they came to tell me . . . ." She took a drag on her cigarette and turned away choking.

"We're very sorry," Sister Crane managed.

She shook her head wordlessly. The wail of a baby drifted up from inside the apartment.

"We have a message that will comfort you," Sister Crane assured her, gazing into her eyes, trying to pour sympathy into them.

"No, I'm too busy. Come back another time."

"Maybe you'd like to read this brochure?"

She took it from Sister Crane's outstretched hand, turned it over, and shrugged. Then she closed the door.

We stood there a minute. Sister Crane looked at me, smiling weakly.

"It's OK," I said. "We can take a break now, if you want to."

She squeezed my arm, took a deep breath of fortitude, and marched down the stairs ahead of me.

On the next landing I copied the name on the right--Schmidt--into the tracting book, and pushed the buzzer. Heavy
steps inside plodded toward us. I felt a mild tinge of excitement. Well, maybe this was our golden.

The door creaked open and a fat man stared out. His head was scattered with bristles that grew to a point on his forehead, like a soldier hat. His eyes were deeply recessed in folded bags.

"Good day," I smiled.

"I know." He waved downward with his hand to dismiss us. "Red Cross."

"Nope," I said. "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Mormons."

He nodded as if he understood completely. "The Mormons. You're religious. But I'm not." He gave us a sly look. "I don't believe in God."

"You don't!" I pretended to be shocked.

"I don't believe in God because He took away my wife."

"So you really do believe . . . ."

"Nope. No God." He waved again to dismiss the idea.

"If there's no God, how could He have taken your wife?"

His eyes lit in triumph. "Who else, then?" He bowed stiffly, his arm swept low. "Good day, my ladies," he said, closing the door.

Sister Crane stared at me, her eyes bulging.


"Huh?"
"Sometimes I really wonder . . . ." I said to myself.

* * *

On our way back into town, Sister Crane began discussing the qualities of the golden person we were about to find.

"You know that look when you see it," she said. "Their faces have a certain glow. My aunt served in Mexico, and she told me . . . ."

I gazed up at the gabled rooftops, the red-tiled cupolas of houses built together, end on end up the street. Kaisers-lautern was definitely the prettiest city in the mission. I loved these arched doorways and intricate window ledges, and the tiny shops with their wrought-iron signs, and the narrow cobblestoned streets. K-Town hadn't been bombed during the war, so it was still picturesque. And I liked it here. Even though things had been pretty slow lately. And that wasn't necessarily our fault--things just went that way sometimes.

As we turned into Marktstrasse, I was distracted by the window of Bäckerei Schäfer. I slowed down to see what they still had out. Trays of crescent rolls--shiny brown pretzels--nussecken with their corners dipped in chocolate--sugary Berliners, with a shot of jelly inside--glazed apple pastry. There was a Schwarzwälder Kirsch-torte, already sliced, with two or three pieces removed--I gazed at the chocolate cake layered with cherry filling, lavished with whipped cream, sprinkled on top with chocolate slivers.
"Let's stop in here just a sec," I heard myself saying. "Pick up something to nibble on the way."

"But we don't want to ruin our appetites, do we?" Sister Crane smiled tightly.

"Oh, heck—I don't care."

She looked at her watch. "If you really want to, then I'll wait for you out here so we don't lose any time."

"Never mind." I started walking so fast that she had to trot to catch up with me.

* * *

The interior of Massimo's restaurant was dark, and fluorescent stars gleamed on the velvet-paneled walls. The city of Naples lay painted beneath, secure under the soft Italian night. The room was filled with red-checked tables, each with its own wax-dripped wine bottle and flickering candle. A row of booths lined the back wall, and in the corner Elder Magleby and Elder Bell were already waiting.

Their faces were rosy in the glow of the candle. Bell ran his finger back and forth through the flame, watching it jump. Elder Magleby studied a menu, periodically jerking his head up to flip the dark hair from his eyes. On one of these flips he saw us.

"Over here, Sisters," he called out matter-of-factly.

Bell looked up, stared at us a second, and then turned back to the candle.

We made our way through the tables to the booth, and I slid in beside Elger Magleby. Sister Crane squeezed in next to
me--although it was tight--so we wouldn't look like a four-some. I wouldn't have minded.

"Greetings," Magleby said. "How was your morning?"

"Not too great." I looked over his shoulder at the menu.

"Did you order already?"

"Yeah. We've been here since twelve." Magleby looked across the table at his companion, but Bell continued to stare into the flame.

"Wonder what's keeping Elder Dunn," Magleby said. "He didn't say why he wanted us here--just left a note in our mailbox."

"Yeah," I said. "Ours too. He said twelve thirty."

The waiter appeared, a pale, skinny Italian with long sideburns, who always waited on us. He set down four glass tumblers and filled them with water, shaking his head and muttering "Leitungs Wasser!" We had him trained now--he brought us water even before we asked, but he always let us know exactly what he thought of our strange beverage.

He left, and immediately returned with a steaming tray. He set down a pizza in front of Magleby and a ceramic dish of caneloni in front of Bell. Then he whipped out his pad, nodded at me, and stood poised to take our order.

Sister Crane was looking over my shoulder at the menu.

"Want to split a pizza?" she asked.

"OK. How about mushrooms?"

"Sounds delish."
"Eine Pizza mit Pilzen auf zwei Teller," I told the waiter. He scribbled on his pad and then stood ready to take the rest of our order. We had to order drinks and salads if we wanted to please him, but I didn't care what he thought.

"Sonst nichts," I told him.

His brows arched in disdain and he tucked in his notebook and turned on his heel.

"Where the heck is Dunn," Elder Bell growled. "He could have the courtesy to be on time."

People always talked about Elder Dunn as if he didn't have a companion, which said a lot about his personality. He had a way of obliterating his companions—of blocking them out—like right now, as he appeared in the doorway. His large frame completely blocked the entranceway, and he seemed to be alone. He gazed around the room, then stalked toward us, swinging his briefcase. Then I saw Elder Madsen, his greenie, romping behind him like an eager puppy, waving to us, saying "boy oh boy oh boy" in a voice that carried across the room.

"Sorry we're late," Dunn said. "We had to come all the way from Bännjerrück."

Elder Dunn was cool, but it wasn't an easy cool. It was tense and practiced, as if he'd acquired it recently, after outgrowing his pimples. And you still suspected—that somewhere back there—maybe in junior high—and he dreaded anybody finding out—he'd been a real creep.
Even now you couldn't call him good looking. His forehead was too high, and his face narrow and bony, like a medieval scholar's. His arms were long and loose, and his large hands were always opening and closing around the handle of his briefcase. He wore wire-rimmed glasses, and his hair was trimmed close around his ears. But there was still something appealing about him. And he'd often mentioned a girlfriend--Francene--who was waiting for him. Well, there were girls, I supposed, who grooved on his type.

He hung up his black coat, unwrapped his paisley scarf, and slid into the booth next to Elder Bell. Madsen plopped down beside him, repeating "boy oh boy oh boy."

Elder Dunn looked around the table at us. "Thanks for being on time, anyway," he said. His gaze lingered on me. It made me uncomfortable, when he looked at me like that--not as if he liked me, but as if he were gazing at me pinned under a microscope, and found me very curious indeed. I endured his look without flinching. Finally he opened his menu.

"Hey," Magleby said. "What's the skinny? How come we're here?"

"Oh, yeah. That." He nodded to Elder Madsen, who was squirming in his seat like a fish. "Tell 'em, Elder," Dunn said.

"OK. Boy oh boy, you won't believe this one! We're gonna bury a guy!"

"Huh?" The four of us said it in unison.

"Yeah. Arthur--you know, that boy we were teaching, out in Pännjerrück. He died of something. We went by
yesterday morning and they told us. They were all wearing black."

"No!" Sister Crane's eyes were bulging. "Not . . . that nice boy in the wheel chair?"

"Yeah. That's him. That was him."

"It was quite a shock," Dunn said, resting his arms on the table. "We knew he had muscular dystrophy, but it wasn't that far along. He died of something else—maybe a brain tumor. None of his family could explain it coherently."

"Gina met us at the door," Madsen interrupted. "That's his sister. She was dressed in black—even black nylons. She said her brother wanted a Mormon funeral. If he couldn't be baptized a Mormon, he wanted to be buried one. That's what he said, before he died."

"Unreal," Magleby said, tossing the hair up out of his eyes.

"So we'll be conducting the funeral tomorrow," Dunn said. "We mean the whole district. I need the rest of you there for moral support, and to sing—we need a choir. And, Elder Bell—"

Elder Bell had finished his cannelloni and was tracing the vines on the rim of his plate with one tine of his fork. He looked up at Dunn.

"Elder Bell, as the senior member of this district, I'd like you to give a talk on the resurrection."

Elder Bell's cool was natural. He looked Dunn up and down—then he smiled easily. "Sure. Love to."
"Thanks." Elder Dunn relaxed measurably in his seat. "Sisters--" he looked at me. "Pick out a couple of hymns we can sing--one for the chapel, one for the gravesite. Something meaningful--not that heavy old rock of ages stuff. Maybe 'O My Father'--something to give them a good slant on death."

"Yeah, yeah," Madsen was saying.

"And here's why," Dunn said. "Most of these people will never have heard of the Mormons. And their funerals are heavy--they'll come ready to howl and sob. But we're really going to shake 'em up. This'll be the first happy funeral they've ever been to--they're going to come away smiling, with a whole new outlook on death. They're going to understand one aspect of the gospel. This is our chance to really get through to somebody."

Listening to him, I was almost convinced. At least it was worth a try.

"The funeral's at twelve," Dunn was saying, "so we'll meet in the stadtmitte at eleven fifteen. We'll catch the number two bus--" he consulted his pocket kalendar, "at exactly eleven twenty-three."

The skinny waiter appeared with two plates, half a pizza on each, and delivered them haughtily to Sister Crane and myself. Then he produced his order pad and cocked an eyebrow at Elder Dunn.

Dunn nudged his companion in the side. "Pizza, Elder?" he inquired.
"Oh, yeah. Yeah." Madsen reached for the menu. "Gee, you guys, I almost forgot, we came here to eat! How about that? Let's see, what do I want?"

"Two pizzas with everything," Dunn told the waiter. "And two sprudels."

The waiter nodded, scribbled, and turned on his heel. Madsen looked up confused—then broke into a grin. "Oh, yeah. That's just what I wanted. Just what I wanted to order."

I turned my attention to the half pizza on my plate—tomatoes, cheese, and mushrooms intermixed, piled thick and baked on a biscuity crust. I cut in with my knife and fork, then twisted the fork into the cheese, winding the strings around and around.

"That's a poor excuse for a pizza," Elder Dunn said.

"How come?" I chewed as nicely as I could, feeling his eyes on me. "I always get this kind."

"Next time try onions and anchovies and green peppers and salami. That'll really smash your taste buds."

"Sure. I'd be breathing fire for a week."

"Oh, come on." He took off his glasses and wiped the lenses with a handkerchief, still looking at me. "You've got to live a little, sometime, Sister Harper . . .," he cocked one dark eyebrow at me, "don't you?" Then he replaced the glasses on his nose.
Chapter 2

THE PAINTER

After Massimo's, we made a quick stop at Bäckerei Schäfer.

"I just can't believe it," Sister Crane murmured as we were leaving. "That nice boy in the wheel chair--I just can't believe he's dead."

"Yeah. That's too bad." I shut the wooden door behind us, to the tinkle of the bell overhead. Then I grappled in my purse for the Öhrchen I'd bought. It was wrapped in shiny white paper to protect it until we got home, only I was going to eat it right now, here, on the sidewalk. I lifted it out and peeled back the white paper.

"...and he was so interested in the gospel," Sister Crane said.

"Yeah." It looked delectable--a thin double pinwheel of rich pastry, firm under a clear sugar glaze. It was a little underdone, but that was good--overbaking added nothing to the taste of an Öhrchen. I held it up to the light, observing the spiral pattern where the pastry was paper thin. Then I bit in all at once, crunching the pastry in my teeth, savoring its buttery sweetness.

"I guess he'll have another chance in the spirit world," Sister Crane said, reaching into her purse and pulling out her
öhrchen. Sometimes I was glad she copied everything I did without asking questions. She didn't need to know we were violating one of the strictest rules of German etiquette. You weren't supposed to eat pastry on the street, or cake, or fruit, either, although a pretzel or an ice cream cone was perfectly correct. The rule made about as much sense as everything else the Germans did. I'd once asked a very correct hausfrau about it, and her look had shriveled me to the size of a garden beetle. She had declared that some things were not meant to be eaten on the street. Pastries should be served on a fine china plate, with a little silver fork alongside, and, of course, a good cup of coffee.

I took another generous bite.

Sister Crane had unwrapped her öhrchen part way, and her large lips were nibbling timidly around one edge, like a rabbit with a piece of lettuce.

"Why do they call this an öhrchen?" she asked.

"It's short for schweinesöhrchen." I broke off a large piece, watching the layers separate in a jagged pattern. "That means little pig's ear. I don't see the resemblance, though."

"Little pig's ear!" She was delighted. "That's cute. I'll have to write home and say I ate a little pig's ear."

She would, too. Whenever she did anything new, she thought the people back home would want to know about it. Well, when she'd been out as long as I had, she wouldn't think everything was such a big deal. But now her daring had taken her far enough. She folded the paper back over the uneaten part
of her Öhrchen and slipped it into her purse, saving it for later. I still had enough left for one last sumptuous mouthful, which tasted nearly as good as the first one had. Then I wadded up the paper and tossed it into a sidewalk trashcan.

We had come to the base of Glockenstrasse, and I pulled out the tracting book. Sister Crane, beside me, took a deep breath and let it out slowly, forcing another smile. "Still think there's a golden on this street?" she asked.

"Sure. We just have to keep looking."

"I think so, too."

On our way up the street she said, "You know, I'm sure our golden's waiting, but . . . ."

"How come the tracting's been so lousy?"

"Well, we work so hard--maybe we're just not effective?"

"Sure we are," I said. "You never can tell. Sometimes we're given dry spells just as a test. You know, just to see if we'll keep working, even when we're not baptizing. And then our golden person will pop up when we least expect it."

"I think you're right." Her smile came easier now.

We trudged on in silence. That was it, of course. This dry spell was just a test. Because we did everything else right. We always got our sixty-five hours each week, with forty of it tracting or teaching. And we didn't waste much time waiting for busses or walking through department stores, or going home for lunch when we didn't really need to. And we kept our minds on the
work—at least Sister Crane did—she never thought about anything else. And I did pretty well most of the time.

"Isn't this where we left off?" Sister Crane reminded me brightly.

"Oh, yeah." Back to the grind, now. This was the house where we'd met all those weird people this morning. And we'd nearly finished it up, except for a couple of names left at the bottom. Should we ring them? Well, why not. We had to give everybody a chance.

"Now who was left in here?" Sister Crane was asking over my shoulder.

"Just a couple of names . . . Krueger on the bottom . . . and another Krueger right above it. That's funny." I rang at the bottom one. "Let's try here first."

There was an immediate buzz as the catch released on the outside door. We pushed our way into the hall and stopped by the door on our right. The nameplate was engraved KRUEGER, in gold letters. What was so familiar about that name? Had we taught a Krueger? Or had a referral? Or maybe . . . oh, of course! The painter! I remembered seeing two canvasses in Elder Bell's wohnung—an Alpine landscape with a lake, and an aerial view of Neuschwanstein castle. They were done by a painter named Krueger, but this probably wasn't the same man.

I was turning to tell Sister Crane when a cheerful voice called out, "Come in! The door isn't locked."
Sister Crane looked dubious, so I led the way in. It was a small, one-room apartment, and the walls were covered with paintings. Directly in front of us a benign-looking man in his early fifties was seated at an easel. His gray hair drooped over a high forehead to his glasses, and his legs were spread wide to bring him close to the canvas. While we stood there, he painted in a hut at the foot of a towering peak, surrounded by trees and a placid lake. Then he glanced up, and a broad smile lit his face.

"May I help the ladies?" he asked, his eyes brightening with enthusiasm as he looked us over.

"We're two representatives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," I began.

"The Mormons! Of course!" He threw his arms wide in delight and leaped up to shake our hands. "The sisters. What a pleasure to see you!"

Sister Crane took a step back, clutching her purse.

"Have we met before?" I asked, shaking his hand.

"Perhaps not. But there have been others. Other missionaries . . . other sisters . . . they liked my paintings. Here, why don't you look around?" His arm made a sweep of his studio that took him around in a half circle; then, settling back down in his chair, he removed the painting and set another in its place. His broad shoulders hunched in concentration as he set to work on the next hut.

We stepped cautiously past his chair, into the center of the room, where we were surrounded by piles of newly stretched
canvasses and collapsed easels. Several paintings were set upright around the room to dry; one was balanced dangerously across the corner of the sink, and two others rested on the back of a battered velvet sofa. Other paintings covered the walls, all the way up to the high, cracked ceiling, where yellow plaster and yellowish moldings were darkened with years of soot. The ceiling was so high, in fact, and the room so small, that it seemed like we were in the bottom of a deep shaft. Only the window saved us— in spite of its murky glass and thin, tattered curtain, it flooded the room with daylight, brightening the pictures and glistening off the sweat on Krueger's puckered brow.

"This one's nice," Sister Crane ventured, gazing at a mountain scene of a cottage beside a greenish lake. Most of the other landscapes were similar combinations of mountains, lakes, and cottages, but they were nice—they didn't have that splashed-on, department store look that characterized most paintings of the Alps. They had the look of patient artistry, in spite of the fact, as I could now see, that Krueger painted fast. He had already finished another hut and was working on the bushes beside it.

"You must enjoy doing landscapes," Sister Crane said. "And you paint so quickly!"

"Oh," he sighed generously. "I usually work for wholesale dealers, and if I make ten or twelve alike, they're finished in a day." He nodded at the stack of identical paintings beside his easel. "They aren't my best work, though. I do my best pictures for private customers, mainly Americans."
I sat down on the battered sofa, just an arm's length from his chair. "I've seen paintings you've done for the missionaries," I said. "They're very good."

Krueger grinned at my compliment, dabbing his brush onto the palette beside him, and returning it to the canvas. "I do my best work for the people I like most. I like the Americans better than anyone else, but I like the Mormons best of all."

Sister Crane alighted beside me, breathing in quick gasps. She caught my eye, glanced at Krueger, nodded meaningfully, and smiled. I patted her hand and winked.

Krueger laid down his brush, turned to us, and folded his arms across his paint-spattered coat. The light from an overhead bulb reflected on his glasses as he gazed upward. He stretched out his legs and smiled comfortably. "I've known the Mormons for many years, and if I were to join any church, it would have to be yours."

"Why haven't you joined?" I asked him.

"That's hard to say." Krueger shifted his pose, looking over our heads. "I decided years ago I wouldn't have anything to do with churches. I think for myself. But if I had to be anything, I'd be a Mormon. They're the happiest people I know. I'm a happy person, but not as happy as the Mormons." He turned back to his easel, picked up his brush, and deftly filled in the roof of the hut.

"Why aren't you happy?" I asked.
"I work too hard. I have to finish these ten canvasses by six this evening."

"Can't you finish them tomorrow?"

"Tomorrow . . ." Krueger sighed. "Tomorrow I have to do eight more, of another scene." His brush flicked over the canvas, and a field of wild flowers appeared by the hut, dancing in the wind. A clump of bushes grew up beside them, and two birds flew up from the grass.

Sister Crane fidgeted beside me. "How did you get to know the Mormons?" she finally asked him.

Krueger sat back again, resting his arm on his knee. Then he set the brush down and faced us again.

"It was about eight years ago. I was in a terrible automobile accident . . . ." He closed his eyes momentarily. "Unimaginable. I was nearly killed. After that, I spent eight months in the hospital, recovering."

It sounded like the beginning of a long story, and I settled back to enjoy it.

Krueger rubbed the side of his nose. "I had always been a member of the Catholic Church—from childhood on—but do you think the priest came to visit me in the hospital?" Krueger knotted his eyebrows fiercely. "He did not. Did he send anybody? No." He settled back again, clasping his arms around one raised knee. "I resolved then to have nothing more to do with the Catholic Church. Obviously, they cared nothing about me; they only wanted my money."
Sister Crane nodded sympathetically.

"There was an old woman in the bed next to me," he went on. "Two young Americans came to visit her every day. They wore dark suits and looked quite intelligent. Sometimes they said a few words to me, too; they wanted to know how I was doing. When the old woman was released, they kept coming . . . to visit me!" He sighed happily, folding his arms again. "You might know one of them—Dan Hicken. He's back here now with the military."

I nodded. We did know Brother Hicken. In fact, he was serving as temporary president of the German branch. One of those rare optimists—I could just see him plodding faithfully to the hospital every day, with his companion in tow.

"They came to visit me," Krueger repeated, "and I found out they were Mormon missionaries. When I got out of the hospital they taught me about the Mormons." His eyes grew distant. "That was a happy period of my life. Soon they were both transferred, but others came. I painted them pictures and they told me about America."

Sister Crane touched my arm, and I knew what she was thinking. Why hadn't he been baptized? All those elders . . . .

We watched as he painted in the stream that ran by the hut, and filled in the stones and clumps of bushes beside it.

"Herr Krueger," I finally asked, "Do you remember much of what Brother Hicken and his companion taught you?"

"Of course." He peered up at me through his glasses and then continued to paint. "They weren't the only ones, either.
Others came. I've heard your six discussions several times. Finally I knew so much they started calling me a dry Mormon."

We were silent as he finished the mountains. Under his quick brush the softly pointed peaks took on a wild, jagged look, thrusting up from the base of the rock, where a gray mist crept in over the pines.

I wondered why he hadn't joined the Church. He probably didn't know himself. If I asked him now, he might say he didn't need to—he knew as much as any Mormon, and he liked the Church, so what was a formality like baptism? But there was something else. In spite of all he'd heard, he'd missed something—he hadn't been touched in the right place. In spite of all those elders—and at least some of them would have wanted to baptize him—he still hadn't been converted.

I looked over at Sister Crane, and she was watching Krueger's brush. Then her gaze moved to the painter himself. She was wondering, too.

There was only one answer—he'd never felt the witness of the Holy Ghost. Either the elders hadn't been in tune, or they'd left something out, or Krueger himself hadn't wanted to understand. But now . . . the Lord wanted him to have another chance now. Maybe Krueger was finally ready, and we could teach him as he'd never been taught before.

Sister Crane turned on me with a large, confident smile, but I suddenly loved her for it. We could do it! The Lord wanted us to baptize Krueger, and that was why He'd led us here.
"Herr Krueger," I said, picking up my purse, "we don't want to keep you when you have so much to do."

Obviously we weren't keeping him from anything, but it seemed like the right thing to say. He'd finished the painting, and he took it from the easel and set another in its place. It was identical to the first one, without the hut, stream, and flowers.

He settled back in his chair and looked at us. "You don't need to hurry off. I like company. As a matter of fact . . . ." His blue eyes shone with a sudden congeniality. "You can come by any time. You can even tell me more about the Mormons, if you want to. Maybe I missed something before."

He turned back to his easel and began to work on the next hut. "I'm building a new house, too, out in Theodor Sturm Strasse. I should take you both out there and show you around."

Before I could answer, the phone rang. He continued to paint as he propped the receiver on his shoulder. "Ja?" He paused to listen. "Na, gut."

"That was the mutti," he informed us, replacing the receiver without losing a brush stroke.

Sister Crane looked blank.

"His wife," I mouthed silently.

"She wants me to come up to dinner." He had nearly finished the hut.

"Up?"

"My family lives upstairs. We all do."
That made sense. It explained the Krueger on the other doorbell, too.

"Well," I said, rising, hoisting my purse, "we really should go, then. But we enjoyed meeting you."

"Can we just pop in any time?" Sister Crane ventured.

"Certainly. Just ring twice, so I'll know you're friends."
The hut was done, and he dabbed his brush onto the pink for the flowers. "Say hello to Brother Hicken for me, too, if you run into him. He hasn't been around lately." He looked up through his glasses, and seeing that we really did mean to go, set down his brush and rose. At the door he shook my hand, and then Sister Crane's, smiling a pleasant farewell.

"We'll come by again," I promised, pulling on my gloves.

"Oh, by the way, I'm Sister Harper. This is Sister Crane."

He nodded his satisfaction and bowed us out of the studio.

* * *

I pushed open the slanted window of our tiny attic bedroom and looked out into the cool March night. The sky was deep and clear over Kaiserslautern, and the few clouds drifted white under the moon. Our roof was one in a sea of rooftops, shadowy dark with small pricks of light from other attic windows like our own. I leaned on the sill and breathed in the fresh night air.

"Still feeling great?" Sister Crane had put on her nightgown and was perched on her bed under the low sloping roof, brushing her hair with a wire brush.
"Yep. I'm glad we've got something going, finally. The Lord does reward us for working hard."

"Krueger's definitely interested in being visited."

Sister Crane opened her drawer, took out a box of bobby pins, and began to section off her bangs.

I looked out the window again. "Something in him wants to know, too," I said. "Maybe we can reach him in a way nobody else has, so far. Friendship and facts obviously haven't done it yet."

Beyond the rooftops, on the edge of town, a train was gliding toward the bahnhof, sending a soft clickity-clack on the night air. The train reached a crossing and sounded its horn, long and low.

I left the window and wandered out into the kitchen to see what we still had left to eat. There wasn't much, on the shelf under the hotplate, but I did find half a loaf of bread twisted up in a plastic bag. I took it out, sliced a piece very thin, spread it with margarine and strawberry jam, and rolled it up like a French pancake.

What made somebody attracted to the missionaries and the gospel, and yet not join the Church? I licked the extra jam from my fingers. Krueger must not have understood completely before. Those other missionaries must not have done the job. But I was glad of that, because now it was our turn, and we'd go in there with a spirit he simply wouldn't be able to resist.
I took my bread back into the bedroom where Sister Crane was brushing her teeth over the sink. "Want a bite?" I asked.

"No thanks," she answered through the foam.

I picked up my diary and lay down on my bed to write.

"What's on for tomorrow?" she asked, rinsing her toothbrush and spitting out the foam.

"We'll tract in the morning until the funeral. Now that's going to be interesting. Wonder if it'll work out like Elder Dunn wants it to. Imagine Elder Bell preaching!"

"Should be something," she agreed.

"After the funeral, let's drop in on Krueger."

"Shall we try to set up a first discussion?"

I wasn't sure. "If we can get him to ask us, that would be better. Or, we can just feel him out and go from there." I rolled over on my back and looked up at the low sloping ceiling over my bed. It was the perfect spot for taping up pictures from home and quotable quotes, but I liked it bare. My thoughts ran free as I gazed over the smooth plaster. "I feel good about Herr Krueger," I said.

"Never having found anybody good, I don't know how you're supposed to feel. But I'm glad we have something to look forward to." Sister Crane sat down on her bed and waited expectantly as I rolled over to write in my diary. I wrote every night, whether I had anything to say or not.

Sister Crane cleared her throat. "Before you get too involved in there . . . ."
"Let's have prayer," I finished for her. Sister Crane liked to be in bed by ten thirty on the dot, and it was twenty after. We knelt by her bed and looked at each other.

"Whose turn?" she asked.

"Mine," I decided. "If it isn't, I'll say it anyway."

She grinned and squeezed my hand.
Chapter 3

THE FUNERAL

At ten forty-four the next morning we were waiting for the bus at Marienplatz. Across the street stood the Marienkirche, with its tall gothic spire like a sharpened finger pointing upward, balancing a delicate cross on its tip. The sky behind it was a clear, pale blue.

"Let's hope we're not late," Sister Crane declared from somewhere behind me.

"No problem." I gazed up at the tower clock with its flat bronze numerals and watched as the minute arm shuddered and jerked up a notch. Ten forty-five.

"Well, right on time," Sister Crane announced as the number thirty-seven bus rolled up in front of us.

We clambered on and made our way to the back, where I plopped down next to the window. Sister Crane slid in beside me. She immediately opened her hymn book and began to hum through the songs we were going to sing.

I gazed out the window, at the shop windows glittering in the sunshine, the sparkling roof tiles, the clear, blue sky—we ought to be going on a picnic, not to a funeral. But if Elder Dunn was right—if this was going to be a happy funeral—well, it ought to be interesting, at least.
We changed busses in the stadtmitte, where Bell and Magleby were already waiting, but there was no sign of Elder Dunn.

"Where's the Führer?" I asked Magleby as we all climbed on the number two.

"Beats me. Maybe he went early."

When we were all settled in the back, the elders in front of us, Magleby turned around and said, "Ever been to a German funeral before?"

I shook my head.

"It's gross. You'll see, though. I won't say anything."

He nodded at his companion. "Bell's getting his sermon ready. He's going to sock it to 'em on the resurrection."

Elder Bell didn't even look up. He was studying the contents of a small orange notebook, moving his lips now and then, shaking his head, wincing suddenly and sliding his palm across his forehead. Then he breathed deeply and turned a page.

* * *

The ride to the cemetery was short. We got off the bus near the Leichenhalle—the corpse-hall—where the funeral was being held. Several of the mourners were already going in. A tall, mustached boy in a black beret and trenchcoat paused by the entrance, waiting for a pair of older men who followed him, stooped under their heavy black wool overcoats. A sharp-nosed woman draped in a black shawl tottered by, supported by her black cane.
Sister Crane followed them in, but I stayed outside for a minute to look around. The cemetery had been carved from the old forest of Kahlenberg, and lay spread out before me in rows and lanes as neatly divided as a subdivision. The individual graves were lush with greenery, bordered by thin cement bricks turned upright, each one a self-contained little shrine to its occupant. Most of the grave markers were polished stone, gray or black, gleaming in the sunlight with a deep, natural luster. Others, of wood, were built to resemble chapel fronts, their overhanging eaves sheltering small statues of angels, cherubs, and the Virgin Mary. The pathways were gravel, meticulously weeded, raked smooth by an unseen caretaker. Along the north wall, a row of birch trees lifted their trunks high in the air, supporting clumps of foliage that rocked gently as a sudden breeze passed through. The breeze lifted my hair slightly, tickling and cooling my scalp, and I suddenly wanted to swing my heavy purse out wide and spin around in a circle, shouting to the sky. But the sight of another tottering dame in black held me in check. I bowed my head slightly and entered the chapel.

"Well, there you are, finally," said a voice just inside the door.

I opened my eyes wide in the gloom— it was Elder Dunn! But he looked taller—and older—than usual. He was wearing a new suit, a smooth dark brown tweed that curved perfectly over his broad shoulders. And the color was the same smooth dark brown as
his eyes, which were gazing confidently down on me. If I'd ever thought he was homely, I'd been crazy.

"Hi," I said to him.

Then I noticed a slender girl at his side, and I felt a quick, unreasonable disappointment.

"I'd like you to meet Gina Belitz, Arthur's sister," Elder Dunn said.

Gina had a quick pixie smile and a fervent handshake. "I'm so pleased to meet you," she bubbled. "But you must excuse me—I have to join my parents." She squeezed my hand again and turned to make her way to the front of the chapel, where she joined an older couple huddled on the first row.

I felt Elder Dunn's hand on my shoulder, and I must have shivered slightly, because he dropped it immediately. When he finally spoke, he was very businesslike again.

"Sister Harper. Are the songs ready?"

I nodded. "Sister Crane picked them out. First we're going to sing 'There is Sunshine in My Soul Today,' and then 'O My Father' at the gravesite. But Sister Crane's worried because we haven't practiced."

"That's OK." He made a check in his appointment book, and then turned away abruptly. I felt my pent-up breath expire slowly as I watched him go.

Deep organ tones welled up around me, and the gloom of the chapel finally began to seep into my consciousness. The floor was stark gray concrete, and so were the walls. Their chill,
unhealthy moistness permeated the room, filtering the light from
the high, pale windows, swirling up around the rough, unfinished
timbers of the vaulted ceiling. A massive pulpit dominated the
front of the chapel, and below it, on a wooden trestle, lay the
coffin, barely visible under its load of pine wreaths and candles.

Arthur's parents were seated just inches from the coffin.
Herr Belitz, in a dull black overcoat, stared stonily ahead, while
his wife's rigid face was fixed on the floor. Other mourners
were taking their places behind the Belitz's, their muffled
whispers mixing strangely with the clatter of the wooden chairs.
Elder Madsen sat at the pump organ, fierce with concentration,
making his way through "Nearer, My God, to Thee." The deep organ
tones swelled louder, filling the room, echoing and resounding
on the concrete walls.

I watched the last guests shuffle in and take their seats.
All of them were dressed in black—hats, gloves, coats, stockings—
some of the men even wore black armbands. I was acutely conscious
of my bright blue coat, and Sister Crane's green one, and Elder
Dunn's brown suit, but at the same time, I was proud of the way
we looked. A funeral didn't have to be so dismal.

There weren't enough chairs for all the guests, so Sister
Crane and I stood with the elders at the side of the room. I
found myself watching the faces of the mourners. There were no
smiles, but surprisingly, there were very few tears, either. In
fact, none of the faces seemed utterly grief-stricken. The sharp-
nosed woman in the shawl was sitting on the second row, her chin
grimly rigid, her eyes glazed dull and staring straight ahead.
The young men in the trenchcoat had spread his legs wide and
dropped his hands between them; head bowed, he watched the cement
floor. The two older men sat on either side of him, and they, too,
looked at the floor, their faces dull, almost blank. Well, it
wouldn't be long now. They were going to be pretty startled when
Elder Bell started talking about the resurrection.

The organ tones died out, the whispers hushed, and a deep
stillness settled over the room. Elder Dunn strode to the pulpit,
and all eyes were upon his brown suit. He greeted the congrega-
tion, then offered the invocation himself.

Our missionary choir was next. We began to sing "There is
Sunshine in My Soul Today," and I almost giggled, it was so
incongruous. But nobody in the congregation looked at all
surprised. The sharp-nosed woman still stared dully ahead, and
the young man in the trenchcoat was gazing at the ceiling. We
might as well have been singing "Rock of Ages."

Elder Bell was on. He took one last look through the
orange notebook, then pocketed it and stepped up to the pulpit.
I held my breath as he smiled out at the congregation.

"Our Savior loves us very much," he began, "and He wants us
all to return to Him someday." As he began to review the
atonement, I watched the faces below him. There were no dramatic
changes, but the young man in the trenchcoat was watching the
pulpit now. His two older companions were also showing signs of
life—they had raised their eyes to the backs of the people in
front of them. On the front row, Herr Belitz fidgeted with the rim of his hat, and his wife dabbed at her eyes and nose with a black handkerchief.

Elder Bell began to talk about the resurrection. Here it comes, I thought. If they're really sorry about Arthur, this will hit them where it counts.

"'The soul shall be restored to the body, and the body to the soul,'" he quoted earnestly. "'Yea, and every limb and joint shall be restored to its body; yea, even a hair of the head shall not be lost; but all things shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame.'"

There it is, I thought. Arthur will be resurrected, just as he was! He'll live again!

I watched the congregation for new signs of life—brightening eyes or uplifted faces to show that some, at least, had understood.

The two old gentlemen were again staring at the floor, and their younger friend seemed to be going to sleep. The sharp-nosed woman pulled her shawl tighter and bowed her head. Frau Belitz lowered her face as a new flood of tears came; her husband gripped his hat more firmly and stared at the base of the pulpit.

Then I noticed Gina. She looked up at Elder Bell with a puzzled, thoughtful gaze, and then at her mother. A smile twitched at her lips, but she stifled it and looked down again.

There was little more to the service after that. When Elder Bell had finished, Dunn nodded to the funeral director, who
rose stiffly like a black roach. He held up a cross, and several other men advanced to the coffin and lifted it by its straps. Led by the director and his cross, they shuffled down the aisle.

Arthur's mother began to sob loudly, her body heaving in uncontrollable spasms. She rose to follow the casket, supported by her husband and Gina. There were other sniffles in the congregation, then more sobs, and the whole group rose in a clatter of chairs and filed out, forming a black procession behind the family.

We missionaries came last, leaving the dim chapel, marching out into the bright sunlight. Ahead of us, the procession took a left turn, the cross still leading the way. The faces that followed it gazed blankly ahead, unaffected by the sunshine and the blue sky. The only happy faces, the only ones with any bit of shine, were right around me. Elder Bell was positively beaming, still buoyant from the spirit of his sermon. Madsen and Magleby talked eagerly in whispers while Elder Dunn smiled crookedly, his eyes fixed on the cross. Sister Crane hummed softly to herself.

Several more turns of the gravel path brought us to the grave, where a pile of loose, pungent earth rested by the hole. Someone had forgotten to take the spade away; it had been thrust into the dirt and waited there, ready to do the other half of its job.

The mourners made a semicircle around the casket and grave, all eyes fixed on the ground. Black hats were removed from bowed
heads and held reverently at chest level. Arthur's family stood by the coffin, Frau Belitz shaking with sobs and her husband staring at the rim of his hat. Gina glanced around the crowd, and her eyes fastened expectantly on Elder Dunn. He caught her signal and stepped carefully to the head of the grave.

"Brothers and sisters," his voice was quiet with dignity, "the grave will now be dedicated." He bowed his head and offered a short prayer, and the mourners grunted "Amen" at its conclusion.

Our song hadn't been announced, but Elder Dunn nodded us the go-ahead and we gathered behind the grave. The deep hole was at our feet, the dismal black semicircle of bodies beyond it. This was our last chance—we had to sing across the hole to reach them, sing our conviction into their hearts.

"'O my Father, thou that dwellest in the high and glorious place . . ."

The song was especially beautiful in German. I tried to make my voice ring with certainty, to convince them that we did have a Father, and that we would regain his presence.

The beak-nosed woman stared at us, her eyes dull and uncomprehending. Her shawl was stretched taut around her bony shoulders, growing tighter as she twisted the ends in her hand.

I felt Sister Crane draw closer to me on one side, and my sleeve touched Elder Dunn's on the other. Our voices, even our souls, seemed to unite in the effort as we reached out to them.

By the fourth verse I was nearly exhausted. "'When I leave this frail existence; when I lay this mortal by, . . ." (Were they listening?) "'Father, mother, may I meet you in your
royal courts on high?" (Did they understand?) "Then, at length, when I've completed all you sent me forth to do, with your mutual approbation, let me come and dwell with you!" Our voices held the last note together.

The two old men shuffled uneasily; one of them gazed into the hole while the other blew his nose. Frau Belitz buried her face in her husband's shoulder and shook without control.

Elder Dunn nodded to the funeral director, who signaled his men. The faces watched now with grim interest as the casket was lowered, disappearing from our view in awkward jerks. A hollow "thunk" resounded as it hit the bottom. The perfect finale, I thought.

But it wasn't the finale.

Herr Belitz stepped heavily to the pile of dirt, scooped a shovelful, and tossed it into his son's grave. It hit the wooden coffin with a heavy thud, followed by a rattling of pebbles. Twice more he shoveled; then, stepping back solemnly, he handed the spade to his wife. She repeated his actions.

"What are they doing?" I whispered, horrified, to Elder Dunn.

"It's traditional. Three scoops—for Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." He watched with interest.

Gina took the shovel next, easily lifting and tossing the dirt. Three muffled thuds—dirt hitting dirt now.

Elder Dunn looked at me with amusement, then moved closer. "The family members go first," he whispered, "then the
relatives, and finally the friends. I guess we're considered friends."

Three more thuds, and the beak-nosed woman received the spade.

I took a step back. "Do we have to?"

Elder Dunn glanced around, then shook his head. "If you want to cut out, they probably won't notice. Maybe we'll come too."

* * *

On the bus back to town, Elder Dunn looked depressed. His shoulders hung limp under his new suit coat, and his glasses slid unnoticed down his nose.

"Hey," Elder Bell said, "come on! You thought it was pretty cool marching along behind that cross."

"Oh, it was interesting in a cultural aspect," Dunn said, "but I'd hoped it would be different. I wanted them to at least smile now and then."

"You'd like 'em to have left their black hats home, too," Bell said. "Naw..." he gazed out the window, "they've all had their chances. They won't change... except maybe that chick!"

He looked back at Elder Dunn. "She was with you all the way."

Dunn smiled slightly. "Yes, Gina. She's one new contact, anyway. Things might look up for the district. Hey," he looked at me, "how are the sisters doing? Any new prospects?"

"Well," I said, "we tracted out Herr Krueger—you know, the painter?"
"Herr Krueger--the landscape artist? Is he in your area?"

"Sure. On Glockenstrasse. We found him by accident."

"He let us watch him paint," Sister Crane added. "He's pretty good. And he said we could drop in anytime."

Dunn raised his brows. "To watch him paint?"

"He's had missionaries before," I broke in, "and he said he wouldn't mind hearing more. Maybe he's ready this time."

Dunn nodded thoughtfully, looking at me a second longer than he needed to. "Keep on him, then. You sisters might be just what he needs."

* * *

It was already late afternoon when we got off the bus at Marienplatz, and we went right to Krueger's. Sister Crane rang twice at the outer door, and it opened immediately. Inside, we found him grinning in his doorway.

"The two Americans! What a delight!" He ushered us in and nodded towards his sofa, where we sat down. Then he pulled up his chair.

"Well, what have the sisters been up to today?" His joviality was reassuring. I'd been afraid of coming back, but now I was glad we hadn't put it off.

"We buried a man," I said blandly.

He hardly looked startled. "I'm not surprised at anything the missionaries do. Whom did you bury?"

"It was really a district project," Sister Crane broke in. "A young man--Arthur Belitz. He wanted a Mormon funeral."
Krueger nodded his approval. "An intelligent lad. Now he's a Mormon."

I didn't bother to set him straight—not yet, anyway.

"How's the painting?" I asked.

Krueger nodded towards his easel, where a half-finished snow scene waited. "Three are finished, and five are partly done. I'll be through by midnight."

Midnight! "Don't you get sleepy?" I asked.

"Sleepy? Sometimes. But I don't mind working hard on things I enjoy. By the way," he raised his knee and clasped it comfortably, "when are you going to tell me more about the Mormons?"

I had my appointment book out of my purse and opened by the time he'd finished speaking. I scanned our week's plans. Not much there. I tried to act casual. "Let's see ... we have tomorrow night free."

Krueger thought it over. "Thursdays are bad for me. How about Friday evening?" He looked up expectantly.

"Wonderful!" I scribbled in my book. Sister Crane caught my eye, then looked up at the ceiling. I got the hint. "Would your family be interested, too?"

He shrugged. "Why not? You can come for abendbrot and then we'll talk afterwards."

"Around seven?" That was the usual time for abendbrot.

He nodded.
I wrote in the time. Writing it down was fun, but quite unnecessary. We wouldn't forget our only real appointment for the week.
Chapter 4

FEED MY SHEEP

"Now, Herr Krueger . . . ." Sister Crane paused, took a shallow breath, and smiled uncertainly. Her fingers toyed with the laminated flannel-board strips that lay on the table in front of us, straightening, adjusting, lining them up more evenly. "Herr Krueger," her voice was steady, "we testify to you that the Lord has restored His true church to the earth again, along with the priesthood. When you come to know in your heart that this is true, will you be baptized by somebody who has the priesthood?"

Her question seemed to hover on the air.

"Of course!" I exclaimed, throwing my arms wide and springing to my feet. Then, with one sweep, I gathered the strips into a pile at the edge of our little table. "It's five to eight. Let's go buy breakfast."

Sister Crane sat back in her chair and surveyed me earnestly. "Do you really want me to give that part?"

"Of course," I said, reaching for my coat and scarf. "You know it as well as I do." I crossed the scarf under my neck, holding it in place with my chin while I slipped on my coat. Sister Crane got up stiffly and put the strips back into their black plastic folder.
"Do you think he'll respond to a challenge that strong?"

I shrugged. "This is the best way to find out."

I knew she was scared. I was, too. The first discussion was never easy. Your stomach always felt queasy as you went to the appointment, and you secretly hoped they wouldn't be home. Then, when they answered the bell, there was that sudden panic—that crazy desire to just vanish on the spot. I couldn't remember a single time when I hadn't been nervous, and surprisingly, it didn't get any better with time or experience.

But most senior companions arranged to give the challenges themselves. They thought their superior German helped them teach more effectively, and maybe it did, but I wasn't so sure any more. Herr Krueger would probably respond just as well to Sister Crane's halting German as to my fluent rhetoric—maybe even better. Sister Crane would like it, too, as soon as we got into it.

I waited by the door as she put on her coat and scarf. We went down the five flights of stairs, through a large garage where no cars ever parked, and out a side door into the dark gray morning. Thick, cold mist hung in the street, settling down heavily on us, straightening our hair, penetrating our scarves and gloves, even our heavy wool coats. The cobblestones and sidewalks were sodden wet and slick from the mist.

The bells in the tower of the Marienkirche clanged the hour as we neared the corner grocery store. Inside, the
proprietress was unlocking the door. She smiled as we entered, and stepped behind her small meat case. "Guten Morgen, die Damen!" She waited expectantly, looking as if she didn't want to force her help on us, but still hoping we might need it.

"Guten Morgen," we chimed in unison.

I already knew what I wanted, but our morning tour of the store had become a ritual. It was about the size of our kitchen back home, and smelled faintly of sour milk and orange peelings. Three of the walls were covered from floor to ceiling with shelves, stacked with packaged and canned goods. One- and two-pound sacks of flour and sugar, dumpling mix, coffee, boxes of salt, cans of soup and preserved meats, tins of herring and sardines, bottled juice concentrates, small packs of Swedish cracker-bread, foil-wrapped blocks of heavy pumpernickle—anything we could have asked for was close at hand, except that we couldn't have asked for more than two or three of any one thing.

The fruit bins faced the windows, tipped slightly to display their contents to the street. Green pears rested in purple cardboard cases, next to crates of golden apples, reddish "blood" oranges, tangerines, and tomatoes. Bunches of bananas and strings of dried figs were suspended from above; bins of potatoes rested underneath on the floor. I could have selected the fruit I wanted myself, but one of those unwritten rules stated that the shopkeeper had to wait on you.

"Eine Banane und eine Blutorange." I smiled as she selected them for me. There was a big disadvantage to this
system—you had to take the bad fruit along with the good. Sister Beesley, my first companion, had once been given a bag of apples so rotten that she’d thrown them all into the gutter in disgust.

A large mahogany counter stood at the front of the store, and the wooden shelves behind it held round, crusty loaves of bread, still warm from the bakery, unwrapped and uncut. I breathed in the heavy bread aroma and felt a sudden impulse to buy a whole loaf and tear it apart with my hands.

A bin of brötchen, Germany’s traditional breakfast roll, had also been delivered. Some of them were round with a dent down the middle; others had been shaped into sticks or crescents. Several were dotted with poppy or caraway seeds.

Then there were the pastries—hunks of apfelstrudel, round käsestückchen, squares of apfelkuchen, and two tortes, thick with whipped cream. They rested in a glass case across the counter from the meat, protected from dust and bumblebees. I asked the proprietress for a poppy roll and a käsestückchen, while Sister Crane ordered two brötchen. They were carefully slipped into small white sacks, taped shut, and delivered with a smile.

Our last stop was the dairy case, a small refrigerator with a glass door, set into the wall. One-liter cartons of whole milk were arranged in rows, and over them stood cups of yoghurt and quark, small tubs of margarine, and blocks of butter. All dairy products were stamped with the date of delivery, which had seemed unnecessary until I discovered that milk often went sour overnight.
I selected a cherry yoghurt while Sister Crane chose strawberry, and we carried everything back to the counter.

"Do you really think he's ready for a First?" she asked suddenly as the shopkeeper began to add up our purchases on a small pad. I had to think a moment—oh, Herr Krueger.

"He may not be," I said, "but it's the easiest way to find out where he stands." I fished out my coin purse to pay the one mark, five pfennig, I knew my breakfast would cost.

"Eine Mark fünf," the woman told me briskly, taking my money with a smile. Sister Crane's cost eighty pfennig; she set her money in the little porcelain dish placed on the counter for that purpose. Germans supposedly didn't like taking money from an outstretched hand, because it was too reminiscent of begging. But I didn't think much of that rule, so I usually ignored the dish and handed over my money directly.

"If he can see the need for a prophet," I said as we left the store, "we've got it made. Everything rests on that. And he has to have a feeling that there can only be one true church—one way back to Christ. If he senses that, we can show him how a prophet can lead us to the true church, and build from there. If he doesn't, we won't be able to get very far."

Sister Crane was silent the rest of the way home. Then, at the top of the stairs, she let out a long sigh. When we were inside the wohnung she said, "You know, Sister Harper, we're really going to need the Spirit this time."
"You're right," I nodded, arranging my purchases on the table. "Do we have any clean spoons?"

She brought two from the dish rack and pulled up her chair. Then she sat down and looked at me. "Whose turn to bless the food?" I asked, yanking the foil lid off my yoghurt.

"Mine, I guess," she said, glancing down at the table. Then she looked at me again. "Sister Harper, I feel so uncertain about Kruegers. Do you think it would help if we fasted?"

Fasted! Lid in hand, I gazed down into my yoghurt, where two red cherries lay embedded near the surface. My käsestückchen waited alongside.

"Fasting," I said slowly, playing with my spoon, "is a good way to get the Spirit. I like to save it for a last resort, though--sort of an ultimate weapon. Let's try everything we can do, first."

Her eyes brightened and she looked me steadily, confidently, in the eye. "That's what I like about working with you, Sister Harper. You always know what to do!"

I couldn't meet her gaze. "Well," I said, unwrapping my poppy roll, "the Lord knows that we need help on this one. If we ask, we'll get it."

* * *

Later on, tracting old hochhäuser in the heavy mist, I thought of Krueger. He was an interesting case. What had stopped him before? Could he make it now? There seemed to be a
good chance, especially since he'd asked to hear more. Was his
family ready, too? What a windfall, if they were!

I warmed with excitement. We were here to work for the
Lord, of course, but there was a lot of personal satisfaction in
having a baptism. You worked for it, prayed for it--then, if it
happened, you thanked the Lord and felt better about yourself.
Our weekly report forms had a space for"Baptisms This Week," and
it had been five months since I'd been able to fill it in.

And if baptizing one person was a blessing, a whole family
was every missionary's dream. The elders who had become the
mission legends--Gardner, Jackson, Cooper--they'd baptized
families.

I suddenly thought of Elder Dunn--that would be neat, too.
Kruegers--the whole family! I could see him shake his head in
wonder. "The sisters" had done it, of course, but Sister Crane
was still new, and green as grass.

I was almost glad the other missionaries hadn't baptized
the painter. And they'd probably never even thought of teaching
his family! But then, it might not be easy . . . .

As we tracted, I tried to concentrate on the doors, but my
thoughts kept wandering back to Krueger. Sometimes, in my visions,
we'd blown it--he raved at us in fury, pelting us with easel parts
and paint tubes as we fled his studio. Other times, he was
dressed in white, standing at the edge of the baptismal font,
beaming his joy to the sisters who had saved him. His family
stood beside him--his beautiful wife and sweet children, all of them in white.

Occasionally I thought about it rationally. Whatever had stopped him before, he could be ready now, if we helped him understand a few critical points. He had to accept the need for a prophet, and realize there could only be one true church. But since he already called himself a "dry Mormon," that seemed settled. He also had to be willing to pray for a testimony, and to study the Book of Mormon with his family and bring them to church. But those were things he'd do naturally if he accepted the first discussion.

* * *

At a quarter to seven we quit tracting and found a deserted stairwell. I listened for footsteps as we huddled in the dimmest corner and said a quick prayer together. Then we went to Krueger's. The mist had turned to a steady rain, and it was already dark as we turned into Glockenstrasse. But a light shone in the second-story window of Krueger's house.

"They're home, at least," Sister Crane said brightly, but her tone didn't fool me. If the windows had been dark, we would have exclaimed our disappointment, told each other we hoped we could get them some other time, and silently breathed our relief. Now, instead, we braced ourselves and rang the bell.

The catch released immediately and I set my face in a smile as we climbed the stairs.
I expected to meet Krueger on the landing, but a young boy of twelve or thirteen greeted us instead. His cheeks were bright with excitement, his dark hair had been slicked down carefully, and he bowed politely as he shook our hands in turn and introduced himself—Rolf Krueger. "My parents are still in town," he explained quickly as he ushered us in.

In the dark, high-ceilinged living room we met Krueger's other two children: Sylvia, a stocky blonde who looked about eighteen, and Helmut, a lanky student in his twenties. Helmut nodded for us to be seated on the sofa, where Rolf sat too, stiffly, hugging the far end.

"Rutsch mal!" Helmut ordered. Rolf slid a few inches toward us and gave his brother the favored spot. Sylvia settled down in a large overstuffed chair, crossing her plump legs at the knee, glancing up nonchalantly from time to time.

The clock ticked and I tried to think of something to say. Sister Crane asked Rolf how he liked school. He liked it fine. Five minutes passed. I fumbled in my purse, took out a ball point pen, and began to thumb through my appointment book. Wasn't there anything we could start talking about?

"Are you working?" I asked Sylvia suddenly. She looked startled, then nodded. She was a hairdresser.

"That must be interesting," I said.

She nodded again and looked at the floor.

Ten more minutes passed in silence. Why didn't they turn on the television? Helmut stretched his arm along the back of the
sofa. What could I ask him about? Did he have a girlfriend? Did he think Sister Crane and I were two funny old maids?

I prayed for Krueger's to come. I listened for a car engine to die, footsteps, a door opening downstairs—anything at all. The clock ticked, and somewhere, far away, a car gunned its engine.

Finally there was the welcome clump of feet on the stairs, and the rattle of keys. Rolf breathed his relief and marched over to let his parents in.

"... already here!" Krueger exclaimed as he burst through the doorway, his arms filled with packages. He dropped them in a corner, then shook our hands heartily, beaming his pleasure, apologizing for his lateness.

He introduced his wife, a heavy-set woman with coarse, chin-length hair, bleached and frizzled. Her cheeks were chapped pink, her lips bright red with lipstick. She smiled broadly, excused herself, and vanished into the kitchen.

Krueger settled down comfortably beside us and began to talk about the shopping trip. I looked at my watch—ten to eight. If we had abendbrot, we couldn't start the discussion for another half hour, at least.

In five minutes Frau Krueger reappeared with a tray of belegte brote and a steaming pitcher. Sylvia brought cups, knives, and small cutting boards. Everything was arranged on the coffee table before us, Krueger said grace, and we were commanded to "greif zu!"
The pitcher held hagebutten tea, a dark red liquid with a
citric taste, palatable with plenty of sugar. Some of the brote
were cheese, others wurst, on halved brötchen or slices of dark
rye bread. I made myself stop after three—they were clumping
together in my stomach like clay.

Krueger ate slowly, almost absent-mindedly, still describ-
ing the shopping trip. Rolf and Helmut paid little attention.
They were busy with the brote, methodically clearing the platter
from the outside in. Sylvia helped, taking time to cut her pieces
into dainty bites, and downing them quickly. Frau Krueger came
and went, supplying more tea, more sugar, more bread. But Sister
Crane was listening to Herr Krueger—she seemed to have forgotten
her nervousness completely as she took in every detail of the
story.

But why did he eat so slowly? I watched the clock and
wondered if we could ever start. It would be hard to set the
right mood, now, this late in the evening.

Frau Krueger came in with another tray—was she going to
clear up now? She wasn't. The tray held dishes of fruit pudding.
"A little bit of dessert," she explained with a smile, setting
them on the table.

It would be impolite to refuse; besides, we'd still have
to wait for the family to finish. I picked up my dish and tasted
the pudding—strawberry! Too bad I couldn't eat it alone
somewhere and really enjoy it.
Eight thirty. It was certainly too late for the discussion now. On the other hand, we could be finished by ten—that wasn't unreasonable. Except that Kruegers would be too tired to understand it. And the handbook said we should stop proselyting at nine.

But this was the chance we'd prayed for—giving a first discussion to a whole family! We were messengers of the Lord, and He'd help us succeed. We'd do it, then.

Krueger was only halfway through his pudding; now he'd started in on the high price of gardening tools. I looked at Sister Crane's bowl—she hadn't touched it. Did she think we had all night?

Krueger took another bite. Across from us, Sylvia thumbed through a magazine. Rolf's eyelids were beginning to droop.
Chapter 5

PULLING TEETH

At a quarter to nine I decided we couldn't wait any longer. I shifted to the edge of the sofa, took a large gulp of air, and caught Krueger's eye. "Well, this certainly has been pleasant," I said. "The abendbrot was delicious."

Krueger pushed his bowl aside and settled back in his chair. "We're always glad to entertain the missionaries," he said languidly. "I think we've had at least fifty pairs of missionaries in here at different times, haven't we, Mutti?"

Frau Krueger smiled blandly and nodded.

"That's good." I pulled the packet of lesson strips from my purse and set them in Sister Crane's lap. "You've probably heard a lot about the Mormons by now," I said. "Tonight we'd like to tell you a little about how our church is organized—sort of review some of what you've heard before."

I glanced around to make sure they were ready to listen. Krueger smiled agreeably and crossed his arms behind his neck, yawning quickly. Sylvia thumbed through a magazine she'd picked up, while Helmut stretched his torso stiff and rested his head on the back of the couch. Rolf shifted forward and folded his hands on his knees, watching us expectantly.
I cleared my throat. "We usually begin our discussions with prayer—*is it all right with you if Sister Crane offers one?" Krueger nodded, returning his arms to his lap.

Sister Crane's prayer was short but fervent, and the atmosphere was calmer when she raised her head. Krueger rested his arms on his knees, pushed his glasses higher up on his nose, and seemed ready to listen.

"As you know, there are many different churches in the world today," I began. "Why do you think there are so many?" I directed the question to Krueger.

He settled back again. "People have their own ideas about religion—they like to think independently and decide for themselves how things should be."

"I'm sure that's part of it." I looked around the circle. Frau Krueger was nodding pleasantly. Helmut and Sylvia seemed not to have heard. Rolf blushed under my gaze.

"Consider a teaching like baptism," I continued. "Some churches teach that it is necessary—others do not. Some baptize by immersion, others by sprinkling. Now, in ancient times, people had questions about religion. While there were still living prophets on the earth, how did the Lord give answers to questions about religion?" It was so obvious that older people usually missed it, so I directed the question to Rolf.

He blushed again. "The Lord spoke to the prophets." He looked over at his mother, who smiled indulgently.
"That's right," I said. "Now, Sylvia, why were the words of the prophets so valuable?"

Sylvia glanced up quickly, and then her eyes went back to the magazine. "I suppose they spoke for God," she said.

"Certainly." I nodded, and Sister Crane nodded, too.

"They did speak for God."

"They were enlightened," Krueger broke in unexpectedly. "Like Kant or Hegel—they were able to think better than everyone else."

Well, that wasn't exactly right, but at least he was listening.

"Herr Krueger," I said, "suppose you had lived in ancient times, and you'd had a question about religion. Why would you have gone to a prophet for an answer?"

Krueger thought for a moment, pushing his gray hair up off his forehead. Then he said, "Because the prophet would have given me the most intelligent answer. Or else I could have studied it out for myself and decided what was best. God gave us all a bit of intelligence—He expects us to use it sometimes." Krueger nodded to himself in satisfaction.

Our handbook said, "As your teaching progresses, make certain contact understands before proceeding."

"Herr Krueger," I said, "what makes a prophet different from the rest of us?"

"He's enlightened by God."
"That's right." He understood that, at least. "How could a prophet help us find the true church, then?"

"The true church?" Krueger looked at me intently, his gray hair creeping down over his glasses again. "How can there be a true church? Every person finds the one that suits him best. Some people like candles, organ music, Latin, all that nonsense. I don't. But I can't criticize those who do."

I started to answer, but he waved my words away. "Oh, I know the Mormon Church is the best—I like everything I've heard about it. But I can't go out and tell my neighbors they have to be Mormons."

I tried another approach. "Jesus Christ organized a church while He was here on earth. If you had lived then, would you have joined it?"

"Of course."

"And now? If you were certain that Jesus Christ's true church were on the earth today, would you join it?"

Krueger looked down at the carpet. "The world is different now. People aren't the same. I just read in Bild Zeitung where a woman shot her husband and children, and then left town with another man. Three small children—can you imagine that? What kind of a world do we live in?" His blue eyes fixed me steadily.

"If it's that bad," I said, "if people really are that wicked, don't we need a living prophet now, more than ever before?"
I held his gaze until his eyes drifted away. He shook his head slowly but emphatically, the gray hair brushing his forehead. His palms pushed into his thick legs. "If there were a prophet today, he'd be rejected." He looked up again, his blue eyes burning. "Can you imagine what this world would do to a prophet of God? He'd be stoned!"

"Suppose we had one, though," I insisted, "and he were alive today, how could he help us find the true church?"

"True church?" Krueger's voice shook with contempt. "Who can say which church is true? Who knows? The priests are liars... vultures in black robes, hovering over us, hoping they'll get our money somehow."

Rolf shifted awkwardly beside me and looked at his father. Then he took a gulp of air and spoke out. "If there were a true church, and we did have a prophet... the prophet could show us the true church." His face flushed with embarrassment.

Krueger looked over, startled.

"Give that boy a piece of candy," I thought, smiling my relief and approval. Sister Crane reached behind me and patted his shoulder. His blush deepened.

"That's right." I nodded emphatically, looking around the circle, trying to get them to nod, too. "If there were a true church," I repeated, "and we did have a prophet, he could show us that church. Does everybody agree?"

Krueger nodded slowly, still staring at his son. Helmut, watching the ceiling, finally glanced sideways at his brother.
Frau Krueger nodded absently. It probably wasn't enough agreement to satisfy the handbook, but we had to take what we could.

"The wonderful message we've brought to your home this evening," I continued, "is that the Lord has called a living prophet in our day. Sister Crane, will you tell us how this came about?"

Sister Crane sat forward on the sofa, smiling eagerly. Her long fingers quivered over the packet of lesson strips in her lap. "The name of the prophet the Lord has called," she began distinctly, "was Joseph Smith. In 1820, as a young man, he wanted to join a church. But as he visited the churches in his neighborhood, he found the same confusion we've been speaking of." She smiled at Rolf. "So he decided to pray and ask God. He went into a grove of trees near his home and knelt in prayer. As he prayed, a pillar of light descended from above." She paused dramatically. "In the pillar were two persons, whose brightness and glory were indescribable. One of them called Joseph by name and said, pointing to the other, 'This is my beloved son.' Rolf," she turned to the boy, "who were those two personages?"

"God and Jesus Christ," he answered simply.

She beamed her satisfaction. "I know," she paused, and her earnest gaze swept the circle, "I do know that Joseph Smith saw the Father and the Son!"

"I know, too, that he saw God the Father, and Jesus Christ," I added. "He could see them as clearly as you see Sister Crane and myself." I tried to meet Krueger's eye, wanting him to
catch the full impact of my testimony, but he didn't look up.
"Frau Krueger," I finally turned to her, "why was Joseph Smith a prophet?"

She blinked, then looked quickly around for help, but all eyes watched the floor. Her frizzled hair grew damp around her temples.

"What happened to Joseph Smith that made him a prophet?" I repeated gently.

"He saw God and Jesus Christ." The answer shot out from the direction of the overstuffed chair. Sylvia's head was still bent over the magazine, but she looked up for a split second and met my gaze, almost defiantly.

"That's exactly right." My words came out a bit louder than I expected. I tried to soften them. "Joseph Smith was a prophet because he saw God the Father and Jesus Christ. Does everybody agree?" I nodded my encouragement. Rolf nodded, too.

What was wrong with the others? Krueger, looking over our heads now, pushed up his glasses again and folded his arms across his broad paunch.

Sister Crane took over again. "In the grove that day," she began carefully, "Joseph Smith asked Jesus Christ which of the churches he should join. He was told that he should join none of them. Helmut, why do you think the Savior told him that?"

Good move, I thought. Helmut had been staring languidly at the ceiling. Now he looked over at her, obviously surprised at the intrusion. He stroked his thin sideburns. "If Joseph was
told he should join no church, then *obviously* they were all false." He raised his eyebrows in affectation, but Sister Crane smiled serenely.

"That's exactly correct," she said. "There **was** no true church of Jesus Christ on the earth at that time." She opened the black case in her lap. "Now, we want to investigate the church that Christ organized while he was here on earth. If we know how **His** church was organized, how will that help us find the true church today?" She turned her smile on Rolf.

He was ready with the answer. "The true church of Jesus Christ should be the same today as it was in ancient times." His clear brown eyes were serious, brightening only slightly under Sister Crane's smile of approval.

Krueger had been rocking slightly in his chair. Now he held up his hand as if to block our course. "You're saying Christ's church should be the same today--how _can_ it be? There was only one church back then--now we have dozens. The Buddhists are satisfied with their religion--the Hindus, the Moslems, the Freethinkers--my sister-in-law has been investigating a sect that runs its own nudist colony. Isn't that right, Mutti?" He settled back comfortably.

Frau Krueger, looking blankly ahead, nodded her agreement.

"Herr Krueger," I said, "does God change?"

He met my gaze finally. "No, God can't change. He's God."

"If God himself doesn't change, would He change His church?"
"Of course not."

"Then shouldn't the true church be the same today as it always has been?"

He weighed the question, rubbing his hand over the light gray stubble on his chin. Finally he nodded. "The church should be the same, only people won't let it be. They're all in it for the money. The priests--the pfarrers--when I was in the hospital, did they care about me?" His blue eyes burned. "No. They only wanted my money!" He threw up his hands in disgust.

I mustered all my control. "If a prophet--a living prophet of God--led the church, could it change?"

They were silent. Rolf shook his head to himself.

Finally Krueger shrugged.

I looked over at Sister Crane. Did she want to go on with it? She was taking the lesson strips from the plastic case and arranging them in their proper order on her lap.

Well, why not? We might be wasting our time, but it couldn't hurt anything.

The next part of the discussion explained how Christ had organized His original church. Using our strips, we built up the church on a foundation of apostles and prophets, and then we showed how the building would fall down if the foundation were taken away. "How were the apostles and prophets able to hold the Church together, even after Jesus was gone?" I asked Helmut, who was studying our strips now.

"They were inspired."
"And why do we need apostles and prophets in the Church today?" I pointed to the foundation of the building.

"To hold it together." He crossed his legs and assumed a bored look.

Next, Sister Crane showed a picture of the Savior placing His hands on the head of an apostle. "'Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you and ordained you,'" she quoted. "What did Jesus give the apostles when He ordained them?" She looked at Rolf.

"His power."

"That's right. They received His power, or the authority to act in His name. We call this the priesthood. With this priesthood, the apostles could preach, teach, and even baptize. What would it mean in the eyes of God, though," she asked Rolf, "if a man baptized without the priesthood?"

"It wouldn't mean anything." His tone was solemn.

Sylvia had put down her magazine and was leaning over to read the strips.

"Even if the man were sincere, Sylvia?" Sister Crane asked her.

"That would be different." She tugged her skirt over her knees. "God recognizes any sincere action on our part."

Helmut shot her a look of disgust. "Look, Sylvia, if you see me run a stop sign, can you write me out a ticket? Hummm?"

Her eyebrows arched disdainfully.
"What if you're VEry sinCERE. Huh?" He settled back in triumph. "How do you think those apostles or anybody else could baptize without authority?"

Krueger sat upright. His wife smiled uncomfortably. Both of them were looking at Helmut.

Sister Crane took up the next part. "So we see that the priesthood is necessary to act for God. Before we can tell whether or not a man holds the priesthood, though, we have to make sure he belongs to the true Church of Jesus Christ, built on a foundation of apostles and prophets. Do you agree that the Church of Jesus Christ should be organized like this even today?"

Rolf nodded emphatically; Helmut stretched out his legs again and smirked at his sister. Krueger nodded slightly, his head bowed in thought.

Well, at least they were following now. If they understood the next part—the apostasy—they still might commit themselves. I said a silent prayer as I began.

"As long as the apostles were alive, the church remained united. But as they went out to teach, one by one, what happened to them?"

"They were killed," Krueger answered simply.

I pulled the foundation strip out from under our building. "What happened then to the rest of the church?"

He rubbed his chin. "It fell apart."

"Exactly. And without the apostles and prophets to control it, the priesthood was lost, too. What does that mean for
the Catholic and Protestant churches of today?" I held my breath, expecting another tirade, but he gazed quietly at the floor.

"It means they have no authority to act for God." He looked up, and his watery blue eyes met mine. "It means, too, that their baptisms aren't valid. Our baptism into the Catholic Church was a sham." He glanced at his wife, and she nodded slowly. Rolf clutched the edge of the sofa, watching first one, then the other. Helmut gazed at the floor, his arms folded on his knees.

A new stillness had settled over the room. Sister Crane felt it, and her eyes brightened as she smiled at me and took a deep breath. Her challenge couldn't come at a better moment.

"Herr Krueger, Frau Krueger, . . ." her eyes took in Sylvia, Helmut, and Rolf, "the wonderful message we bring you this evening is that Jesus Christ has restored His true church to the earth, along with the priesthood." She paused. "When you come to know in your hearts that this is true, will you be baptized by someone who has the proper authority?"

It was so logical, so beautiful—they couldn't say no.

The silence was too long. Sister Crane opened her mouth to add something, but closed it again.

Krueger drew a deep breath and let it out slowly. When he finally spoke, his voice was almost casual. "Of course, if we come to know it's true, we're bound to commit ourselves." His wife nodded vaguely. Rolf had relaxed his hold on the edge of the
sofa, but shifted uncomfortably where he sat. Helmut and Sylvia were looking at the floor.

"Helmut, Sylvia, Rolf," Sister Crane looked at each of them in turn, "will you be baptized when you come to know these things are true?"

Rolf nodded impulsively. Helmut shrugged without looking up. Sylvia tugged at her skirt again. Well, we had Krueger and Rolf, at least.

"The restoration of the Church of Jesus Christ," I began, "was foretold in the scriptures." I asked Rolf to read Acts 3, verses 19 to 21; then I explained that the "restoration of all things" mentioned indicated that the priesthood would be returned to the earth. "How this would occur," I said, "is foretold in Revelations 14, verses 6 and 7. Frau Krueger, would you please read this passage?" I handed her my opened Bible.

"'And I saw another angel flying . . . .'
She read slowly to the end of the passage, then continued to stare down at the page.

"This scripture you've just read," I explained, "prophesies that the Gospel should be restored to the earth by heavenly messengers. And we testify to you " (Krueger was following intently now), "that heavenly messengers visited the prophet Joseph Smith. One of them was John the Baptist, who appeared to Joseph and his friend, Oliver Cowdrey, and gave them the priesthood, or the authority to baptize."
I set down a small picture of Joseph and Oliver being ordained. "But John the Baptist had never been an apostle, so he didn't have the higher priesthood necessary to restore the foundation of the Church. A short time later, however, three other messengers visited Joseph and Oliver," I produced a picture of three robe-clad figures, "Peter, James, and John. These three apostles gave Joseph and Oliver the same power they had received from Jesus Christ himself." I pointed back to the picture of the Savior. "What could Joseph Smith do now, with this higher priesthood?" I looked up at Krueger. Don't say baptize, I thought. He rested his chin on his palms.

"He could restore the foundation of the Church." The answer came from Rolf, who had slid as close as he could to the coffee table and was resting his elbows on the edge.

"Yes," I emphasized, "he could, and did, restore the foundation of the Church. Herr Krueger, what does that mean for you and your family?"

Krueger rubbed his knees thoughtfully. "This Herr Joseph Smith—what happened to him?"

"He restored the Church."

"No, I mean after all that. Wasn't he murdered by his own people?"

"He was killed, but it was done by an angry mob."

Krueger breathed through closed teeth, shaking his head slowly, the gray hair creeping down over his glasses. "Butchers! Murderers . . . they slaughtered their own prophet!" His voice
broke into a rasp. "Do you see what the world is coming to? Men lie and cheat... you can't trust your own neighbor."

Frau Krueger seemed to come alive now. "It's true," she nodded energetically. "You go downtown to buy a TV—the first thing they want to know is, how much money do you make? Would you believe... ."

"Everybody looks after himself," Krueger interrupted her. "Nobody cares for anybody else. We bought a new car—can you imagine what it's costing us? Do you realize," he gripped the arms of his chair, "do you realize I'll have to paint nearly four hundred pictures to pay for that car?"

"Not to mention the cost of gasoline and repairs," his wife added eagerly.

Rolf, beside me, was tracing the margins of the opened New Testament with his finger.

"And the contractors for our house," Krueger continued vehemently. "They over-charged us for the lumber, after we agreed on the price. And when the shingles came, there wasn't a decent one in the whole shipment, and we had to pay to return them."

Helmut was listening now, waiting his turn. "You don't expect to trust anybody, Dad. You can't walk around hoping a contractor's going to be honest."

Krueger groaned and rolled his eyes. "Disgusting!"

I decided to give it one more try. "Herr Krueger, in this degenerate world, isn't it good to know there's one church that hasn't been corrupted by evil men?"
He sighed heavily and shook his head in exaggerated wonder. "It's a miracle!"

Frau Krueger nodded her agreement.

That was a new foothold, at least. "How can you take advantage of this church being on the earth today?" I asked quickly.

He shrugged. "We can learn more about it. You know you're welcome to come back any time."

Was it worth it? Well, they always said we were here to teach, not just tract. I reached for my appointment book.

"We'll be glad to come back and tell you more," I said. "How about Sunday night?" It was a little soon, but any interest they had now would die quickly if we didn't follow up.

Krueger nodded agreeably. "Sunday night. All right, Mutti?"

Frau Krueger nodded automatically.

I scribbled in my book. "We're looking forward to talking to you all again."

Sylvia shifted in her chair. "I work Sunday nights. And Helmut will be back at the university."

That was no big loss. "We're sorry to hear that," I said. "But we would like to invite you all out to church Sunday morning. Our services begin at nine and ten a.m., in our meetinghouse over in the Lauternstrasse." I wrote the times on the back of a pamphlet. "Will you be there?" I looked first at Krueger. The
light reflected off his glasses, so I couldn't see his eyes.
"Will you be able to make it, Herr Krueger?"

He pushed his hair back again. "Possibly. I guess I could let my painting go Sunday morning . . . and I probably should." He smiled suddenly and met my eyes. "How could I better keep the Sabbath?"

Wow! Never give up, I thought.
"I know the Lord wants you to put Him first," I blurted out.

Krueger's smile broadened.
"Frau Krueger, will you be able to come, too?" I asked.
She smiled blankly. "Sunday mornings I have to cook dinner. Some other time, maybe."

"Rolf?"
He nodded happily. "I'll come with my father."

"Helmut? Sylvia?" Sylvia said "Maybe;" Helmut shrugged slightly.

"In order to help you study our message," I said briskly, "we have a brochure for you: Joseph Smith Tells His Own Story.
Will you read it carefully?" I handed it to Krueger.

He held the booklet, gazing down at the picture of the prophet, studying it intently. "A wonderful portrait," he finally commented.

"Will you read his story inside?"

"If I have time." He handed it to Rolf. "Rolf's our scholar—he can read it and tell us what it says."
I suddenly felt very tired. What time was it, anyway? Maybe Sister Crane wouldn't mind finishing up.

She caught my look, smiled, and slid to the edge of the sofa. "It's been wonderful visiting with you this evening," she said with strange enthusiasm. "We would appreciate having prayer with you before we leave."

She got Rolf to say it, which he did very well, hesitantly but distinctly, smiling broadly when he finished.

We gathered up our lesson strips and the Bible, then rose to leave, but Krueger waved us down again. "You don't need to hurry off. There's something else I want to ask you about. What are you people doing in Vietnam, anyway?"

Sister Crane's mouth opened in surprise, but Krueger was gazing over our heads and didn't notice. "It's pure butchery, that's all it is," he said with another wave of his arm. "Pretty soon Vietnam will be one huge graveyard—do you want that? Bones and crosses, nothing else." The light mirrored off his glasses. "I always said if there's a God, why does He allow it?"
Chapter 6

SUNDAY IN THE GEMEINDE

Sunday morning it was still raining. I was sitting at a wooden table in the foyer of the chapel, staring out the window at the dank gray sky, trying to compose my thoughts into some logical order so I could transfer them to the blue airmail paper in my lap.

Elder Dunn was standing just inches from my elbow, reading the bulletin board. He cleared his throat once but didn't say anything.

"Dear Mom, Dad, and geschwister," I wrote.

He cleared his throat again, and I felt him looking down at me.

"Good morning, Sister Harper," he said very deliberately.

"Morning," I said.

"How's it going with the painter?" he asked.

The painter. Looking up into his penetrating brown eyes, I couldn't remember any painter. Oh, yes--Krueger.

"The painter," I repeated stupidly. "Well, we gave him a First. But it was like pulling teeth."

Dunn nodded, taking in my words.

"He couldn't see the need for a prophet," I said. "So he kept getting sidetracked on all the liars and hypocrites he knows."
Then he raved on about all the religions in the world, and how one couldn't be right for everybody."

Elder Dunn was watching my hands. I looked down and saw that my ball point pen had been making ink tracks all over my fingers. So I put it down and folded my hands in my lap. They were too large. I moved them under the table.

Elder Dunn leaned over and rested his hands on the edge of the table, his long fingers stretching towards my papers. His nails were thick and blunt, but carefully trimmed.

"Did he commit himself on anything?"

"He's coming this morning, with his son, Rolf," I said, glancing up at the clock. "Hopefully."

Elder Dunn drummed his fingers slowly on the table. I looked up past his white cuffs and dark coat sleeves, to his tie. It was a maroon paisley pattern, with swirls of pink and gold.

"How do you like my tie?" he asked.

"It's neat."

"Thanks." He glanced down at it fondly. "I made it back home, on my sister-in-law's sewing machine. It only took me four hours." He gave me another long look, and then straightened up.

"We gave Gina a First, too," he said.

"Gina?" That was a total blank.

"Gina Belitz. You met her at the funeral."

"Oh." I remembered the pixie smile, the trim black suit.

"She took it beautifully," Dunn said. "And she'll be here this morning. Now, I want you and Sister Crane to fellowship her."
Talk to her, make her feel at home. I'll be sitting with her, but other than that, do her a job!" He gave the table top a parting knock, and turned away.

"OK," I said to myself. Elder Dunn the Führer. He just couldn't help it, sometimes. I watched him saunter over to the coat room.

Then I went back to my letter. Krueger . . . how could I tell the family about Krueger, and make it sound right? Not like it was a sure thing, but that he still had a chance. If I sounded too optimistic, Mom would get all excited for nothing, and when the next letter came she'd be disappointed. At home they only counted success or failure—not all the degrees in between. So it would be better to play down Krueger now and then surprise them if he really made it.

If he made it . . . . I suddenly had a vision of the baptismal service. Elder Dunn was conducting, looking down at me from the pulpit.

Stop that, I told myself. Besides, if Krueger made it, I couldn't take the credit. We were only tools in the Lord's hands, here to teach the honest in heart.

So what was honest in heart? Was Krueger? He'd said he'd be here this morning. I looked up at the clock. Ten to nine. Well, there was still time.

Sister Crane came walking into the foyer, smiling wide through her thin, bright red lips. She'd been studying in the ladies room. She always studied there on Sunday morning after our
report meeting, probably so she wouldn't be distracted by the elders. Now she stopped by my table to "pick me up" for Sunday School. I rose and gathered my airmail stationary and scriptures, and packed them back into my purse. Then we walked into the chapel.

Our K-Town chapel was so American it made me homesick. It looked like a little piece of Provo or Bountiful or Rexburg that had somehow sprung up in Germany; "somehow," because the American servicemen's branch had built it. And the German members hadn't objected--they didn't seem to mind the velvety light blue carpeting, the blonde wood benches, the high windows of colored glass that let in so much light, and tinted it such beautiful pale hues.

Sister Crane went up to play the organ, but I stayed in the back, where I still had a good view of the foyer. It was already five to nine, but he still might make it.

Five to nine, and most of the members were already in their places. The Americans, when they met, filled up the chapel, but our members would hardly have filled up the first two rows, even if they'd been sociable enough to all sit together. But for the most part, they didn't sit together. They had mysteriously assigned places, scattered throughout the chapel, and woe unto you if you sat in somebody else's place.

Today, as always, little old Sister Lippke sat on the front row. She was a refugee from the East Zone, and was still
considered a foreigner, even though she'd been here for twenty-five years.

The two little Werle boys, three and five years old, sat like marble cherubs beside her. And their mother, young blonde Sister Werle, was on their other side. She came every Sunday in spite of her husband, who was highly critical of the Church and had a face like a wolf.

I checked my watch. Two minutes to nine. Maybe the bus was late. But Krueger did have a car. Oh, well.

Brother Hicken was just coming in, bending slightly so he wouldn't knock his head on the doorframe. I felt sorry for him, being president of the German branch, but he never complained. He had a crew-cut military haircut, and a Dick Tracy type chin that dropped wide open in a smile whenever he saw anybody he knew. He was shaking hands with Sister Wagner, who was smiling, too, her cheeks red from her two-mile walk to the church. She always wore the same wool skirt and sweater, with short snow boots. Renate, her plump ten-year-old, had grabbed Brother Hicken's other hand and pulled it out straight, swinging back and forth with her feet anchored at his heels. Lanky Arno hulked behind them, his fiery red hair bristling out around his head.

I looked past them to the front door. One minute to nine. He probably wasn't coming, now. I should sit down and quit worrying.

Elder Dunn walked in, with Gina at his side. Her small face was bright with excitement, and she nodded eagerly as he
pointed out this and that to her. He caught my eye and gave me a cool nod, which probably meant that I was supposed to come over.

I took one last look into the foyer, and just outside the glass doors I saw a young boy. He wore a neat round cap over his slick dark hair, and while I watched, he opened the door resolutely and walked in. Rolf! I walked past Elder Dunn and Gina, and hurried out to meet him.

He approached me smiling, slightly embarrassed. "Papa couldn't come," he announced, shaking my hand with a polite bow. He smiled again, glancing around nervously. "Is your companion here, too?"

I pointed into the chapel, where Sister Crane was perched at the organ. "She's playing the music," I said. "We're very happy you could come." I reached down and gave him a pat on the shoulder, and we went in. Sister Crane waved from the organ, pumping extra hard as she played.

We walked to the center of the third row and sat down, just as Brother Hicken rose to begin the meeting. Rolf stared up at the pulpit, almost hypnotized, his eyes wide and his mouth slightly open as he took in every word.

We shared a song book for the opening song, and I tried not to grasp it too tightly, or too loosely, either, keeping the binding suspended exactly halfway between us. But why should I be so nervous, sitting next to a thirteen-year-old boy? What if Krueger himself had come?
I was relieved that he hadn't. But why? He had to start coming eventually, before he could be baptized. But I was glad for the week's reprieve—glad I could relax and enjoy the meeting. If you could relax next to a polite thirteen-year-old boy.

I looked over the sparse congregation. Besides Krueger needing the Church, the Church here definitely needed Krueger. And his family. K-Town had two hundred and fifteen members on paper, but only a handful appeared on Sunday. Most of the others were completely inactive—they had joined under the influence of some special missionary, lasted maybe a few months, and then dropped out of sight.

That made us appreciate the faithful members all the more, though. Like Diemers, sitting in front of us. Their heads were bent together over the hymn book, his coarse white hair brushing her dark locks. He was twenty years older, but they claimed it made no difference. They liked to tell us how they'd joined the Church. Twelve years ago, in a cafe, they'd seen two young Americans blessing their food. Brother Diemer was overcome by curiosity and introduced himself, and they both ended up joining the Church. Now, after twelve years, they still came faithfully.

Brother Lappe stood up to give the opening prayer. Crazy old Brother Lappe—he looked like a sorcerer, with his black cape, and that dark hair hanging down in spikes around his creased face.

"Oh, holy Lord," he prayed, in a deep, hollow tone, "wilt thou have mercy on thy penitent children this day . . . ." A long stream of vague liturgical phrases followed—Brother Lappe
loved to pray. One mission rumor had it that he'd escaped from an insane asylum. Another, which I was more inclined to believe, said that he'd been a Catholic monk in France before he joined the Church. I did know that he kept an altar, complete with candles and crucifix, in one corner of his tiny attic room.

Brother Lappe wasn't the only strange old man in the branch, though. There was Brother Reichmann, who shaved his head once a week, for some unknown reason. And Brother Heine, who always smelled of garlic and talked about the war. In fact, there wasn't one single normal intelligent mature man in the branch. So Brother Hicken was serving as branch president, but it still would have looked better if a German were in charge.

K-Town hadn't been lucky with its German branch presidents, though. They were too cognizant of rank and office, and too new to the brotherhood of the Gospel. Brother Ruesch, the most recent one, had relished his position, taking every opportunity to remind the others of his authority over them. He'd been released after a few months, and hadn't been seen in church since, yet many of the inactives still blamed him for their apostasy. "I asked myself, how could the Lord let such a man..." they always protested.

Sister Werle stepped up to lead us through the practice hymn. "'Die Zeit ist nur kurz, und es nahet die Stunde,'" we sang briskly together. Rolf, beside me, scanned each line in advance, then sang out eagerly, in perfect time with the baton. I visualized Krueger sitting next to him, his wife on the other side,
maybe even Helmut and Sylvia . . . all of them singing with vigor. This branch needed at least one good family!

And Krueger would be a natural as branch president. I could just see him standing dignified at the pulpit, smiling benevolently down at a large congregation—row after row of faithful German families. Some were new, others had been reactivated, but the new branch president had touched each of their lives with the spark of his fervent testimony.

Were we giving Kruegers every chance we could? Maybe I wasn't really in tune with the Spirit this time. Maybe I needed to put more into it—more thought and prayer. But we had prayed about Friday night. And I'd thought about them all that day.

Well, we were only tools. Werkzeuge. Things would work out the way the Lord wanted them to.

Klaus Fischer stood up to give a talk. Now Klaus would make a good branch president—in a few more years. He was probably too young right now.

I remembered Klaus's conversion story, which he'd told us one afternoon at Diemers, while we all sat around drinking sprudel and eating cookies. "I was a smoker, a drinker—a real man of the world," he said with pride. "I was a hard case! One day, after the missionaries started teaching me, I was reading Geschicht der Mormonen. I came to the part that says Mormons don't smoke or drink . . . and I looked down at the cigarette between my fingers." He rubbed his hands together and looked at us, his captive audience. "Then I heard a voice in the room, as
clearly as you hear mine. It said, 'That is a commandment of the Lord!' And that was my last cigarette."

His last cigarette. I thought again of Krueger: "I could let my painting wait Sunday morning . . . ." And he hadn't. Or something else had come up. But if he'd really been committed, like Klaus, nothing would have come up.

Of course it wasn't everyone who heard a miraculous voice. But then, not everyone was prepared to hear one. You had to be looking for something, searching, ready to accept the answer when you found it. If Krueger heard a voice saying he should come to church . . . I could just hear him telling the voice he only had to paint 227 more pictures to pay for his car--then he'd come, gladly.

Klaus was talking now about how we all needed to pay our "fire insurance." He was so un-German, sometimes, the way he smiled and joked. We needed more members like Klaus. Where had the missionaries found him, anyway? They hadn't, I suddenly remembered. He'd walked into the church one day, introduced himself to the missionaries, and said he was curious about the Mormons. Three weeks later he'd been baptized.

"Let's not go tracting this afternoon," I could see myself telling Sister Crane. "We'll just sit here in the church . . . ."

* * *

As it turned out, we didn't go tracting anyway; after Sacrament meeting, Sister Ebert invited us over for kaffee and kuchen.
"What time?" I asked her, pulling out my appointment book.

She laughed, patting my arm fondly. "After dinner . . . after dinner . . . ." She grinned and watched me scribble in my book, her round pink face alive with dimples and creases. Her white hair blossomed out in frizzled waves, reminding me of Sally in Peanuts.

Sister Ebert was one of our members. We visited her regularly, and she, in turn, looked after our material welfare. Every Sunday she brought us a tasche—a white plastic shopping bag from Kaufhof, filled with fresh eggs, or tomatoes from her garden, sometimes with a chocolate bar down in the bottom, or a cellophane-wrapped cake. She always gave me the tasche after Sunday School, with a broad smile and a hearty squeeze of the arm. Now she was waving goodbye, pushing her way out the glass doors. On the sidewalk she put up her umbrella, turned to grin and wave once more, and waddled away to catch her bus.

Elder Dunn was saying goodbye to Gina. She looked up into his face, smiling so that the corners of her eyes crinkled, pulling on her small gloves and fastening a dark cape around her shoulders. Elder Dunn held the door open for her and said something I couldn't hear. She turned away, smiling, and skipped down the sidewalk.

"Auf Wiedersehen, Schwester Harper," said Rolf beside me. He shook my hand solemnly, half bowing, and I did the same. Then Sister Crane escorted him to the door.
Elder Dunn was putting on his raincoat. "Don't forget tausch-out day Wednesday," he reminded me with a nod of farewell. "I need to work with each of you again. Study class here at seven." He slapped Madsen on the shoulder and herded him out the door.

* * *

After a dinner of rice-and-tuna casserole, Sister Crane and I took the bus out to Friedrichstrasse. It had almost stopped raining by the time we got off, but we put up our umbrellas for the walk to Sister Ebert's.

She was downstairs waiting for us in her doorway, smiling broadly as we approached, chuckling when she squeezed our hands. We followed her up the narrow, crooked stairs, into her second-floor apartment, where she took our coats and dripping umbrellas and nodded us into her tiny living room.

I had long since noticed one thing about German living rooms—the smaller they were, the more furniture they had. Sister Ebert's was a good example; as we squeezed behind the low coffee table and sat down on the sofa, I took inventory: two overstuffed chairs, a large mahogany china cabinet, a massive bookcase, a clothes closet, and a small end table holding a potted plant. There were doilies and figurines in every possible place; glassed pictures, photographs, and certificates on the walls. A musty, old-silk smell pervaded the room.

Sister Ebert was shuffling around in the kitchen. In a few minutes she appeared with a large plate of marmorkuchen,
another of käsekuchen, and a steaming coffee pitcher. She set them carefully on the white linen cloth spread over the coffee table; then, from the cabinet, she took fragile china cups and plates, and from a drawer, silver forks and spoons. After setting three places, she deposited herself across from us and folded her hands in her lap.

We slid forward and waited.

"Sister Harper," she nodded to me, a new grin deepening her dimples. "Will you bless our food, please?"

I was glad to.

Then she poured our coffee, which wasn't really coffee, but Karo, a surrogate drink similar to Postum back home. Sister Crane diluted hers with plenty of canned milk, and added three teaspoons of sugar, but I sipped mine plain.

This was nice of Sister Ebert, having us over. I told her so as she slipped a piece of marmorkuchen onto my plate.

"It's my pleasure." She placed a wedge of käsekuchen alongside it, sliding it carefully to keep from breaking the crust. I wondered if she'd had many visits from the missionaries, or how long she'd been a member, for that matter.

"Sister Ebert," I said, cutting into my marmorkuchen, separating a chocolate bite from a rich, yellow swirl, "you seem to know what the missionaries like. Have you been a member of the Church very long?"

She poured a generous amount of canned milk into her coffee and stirred it slowly. "About three years." She took a sip,
then added more sugar. "It was a wonder that I joined in the
first place. The missionaries were always coming by, but I wasn't
interested. I listened to them, though—they were such polite
young men. But they couldn't convince me I needed a new church."
She paused, cutting vigorously into her cake.

"What finally converted you?" I asked.

"I don't know, really. They got me coming to church every
Sunday, but I had trouble reading the Book of Mormon. They always
scolded me about that." She chuckled broadly. "I liked to pray
with them, though—that was always easy."

Sister Crane's cake eating had stopped after one bite.
"How long were you taught?" she asked.

"How long? Four or five months, at least. I don't know
why the missionaries kept coming back. I must have been a poor
prospect. But they were patient, and I thank the Lord they were."

Four or five months! She couldn't have been very golden, then.

We ate silently for a few minutes. I finished my marmor-
kuchen except for the crumbs, and then started on the käsekuchen.
It had a shiny rippled surface, and the cheese filling underneath
divided smoothly as my fork cut in. It dissolved into chunks in
my mouth, tart and lemony. The crust was dry and sandy textured,
but rich with butter.

Sister Ebert refilled my coffee cup, and then her own. "I
like to see young people eat a lot," she encouraged us.
Sister Ebert. Staunch and faithful. But she hadn't been
golden. No miraculous voice, no instant conversion.

"Are you the only member in your family?" I asked her.

She shook her head. "My sister Gertie joined, too, just
after I did, but she doesn't come any more." Her natural blush
deepened. "I stopped coming too, for a while... but I wasn't
happy. Then I decided if this were really the Lord's church, it
was all or nothing for me. So I came to the meetings again, and
finally started paying my tithing. Then I went to Switzerland, to
the temple! After that, nothing could stop me!"

Sister Crane sighed in contentment. I cleaned the crumbs
from my plate with the back of my fork.

"Switzerland was beautiful. The temple... I can't
describe it. Do you know what my dream is now?" Her cheeks
glowed. "We are three sisters--Riedle, Gertie, and myself. I
picture us all together in the Temple--then I don't need to see
heaven!"

"Is Riedle a member, too?" Sister Crane asked quickly.

Sister Ebert leaned forward. "Not yet." She half winked.
"But she's receptive. I've been working on her. She'll be coming
to church with me soon."

"Wunderbar!" I could have jumped up. "And after that,
we'll teach her the gospel, right here in your own home."

Sister Ebert nodded. "That's what I'm hoping for.
Another sheep for our fold." She poured herself another cup of
coffee and filled mine again. "How is your work going now?"
"We have one possibility," I told her. "A painter—Herr Krueger—in the Glockenstrasse. Do you know him?"

She shook her head. "Has he come to church yet?" she asked.

"He hasn't," Sister Crane broke in, "but his son Rolf was there this morning, the young boy with dark hair. We're going back to the family tonight, to teach them about the Book of Mormon."

Sister Ebert nodded approvingly.

"If we can get them reading it," I said, "they have a good chance—if they pray, too, and come to church."

She set down her cup, folded her hands in her lap, and looked up with an air of wisdom. "Give them time," she cautioned. "Don't rush them. So many have come and gone."

* * *

We stayed at Sister Ebert's until five, when Sister Crane remarked that we should be leaving soon, if we wanted to make our appointment with Kruegers. That was for me to decide, of course, but we did need to get going.

We said a final prayer together; then Sister Ebert escorted us down the stairs to the street. She shook my hand tightly, holding it for several seconds. "Your visit has been wonderful," she said, giving my hand another squeeze. "Come back soon. Mornings I'm out shopping, or in my garden, but afternoons I'm always here."
We nodded, pulling on our gloves.

She waved as we left her in the doorway. "Good luck with your painter," she called after us. "I'll be praying for you!"
"Well, it wasn't the best Second we've ever given," I said, "but they've still got a chance. They seemed interested in the Book of Mormon, anyway."

"All five of them?" Elder Dunn sat straight in his folding chair, taking notes on a clipboard.

"Helmut and Sylvia weren't there, which didn't bother us too much," I reported. "So it was just Herr Krueger and his frau, and Rolf. Rolf was the only one who'd read the Joseph Smith brochure."

"He's golden," Sister Crane put in. "I won't be surprised if he makes it all by himself."

Dunn added another line to his notes. "Are they praying?"

"I don't know if they are yet," I said, "but we challenged them hard to pray about the Book of Mormon. They said they would."

"But they won't pray when we're there," Sister Crane protested. "We have to get Rolf to say every prayer, or do it ourselves."

Dunn nodded. "How about church meetings—did you get a real strong commitment on that?"
"Humm," I said. "Well, we haven't really pressed them yet, but we'll work on it Friday night when we go back. Mainly we concentrated on reviewing the first discussion."

"They remembered a lot," Sister Crane added. "They still agreed on the apostasy, and said they'd be baptized when they came to know the Church was true."

When, I thought. Krueger had said something about not rushing into things. Frau Krueger had thought maybe in a year or two, when the house was finished.

"They were really interested in the Book of Mormon," Sister Crane went on. "While I was doing the part about the Indians and the new witness for Christ, Herr Krueger went over to the bookshelf and pulled out a Book of Mormon he already had. It was one of those old black ones, without the picture of Moroni on the cover. He showed us the flyleaf where his first two missionaries had signed it. Elders Hicken and Leishman, 1961."

"Seeds that rest in rich brown furrows," Elder Bell singsonged under his breath. He stifled a yawn and rocked back in his chair, resting his head against the wall.

Dunn underlined something on his sheet. "Did it look well-read?"

"It looked old, was all," I said. While we were talking, Rolf picked it up and started First Nephi. We challenged them to read the first fifty pages this week, and they said they'd see how their schedules went. Krueger thought it would be a good idea to
save it for some Saturday afternoon when he could relax and really concentrate on it."

    Elder Bell snorted as his chair hit the floor. Dunn clamped his mouth into a frown.

    "One thing really disappointed us," Sister Crane said. "When we were reading Moroni's promise at the end, Frau Krueger thought it was beautiful, and they all said they'd pray and ask the Lord if it were true. But then, before I'd even closed the book, they were talking about their new house again—almost as if it were just as important."

    Elder Dunn tapped the sole of his shoe with his ball-point pen. "To them it probably is. Don't give up yet, though."

    "We won't," I said. "They're still willing to listen. But we haven't really gotten through to them yet. I think we'll probably fast before we go back Friday night. If it's going to happen, it'll have to be then."

    Elder Dunn nodded. "Would you like us to fast with you?"

He looked at me, and he suddenly seemed very young.

    "Sure," I said. "If you want to."

    "OK. We'll talk about it tonight. Now, the rest of your contacts. Anything new?"

I flipped through my appointment book.

    "We have one good prospect," Sister Crane volunteered. "Sister Ebert's working on her sister, Riedle. She's almost ready to set us up with her!"

    "Not bad. You sisters really have a way with the members."
"Oh, we weren't even asking her for referrals," Sister Crane said.

Dunn nodded. "Anything else?"

"Lots of tracting," I said. "We gave a First on Monday, to an out-of-it Adventist, but we won't be going back."

Dunn made another check on his sheet. "Have you sisters been getting to bed on time?"

"No."

"We haven't, either. Bell and Magleby?"

"We stay up all night," said Elder Bell.

"Contact report."

"Oh." Elder Bell ran his fingers through his hair and blinked. "We're trying to reactivate Brother Frank. We've been spending a lot of time with him, so we haven't done much tracting."

Brother Frank was an inactive member on their list. I'd never seen him in church.

"We've got some good appointments lined up for this week," said Bell.

"We had some good ones last week," grumbled Magleby.

"Really fine. They all dumped."

"Keep at it," said Elder Dunn. "Try to be more discriminating. Now, anything else?"

Bell shook his head and yawned. Magleby crossed his arms and rested his chin on his chest.
Elder Dunn made some final marks on his sheet. Then he sat back. "Well, Madsen and I had a good week, too," he said. "Give us a report, Elder."

"Sure!" Madsen sat upright. "We gave Gina a Second, and she ate it up. Man, she really grooved on the Book of Mormon!"

"Great," said Magleby.

"We challenged her out for April tenth, two weeks from Friday. And she's gonna make it!"

Elder Dunn grinned involuntarily. "We can't believe she's for real. All during the discussion she kept jumping ahead—asking questions about baptism for the dead, and the resurrection. We had to hold her back so we'd have something left for the other discussions."

"Yeah," Madsen said. "Finally she just sat there with those big goo-goo eyes and took it all in."

"Sounds good," said Sister Crane.

"One thing, though," Elder Dunn looked up from his clipboard. "Sisters, she needs help on a few personal questions. I'd like to take you with us tomorrow night."

"OK," I said with mixed feelings.

"Meet us at the Rathaus at seven." He made another note and looked at his watch. "Twenty-five after. That better be it for our contact report. Elder Magleby, let's have your study class."

Magleby cleared his throat, sat up straight, and pulled an aerogramme from his pocket. "The sisters got the jump on me this
morning," he said, "but I'm going to talk about it anyway--member missionary work." His large round face looked at each of us in turn. "Now, we all know if this mission's ever going to get off the ground, it's got to be through the members. Tracting's the pits."

We nodded.

He unfolded the aerogramme and smoothed it out in his lap, jerking his head once to flip the dark hair up out of his eyes. "I got a letter from one of my high school buddies who's serving in Mexico. He and his companion work completely with the members, and they get so many referrals they don't have time to tract. Now listen to this: 'We've given the pep discussion to ten of our member families. Each time we've gotten thirty or forty referrals, and we're concentrating on the best ones. We don't even go past the first discussion if they're not serious. In February we had twenty-three baptisms, and March looks even better.'"

There was a snort from Elder Bell's direction. He folded his arms and leaned back with a tolerant smile.

Magleby gave him a sharp look. "OK, so this isn't Mexico. Maybe the people here aren't so aufgeschlossen as the Mexicans, but we need to remember something!" He thumped the aerogramme so that it crackled. "We've been called here to baptize, and there's no reason why we shouldn't!"

"It says here in the D and C," he opened his German triple combination; "it says here in Abschnitt 4 that the field is white,
already to harvest. Listen to this: 'Denn sehet, das Feld ist schon weiss zur Ernte, und wer seine Sichel mächtig einschlägt, sammelt einen Vorrat.' It says mächtig, brethren. And sisters. We've gotta go at it with all our might! And we have to have faith we can do it. Faith. That's what it takes. Joseph Smith once said, 'Faith and doubt can't exist in the same heart at the same time!' If we have faith, we'll baptize."

He tossed his hair up again. "Now, you all know what it says in the handbook. The Lord has prepared people for baptism, within the boundaries of our mission. Our job is to find them, teach them the Gospel, and lead them to the waters of baptism."

I knew that part of the handbook by heart. Sure there were people—in a country of sixty million, there had to be. It was just finding them . . .

"... only if we work through the members," Elder Magleby was saying. "And we have to be completely dedicated. You all know about Ether. He was so dedicated they couldn't put him down." Magleby opened his Book of Mormon. "Here in Chapter 12 of Ether it says, '. . . he began to prophesy unto the people, for he could not be restrained because of the Spirit of the Lord which was in him. For he did cry from the morning, even until the going down of the sun.' OK. There it is. Have we got that spirit?"

Of course we didn't. Nobody did. From morning till night? Without counting the hours?

But I felt vaguely guilty. If I were as spiritual as Ether, we might be having success. I'd know just what to say to
Kruegers, and how to say it, and they'd feel the Spirit, and know it was true. Or maybe, if they really weren't ready yet, I'd know that, too, and we wouldn't be wasting our time on them.

Elder Dunn cleared his throat, but ended up yawning.
"Thanks, Elder," he said to Magleby. "I think we all needed to hear that. I know even I could be more in tune with the Spirit sometimes."

Sister Crane cleared her throat. "Speaking for the sisters," she said, "I think there's a lot we could do to improve the work."

She didn't really need to speak for both of us, but I tended to agree with her.

"To close our study class," Dunn said, "let's kneel together as a district and rededicate ourselves in prayer. Sister Crane, would you lead us?"

Sister Crane prayed with a sincerity that bothered me, but as we knelt there together, I suddenly felt as if I were watching from several feet away, a stranger observing the little group with heads bent together, bracing itself for strength against a whole city, seeking the Lord in prayer. I wondered suddenly if it were possible—if we could be like Ether, and work the impossible.

We were all grinning as we helped each other to our feet.

"Right on," said Dunn. "Now, let's have breakfast. Who's going to kauf ein?"

"Send the juniors," Bell suggested.
Elder Madsen reached for his coat. "What does everybody want?"

"I'll have a lemon yoghurt and two streusels," said Bell, handing his companion a one-mark piece.

I asked Sister Crane to get me a small roll of pumpernickel bread and a banana, and Elder Dunn ordered a strawberry quark and three brötchen with cheese. Then he looked at me.

"You're eating light today, Sister H.," he said.

"She's practicing self-control," Magleby told him. "Hey, boss, when are we going to have another ausflug?"

"When do you want one? Saturday's fine, if we all get our hours by Friday night."

"Hey, I know what," said Madsen, stopping in the doorway.

"Let's go down to Neunkirchen! Only fifty kilometers on the train."

"So what's in Neunkirchen?" grunted Magleby.

"They've got a zoo! It's the greatest! Our landlady says they've got lions and bears and dogs and cats . . . ."

"Dogs and cats?"

"Yeah. It must be a crack up!"

Elder Dunn looked at me. "What do you think, Sisters? Shall we visit the zoo Saturday?"

"Sure," I said, without consulting Sister Crane. "Do you want us to pack a lunch?"

* * *
We finished breakfast and were ready to tausch-out by nine. Elder Dunn did some figuring on his clipboard and then divided us up for the morning: "Elder Madsen, you take Sister Crane and Elder Magleby to our area. See if you can catch that Yugoslav at home. Get him out of bed, if you have to. Bell and I will go with Sister Harper to her area. Let's meet back at Kaufhof by one." He punctuated the decision with a flourish of his clipboard.

I would rather have gone anywhere else—it was a drag tracting in your own area on tausch-out day. But then, with Elder Dunn along . . .

* * *

"Magleby gave a good study class," he said as we got off the bus at Mozartstrasse. "I'm concerned about our work here in Germany. One of my ex-roommates is down in Columbia. He's baptizing up a storm."

I pulled out the tracting book and found the page for Mozartstrasse. We'd been here once before, two weeks earlier, in the afternoon. Hardly anyone had been home.

"There must be some good reason why we're here," I said as we stopped by the first house."

"There is—" said Bell, "to test our faith. You can bet it isn't just the gospel. Europe's all washed up as far as the gospel goes. They've had missionaries since 1851, and now we're just making sure there's nobody left."
"Hummp," said Dunn, shouldering the door gently. It was unlocked and gave way with a click.

"I mean it," Bell said as we climbed the stairs. "There's a curse on this land. They've started two world wars. Do you think the spirit of the Lord's going to stick around after all that?"

At the first door was a sleepy taxi driver whose chin was rough with stubble. I put an X by his name—Reith—in the tracing book. Then I rang at the other door.

"I don't know what the problem is here," Dunn said. "I'm wondering now what I'll tell people when I get home. Sure it's the best two years of our lives, but if we tell them what it's really like here they'll never believe it."

I pushed the bell again.

"Give 'em a lot of soft soap about sweet little old ladies," said Bell, bumping his briefcase against the bannister. "Tell about one of them having a dream two young men would come to her door, and the next day there you were. Then you can cry when you tell about her baptism."

The door jerked open. A young woman smiled tightly, clutching a wet washcloth.

I smiled, too. "Hello. We're three representatives of the Church of Jesus Christ . . . ."

"Mein Kind liegt gerade auf dem Tisch," she said, hardly moving her lips. The door closed quickly.
"Sure thing," said Bell. "Her baby's lying on the table. Every time I hear that one I want to say 'guten Appetit.'"

Down on the next floor I rang twice at each door, but nobody was home.

One more flight down an old woman opened up. Her workkittel was buttoned tightly across her broad chest and she chuckled as I told her who we were.

"No time," she said, closing the door.

Her neighbor across the landing scowled as I gave her the same approach.

The next floor down, nobody was home. Nobody was home on the ground floor, either. I handed Elder Dunn my pen and the acting trading book. "You get the next house," I said.

He fingered the pen carefully. "Where do you get BIC pens over here . . . hey, you've been chewing it!"

"I get hungry."

"I'm not surprised, the skimpy breakfasts you sisters eat."

He walked ahead of me down the hall, pushed the door open, and held it for us. The passageway was so narrow that my shoulder brushed the front of his coat as I went through. Out on the sidewalk I felt like skipping as he caught up with us.

The air was still cool, in spite of the sunshine, and dark splotchy shadows of clouds moved at random over the city. The hills to the south--the Pfalz--were still gray, except for dark green patches of pine trees. Soon the gray would be a vivid green, and the branches of the dark pines would be tipped a
lighter green, and we'd be out tracting in the balmy warm summer air, stopping at ice cream parlors . . . .

"So what did you decide about the folks back home?" Elder Bell asked as we climbed the stairs in the next house. "Are you going to tell it like it is?"

Elder Dunn paused on the third-floor landing and set his briefcase down in the windowsill. "I'm still debating," he said. "The ideal thing would be to tell them enough good so they realize our time here is worth it, but enough bad so they know how it really is. I don't know if I can pull it off with that kind of balance."

"You can't," said Bell. "Give 'em the soft soap."

At the next door we met a worldly looking Herr Gaussman, complete with turtleneck pullover and long cigarette holder. Smoke hung thick in the room behind him, and I hoped he wouldn't let us in. He didn't, but was surprisingly pleasant and invited us to come back some evening when he had more time. Elder Dunn gave him a Joseph Smith brochure and made two checks by his name in the tracting book.

We started down the stairs and Elder Bell looked at his watch. "What time are we meeting back?" he asked.

"One o'clock," said Elder Dunn.

Bell was silent.

"Where do we eat?" I asked.

"Wherever we want," said Dunn. "I like Italian or Chinese."

"Yeah," said Bell. "They've got really decent sweet and sour pork."

"Oh, but their duck chop suey's better," I said. "And it's only six marks."

Elder Dunn stopped on the next landing, put down his briefcase, and stretched out his arms. "We missionaries really get to be gourmets," he said. "Back home, I thought I was really daring when we had tacos. But here, we eat fish in white wine sauce, duck chop suey, cordon bleu, caneloni . . . ." He looked in the tracting book and pushed the next bell. We waited, but there was no answer.

"I can just picture it, when I get home," he went on. "I volunteer to cook dinner for the family, so I'm out in the back yard digging up snails," he hefted an imaginary shovel, "pouring in brandy," he shook a make-believe bottle vigorously, "prying open clams," his bony jaw was set with concentration as he tugged at the imaginary clam shell.

There was nobody at home in the rest of the house, so Dunn handed Bell the tracting book and we went on.

The next house was plastered a dull gray and set well back from the sidewalk. We followed the paving stones through a limp garden, pushed open the door, and entered the dusky main hallway.

"Let's start at the bottom," Bell said, pushing the buzzer by the door on our right.
A shuffle of feet approached from inside, the curtain moved slowly aside, and a face peered out. We heard the clank of a key turning in the lock, three times around, and the door opened a few inches. "What do you want?" asked a woman's voice. 

"We're three representatives of the Mormon Church and we'd like to talk with you for a few minutes," said Bell. 

The door opened an inch or two wider. "The Mohammedans?" she asked. 

"Mormons. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." Bell smiled engagingly. 

She opened the door far enough to admit us, then turned and walked toward an inner doorway. Elder Bell hesitated, then stepped in; Dunn shrugged and followed. I was last, pulling the door closed behind me. 

We followed her into a parlor, where she pulled aside the heavy drapes to let in the sunlight and motioned us to a large polished table. We sat down and she seated herself across from us, folding her hands in front of her on the table. Her eyes had a vacant look and her mousey, gray-brown hair hung in slack curls. "Tell me about the Mormons," she said. 

Elder Bell pulled out a Joseph Smith brochure and laid it in front of her. "This is Joseph Smith, who wanted to find the truth. He investigated all the churches of his day, but none of them satisfied him completely. So he decided to pray and ask God . . . ."
She listened closely, her forehead puckering slightly, but her eyes were steady. She was younger than I'd thought—thirty, at the most. She nodded slightly as Elder Bell described Joseph Smith's prayer in the grove, and her lips parted when he told of the appearance of God the Father and Jesus Christ.

"I believe you," she broke in suddenly. "Others won't, but I do. I accept heavenly manifestations."

Elder Bell looked startled.

She leaned across the table to him and whispered softly, "I believe in spirits. They commune with me."

Elder Dunn sat back and fixed her with an unwitting stare. Bell smiled tolerantly. "That's fine. But God and Jesus Christ weren't spirits. They had heavenly bodies. Joseph Smith communed with them and asked which church he should join. He was told to join none of them. Why do you suppose that was?"

She refolded her hands. "None of them teach the truth. I know, because I search for truth." She glanced over at the open door, and her voice dropped. "I don't talk about it with my neighbors and family, but I do listen to the Jehovah's Witnesses. They come every week and discuss religion with me. Do you do that?"

"Do what?"

"Visit people. Explain your beliefs."

"Oh, we do that sometimes." Bell crooked an eyebrow at me.

"If you have time," she said, "I'd like to have a series of discussions with you." She looked at her wristwatch. "But not
now. My mother will be back from shopping in a few minutes and she doesn't like visitors."

I had my appointment book ready. "Frau . . . ."

"Schlege," she said.

"Frau Schlege, I'll be happy to visit you again with my regular companion. We're free almost every day."

"Monday or Tuesday," she said.

"How about Monday. This same time?"

She nodded.

* * *

Out on the sidewalk we breathed our relief in the fresh air.

"She seems interested, at least," said Dunn, buttoning his trench coat.

"Interested, maybe, but wow!" Elder Bell flapped the sides of his suit coat to fan himself. "When she stared at me like that . . . ."

"The sisters can do her a job," said Dunn. "She needs some direction, that's all."

Bell cocked his mouth sideways. "If you sisters want to go back in there, bitte! Maybe you can get in on one of her seances."

"She's weird," I admitted. "But she might be good. We'll go back."

"Do that," Dunn said as he picked up his briefcase. "But see if you can get her away from those communing spirits."
Chapter 8

MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

By Friday morning, though, spirits were the farthest thing from my mind. I was sitting at our opened kitchen window looking out across the rooftops, over a sea of orange and brown roof tiles, still blotchy with the night’s dampness. But the moisture seemed to be rising from them, collecting into patches and streaks that wavered and vanished in the morning sunlight. The sky above me was a pure blue.

"Looks like we're going to have another beautiful day," I said to Sister Crane. "We must be living right."

"Must be," she agreed, brushing her teeth at the sink.

I took a deep breath—it tingled cool and fresh over my nostrils, with the barest hint of smoke from the Pfaff works. I filled my lungs until they almost hurt; then I relaxed them slowly, closing my eyes in the warm sunlight. Why did I feel so good?

We were fasting for Kruegers. And the elders were fasting, too. This neat brotherhood of the Gospel... I looked over toward Hasenstrasse, where Dunn and Madsen lived, and I could feel their spirits reaching out to join with ours, in prayer for Kruegers. And Bell and Magleby were fasting too. Kruegers would have to feel it. On a beautiful day like this, they'd have to know it was true.
And the Gospel was true. "My soul delighteth in the
things of the Lord; ..." We'd just been reading II Nephi,
Chapter 4. "My heart pondereth continually upon the things which
I have seen and heard." It was possible, on a day like this.
Clear sky, sunshine, fasting—it was neat, being a missionary. We
were in the right place at the perfect time.

And Kruegers would make it. We'd go in there tonight with
a spirit so strong they wouldn't be able to resist. Our plan was
to give them a combination of the third and fourth discussions,
skimming the Third lightly because it dealt with the Word of
Wisdom, which they already knew about, and then really hitting
hard on the Fourth, especially the mission of the Savior and the
atonement. If we did it right ... .

"Can't seem to find any Book of Mormon hefts," Sister
Crane said from the corner. She was sorting through the heap of
brochures, piling up some, moving others aside. We needed to
straighten out that corner one of these Saturday mornings.

"Try that brown package," I said.

She broke it open carefully with her long sharp thumbnail,
took out a generous handful of brochures, and packed them into her
purse. Then she hoisted the purse to her shoulder and smiled at
me. "Ready?" she prompted.

I was ready.

"You know," she said as we descended the stairs together,
"I feel so good after last night. I wish she were our investi-
gator."
"So do I."

We sighed together as we thought of Gina. We'd been to visit her last night, with Dunn and Madsen, and I was even starting to like her, although she did look at Elder Dunn more often than she needed to.

We'd talked about chastity, and she'd been so eager to know what the Church taught— I remembered her sitting there on the edge of her bed, her lips pursed and her brow contracted into a fine web of wrinkles, listening intently as we taught her about repentance and forgiveness. "You mean I can really be clean again?" she'd asked me, and my heart had pounded with pure joy.

"That chapter we read this morning," Sister Crane said. "It reminds me of her. Nephi enjoying the things of the Lord. Most people don't even want to talk about spiritual things, but she does."

"Right," I said. "'My sheep hear my voice.' No wonder Elder Dunn is so confident about her."

We passed through the garage, where the postman was sorting the building's mail. We paused by our box, and he handed Sister Crane our letters with a smile and a tip of his hat.

I had an aerogramme from Rudi and a letter from home. I opened the letter first.

Dad had written this time. "Your mother and I picked out the new kitchen cabinets from Sears . . . Richard has taken over Andy's paper route but hasn't had the nerve to go collect yet . . . Whisk has been entertaining the neighborhood Toms and is probably
pregnant again . . . " Dad and Mom always apologized for their dull letters, but I loved them. The homely little details fascinated me. I put the letter away for tonight, when I could stretch out on my bed and really enjoy it.

Now, the aerogramme. Rudi was my pen pal—or had been. He was a German, from Germany, and I'd written to him all through high school. My biggest dream had always been to convert him so he'd come to America and marry me, but when he joined the Church, and did come to Utah, we both discovered that we got along better on paper. And now that I was in Germany, we were pen pals again.

I opened the aerogramme. "... going on as usual ... saw your father in the library ... my roommate is a hypocrite—all the returned missionaries around here are hypocrites ... ."

Rudi was a true German—he loved to tell me who the hypocrites were. And since he'd stopped going to church and paying his tithing, his eyes had really been opened. Provo was a small town, BYU was a provincial institution, and all the Mormons were narrow minded and selfish.

I skimmed the rest of it. "... let me share my favorite passage from Kierkegaard with you ... God's love drenching our souls . . . ." Rudi was still religious—passionately so. He loved to rave on about God's love for us, unworthy creatures that we were, blotting out our sins.

We were walking up the sidewalk now, passing stony faces that looked toward the ground as they hurried along.
Did any of them ever get converted? Was it even possible for a German to understand the Gospel? I folded up the aerogramme and tucked it into my pocket.

* * *

At six that evening, we ended our fast on fish brötchen and sprudel from the Nordsee Stube, and then I began to brace my thoughts for the discussion with Kruegers.

"Why, then, is it so important for you to be baptized, Herr Krueger," I practiced to myself as we threaded our way up the narrow Kerststrasse. A beer wagon lurched over the cobblestones, and we stepped up onto the sidewalk to get out of its way. "Why, then, will the seventeenth of April be a special day in your life?"

My teeth were rattling like a pair of dice. This was crazy. I had no reason to be afraid. We were doing our part, and the Lord would do His. And Kruegers would have to feel the Spirit and know it was true.

And besides—that one dark idea tugged at the back of my thoughts, as we climbed the polished wooden stairs to Krueger's apartment. If we weren't going to baptize, why even keep trying? Here we'd worked so hard, and prayed, to find a good family. And now, if they weren't going to make it, what was the use of it all, anyway?

We rounded the landing, past a set of heat pipes wrapped in tattered muslin, and climbed the last narrow flight to Krueger's door.
They were waiting in the high-ceilinged living room, Herr Krueger looking fresh and jovial, but a little uneasy, Frau Krueger gracious and blank, Rolf smiling his politeness. Sylvia was there, too, positioned in her chair, reading her magazine.

We said an opening prayer, and then Sister Crane congratulated Rolf on coming to church.

"It was a pleasure for me," he said, slightly embarrassed. Sister Crane smiled and looked at me. I was supposed to challenge them all about coming next Sunday.

"We know it would be wonderful if you could all attend our meetings next Sunday," I said. But that sounded flat. "Will you be able to make it?" That wasn't much better.

"We'll try," said Krueger. "Things are getting pretty busy for us now."

"I'm sure they are," I said. "Rolf can tell you how enjoyable it was, though." That didn't sound right, either. Rolf was shifting uncomfortably in his chair. I'd bring it up again at the end of the discussion, when the atmosphere was a little more relaxed.

Now, how was I going to lead into the Book of Mormon? I pulled a copy out of my purse and set it down on the low table. "Tonight we wanted to find out, too, how you enjoyed the first fifty pages of the Book of Mormon. Were you able to get that far?"

Rolf was grinning with enthusiasm.
"Rolf," I said, "how did you enjoy your reading?"

"Very much. I especially liked the part where Nephi was building the ship and his brothers didn't think he could do it. He really showed 'em."

"We're glad you liked it. Will you read another fifty pages by next week?"

He nodded confidently.

Krueger had picked up the book and was thumbing its leaves. "This is a newer edition than ours. Published . . ." he found the title page, "published in 1964. Is it much different?"

"Not the content," I said. "And that's the important part. Were you able to get started reading it?"

He shook his head. "If you missionaries only realized what kind of pressure I'm under . . . ."

"Maybe you can get into it this week," I said. I didn't bother to interrogate Frau Krueger, who was looking over her husband's shoulder, or Sylvia, either.

"In addition to the Book of Mormon," I went on, "there was another very important challenge we gave you last week. Have you been praying about the prophet Joseph Smith and the truth of our message?"

Krueger set the book down again, leaned back, and positioned his hands behind his neck. "I've always prayed, in my own way," he said. "At night when I'm lying in bed I think back over the events of the day, and compose my thoughts to God. That gives me a very peaceful feeling."
"I'm sure it does," I said, "but if you want to find out something from God, you have to ask Him specifically. This week, will you pray and ask Him if Joseph Smith was a prophet?"

Krueger placed the tips of his fingers together and nodded slowly. "I can see your point."

"Will you do it?"

"I'll try. But something like this takes time. It doesn't just happen overnight."

"That's right. It takes time and effort. But we know you can do it."

Sister Crane nodded her support. "You can do it, Herr Krueger."

He smiled matter-of-factly.

We skimmed over the third discussion, which began with the apostasy and the restoration through Joseph Smith. They still agreed on every point, and Krueger even commented that it was all so obvious, he didn't see how any person in his right mind could remain a Catholic.

"What does the restoration of the true church of Jesus Christ mean to you personally?" I asked him.

"It means," he looked over my head, "that I should ... well, commit myself to living in accordance with the truth."

"Exactly right," I told him. We'd get more specific in a few minutes.

The rest of the third discussion was an explanation of the Word of Wisdom. "It's essentially this," said Sister Crane,
lifting each of her long, thin fingers as she counted them off.

"No alcohol, tobacco, coffee, or black tea. Will you refrain from using these things?"

Frau Krueger chuckled, her face pink. "That should be easy for us—we've never had them in the house!"

"Didn't I tell you we were dry Mormons?" Krueger joked.

"We've known about your Word of Wisdom for years. I tell my friends about it, and they think I'm crazy."

I suddenly felt very comfortable. I winked at Sister Crane, and she took the flannel board strips from the case in her lap.

The fourth discussion began with an explanation of death. Sister Crane handed Rolf the New Testament and asked him to read Romans 5, verse 23.

"'For the wages of sin is death,'" he pronounced slowly. 
"'But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord.'"

"Would you please read that first sentence again?"

"'For the wages of sin is death.'" He glanced up uncertainly. 

"Thank you, Rolf. Since Adam was the first man to break a commandment, what wages did he receive?"

"Death," said Krueger sharply.

"That's right. And why, then, do we have to die?"

Krueger rubbed his stubbled chin thoughtfully. "We're descendants of Adam."
"Exactly," I said, as Sister Crane placed the "physical death" strip on the table. "Now, many people will suffer another kind of death—a spiritual death. This means that, because of their sins, they will be cut off from the presence of God." I set down the "spiritual death" strip. "So there are essentially two kinds of death. What is the basic difference between them?" Sylvia was listening now, so I directed the question to her.

She shrugged. "The physical death is Adam's fault—we can't do anything about it."

"And the spiritual death?"

"That's our problem."

I nodded, surprised at the honesty of her gaze.

Sister Crane cleared her throat and swallowed hard. Then she looked slowly around the circle. "Herr Krueger," she said softly, fixing her attention on him, "what has God done so that we may be free from death and sin?"

He was silent, but it was an easy, thoughtful silence. Take your time, I thought. This is important.

Finally he spoke. "God sacrificed his son Jesus Christ, for us." The last words seemed to catch in his throat, and his eyes brimmed over. I suddenly wanted to hug him.

"We testify that Jesus Christ is the savior of the world," Sister Crane told him. "He loves us so much that he was willing to suffer and die for us. And his sacrifice made it possible for us to overcome both kinds of death."
She paused and took the New Testament from Rolf's lap.
"Christ overcame the physical death through his suffering and
death on the cross and the resurrection that followed. Herr
Krueger, would you please read I Corinthians, chapter 15, verses
21 and 22?"

He fumbled through the pages, finally stopping and drawing
a breath. "'For since by man came death, by man came also the
resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in
Christ shall all be made alive.'" He looked over the passage
again, his face rapt.

"What happens because of Adam?" Sister Crane asked him.
"All men die."
"And what happens through Christ?"
He looked up at her. "All men will live again."
She nodded. "I know that what you've said is true, Herr
Krueger."

I caught his gaze. "I know, too, that Christ has overcome
the physical death for all mankind," I said. "We don't even need
to worry about the fall of Adam. But what happens to men because
of their own sins?" I turned my gaze on Frau Krueger, and she
blinked. "What other death must they suffer?" I prompted her.

"A spiritual death."

Herr Krueger patted her knee.

"Now, all of us have sinned," I continued, "and unless
these sins are paid for, we'll suffer a spiritual death. What,
then, is another reason that Christ died on the cross?"
"To pay for those sins," said Rolf.

I nodded. "The Savior will forgive all men who learn to keep His commandments, and He'll remove their sins." Then I looked at Krueger. "But if we make no effort to keep his commandments, will He remove our sins?"

"No."

"Why, then, is it so important for you to live the commandments?"

He nodded once, decisively. "So the Savior can remove my sins."

Sister Crane had added a picture of Christ and two more strips to our layout. Now she took the next part. "One of the most important commandments is to have faith in the Savior. What is faith, Herr Krueger?"

"Confidence." He folded his arms across his chest. "Faith is confidence that each day will be worth living."

"Confidence . . . well, all right," she said. "But faith is also a strong belief—an assurance that God lives. How can you tell when a man has faith?"

"He isn't shaken by the hypocrisy of others." Krueger glanced at his wife, who nodded her agreement.

"What might be another way?" Sister Crane asked Rolf. "He keeps the commandments of God."

"That's exactly right. Now, if a man says he has faith but makes no effort to keep the commandments, how much faith does he really have?"
Krueger chuckled softly. "Very little."

"Now," she added another strip, Faith, "how have you shown that you have faith, Herr Krueger?"

"Through my art." He turned his calloused hands to us.

"I show my faith in humanity by painting. If I thought my work would never be appreciated, would I even bother to touch a brush to canvas?"

I couldn't help smiling. "There are many kinds of faith," I said. "Faith like yours is hard to find in our modern world."

Krueger nodded, pleased.

"Some people are blessed with a strong faith in God," I said. "They feel compelled to attend church, as Rolf did last Sunday. This is a faith that grows as you keep the commandments."

I reached for the New Testament and opened it in my lap.

"Here, in the second chapter of Acts, we find a group of people who had a very strong faith. Would you read verses 37 and 38 please, Sylvia?"

She took the book nonchalantly from my outstretched hand.

"'Now when they heard this they were pricked in their hearts and said unto peter and to the rest of the apostles men and brethren what shall we do then peter said unto them repent and he baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the holy ghost.'" She closed the book.

"Thank you. Now, how do we know these people had faith?"
"They wanted to do something," said Krueger. "The true faith is doing. Nobody is saved by just sitting around."

"Right," I said. "And what did Peter command them to do?"

"Repent," said Rolf.

"Good. What is repentance?"

"One has to recognize the need for a change in his life," said Krueger. "He has to see his own inadequacy."

"That's part of it. He also needs to stop doing wrong and begin doing right."

Krueger nodded.

"How have you used the principle of repentance in your own life?"

"I'm listening to your message. I realize that my life up until now hasn't been completely acceptable before God."

"What can you begin doing to show God that you want to change?"

He looked out the window. "I should pray more often, and attend your meetings."

Sister Crane sat forward on the sofa. "We know that you will," she said. "Now, what is the next commandment Peter mentions?"

Nobody remembered.

"Sylvia, could you please read verse 38 again?"

"Then Peter said unto them repent and be baptized every one of you . . . .!"

"That's fine. What did Peter command the people to do?"
"Be baptized," said Rolf, looking directly at his father.

Sister Crane nodded vigorously. "Why is baptism necessary, Herr Krueger?"

"For the remission of my sins."

"That's right. At the time you are baptized, the Savior washes away your sins. He has the power to do that because he suffered for them. But," she paused and drew a deep breath, "if a man refuses to be baptized, who must suffer for his sins?"

Krueger bowed his head. "The man himself."

The room was suddenly quiet.

Finally Sister Crane spoke again, softly. "Why, then, are you going to be baptized, Brother Krueger?"

He was breathing heavily now. "So I won't have to suffer for them myself. Oh, God, what a load!"

Several seconds passed. Finally he raised his head and looked out the window again. The evening sky was growing dusky, and the street below was still. A fresh breeze rustled through the opened window, bringing with it the smell of dust, green leaves, and a hint of rain.

Krueger's face grew softer, more relaxed. Something had happened. I was glad for our fasting and the extra help from the Lord. We could never have done it ourselves.

"Herr Krueger," I finally said, "we know baptism into the true church of Jesus Christ will be a wonderful event in your life. How soon will you be ready?"
He gazed at me, half-smiling. "Schwester Harper, there are many things..." He looked down at the floor. "If a man were completely free of responsibility, he could do exactly as he wanted. I'd join your church tomorrow."

"Well, we probably couldn't even fill up the font that fast," I joked. "Let's set a realistic goal."

He looked up again, his smile more relaxed. "I could use a little time." He looked at his wife. "The house will be finished this fall. Maybe sometime after that."

She nodded agreeably.

Fall! That was six months away.

"Well," I said, "that may be realistic, but there are dangers in procrastination. You could probably be ready in two or three weeks, if you made the effort."

He raised his eyebrows. "That soon! You Mormons are marvelous. Don't you think Herr God can wait a little longer for us? He's waited ten years already."

Sylvia chuckled softly.

Sister Crane was leafing through the Book of Mormon. Finally she flattened down a page. "Herr Krueger, an ancient prophet wrote this especially for you. Would you read verse 33, please?"

He took the book from her hand. "'Therefore, I beseech of you that ye do not procrastinate the day of your repentance until the end, for after this day of life, which is given us to prepare for eternity, behold, if we do not improve our time while in this
life, then cometh the night of darkness, wherein there can be no labor performed." He looked back over the verse, moving his lips; then he drew a long breath and looked up. "Very well written."

"We'll be baptized as soon as we're ready," broke in Frau Krueger. "But God doesn't expect us to give up everything right now--our new home, our car . . . ."

"No, He doesn't," I said. "But he does expect you to set aside some of your worldly desires so you can keep His commandments."

Krueger ran his hand through his coarse gray hair, lifting it up off his forehead. "Oh, Schwester Harper . . . ."

"If you could only know what we've been through," his wife broke in again. "Do you know what it is to start from nothing? After the war we were driven from the East Zone. We came here with absolutely nothing, only the clothes on our backs, and the will to begin over." She paused, breathing heavily. "We did it, too. And we have everything now, everything we lost, and more. My husband must keep painting. There's no time to stop. How can we risk losing it all again?" Her eyes drilled into mine.

"This isn't the first time we've discussed our problem with the missionaries," Krueger said. "Others have brought up the same arguments. In the end, they always understood our position. Even your mission president had to understand . . . ."

His voice trailed off and the room was silent. The breeze puffed in again, bringing a new smell. Fresh, pungent--what was
it? Somebody was digging, somewhere outside . . . I was back in the cemetery . . . thud, on the coffin. Two more thuds. Three times, for father, son, and holy ghost.

* * *

After that we talked about doctors and their high fees. I managed to get in another challenge about church, but it wasn't very forceful, and we didn't make a definite appointment to come back. Sister Crane said the closing prayer and they escorted us politely to the door.

Krueger shook my hand heartily. "Come back any time . . . any time," he said jovially, but his eyes looked past mine.

I took Rolf's hand. It was cold and limp.

"Auf Wiedersehen, Rolf," I said.

He looked at me just a moment, then down at the carpet.

* * *

"We gave a combination Third and Fourth to Kruegers tonight," I wrote, "and they went down with class."

I was stretched out full length on my bed, pen in one hand, bread and jam in the other, holding my diary open with my right wrist and left forearm.

"We probably won't be going back. What could we do with them now? They gave all the right answers, but they wouldn't promise anything. There was one point where I thought we had them, for sure. Herr Krueger, at least."

I took another bite. Somewhere a train whistled, long and low. It sounded mournful.
"The worst part was saying goodbye to . . . ." I scratched that out and rolled over to look at the ceiling. It was white and bleak. I needed to tape up something there—maybe a picture, or a post card.

What had happened to Kruegers? They'd been our big chance, our golden family. We'd worked and prayed for them. And fasted.

I rolled back over to my diary.

"I thought the Lord wanted them baptized, but something just didn't click. What? I don't know. Someday I'll have this all figured out. But for now . . . ."

I took another bite, catching a piece of jam with my tongue before it could fall onto the page. What about now?

"Hang on, I guess, and keep working. Maybe Frau Schlegel's our golden. If we can't baptize, why don't we all go home?"

I waited to be struck by lightening, but nothing happened, so I took another bite. Had I really written that? Well, it was true. They were always telling us to baptize. If there wasn't anybody to baptize . . . .

I'd give it one more try, though. Frau Schlegel might be the one. She didn't look very golden, but I'd been wrong before. This time we'd work and pray and give it everything we had. And then, if she didn't make it . . . .

I dumped the whole business from my mind. There were better things to think about. The ausflug tomorrow—a picnic with the elders . . . .
"We're going down to the Neunkirchen Zoo with the district tomorrow," I wrote. "I'm glad. We need to get away from here and clear out our brains."
Chapter 9

THE NEUNKIRCHEN ZOO

Our train lurched into the Neunkirchen station, screeching to a halt on the iron rails.

"Neunkirchen! Neunkirchen aussteigen!" bellowed the conductor, throwing open the metal door and stepping aside for us.

Madsen and Magleby dropped down first, followed by Elder Dunn, and then Elder Bell, who turned to reach us a hand. I took it first, and Sister Crane came behind me, a little unsure of her footing in the new sneakers I had persuaded her to buy. She was just letting go of the handrail when the door clanged shut behind her; then the train lurched again and began to move.

"Now that's what I call a ten-second whistle stop," said Elder Dunn, surveying the bahnhof. It was an ancient building of stucco with a steep, shingled roof, and one swinging door leading into the waiting room. A ticket window served customers on the platform, and above it, a large white sign with peeling paint told us that this, indeed, was Neunkirchen. There were four sets of tracks, and beyond them a row of sooty houses. That was it.

Elder Dunn, who was very much the Führer today, led us in through the waiting room and out onto the sidewalk, where he halted us and unfolded a map.
"It looks like the center of town is a few blocks south of here," he said. "Now let's find the zoo."

"Let's follow our noses," said Magleby. "Any zoo with cows and goats couldn't be that hard to smell out."

Sister Crane had a suggestion. "Let's find a nice park where we can eat our lunch first. This sprudel is getting heavy."
She set down a large shopping bag that bulged with bottles, and Elder Bell picked it up.

"Right," Dunn said, folding the map with one hand. "If we take off down this street we should hit a little park just before we get to the zoo."

We set off again behind Elder Dunn, who looked like Count Dracula today, with his black raincoat draped over his shoulders like a cape. Count Dracula the Führer.

He led us down a narrow cobblestoned sidestreet which reminded me very much of K-Town. There were the same flat stone sidewalks, and the same stuccoed houses built end on end, with their graceful Dutch-style rooftops. And the hausfraus even looked the same. Saturday morning cleaning was in progress, and hausfraus up and down the street were pushing their feather bedding out the windows to air it. Several of them stopped to rest in their windowsills as we approached, lounging like huge fat pillows alongside their bedding, with massive forearms folded underneath them for support, watching us traipse by. Elder Magleby waved at one of them and she ducked back inside.
I caught up with Count Dracula, who was swinging his camera absently. He looked down at me. "Sister Harper! Let's go tracting."

"Sure," I said. "You get the first door plus everyone over eighty."

I was trotting to keep up with him. He looked past me, up toward the rooftops, and then at the sky. "Isn't it great not to even think about proselyting for a whole day?" he said. "Not one doorbell—not one hausfrau."

"Hey, you're a DL," I said. "I thought you guys loved to work."

"We do," he said. "But sometimes you need a break." He was still gazing upward.

"I'm glad we planned it for today," I said. "After last night with Kruegers I was ready to pack my bags."

"Yeah," he nodded sympathetically. "I bet you were disappointed. The district really needed that baptism."

"I guess I overestimated them," I said. "But sometimes I really wonder if it's worth it. I mean, who ever really gets converted?"

He pinned me with his quick stare.

I shrugged. "Well, sometimes you really do wonder. I guess the best thing is to keep working like a robot and not think about it."

His look said that he wasn't satisfied. "Keep working," he said. "You'll find that baptism. Heaven knows you deserve it."
Then his face brightened. "Somebody like Gina. Hey, thanks for your help Thursday night. She really enjoyed that contact with you sisters."

"She doesn't seem to mind any contact with you elders," I said without thinking.

Dunn's grin widened. Then he gave me a curious look, that sharp look again, trying to pin me under the microscope. I shook it off. Well, what did I care? I certainly didn't like him.

We were coming into the business district now. The houses looked the same, except that the ground floor of each one was a shop or a store. An interesting looking bäckerei was coming up on our left, but Elder Dunn was walking too fast. Well, maybe after lunch.

"What do you hear from home?" he asked suddenly. "Things going OK?"

"Sure. No problem."

"What about Rudi? Is he still waiting for you?"

I'd never really said Rudi was waiting for me, but it didn't hurt for him to think so.

"I don't know," I said. "Hard to tell. What do you hear from home?"

"Well, my family's still loyal. I don't know about Francene."

Now that was news.

"She sent me an Honors Program newsletter last week," he was saying. "I'll have to let you read it."
What if she didn't wait? That'd really blow his plans. Then he'd have to date other girls when he got home. Maybe he'd ask me out. I could easily picture the two of us going into the Varsity Theater together—me trim and smiling in the blue suit I'd bought in Frankfurt, Elder Dunn suave in a sportcoat, handing our tickets to the doorman, then putting his arm around my waist to guide me in . . .

No . . . I shook the picture from my mind. Those fluffheads always waited. The two of them would pass me on the sidewalk at BYU, Francene clinging to his arm, Dunn smiling apologetically as he stopped. Francene would gaze up at him adoringly while he said to her, "I'd like you to meet Sister Harper. I was her district leader in the mission field." And she'd flash me a radiant smile and say, "Oh, Steve has told me so much about his mission."

I shook that one from my mind, too. He'd probably be married before I got home. And what did I care, anyway?

The other missionaries had passed us up by now. Madsen and Magleby were leaping over garbage cans in the street, and Bell followed close behind, swinging the sprudel bag exuberantly. His T-shirt proclaimed, "keep on Truckin'." The elders always wore T-shirts and levis on diversion day, except for Elder Dunn, who seemed to have more of a feel for the German cultural niceties. Today he wore polished cotton slacks and a plaid sport shirt under his Dracula cape. His brown hair was combed nicely, and the ends of his glasses curved neatly down behind the backs of his ears.
"Hey," Dunn said, nodding at the group ahead of us.

"What're they singing?"

They were singing something, I could tell, as they stopped in front of a stereo shop. They gazed alternately into the window and then at each other, bobbing their heads to keep the rhythm.

"Your choir sounds good, Elders," Dunn said as we caught up with them.

"There's this groovy song in the hymn book," Magleby said. 

"Wenn vom Nebel Frei die Bahn." Bell and I found it Sunday night when we were dinking around at the piano. We've been singing it on the doors."

"I bet Sister Harper knows it," Elder Dunn said, looking at me. "She's memorized all the songs in the book."

"Sure I know it," I said. "It's especially significant for missionaries."

"Why's that?" Dunn was straightening his cape.

"It talks about mist covering our paths, so that we never really get to know each other."

"What does that have to do with missionaries?" demanded Magleby.

"A lot," said Elder Dunn, trying to pin me with that look again.

I bent over to tie my shoe. "It sounds even groovier in English," I said quickly. "Then the chorus goes, 'When the road ... is free of fog, fog, fog!' It sounds just like a fog horn."
"Right on!" shouted Magleby. "When the road," he sang loudly, "is free of fog, fog, fog!" Bell and Madsen joined in.

Elder Dunn was still looking at me but I didn't meet his gaze.

"You were going to say something else," he said.

"No I wasn't."

* * *

We came to a small shaded park where benches lined a circular walkway. Elder Dunn halted us with an outstretched arm.

"This is the place," he announced. "Chow down. The zoo should be right over there." He pointed towards a row of ancient stone houses.

We gazed incredulously, following the line of his arm.

"It's right behind the houses," he said. "I'm surprised we can't smell it from here." Then he turned to the lunch bags.

"Let's eat."

Sister Crane began passing around sandwiches and Elder Madsen uncorked the sprudel bottles, which hissed and spurted as he pulled up the wire clamps.

Elder Magleby was already chomping into a sandwich. "This is good, sisters," he grunted between mouthfuls. "Only Americans know how to make tuna fish sandwiches."

"Are they all tuna?" Elder Dunn asked, studying the pile.

"All but the three dark ones," I told him, pointing to the ones I had made. "Those are leberwurst with Münster cheese and pickles, on roggenbrot."
"All right! Somebody has imagination!"

"Why don't the Germans make tuna fish sandwiches?" asked Sister Crane, cutting hers in half with a tableknife.

"They usually don't make sandwiches, period," I said. "They say it's easier to lay everything on one piece of bread and eat it right there. More couth, too, I guess. If you're aristocratic you eat it with a knife and fork."

"Just like everything else—they gotta make a big deal out of it," muttered Bell.

I watched Elder Dunn bite into one of my sandwiches and chew appreciatively. Then he gave me a long look. "You make a mean sandwich, Sister Harper," he said.

* * *

After we had finished eating, Elder Dunn collected our trash and stuffed it all into a small can attached to one of the benches. Then he led us across the street and through an alley between the ancient houses. We emerged at the crest of a wide ravine. Down below was a maze of pens and walkways, surrounded by a rickety wooden railing. A strong barnyard stench hung in the air, and a sign down the path proclaimed, "Neunkirchen Zoo--Eintritt eine Mark."

Madsen and Magleby were in favor of vaulting the wooden railing, but Dunn led us down to the entrance booth.

"How much do they want?" Bell asked, fishing in his pocket.

"The sign says one mark," Dunn told him.
We handed our money to the grizzled old woman in the booth and pushed in through the turnstile. Ahead of us was a broad dirt path, recently raked, lined with uneven stones. It led down to a small stagnant pond where a few ducks floated placidly; beyond were the wooden cages.

"Man, this is something else!" said Elder Madsen, squatting on his haunches to photograph the pond. Not pleased with the angle, he lay down on his side, squirming in the dirt until he was satisfied, then freezing long enough to click the shutter.

"Madsen, remember you're an elder," Dunn told him.

"Yeah, gettup outa the dirt and let's have a look at the zoo, man!" Magleby tugged him to his feet and they sprinted away toward the cages.

"It's not much like Hogle Zoo, but I guess they try," said Sister Crane.

"They have better zoos in the cities," said Dunn, squinting at the ducks. "But a little dorf like this one can't afford much upkeep, let alone the big cages and exotic animals."

We drifted over to the goat pen, where Elder Madsen was leaning over the top rail, balanced on his stomach, reaching out to a baby goat. "Cute little bugger, isn't he," Madsen grunted, struggling to keep his balance.

"If you fall in, you'll be right at home," said Bell, focusing a picture of Elder Madsen and the goats. "One more animal in the zoo."
Elder Dunn wandered over to a cage on our left, where a fox crept smoothly back and forth. "There's a cat in here, too! They live together."

I joined him at the railing and we looked into the cage. Near the back wall, a fat gray tabby lay stretched out asleep, its sides rising and falling slowly.

"Now that's nice," I said. "They must like each other. I wonder if they ever fight."

Dunn shrugged. "I guess it doesn't matter if they do. That might be the only entertainment they get."

We watched the fox creep and turn, back and forth, sniffing the wire endlessly, flipping his tail with each turn.

Elder Dunn rested both arms on the railing. "He reminds me of somebody I know rather well."

"Who?" I asked him.

"Oh, it doesn't really matter." He turned and strode away. I followed him. He stopped at the next cage, where a sleek Siamese cat was eyeing us from behind the bars, twitching its tail suspiciously.

"He's scared," Dunn said. "Madsen must have tried to get friendly with him. But a cat! Only the Germans would put cats in the zoo."

"Maybe Siamese cats are rare here," I said vacantly.

Dunn stretched out a hand. The cat drew back defensively.
"Now look at that," he mused, almost to himself. Then he was silent for so long that I began to feel uncomfortable. I tried to think of something to say.

Suddenly he turned and faced me. "Sister Harper, something's bothering you. What is it?"

He looked at me intently, and my mind began to whirl.

"You seem restless and uneasy when I'm around," he went on, as the cages, the fence behind him, the whole world grew fuzzy. Then his face came into focus, the only thing in the world; his square, half-smiling jaw, his clear brown eyes. "Does it concern me?" he asked.

A hot blush spread over my cheeks. "I guess it does," I said.

His face grew more intense.

"Sometimes, when I'm around you, ..." I began.

"Some of your feelings don't seem right for a lady missionary?"

I shrugged. His eyes were so brown.

He rested his hands on the railing, next to mine, closing his fingers neatly around the wood. "I should tell you something," he said. "We elders have feelings that are hard to cope with, too."

"Oh, I know. You have to look the other way whenever you pass a magazine stand."

He looked surprised. "Well—not only that ... sometimes we might feel attracted to a particular girl," he looked at me,
"but we have to suppress our feelings. There's nothing we can do about it until our missions are over."

"What if your feelings change by then?" I asked him.

"If they do, I say 'bitte'--it probably wouldn't have worked anyway. I think though . . . ." He paused to reach a finger to the cat, who had pushed its nose through the narrow bars. "I think that when you meet someone important to your future, your feelings grow stronger with time."

I nodded slowly, holding the bar. "Mine seem to."

He grinned suddenly and pushed himself away from the railing. "I'm glad to hear that."

"I didn't say anything."

"I know." He started walking again, and I had to almost run to keep up with him.

"You know, Sister Harper, you don't have much time left. I have even less. Let's make the most of it, OK?"

"OK," I said.

"The best way to prepare ourselves for the future is to work hard now. We'll never forget our experiences here."

We sure won't, I thought.

"That song Elder Magleby was singing," he went on. "'Wenn die trüben Nebel schwinden . . . .' I knew all along what you meant."

"The last line's really the best," I said. "'Besser werden wir uns kennen . . . .'"
He nodded, translating. "We will know each other better, when the road is free of mist." Doesn't that sound better than fog, fog, fog?"

* * *

We caught up with the rest of the district by the aviary. Sister Crane patted my arm solicitously. "We wanted to wait for you," she said, "but then I remembered how much you like cats. We've been here feeding the peacocks."

"They're beautiful," I said, looking into the chain-link birdcage without seeing a single peacock.

Sister Crane nodded knowingly. "I'm so glad we decided to come along today. Isn't it great to get away from the doors and clear out our minds?"

Blow our minds, I wanted to correct her, trying not to look at Elder Dunn. "It's the greatest," I said.
Chapter 10

TEAMWORK

I flirted a moment with the mirror, then leaned forward to stroke on a second coat of mascara. That made my lashes even longer and thicker. Next, eyeliner—a smooth, delicate stroke across the base of each lid. Then I half-closed my eyes to see the effect. Very nice. No telling who we might run into today.

I needed eyebrows, too—the curse of being a blonde. I stroked them in lightly with brown mascara, arching the brows, tapering off toward the ends. Careful, now—that left one might be a little too dark . . .

"Sister Harper?" came from the kitchen.

"Just a sec!"

I decided to rat my hair a little higher in the back, so it wouldn't collapse by noon like it usually did. I teased up the crown and then smoothed it over, shaping three slight curls across the back. That looked nice. Too bad I was out of hairspray.

"Sister Harper, it's fifteen to."

"Coming."

Sister Crane and I always held a short planning session just before we left the wohnung. It made a big difference in how our day went. "If you fail to plan, you plan to fail," they were always telling us.
You had to plan ahead, too. "The best way we can get ready for the future . . . ." I smiled into the mirror. Our future. It was too good to be true. And who would have thought I could feel this way about him?

In the kitchen, Sister Crane's chair scraped against the floor. She was coming in to get me. What was the hurry, anyway? We didn't have to start at exactly fifteen to nine.

I yanked open the door and went out into the kitchen. She was standing uncertainly by the table, but she smiled at me and sat down again quickly. Why did she always have to wear that awful red lipstick? It made her look at least thirty. And couldn't she do something with her kinky hair? We were missionaries, of course, but girls, too. We could still look nice.

"I just thought you'd want to be getting started," she said.

I sat down and went over the plan with her. We had an appointment with Frau Schlege, at ten-thirty, for a First. Before then we could tract in the Mozartstrasse.

"That'll be perfect," she said. "We can get those last three houses done and out of the way."

Sister Crane always talked about our work as if it were something you could get done. But I couldn't see what we were getting done that we couldn't do again tomorrow, and every day, or not do at all, for that matter.

And why did she have to know my plans down to the minute? So she could keep us on schedule? That was my responsibility.
I was senior! Actually, she was lucky I even told her my plans. Not all seniors did that. I should be like Sister Miles and just let her follow me around like a puppy. Then she'd know how good she had it.

"... and then we can be at Frau Schlege's right at ten-thirty," she was saying.

"Well, we don't need to kill ourselves getting there," I said nonchalantly. "If we don't make it by ten-thirty, it's no big deal." I remembered that the appointment with Frau Schlege was pretty indefinite. But Sister Crane didn't need to know that.

She looked at me, and her cheeks slowly reddened. "No big deal?" Her voice rose unexpectedly. "I wish you'd tell me why a first appointment is no big deal! You seem to know a lot, lately."

I shrugged and closed my appointment book.

She tried to keep her voice steady. "If you don't care enough about our contacts to be on time, then it's your fault we aren't baptizing!"

My fault! That was a good one. Who did all the planning? Who told her what to do every minute? And then she could say I didn't care. Well, all she cared about was following rules down to the letter, whether they made sense or not.

"Look," I said, "do you think you care about our people? All you care about is the handbook. Follow the rules," I singsonged. "Be on time. Get the work done. I'd like to know what we're getting done!"

She opened her Bible without looking up.
"As if any of that could make us baptize!" I said.

She placed her finger on a verse and started reading, tracing each line with her long pointed nail, mouthing the words to herself. That was her out every time. Reading the scriptures--then she knew she was righteous. Not bothering to think, just getting her pages read. I wanted to reach over and tear them out.

But I summoned all my cool and leaned back in my chair. She kept reading, her bony shoulders hunched over the Bible, tracing each line slowly with her finger, across the column and back again. Hadn't she ever learned to read right?

Finally I said, "Don't you ever wonder if it's worth it, all the tracting we do? This morning we'll go push doorbells, hear the same blah, blah, blah every time. Nobody's going to listen."

She looked up, her eyes cold. "They certainly won't listen to you, as long as you feel like that. And how do you think I can do any good contacting when I know you hate every minute of it?"

That was Sister Crane all right, worried about her own success. I was probably killing her spirituality, too.

"We could split up, then," I said. "Except it's against the rules."

Her finger had stopped moving across the column. "What do you care about the rules? Anyway, I should think you'd like tracting by yourself for once, without your dumb junior."

She thought I didn't have the nerve.
"OK," I said, picking up my purse and gathering a handful of tracts. I took my coat from the hook in the corner and opened the door. "See you later," I said.

* * *

Outside, the sky was clouding over and a cold wind blew. I put on my coat and hoisted the purse to my shoulder; then I set off down Moltkestrasse. This was weird, being alone. I felt naked.

At the corner I turned up Königstrasse, toward the center of town. Busses were rolling past--cars honking--I kept my head low. She thought I didn't have the nerve. I felt a great surge of satisfaction. She thought I wouldn't dare. Just because she was wishy-washy.

Near the center of town I turned into Fackelstrasse, the main shopping district. People were hurrying past me, buttoning up their coats and opening their schirms. Heavy raindrops began to pelt the awnings and drum into the street, collecting between the cobblestones and running in rivulets down into the gutters. My hair was getting wet.

I ducked into the entranceway of Kaufhof. Too bad I hadn't brought my schirm. It looked like I'd have to wait out the rain in here.

I wandered among the counters, fingering silky scarves, delicate and gauzy thin, then lace-trimmed handkerchiefs, embroidered with roses. I looked at leather purses and gloves, then at makeup, nylons, and jewelry. I stopped at the cologne
counter, where I picked up a bottle of 4711 and took off the lid. The scent was light but provocative. I ought to wear cologne more often.

I took the escalator up to the second floor, to the housewares department. There was a display of porcelain cookware, one set in a delft blue pattern that I liked, and another in red, with little white flowers around the rim. I wondered what it would cost to ship a set home. They'd look nice in my kitchen someday.

On the next aisle were the baking pans—obsttorten forms, and a sculptures napfkuchen pan, the kind I wanted, except that it was teflon coated and cost too much. Maybe they had a cheaper one. I wanted to bake authentic German cakes when I got home—sandkuchen, and gugelhupfen with hazelnuts and little chocolate pieces. I liked to picture my husband slipping his arms around my waist as I took a German cake from the oven. Then we'd sigh, or chuckle together, as we remembered the hausfraus and the tracting. And he'd gaze at me with those deep brown eyes . . . . My husband. It was too good to believe. Our future . . .

Our future! I stared down at the pan in my hands. Good heavens! What was I doing here?

I dropped the pan and scuttled back down the escalator. Outside, it was raining hard. I buttoned up my coat as I stepped out into the downpour. "The best way to prepare ourselves for the future . . . ." I smiled into the rain. The shop windows reflected my hurrying figure. My hair looked awful now, but I
could fix it again at home. "When you meet someone important to
your future . . . " I started to run.

* * *

When I got back to the wohnung, Sister Crane was still
sitting at the table, reading her scriptures. She looked up as I
came in. Her eyes were red.

"It's raining," I said, reaching into the closet for my
umbrella.

She looked back into her book.

"Hey," I said. "Let's go. We can still make it to Frau
Schlege's by ten-thirty."

She cleared her throat. "You think you're doing me a
favor."

I picked up my comb and set to work on my hair, ratting up
the back and smoothing over the top. It really didn't look so
bad.

"There's still time," I said. "We can make it to Frau
Schlege's in half an hour, easy."

She looked at her watch, then got up slowly. I thought
she might want to say a prayer, but she shuffled past me to the
closet, where she bent over to pull out her tracting shoes. Those
heavy old black things, with their thick ripple soles—I wouldn't
have been caught dead in them. She slid them onto her narrow
feet, pulled up the laces, and tied them in quick, final jerks.

* * *
On the way to Mozartstrasse we passed two nuns, smiling under their black umbrellas. One of them gave me a friendly nod—then she turned back to her companion, and their voices rose in brisk conversation. Well, they could afford to be happy. They probably didn't have to live together twenty-four hours a day.

* * *

Frau Schlege was standing in her doorway when we arrived. Her eyes had a liquid, vacant expression, and they almost seemed to turn inward as she pressed our hands in greeting. Her free hand held together the edges of a matted pink sweater, pulled tight across her shoulders, its arms hanging limp at her sides. She turned without a word and led us into the parlor.

The drapes were drawn, and three chairs had been pulled back slightly from the polished wooden table. In the center, on a lace doily, were the Bible, a Watchtower magazine, and our own Joseph Smith brochure. She motioned us to be seated.

"As you can see, I've brought a new companion today," I said as we sat down. "This is Sister Crane, who usually works with me."

Frau Schlege nodded vaguely, and Sister Crane gave her a tight smile.

In the hallway, a door opened and shut. A thin man slouched by, giving us a cursory glance. The outer door closed behind him. Was that her husband? I hadn't thought she was married—maybe because she'd said her mother lived here, too.
"My husband," Frau Schlege murmured. "We're alone now... you're lucky my mother isn't here. She won't allow me to have visitors, especially to discuss religion. It doesn't matter, though."

I tried to catch Sister Crane's eye, to have her say the opening prayer, but she wouldn't look at me. So I asked Frau Schlege to say it. She nodded compliantly, bent her head, and prayed with a sincerity that surprised me. Maybe she was our golden.

I decided to begin the discussion with a review of the Joseph Smith story. "As we explained last time," I said, pointing to the brochure, "Joseph Smith was called to be a prophet in the last century. Were you able to read his story?"

She nodded, reached for the brochure, and opened it to a page she had marked in red pencil. "I read his story twice," she murmured, "and its message was communicated to me. One passage interested me in particular." She ran her finger down the page, stopping in the middle of the third paragraph. "This concerns the manifestation: 'Immediately I was seized upon by some power which entirely overcame me, and had such an astonishing influence over me as to bind my tongue so that I could not speak. Thick darkness gathered around me, and it seemed to me for a time as if I were doomed to sudden destruction...!'" She closed her eyes and moved her lips as if she were still speaking, but no words came.

Finally she opened her eyes, and her voice returned.

"... such are the powers of darkness. Do you know that I have
had such manifestations?" She glared suddenly at Sister Crane, who blinked in surprise. "Yes. I must tell you. Last night . . ." her voice dropped to a whisper, and she leaned closer. "Last night I took a pot from the shelf to heat some milk. I reached for my thermometer, and it jumped from my grasp."

Sister Crane shrank back.

"Yes, it jumped. From the shelf to the drain, then to the faucet, then it danced around the kitchen. It stopped in mid-air by the refrigerator, and I took it in my grasp. It shook again, trying to free itself. Finally it grew still."

Sister Crane's eyes were bulging, and her face had lost its color. She stared at me in panic.

I shrugged nonchalantly. "Take the third conclusion," I whispered to her.

"In the grove of trees that day," she began automatically, "Joseph Smith asked the Savior which of the churches he should join. He was told that he must join none of them. Why do you suppose Jesus told him that?"

Frau Schlege blinked at her.

"Why did the Savior tell him that?" Sister Crane repeated.

"Because they were all wrong."

Sister Crane nodded. Then she began to explain how the true church of Jesus Christ had been lost from the earth.

ripped to pieces by savage lions. Scorched on flaming crosses. Drowned in glutinous oil."

Sister Crane stared at her, dumbfounded. I decided to take the next part.

"As we look more closely at the original Church," I said, "we realize that it was organized by the Savior himself."

Frau Schlege turned to me and watched closely as I set up the foundation of apostles and prophets.

"These men were able to hold the Church together because they were inspired by God," I said. "Why, then, do we need apostles and prophets in the Church today?"

"To keep the Church together." Her eyes gleamed.

I nodded to Sister Crane, and she began to explain the priesthood—how the Savior had ordained his apostles and given them the power to act in His name. "What could the apostles do, now, with this authority?" she asked.

"They performed marvelous healings, worked mighty miracles ... ." Frau Schlege was breathing hard, and her cheeks burned. "They acted for God, as I wish to. I seek to immerse myself in God. Only then will I be protected from the powers of darkness."

I reminded her that the apostles were also responsible for controlling and directing the priesthood. "Do you agree that the Church of Jesus Christ must be organized this way even today?" I asked her.

She nodded vigorously.
"And I agree with you, Frau Schlege," Sister Crane declared. "I know this is the way Jesus intended His church to be. Now, let us find out what happened to His church after he was crucified. As the apostles went out to teach, one by one, what happened to them also?"

Frau Schlege leaned forward eagerly. "They were killed... tortured," she caressed the words, "... stoned. Stephen gazed up to heaven in his moment of despair. I, too, would like to be stoned for my beliefs... to die at the foot of the cross."

She gulped for breath, her face radiant.

"After the death of the apostles," I cut in quickly, "the Church of Jesus Christ fell to pieces." I pulled the foundation strip out from under the flannel-board church. "The priesthood, too, was lost. What did that mean for the baptisms performed after that time?"

"They were done in mockery, vain in the sight of the Lord."

"So what does it mean when a Catholic or Protestant minister of today performs a baptism?"

"Absolutely nothing!" Her eyes glittered.

Sister Crane took the next part. "The wonderful message we bring you today, Frau Schlege," she declared, "is that the Savior has restored His true church and the priesthood to the earth again. When you come to know in your heart that this is true, will you be baptized by someone who has the priesthood?"

Frau Schlege reached across the table and grasped Sister Crane's hand. "Schwester Crane! Oh, Schwester Crane. I long..."
for a true baptism! This is what I've searched for! A true belief. Chains of faith to bind me fast!"

Sister Crane smiled with effort. "We hold regular baptismal services in our church," she said. "The next will be April twenty-fifth, three weeks from Saturday. You should keep this date in mind as you continue to learn about the Church. Do you think baptism into the true church is something you need to prepare for?"

Frau Schlege nodded fervently, squeezing Sister Crane's hand even tighter. "Three weeks. Only three weeks before I join the true fold of God. Yes, I hope I shall be ready."

I looked into her eyes, expecting them to be moist, but they had a strange dry look, almost scorched, and I couldn't look past their surfaces. But she was saying all the right things.

I concluded the lesson by explaining the restoration of the priesthood, through John the Baptist and Peter, James, and John. Then I invited her to strengthen her testimony by attending church with us next Sunday.

Her lips parted. "That may be a problem. I never go out of the house, unless I have to. My garden—I go to my garden. But not among people."

"We'll pick you up," I said. "You can ride the bus with us."

"The bus." Her face darkened. "I never ride the bus. All those people pressing me in. I have to scream and fight my way out."
Now that could be a problem. But we'd work something out before Sunday.

I pulled a "Which Church is Right?" brochure from my purse and set it on the doily in front of her. "This is a review of the things we've discussed today," I said. "Will you read it within the next day or two?"

She placed it on top of the Watchtower magazine. "I'll read it tonight in bed." Her eyes looked vacant again. "Once I rode the bus in Hamburg. It was crowded with people. Every face looked at me. Then they closed in. I had to . . . ."

"We've enjoyed meeting with you today," I said quickly. "May we say another prayer together before we leave?"

She looked at me, comprehending slowly.

"Would you like one of us to offer the prayer?" I asked gently.

She bowed her head, clasped her hands tightly, and began to work her lips. Finally the words came. "Oh, God, sender of these messengers, who have revealed Thy Truth today. Let me embrace Thy Gospel . . . free me from destroying angels and the powers of darkness . . . ."

She prayed for several minutes. Then she finished abruptly and stood up. We gathered our things and followed her to the door. When she shook my hand I realized how tired she looked. Her face was ashen, and the lines around her eyes and mouth sagged.
"May we drop by again tomorrow?" I asked. "Just to say hello."

She nodded. "Please come after noon. My mother leaves in the morning for a week in Baden."

* * *

On the way back to the wohnung I apologized to Sister Crane for the way I'd acted that morning. She looked relieved at the chance to talk about it.

"I'm the one who should apologize," she declared. "I do think you care about our people, and you always seem to know what to do. But I get worried when we're not on schedule. I don't want to miss any appointments."

We'd never missed an appointment yet, but I smiled anyway and patted her arm. "That's OK," I said. "Just keep us on schedule. And let me know if there's anything else you think we should be doing. We're a team, remember."

"I know." Her lips opened wide in a smile. "And guess what. I do have a suggestion. You know how Frau Schlege seems to be living in her own little shell?"

I nodded. That was putting it mildly.

"She needs to get out and mix with people, or she'll never want to join the Church. Maybe we could take her over to Sister Ebert's sometime and read in the Book of Mormon together, or just talk about things. Wouldn't that be fun?"

I thought it sounded like a lot of trouble, but I nodded agreeably. Sister Crane did need to feel more a part of things.
"Now getting her there might be a problem," she was saying. "She won't want to visit a stranger at the drop of a hat."

"So we won't tell her where she's going," I said. "We'll pop in with lots of enthusiasm and sweep her off with us. By the time she knows where she is, she'll be having a good time."

* * *

That night I couldn't get to sleep. I rolled over on my stomach and gathered in the pillow, folding under the sides so that it made a tight, smooth ball under my chin. Then I closed my eyes and tried to imagine a blank wall.

Several minutes later I rolled onto my side, letting the pillow go flat and drawing up one knee even with my chest. It began to slide into the crack between the two sections of my mattress, forcing them apart. I got out of bed and pushed them together again; then I smoothed over the sheet and lay down on my back. The federdecke was too short. I sat up and arranged it diagonally so one corner covered my feet. But the other corner poked my chin. I folded it under and rested my chin on the fold.

Moonlight streaming in through the window made a white rectangle on the floor. If I watched it long enough, I might see it move.

From the other corner of the room came Sister Crane's steady, peaceful snoring. That was too bad about this morning. I should have been nicer. But she acted so righteous, sometimes. And she thought following the rules could make us baptize. Well, she'd learn.
Learn what? What did I know about baptizing? Kruegers hadn't made it.

Well, maybe there was a magic formula I was still going to discover.

I rolled back onto my stomach and gathered in the pillow under my chin. Let's see. Tomorrow ... we'd have to visit Frau Schlegel again tomorrow. And Sister Ebert, too. Maybe we could set up the meeting for Wednesday. No, Wednesday was tausch-out day. I caught my breath. So soon! What could I say to him? How would I act? I'd wear my light blue skirt and sweater, and curl my hair the night before, on the small rollers so it'd stay in better. And maybe I could get some hairspray by then.

Wednesday ... we'd be tracting together ... I'd be standing demurely by his side while he rang the bell, and then he'd look down at me. I shivered at the thought. To think of all those tausch-out days I'd hardly noticed him, and now I was living for Wednesday.
Chapter 11

THE GOOD SEED

By Thursday morning I was beginning to calm down again. We were sitting in the office of the Kaiserslautern Polizei-direktion trying to get Sister Crane's aufenthaltserlaubnis, and my chair had a crack down the center and pinched me whenever I shifted my weight.

Sister Crane was reading "Welche Kirche Hat Recht?" but she kept looking up at the counter, and she gripped her passport in her left hand, ready to leap up when they called her name. I was trying to review my scripture cards, but the happenings around me were more interesting.

The Kaiserslautern Polizeidirektion was typical of German bureaucratic clutter. Wooden desks were piled high with documents and Leitz binders, ashtrays and coffee cups, and half-eaten pastries on cardboard plates. Uniformed officials sauntered through the aisles, talking loudly on their telephones and puffing endless cigarettes. Secretaries in mini-skirts pushed their way past the officials, delivering reports, memos, and more coffee. All the windows were thrown open to the April sunshine, and a gentle breeze riffled papers and scattered crumbs on the desks.

Sister Crane and I sat in the waiting area, separated from the office by a high wooden counter. We'd been there nearly
an hour already, and of the four Italians ahead of us, the second was just now being waited on.

Every foreigner was required to have an aufenthalts-erlaubnis, or permission to stay in the country. But getting it was a pain. First you had to anmeld at your local police station, where you filled out a form stating your residence and your occupation. Then they gave you an aufenthalts-erlaubnis application, which you filled out and took to the Polizeidirektion, along with your anmeldungs form, pictures of yourself, money (usually ten marks), and anything else they asked for. Then you were told to report back within a week or two to see if your application had been approved. When you came back it usually hadn't, and you kept coming back and coming back, wasting an hour or two at each visit. When your lucky day finally came, they stamped your passport and signed it. That was good for a year—then you had to renew it.

Now the second Italian was returning to his seat, looking very discouraged.

I shifted my weight on the chair again, avoiding the crack. My mind wandered back to yesterday.

It had started out to be a neat tausch-out day. Elder Dunn appointed me temporary acting DL, so I assigned him to wash all the breakfast dishes. He didn't complain, and he looked very domestic, standing at the sink with his shirtsleeves rolled up, and a dishtowel tucked around his waist.
Then he let me arrange the tausch-out, and I sent him to his own area for the morning, with Sister Crane and Elder Magleby. That way, we'd be together in the afternoon, which was a longer tausch anyway. And he seemed to know what I was thinking.

Drawing on his coat in the foyer, just as we were splitting up, he gave me a slight wink and said, "Good going, Sister Harper. I couldn't have done it better myself." And then he just looked at me . . . .

That was the best part of the day. In the afternoon, when we were finally together, he acted very cool. He talked about the work, Gina's progress, mission goals . . . . But then, what did I expect? After all, he still had five months left.

"Crane!" demanded the voice at the counter.

Sister Crane leaped up, clutching her passport.

The official was leafing through her application, marking something in pencil, pursing his lips, making polite little discouraging noises in the back of his throat.

After she was finished here we'd go tracting until two.

Then we'd pick up Frau Schlege and take her to Sister Ebert's—if we could bring it off.

But Frau Schlege was looking better all the time. Tuesday afternoon we'd dropped in to see if she'd read "Welche Kirche hat Recht?" and she'd been bursting with questions about the apostles. After we'd prayed together she'd squeezed our hands fervently, saying she could actually feel herself breaking loose from the powers of darkness.
Yesterday Sister Crane had gone by with Bell and Madsen, and they'd found her in a good mood—"lookin' groovy," according to Madsen. She'd just been shopping all by herself, she was proud to report. And she'd been delighted at Sister Crane's mention of a surprise for today. "Not half weird," was Madsen's verdict.

I glanced up to see how Sister Crane was doing at the counter. She looked perplexed at something the official was explaining. He took her papers back to his desk, where he sat down and crossed one leg, revealing a hairy calf. He selected three stemples from the circular rack on his desk and stamped vigorously. Then he returned to the counter and gave Sister Crane one of the sheets.

"... three or four more weeks," I heard him say. Well, there went that one.

Sister Crane smiled bravely.

* * *

We tracted in Weberstrasse, the next street down from Mozartstrasse, and it was surprisingly profitable. Sister Crane lent out two Books of Mormon, one to a young nurse and the other to a Yugoslavian shoemaker. We made appointments to see both of them again.

"Success so far today," Sister Crane pronounced as we left the Yugoslav's. "But I'm worried about this afternoon."

"How come?" I was feeling surprisingly calm about the get-together at Sister Ebert's.
"Schwester Schlege's made such terrific progress—what if this ruins everything? She might not want to come."

"She'll come," I said.

* * *

When we crossed the limp garden to Frau Schlege's house, I thought I saw a curtain move at the window. We entered the dim hallway and rang by her door. It opened immediately. But was this Frau Schlege? Her gray-brown hair bounced in jaunty curls, and her face was radiant with smiles.

"My two angels," she breathed. "Come in. I've been waiting since early morning for the surprise."

Sister Crane squeezed her hand in greeting and took a deep breath. "You'll need to bring your sweater—the surprise is down the street."

It worked. We had her out the door and hurrying down Mozartstrasse before she could ask the next question: "Where are we going?"

"It's a secret." Sister Crane smiled mysteriously.

We marched her down Eisenbahnstrasse, through Schulstrasse, across Adolf Kolping Platz, and then up Friedrichstrasse, never breaking stride. Finally we stopped, breathless, at the door of a familiar gray house.

Sister Crane turned to our captive and grinned. "Here's the surprise—a Mormon living in your own neighborhood!" She pressed Sister Ebert's bell with a flourish.
The door clicked open and we led a dazed Frau Schlege up the narrow winding stairs to the second floor, where Sister Ebert waited, flushed pink and beaming her delight.

"Come in! Come in, children." She tried to enclose the three of us in one giant embrace.

We were already seated in the tiny living room, tucking our knees under the coffee table, with Sister Ebert hurrying back and forth from the kitchen, before Frau Schlege could voice her amazement. "This is . . . wonderful. I never . . . I've never . . . ."

"You'll love Sister Ebert," Sister Crane assured her. "She's so motherly!"

I chuckled at the idea of Frau Schlege needing any more mothering. She'd progressed beautifully since her own mother had left the scene.

Sister Ebert brought in a silver tray laden with plätzchen, and a bottle of lemon sprudel. "Of course we could have a hot drink instead," she explained, "but since it's nearly summer--well, why not let it be summer?"

We all laughed at her joke.

Frau Schlege helped herself to the plätzchen, looking around the circle as if she were waking up from a confusing dream. We discussed the weather, the plätzchen, Sister Crane's problems at the Polizeidirektion, and the difficulty of getting fresh eggs anywhere but from a reliable farmer. Frau Schlege smiled at our comments, but she ventured nothing herself.
"And this is the newest result of your missionary zeal," Sister Ebert finally said, reaching across the table to place her plump hand on Frau Schlege's bony one. "My child, you'll soon be one of us."

Frau Schlege smiled uncertainly, but relaxed in the brightness of Sister Ebert's grin. "Yes," she said, "on April twenty-fifth. I hope I shall be ready."

Sister Ebert gave her hand a hearty squeeze. "How wonderful! I still remember my own baptism. I was smiling for weeks afterward. Will you be baptized here in Kaiserslautern?"

Frau Schlege looked at Sister Crane, who nodded vigorously. "I'll be there," Sister Ebert declared. "I'll bake a kuchen and we'll all celebrate afterwards."

Frau Schlege looked completely amazed, and Sister Ebert chuckled. "We're all brothers and sisters in the Gospel. I've always hoped to have another Mormon in the neighborhood! We can ride the bus together on Sundays!"

I held my breath, expecting Frau Schlege to stiffen with terror, but she merely nodded, still dazed.

"What religion are you now?" Sister Ebert asked her.

"Catholic, probably?"

"I began as a Catholic, but I've investigated many religions in my search for the Truth. And now my two angels," she glanced at us, "my two angels bring me new Truth every day."

Sister Ebert beamed and nodded.
I knew that Sister Crane wanted to work into the Book of Mormon, and this was a good chance.

"And your new truth for today is found in the Book of Mormon," I said, pulling a copy from my purse. "This book of sacred writings was translated by Joseph Smith. You'll be having a lesson on it tomorrow night, but today we'd like to read an important chapter with you."

I handed Frau Schlegel the book and she took it eagerly. "The golden Bible, delivered by an angel. I remember from your brochure," she explained.

Sister Ebert had pulled her copy down from the bookshelf and opened it on her knees.

"The chapter we'd like to read is Alma 32," Sister Crane began. It tells of two missionaries, Alma and Amulek, who are sent to convert the apostate Zoramites."

"They all lived in America, in ancient times," I added. "In this chapter Alma speaks to a group of the poorer Zoramites, who had been thrown out of their synagogue because of their coarse clothing. Sister Ebert, would you begin reading?"

Sister Ebert unfolded a pair of thin wire glasses and set them on her nose, held the book upright on her half-spread knees, and began reading. I looked over her shoulder while Sister Crane shared our copy with Frau Schlegel.

Sister Ebert read slowly, mechanically at first, but her voice took on a dramatic tone as she came to Alma's confrontation with the Zoramite outcasts.
"Behold, I say unto you, do ye suppose that ye cannot worship God save it be in your synagogues only?"

Frau Schlege followed carefully.

"And moreover, I would ask, do ye suppose that ye must not worship God only once in a week?" Her voice was firm with authority. "I say unto you, it is well that ye are cast out of your synagogues, that ye may be humble, and that ye may learn wisdom . . . ."

By the time we came to the part about signs and miracles, we had Frau Schlege reading.

"Yea," she faltered, "there are many who do say, if thou wilt show unto us a sign from heaven, then we shall know of a surety, then we shall believe."

Take note, I thought. All your manifestations . . .

"Now I ask, is this faith?" Her voice slowed down.

"Behold, I say unto you, Nay, for if a man knoweth a thing he hath no cause to believe, for he knoweth it." She put her finger on the verse and looked up. I expected her to say something, but she didn't. Finally she continued reading. "And now, how much more cursed is he that knoweth the will of God and doeth it not . . . ."

She paused often, without comment, silently considering each phrase before she went on.

". . . as I said concerning faith . . . faith is not to have a perfect knowledge of things . . . therefore if ye have faith ye hope for things which are not seen, which are true."
She paused again, still looking at the page. "Yes," she finally murmured. "True manifestations from the unseen world. For this we hope."

Now what did she mean by that? I had no idea, so I let it go.

Verse 23 stopped her short: "'And now, he imparteth his word by angels unto men, yea, not only men but women also . . . .'" Her lips parted in surprise. "Not only men . . . ." She looked at me. "Schwester Harper, the apostles were men. The foundation—the priesthood—all men, or so I thought. Yet God will give me this power, too?"

Sister Crane was ready with the answer. "As a woman, you may share the priesthood through your husband," she explained.

Frau Schlege looked mildly surprised. I remembered the thin man in the hallway.

"But you may receive answers to your prayers directly from God, by inspiration," Sister Crane assured her.

Frau Schlege nodded and continued reading.

When we came to the parable on faith, I took over. "'Now, we will compare the word unto a seed,'" I began. "'Now, if ye give place, that a seed may be planted in your heart, behold, if it be a true seed, or a good seed, it will begin to swell within your breasts.'" I paused for emphasis. "'And when you feel these swelling motions, ye will begin to say within yourselves—it must needs be that this is a good seed, for it beginneth to enlarge my
soul, yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding, yea, it beginneth to be delicious to me."

Frau Schlege had been following intently, mouthing each word that I read. Now, as I paused, she gazed at me in rapture.

"Schwester Harper, this is the seed that has been working in me. I gave it place in my heart—now it has begun to grow and enlarge my understanding." She pressed her arms across her chest. "It is beginning to burst forth from within me, filling my soul with light."

Sister Ebert nodded enthusiastically. "It was the same with me. Each prayer gave me new answers—each church meeting seemed more wonderful. As I grew in the Gospel new mysteries unfolded . . . ."

Frau Schlege's eyes were alive with interest.

". . . new truths were revealed. Finally I went to Switzerland to the . . . ."

"Each new member feels this same excitement," I broke in. "And baptism makes the difference, somehow, doesn't it, Schwester Ebert?"

"Oh, yes. To feel the Holy Ghost working within you, guiding your footsteps . . . ."

I nodded my satisfaction. Now, to steer things back to Alma.

". . . understanding such mysteries as blood atonement and plural marriage," Sister Ebert was saying. "Now let me tell you . . . ."
I had to stop her again. "Let's see what else the Book of Mormon tells us about faith," I said quickly, propping up Sister Ebert's book on my knees. I read without stopping through the explanation of good and bad seeds; then I came to the discussion of perfect knowledge.

"'Yea, your knowledge is perfect in that thing, for ye know that the word hath swelled your souls, that your understanding doth begin to be enlightened, and your mind doth begin to expand.'"

Frau Schlege listened with the rapture of a child, her lips gently parted and her eyes glistening.

"'Oh, then, is this not real?'" I was reading directly to her. "'I say unto you, Yea, because it is light, and whatsoever is light, is good.'"

"This light," she whispered, "this light of God will free me from the chains of darkness . . . free me from the spirits of night."

"It will," I said, "if you nourish your testimony. I know it will."

Sister Crane finished the parable. "'And behold, as the tree beginneth to grow, if ye nourish it with much care it will get root, and grow up, and bring forth fruit."

"'But if ye neglect the tree,'" her voice grew solemn, "'and take no thought for its nourishment . . . behold, it will not get any root. And when the heat of the sun cometh and
scorcheth it,'" Sister Crane's voice was scorching, "'it withers away. And ye pluck it up and cast it out!'"

Frau Schlegel's eyes were wide with horror. She seemed to be getting the message.

"'Now, this is not because the seed was not good . . . .!'" Sister Crane read on through the next verses, her voice brightening again to match Alma's more positive tone. "'... but if ye will nourish the word, yea, nourish the tree as it beginneth to grow,'" she paused and looked directly at Frau Schlegel, "'by your faith, with great diligence, and with patience, looking forward to the fruit thereof, it shall take root, and behold it shall be a tree springing up unto everlasting life.'"

Frau Schlegel nodded, her lips pressed together in concentration.

"'... behold, by and by ye shall pluck the fruit thereof, which is sweet above all that is sweet, and which is white above all that is white, and pure above all that is pure, and ye shall feast upon this fruit even until ye are filled, that ye hunger not, neither shall ye thirst.'"

"The Love of God," Frau Schlegel breathed. "This is what I've searched for--to taste the fruit, never to hunger again. This is the quest of my existence."

Sister Crane nodded happily, finishing the last verse.

"'Then ye shall reap the rewards of your faith, and your diligence, and patience, and long-suffering, waiting for the tree to bring forth fruit unto you.'"
As her voice died out, Frau Schlege leaned forward and took the book in her hands. Her curls tumbled forward as she poured over the words; then she sat upright and closed the book.

"I hope to read these words of faith again soon," she said. "They shall guide me to the light. I wish to nurture the seed of faith in my soul, until I achieve eternal life."

Sister Ebert was quivering with pleasure. "Frau Schlege," she declared, "I know these words are true, because they've changed my life. Before the missionaries found me I had no faith—nothing to direct me back to God. Now I feel His spirit guiding me every day."

Frau Schlege caressed the book in her lap. "I've already felt a happiness, here in this room today, a new lightness I've never experienced . . . . I feel something unfolding within me, something changing. Do you know," she paused, searching for the right words, "do you know that I never visit strangers?"

Sister Ebert chuckled.

"It's true—I never go out of the house. Yet these angels have brought me here today, and I have experienced more happiness in one hour than I've known in my entire lifetime."

Sister Ebert nodded, grinning. "It's the Spirit of the Lord. You'll feel it again and again as you come to understand the Gospel."

"Then I may known heaven before I die," she murmured, gazing at Sister Ebert. "I hope we may meet again like this. You hardly know . . . ."
Sister Ebert beamed proudly. "We'll meet often and help each other grow. And we'll ride the bus to church together this very Sunday."

Frau Schlege gasped softly, but then, under Sister Ebert's radiant assurance, she smiled and nodded. "Yes, that would be wonderful."
Chapter 12

CHECKLIST FOR GOLDENS

Sunday morning I was sitting at my usual place in the foyer of the chapel, writing my letter home, and waiting for the bus to come. A few minutes earlier, Elder Dunn had walked past my table without saying a word. Now he was in the kitchen holding a private planning session with Elder Bell.

I stared out the window at the sodden gray sky. The K-Town weather was extremely consistent—it rained every Sunday morning. And I was always sitting here at the wooden table next to this green potted plant, writing my letter home. No wonder I never had anything cheerful to say.

Brother Lappe came in, shaking the water from his black beret, smiling through his blotchy pointed teeth. He swung the black cape from his shoulders, and it seemed to fly by itself to a coat hook. Then he walked stiffly into the chapel.

Our members came early, if they came at all. Some of them were here half an hour before Sunday School, and then they sat by themselves in the chapel, waiting for the meeting to start.

Sister Werle came in with Rolf and Peter, her two little marble cherubs, herding them over to the coatrack while she tucked in the straggling wet ends of her blonde French twist. The boys took off their coats and gave them to her to hang up, while they
gazed at me with faces that had been scrubbed pink. Their suits were newly pressed. I was glad Sister Werle brought them every week, in spite of her husband.

I remembered visiting their apartment once, back in those awful days with Sister Miles, when we hadn't spoken to each other for weeks at a time—when each day had been something to get over with, and every night I'd cried under the federdecke where she couldn't hear me.

Sometime back then she'd taken me to visit Werles, in their tiny apartment in the three-hundred-year-old monastery, in a dark crooked street where the paving stones had sunk at crazy angles over the years, and the walls were black with moss.

I remembered entering through a pair of battered oak doors and groping our way up the winding dark stairway, feeling for the dip in each step, worn there by countless foottreads over the years. As we neared the top, a doorway opened and two German shepherds rushed out, barking frantically.

"Hush! Get back in here!" Sister Werle stood in the doorway, yanking at their collars. She smiled as we emerged from the darkness. "The sisters! Come in! I've been hoping you'd visit me."

As we entered I was almost stifled by the close, acrid scent of the dogs. They belonged to her husband, I found out, and had equal domain with her. One corner of the room was littered with bits of food they'd scattered from a tin plate, and the gray carpet was worn to the threads from their scratching.
The room itself was small with a high ceiling, and two deeply recessed windows that looked out onto the narrow street. The walls were massive, and spread with a thin plaster that had cracked and broken away in places, showing the rank stone underneath. The toilet was out back, Sister Miles informed me under her breath, and all their water was pumped from a well in the courtyard.

Sister Werle disappeared into the kitchen, and we sat down on the lumpy horsehair sofa, which also reeked of the dogs. I wondered if I dared open a window.

One of the dogs sidled up to sniff at my hand, but I jerked it away. He choked suddenly, then vomited onto the carpet, a thin yellow-green liquid that spread out and soaked into the threads.

Sister Werle reappeared, smiling, with two glasses of Sinalco, which she placed on the coffee table. The Sinalco was yellow, almost yellow-green, and warm. I took a sip and said how good it tasted.

The smell on the floor grew steadily worse. I tried to concentrate on the conversation and drink my Sinalco without looking down. Then I noticed the dog easing back around the sofa, sniffing at the puddle, taking a cautious lick. I lifted my purse and swung it noiselessly, clunking him in the head. He looked at me in surprise and drifted away again.
I was relieved when we finally got ready to go. Then Sister Werle asked if we could say a prayer together first. Of course, we told her, settling back down again.

She bowed her head and clasped her thin hands in her lap. "Vater im Himmel, ich danke dir für jeden neuen Tag . . . ." I hadn't heard the rest of her prayer. "I thank thee for every new day . . . ." How could she be so thankful, living like this? And here I was . . . and I didn't have it half bad. Sister Miles might be transferred any time. "Ich danke dir für jeden neuen Tag . . . ." I still thought of that, whenever I saw Sister Werle.

Right now she was holding her boys up to the drinking fountain. Elder Bell was coming down the hallway swinging his briefcase, humming under his breath. But where was Elder Dunn? He almost seemed to be avoiding me this morning. It had already been four days since our tausch-out, and even then he hadn't really said anything. Did he want me to forget all about the zoo . . . our future?

I tried to concentrate on my letter. I wanted to tell the family about Frau Schlege and the progress she was making. And it really was a miracle. Yesterday afternoon we'd dropped in just to say Hi, and she'd sparkled with excitement to see us again. "I prayed for you to come by," she'd said, bringing in a tray of bread and cheese. "Now we can have lunch together."

She'd shown us a postcard from her mother, postmarked Baden-Baden. I turned it over and skimmed the message:
"... hope things are going well in my absence ... be careful not to overstrain yourself until you're completely well ... ."

"My letter must have crossed it in the mail," she'd said as I handed it back to her. "I wrote yesterday afternoon to tell her about my wonderful new faith. Now she'll want to meet you as soon as she comes home."

Somehow I wished Frau Schlege's mother would stay away as long as possible. Things were going so well just now.

Sister Crane emerged from the ladies' room carrying her scriptures and purse, neatly poised in a short-sleeved box jacket and pleated skirt, like the older girls had worn when I was in junior high school. Her hair was pulled back from her forehead, held in place by a pink plastic barrette. She smiled at me and drifted over to my table.

"It's almost time," she said, checking her watch against the clock on the wall. "It's almost past time. I think their bus comes at eleven to."

I glanced out the window. "Take a look," I said.

Around the corner came Sister Ebert and Frau Schlege in step together, walking briskly, arm in arm under Sister Ebert's giant black umbrella. They made a strange pair, though--Sister Ebert waddling bulky in her large raincoat, and Frau Schlege clutching her arm, thin as a mouse beside her.

"She made it!" Sister Crane breathed as they came in the door.
Sister Ebert was puffing like an engine, stomping the water from her rain boots, pulling a scarf from her cottony white hair.

Frau Schlege's face was bathed in wonder. "We rode the bus together," she announced, fixing me with her large round eyes.

"That's great," I said, pumping her hand. Sister Crane helped her off with her coat while Sister Ebert clucked approvingly.

"How have you been since yesterday?" I asked her while Sister Ebert bustled away with the coats. She smiled eagerly.

"I feel wonderful, Schwester Harper. After you left yesterday afternoon I was so hungry for more inspiration that I buried myself in the Book of Mormon for several hours. Then I felt a strong desire to pray and receive a confirmation of its truthfulness. Schwester Harper," she pressed my hand again, "the Lord has given me a wonderful feeling of warmth and peace. Do you know . . . I could only smile and sing to myself for the rest of the day."

I wanted to swing her around right there in the foyer, as she gazed at me with those clear blue eyes, so open and happy, so totally changed from a week ago. The Gospel really worked. It really did things to people.

A tall brown suit appeared at my elbow and extended its hand to Frau Schleges. Elder Dunn cleared his throat. "Good morning, Schwester Schleges," he said. "Welcome to Sunday School."
"Oh." She stared at him in surprise. "You were one of the first three."

"Yes," he said. "I remember you well."

"That's hardly possible," she declared, "because I've changed completely since then. A week ago I wouldn't even step outside my door. And now, this morning, I've ridden the bus across town with Schwester Ebert. Doesn't that prove the worth of your message?"

Elder Dunn nodded thoughtfully.

"And I shall be baptized on April twenty-fifth, two weeks from Saturday," she concluded. "Only twenty more days. I hope I shall be ready."

Dunn shook his head in amazement.

The door opened again and Gina stepped in, flashing her pixie smile as she spotted us, collapsing her umbrella with one quick shake of her wrist. Her trim black suit was brightened by a delicate white collar, and a cluster of tiny blue flowers was nestled against her throat.

Elder Dunn shot her a glance that turned into a stare, and then broadened into a grin. But he stood where he was, waiting for her to come over.

"She's unbelievable," he whispered to me. "We gave her the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth this week, and she'll go in Friday night, no problem." He slid his hand out horizontally, in a gesture of confidence, still looking at Gina.

I wished that Gina would drop through the floor.
She was introducing herself to Frau Schlege, smiling and nodding her head, extending her petite, graceful hand.

"And Frau Schlege," Dunn said, rocking back on his heels. "Now there's the real miracle." He was suddenly looking down at me. "I don't know how you sisters did it, but ..." He moved an inch or two closer. "I shouldn't tell you this," he said, looking at me intently, "but I've written President Rogers about what a great job you're doing here. I don't want him transferring you out of my district."

We stood there silent for a minute or two. Then he looked away. "I guess I shouldn't have told you that," he said. "Sometimes I forget myself. Now--" his tone was businesslike again, "while I'm still thinking of it, you sisters have the vortrag, right?"

The vortrag. I tried to think. The projector and cassette recorder, with the tapes. Did we have them?

"I think so," I said.

"Good. Nobody else does. We need the projector for tomorrow night. Can you bring it and meet us at the fish place tomorrow at noon?"

"Sure." I was glad for the chance to see him again so soon.

"Good." He turned away and began to talk with Gina.

I heard Sister Crane say that it was five to nine, and we ought to all be going into the chapel to find our seats. I followed them to the door. Elder Dunn was still talking to Gina.
In the doorway Frau Schlege suddenly dropped to one knee, crossed herself, and began to murmur a silent prayer. Sister Ebert whispered something in her ear and helped her to her feet again. She flushed and looked around quickly, but the rest of us pretended we hadn't noticed, and followed her into the chapel.

* * *

When it came time to separate for classes I stayed in the chapel with the adults, so I could keep an eye on Frau Schlege and Sister Ebert. Elder Dunn went out with Gina and the other teenagers, and I watched the door close behind them.

Brother Diemer was giving the lesson, on the gathering of Israel. He looked like an ancient Israelite prophet himself, with his coarse white hair and sun-wrinkled face. Even his voice was low and prophetic. Frau Schlege stared at him, fascinated, while he waved the lesson manual and named prophecies that foretold the gathering. Then he launched into a discussion of the ten tribes.

At one point Sister Lippke raised her hand and commented that the ten tribes were probably hidden somewhere in the center of the earth. Frau Schlege's neck snapped around, and I held my breath.

"There are many theories concerning their whereabouts," Brother Diemer said, "but unfortunately the Lord hasn't given us a definite answer. So we will have to limit ourselves to what he has revealed."

Frau Schlege looked mildly disappointed.
"We do have revelation concerning their return, however," he continued, opening the Doctrine and Covenants. "Section 133, beginning with verse 26: 'And they who are in the north countries shall come in remembrance before the Lord, and their prophets shall hear his voice, and shall no longer stay themselves, and they shall smite the rocks, and the ice shall flow down at their presence.'"

Frau Schlege was enthralled once again.

"'And an highway shall be cast up in the midst of the great deep. Their enemies shall become a prey unto them, and in the barren deserts there shall come forth pools of living water; ...'" Brother Diemer read on, savoring the words. "'And the boundaries of the everlasting hills shall tremble at their presence.'"

Frau Schlege's hand shot into the air. He paused for her comment.

She stood and cleared her throat. "The hills shall tremble when the unbelievers march before them. As the prophet Alma has explained in the Book of Mormon, they would wish to command the rocks and the mountains to fall on them, hiding them from his presence."

She dropped back into her seat, her face white. Sister Ebert gave her hand a quick squeeze.

Now how was Brother Diemer going to work that one in?

He nodded solemnly. "This sister has made a very pertinent observation. The ten tribes may well consist of both
believers and non-believers alike, but all will need to purify themselves before they reach Zion, where they shall be crowned by the children of Ephraim. As we read in verse 32 . . . ."

Frau Schlege's face relaxed into a smile. Sister Crane whispered something into her ear, and she blushed with pride.

* * *

After Sunday School, all our members converged on Frau Schlege. Sister Diemer invited her to Relief Society, and Sister Werle asked her over for coffee on Thursday. Klaus Fischer bowed politely and congratulated her on her coming baptism. Brother Lappe, fastening his cape, muttered something to her in a low voice about escaping the desolation to come, when only the elect should be saved, and this Babylon of wickedness . . . .

Sister Ebert pulled her away just in time.

"Come, my child," she said, taking her arm, giving me a farewell pat on the cheek. "I think the bus is coming very soon."

Frau Schlege smiled and shook my hand. Then, suddenly, she looked startled. "Schwester Harper, I nearly forgot to tell you—my mother called from Baden last night. She plans to be home early tomorrow morning. If you have time, come by around noon and we'll all have lunch together . . . ." She seemed to be looking past me. "I'll make a ham and potato soup with green beans. That's one of Mother's favorites."

* * *

Sister Crane and I discussed Frau Schlege as we walked to our tracting area in the rain. Sister Crane was so excited that
she grinned at every Sunday stroller we passed, bobbing her frizzy head and giving a little wave with her hand. Most of them smiled back, probably wondering who this strange girl in the American raincoat was, and if they knew her from somewhere.

"She's really getting a testimony now," Sister Crane bubbled. "And she loved Brother Diener's lesson. Wasn't that great when she stood up and made her comment?"

"Sure was," I said. "I didn't think she had it in her. But you know what?" I looked at Sister Crane, suddenly feeling a little warmer, and a lot closer to her. "The Gospel does change people. That's amazing."

We walked along in a comfortable silence, the rain drumming on our umbrellas. Then Sister Crane gave another ecstatic sigh. "For the first time," she said, "for the very first time on my mission, we have a golden contact. She's lots better than Krueger's, because she's doing things."

I nodded. "That's how you can tell."
She sighed again. "Everything's perfect."
I nodded towards her purse. "Have you got your handbook in there? Mine's at home."

She pulled it from a pocket on the side.


She opened the book with one hand and found the page.

"'An estimate,'" she read slowly, "'is a realistic appraisal that the person or persons will be baptized three weeks
from the first discussion. In a way, an estimate is a measurement of your faith. After finding and teaching contacts . . . ."

"Skip over to the next page," I said. "There's a check-list for goldens."

She found it, after a minute. "Here are a few suggestions of how to tell if a person is golden," she read. "'A: Listen to the Spirit.'"

That stopped me cold. "What do you think?" I finally asked her.

She nodded. "I definitely feel good about her. 'B: Will he study, pray, and attend church?' Yes on that one."

"Definitely," I said.

"'C: Is he willing to meet with you?' She smiled at me. "Every day. 'D: Does he recognize the need for a prophet?'"

I thought back to the first discussion. "Check," I said.

"'E: Does he accept the apostasy? F: Does he recognize the need for a restoration? G: Does he believe Joseph Smith is a prophet?' Check on all three, don't you think?"

"Yep."

"'H: Does he live the Word of Wisdom during discussions?' No problem there."

"No problem," I agreed. We hadn't told Frau Schlege about the Word of Wisdom yet, but she'd definitely followed it during our discussions. "Is that all?" I asked.

"That's it!"

"Do you think she'll make it?" I asked her.
Sister Crane twirled her umbrella. "She'll make it."

"I hope so," I said. "If she slips now, we might lose her pretty fast. But as long as she keeps up the study and prayer, there shouldn't be any problem."

"Shouldn't be," Sister Crane agreed. "Are we going to see her tomorrow?"

"Sure! Oh, hey, I almost forgot. Her mother's coming home in the morning."

"In the morning!" Sister Crane unfolded the planning sheet in the back of her handbook. "I've got written down here that she won't be back till Wednesday."

"I guess she changed her plans," I shrugged. "Anyway, we're invited over for lunch to meet her. Frau Schlege's fixing ham and potato soup with green beans."

"Sounds good," Sister Crane said.
Chapter 13

PACK THE BOOKS

The air raid siren rose to a shriek and the sky exploded in a burst of fireworks. Pinwheels, blinding white—chrysanthemums shimmering green and red, streaks of orange . . . Another burst—fire shimmering down, pelting the rooftops, falling on the city! Sirens screaming, fire streaking down—we had to get out! Pack the books!

I stumbled over the floor, knocking against boxes, cartons of books tied with rope. Pack the books! We had to get out. Drag the cartons, push them to the door. I grabbed one by the rope and pulled with all my strength, but it didn't move.

Take my suitcase, then—my suitcase, with the trim blue suit I'd bought in Frankfurt, wear it on the plane home. My future . . . I floated to the door.

Take a strassenbahn—the number eight to the bahnhof—fly, float to the bahnhof, catch a plane home.

Shrekk . . . Whoomp! Bombs falling . . . clangle, rrrzzz . . . my alarm clock ringing. Turn it off—get going! Morning already! Get going! I sat up in bed and turned off the alarm. Going home . . .

The rain drummed softly against our slanted bedroom window. Going . . .
But I was going home. They told us pack the books. That meant get out. Go home . . .

It was barely light outside. The rain pattered against the window, running down the glass in streaks and tiny rivers. I looked over at the clock again. Six a.m. Get up and be a missionary, still. Where had I put my slippers?

I stood at the sink and ran cold water from the faucet. My washrag, which I had hung over the drainpipe, was still damp from last night, and nearly frozen into shape. I used it to slosh the cold water on my face. Then I patted my cheeks with a towel that was also slightly damp. I noticed that it was developing a sharp, sour odor. I hung it back up and sat down on the edge of my bed.

Another day of being a missionary, and then tomorrow, and the next day. And every day after that for eight and a half more months. Every day getting up in the cold, hunting for my slippers, washing my face with a cold washrag, facing Sister Crane and her smiles . . . every day until next January, and that was too far away to even think about.

I looked at the clock again. Five after. Then I noticed Sister Crane's rumpled bed—it was empty. How come she was up already? What was there to get up for? I lay back down on the bed and decided to stay there for a while.

Was there any reason to keep being a missionary? Now today . . . we'd go tracting all day long . . . and what else?
Oh—visit Frau Schlege. Golden Frau Schlege. She was getting baptized! I'd forgotten that.

And Elder Dunn couldn't believe it, and didn't want me transferred . . . Elder Dunn, who wanted me for his future . . .

Things were pretty good, I decided, vaulting out of bed.

I found Sister Crane in the kitchen, reading her German scriptures, which lay opened flat on the table in front of her. I might have looked funny in the morning, but she had me beat by a long way. She looked like a large grasshopper sitting upright, with her thin legs bent, ending in huge, fluffy slippers, propped on the other chair. Her shoulder blades made sharp ridges under her satin bathrobe, and her head looked even smaller than usual, done up in a tight array of bobby pins.

She looked up and smiled. "Guten Morgen."

"Morgen," I said. "You're up bright and early."

She stretched out her thin arms and yawned slightly. "I woke up at five and couldn't go back to sleep, so I decided to catch up on my reading."

I walked over to the window and looked out. Gray mist hung over the rooftops, and the rain beat down in a wet monotony.

"Pretty dismal out there," I said. "Oh, well—it keeps this place green."

"Sure does," she agreed, taking her feet from the other chair so I could sit down.

I pulled back the chair and plopped myself into it. "I just had the craziest dream," I said. "There was this air raid,
and we had to get out. We'd gotten a pack-the-books message from the mission office."

"Pack the books?" Sister Crane's finger stopped moving across the page.

"Or ship the books. I don't remember. Now where did I hear that? Maybe it's just a mission rumor, but supposedly, when you get a message from the mission president saying 'pack the books,' that means you're supposed to get ready to leave the country. 'Ship the books' means to get out."

Sister Crane stared at me without speaking.

"Anyway, we were trying to get out, and these fireworks were going off. No, they were bombs falling. And I was trying to get to the bahnhof, or the airport, I guess, to catch a plane home."

"Sounds awful," she said, her eyes gleaming. "Now what was that again? Pack the books?"

"Something like that," I said. "But don't worry; they'll never send us home."

She was writing carefully in the margin of her scriptures: "Pack the books means . . . ."

"We'll be here forever," I said cheerfully, reaching for a box of Ritz crackers on the table. "But that's OK. We've got some good things going here. Now, today . . . ."

"Oh, yes," she said, laying down her pencil. "What's on for today, besides lunch at Frau Schlege's?" She began to pull out the bobby pins, leaving springy little curls all over her head.
"Elder Dunn wants us to meet him at the fish place at noon. He needs the projector."

She looked grave. "We're due at Schlege's at twelve o'clock sharp."

I didn't say anything. The Ritz crackers were getting soft, but still tasted OK.

She worked her fingers around to the back of her head, gathering six or seven bobby pins at a time and then stacking them in a little plastic box on the table. Finally she said, "We definitely need to be at Frau Schlege's on time. Why don't we just take the vortrag by the elders' place this morning? If the door's locked we can leave it with the hausfrau."

That was a possibility, of course, but then I wouldn't get to see Elder Dunn.

"They might not think to check with the hausfrau," I said. "But hey, I've got it! If we can get to the fish place a few minutes before noon, they might be there already. Then we can still make it to Schlege's by fifteen or twenty after."

I could tell she didn't approve. She was utterly silent, gathering and stacking the bobby pins in her little plastic box. Finally she said, very deliberately, "I really don't think we can chance it."

I shrugged. "Don't worry. We'll still get there in plenty of time."

* * *
We spent the morning tracting in Parkstrasse, a stately older neighborhood across from the Stadtpark. The houses were large, set well back from the street, rich with turrets, cupolas, and wide bay windows. There were lawns and statuary, wrought iron fences with spikes along the top, and gates—all of them locked. Alongside each gate was a small metal plate with three or four doorbells and an intercom speaker. We pressed each of the doorbells in turn, occasionally getting a voice on the speaker that asked what we wanted, and then said it couldn't be bothered. For the most part, though, nobody was home.

As we worked our way down Parkstrasse, the rain thinned to a fine drizzle. Rain was different here in Germany. Back home it came on suddenly, pattering down fresh and clean on the cement, or making pocks in the dust, then drying up quickly when the sun came out. But here, where it rained for days on end, the stone walls and gutters grew rank with the smell of moss and decomposing leaves. Germany was beautifully green, but it was an unhealthy, jungle kind of green—a green that made you long for just one breath of fresh, dry air.

And this elegant old neighborhood by the park was especially sodden and dank, with its mossy stone walls, tangled green lawns, and black flower beds. Everything here seemed to absorb the rain, to soak it up and swell and putrefy—like the piece of bread I saw in the gutter. It was swollen half again its size, ready to fall apart at the first touch.
We traded until eleven thirty with no success at all. Then we walked back to the bus stop and caught the number seven into town.

* * *

Dunn and Madsen were already waiting in front of the Nordseestube when we got off the bus, but they didn't see us. Elder Dunn stood hunched under his umbrella, with his briefcase between his legs, reading a letter out loud to Madsen. Madsen's fists were crammed down into his pockets, and he smiled knowingly as he listened.

Suddenly Dunn stopped reading and cocked his mouth into a grin, scanning the rest of the page.

Madsen nudged him in the side. "Come on, old man. Let's hear the rest of it."

Dunn shook his head. "No way, Elder. This'd blow your mind!"

Madsen was already reading over his shoulder. His lips pursed and he let out a low whistle. "Man," he breathed, "she really craves your bod! I wouldn't let . . . ."

"Hi, Elders," Sister Crane called out gaily. "It's a good thing you're here early."

Elder Dunn looked up quickly and his smile dissolved. "Hello, Sisters," he said. "Right on time, as always. I'm glad to see you brought the projector."

Madsen saluted us leisurely. "Yeah, Dunn's been reading his latest love letter from the chick. She gets more . . . ."
Dunn silenced his companion with one cold stare. "Just a note from Francene," he said, folding the pink scalloped sheet and tucking it into his jacket pocket. "She expresses herself quite explicitly at times."

I handed him the projector and tape recorder, and he dropped them into his briefcase, snapping the flap shut across the top. "Thanks, Sisters," he said, without looking up. "We've got to eat and go. Don't forget tausch-out on Thursday, OK?" He lifted his briefcase and gave us a parting nod. "See you then, if not sooner. Tschüss!"

He pushed open the swinging door and stepped into the restaurant. Madsen lifted his frame from the windowsill to follow. "See ya later, Sisters," he said, with a parting salute.

They were swallowed up by the Nordsee, lost between moving bodies of workers and clouds of grease smoke. The din of voices and clattering of plates swept back out to the sidewalk.

I must have stood there for at least a minute. Finally I heard Sister Crane saying, "It's twelve on the dot now. She'll be wondering where we are, but we won't be too late, if we hurry."

I followed her blindly down Fackelstrasse. My chest felt like it was slowly caving in, and I couldn't breathe. His latest love letter . . . so he hadn't even told her yet! But of course there hadn't been time. But the way he'd been smiling . . . "she really craves your bod!" I'd never seen him smile like that.

"Don't worry," Sister Crane turned around to assure me. "We'll still make it by a quarter after."
I quickened my step to keep up with her.

Our future . . . but he hadn't really meant . . . but he had meant something, the way he'd looked at me, there in the zoo. I couldn't have been wrong about that. And then last Sunday, when he'd moved so close . . .

"If we can just get her mother involved," Sister Crane was saying, "there shouldn't be any problem."

"Shouldn't be," I mumbled as we crossed the street.

* * *

When we reached Frau Schlege's door my mind was still reeling. I tried to collect my thoughts as Sister Crane rang the doorbell.

"Quarter after, right on the nose," she announced, releasing the bell and stepping back.

I nodded and put on my missionary smile. Sister Crane smiled back.

We waited almost a minute. It had never taken her that long to come to the door.

"Shall I ring again?" Sister Crane asked, her smile stretching at the corners of her mouth.

"OK."

She pushed the doorbell again, but nothing happened. Now that was odd—normally, Frau Schlege was waiting at the door when we came. But then, we were a few minutes late.
"Maybe she's out back," I said, walking down the hallway to look out the back door. The yard was empty, except for a few garbage cans and a sagging clothesline.

I rejoined Sister Crane at the door. There were thin curtains over the frosted windowpane, but we could still make out the parlor doorway inside. Was that a dark shape, there, too? It moved . . . or did it? Maybe it was just a coat hanging up.

Sister Crane was watching, too. We stared at the dark shape for several minutes, but it didn't move again.

Finally we turned to go.

Outside, we walked back in the general direction of Parkstrasse. The rain fell steadily, running off our umbrellas at the little points where the spokes ended. My shoes were soaked through. Maybe I needed to haul out my winter boots again.

Sister Crane looked straight ahead, blinking into the rain.

Finally I said, "You know, I don't think it was because we were late. Maybe she just forgot and went to the store."

Sister Crane blinked again, looking straight ahead. "You never know," she said. "You just never can tell."

The rain was coming down faster now. We crossed Breitscheidstrasse, where little streams of water ran between the slick cobblestones, collecting in the gutter on the far side. I smelled that dank, mossy smell again, swollen and putrefying.

Golden Schwester Schlege.
"Maybe she's sick again," I said. "Her mother wrote on the postcard that she ought to take it easy until she was completely well again. I don't know how sick she's been ... ."

Sister Crane looked at me suddenly. "Or what kind of sick, either."

"Right," I said, feeling slightly more secure.

We walked down the far side of Breitscheidstrasse, keeping under the awnings where we could. Most of the stores were closed up for the noon hour, with shutters or iron grillworks pulled down over their windows, giving them a hostile, unfriendly look.

We walked on in silence. Sister Crane was still blinking at the rain.

"We weren't really that late," I reminded her again.

She nodded slowly. "There definitely could be another problem."

Definitely. In fact, I'd wondered all along ... something had bothered me all along about Frau Schlege.

* * *

I lay down on top of the federdecke and opened my diary. The blank page stared up at me. What could I possibly say about today?

The bedroom door opened and I saw Sister Crane's feet in their fluffy slippers. "Would you like some hot cocoa, Sister Harper," she asked.

"Sure," I said, craning my neck up.
She smiled and went out again. I turned back to my diary.
"Today was awful," I wrote. "Everything bombed out. When we met the elders at noon, Dunn was snickering over his latest letter from Francene. She craves his bod."

I read over what I'd just written. It made me nauseated. I certainly had better things to worry about than Elder Dunn and his girlfriends. Frau Schlege—she was our chief concern. Why hadn't she been home today? Or had she?

"Everything we do fizzles out," I wrote, "and all our effort goes down the drain. Why don't we all pack it in? I'm about ready to..."

Ready to what? Quit? Run away? Go home?

I rolled over on my back. Sister Harper quits the mission. That'd be a shocker. Sister Harper, the hours-getter, the scripture memorizer, everybody's ideal lady missionary...

"Dear President Rogers..." I drafted the letter in my mind. "I'm writing you this letter to explain my sudden disappearance. Don't try to find me. I just want you to know that I'm happy now."

No, that sounded too corny.

I was crazy to even be thinking about this. And besides, things were bound to get better. Tomorrow might change everything.

And why blow it now? I already had fifteen, no, sixteen months of good missionary work behind me. Why blow all that?

And maybe we'd still baptize Frau Schlege. In fact, we probably would. Almost anything could have happened to her today.
Sister Crane came back in, steadying two cups of cocoa on saucers. She handed me one and sat down on the edge of her bed. "Are you writing about Schwester Schlege?" she asked.

"Yep." I sipped my cocoa. "Hey, thanks for making this. It's really good."

"Nichts zu danken." She took a sip from her cup, then set it down on the floor. "I've been thinking about Schwester Schlege," she ventured, "and I'm sure there's a good reason why she wasn't home today. Somebody that golden doesn't just turn off overnight . . . do they?"

I shrugged. "Look how little faith we've got. She isn't home once, so we practically write her off."

Sister Crane smiled and took another sip from her cup. "We'll see her tomorrow and find out what happened," she said. "And then we'll laugh at how silly we've been."
Chapter 14

FOOLS MOCK

Overnight the weather cleared, and the next morning the streets were bathed in sunshine. I had forgotten that spring was so well underway—it was April, already. And as we walked by an eis cafe window, it also occurred to me that Sister Crane still hadn't tasted Italian ice cream. I easily persuaded her to have a cone on me.

"Those flavors on the left are milch eis," I said, pointing to the sign. "Schokolade, vanille, nuss, mocha, and malaga. The others are frucht eis, see: orange, banane, ananas—that's pineapple, aprikose, and erdbeere—strawberry. Frucht eis tastes a lot like sherbet." I smiled at the sharp-nosed Italian boy who waited behind the window to take our orders. "Malaga zu dreissig, bitte," I said.

"Jawohl!" He looked me over enthusiastically as his scoop flashed into the ice cream bin; then he handed down my cone with a gleaming smile.

"Danke schön," I said coolly, stepping back so Sister Crane could order.

She studied the sign once more and then smiled at him.

"Drei aprikose."
His enthusiasm was completely for her now as he scooped her aprikose into a cone and handed it down with a princely flourish.

I paid him sixty pfennig for the two cones and Sister Crane gave him a Joseph Smith brochure. "Lesen Sie das," she instructed.

He took it curiously and thanked her with another gleaming smile. "Kom-men Sie wie-der vor-bei," he said, with a lilting Italian accent that was kind of cute. I hoped he knew enough German to read the brochure.

We carried our cones to a sidewalk bench and sat down in the sunshine.

Sister Crane took a cautious lick. "They're not kidding when they call this ice," she said. "It tastes like ice, with maybe a touch of apricot pulp."

"That's probably what it is," I said. My malaga was so strong that it sizzled on my tongue. "Here," I said. "Have a taste of this."

She licked carefully, and her eyes flew wide open. "Wow-- what's that!"

"Malaga," I said.

"I mean in English."

"I don't know. Malaga's Italian for whatever they put in it, whatever that is."

I had a pretty good idea what that was, but I never asked because I didn't want to have to stop buying it.
"These Italian eis flavors are pretty much the same wherever you go," I told her, leaning back on the bench. "Nuss tastes like nuss wherever you buy it, and erdbeer is always erdbeer. I guess the Italians have one set of recipes they all pass around."

"They should open up a Baskin Robbins over here," Sister Crane said. "They'd make a haul. When I worked for ZCMI we used to go there on our lunch breaks and try all the new flavors. Just when I left they were featuring blueberry cheesecake and pumpkin."

"Pumpkin!" I was surprised at her daring.

"Their pistachio almond was really good . . . and their butter brickle, too." She seemed to have forgotten the cone in her hand, and the watery orange frucht eis was softening quickly in the sun and dripping down the sides. My cone was licked flat on top by now.

"I used to get caramel cashew back at the Y," I reminisced. "And grape marble, too. When I was a freshman they gave you a great big cone for a dime, but by the time I left it had gone up to fifteen cents, and the scoops were really puny."

"What did we pay for this, though?" She looked down at her cone. "Thirty pfennig each . . . ."

"That's about twelve cents," I said. "It's not worth it, for the amount you get, but there's nothing else. Tja!" I bit into the sugar cone, which was the one redeeming feature of Italian eis. Anybody was crazy to buy it in the paper cup.
Then I checked my watch—five after twelve. This was the
time we always dropped in on Frau Schlege. In fact, just
yesterday we'd been on our way over there, never suspecting . . . .

And now the whole picture had changed. Or maybe it
hadn't, but all the same, we'd decided to wait until this evening
to go back. We wanted to catch her off guard, so she'd at least
come to the door.

Now, what could we do in the meantime?

Parkstrasse was getting to be a drag. This morning we'd
been let in just one gate, by a cleaning woman who'd thought we
were there to pick up the laundry. Otherwise, we'd gotten voices
over the squawk boxes. I wasn't very excited about going back.

But what else could we do?

It was getting close to lunchtime. If we went home to
eat now, we could pick up the mail, too. I should be getting a
letter from home today or tomorrow.

Sister Crane was finally finishing her ice cream. "The
cone's definitely the best part," she said, wiping her fingers
carefully with a Tempo tissue. "I can't say much for aprikose
frucht eis."

"Try milch eis next time," I said. "Schokolade or nuss.
They're a little richer." I looked at my watch again. "I'm
debating what we should do now. It's almost noon . . . ."

"Let's go home for lunch," she suggested. "Then we can
pick up our mail, too."

* * *
When Sister Crane opened the mailbox, three letters tumbled out. Two were addressed to her, and the third was an aerogramme from Rudi. It seemed like he'd just written. I slit open the top as we climbed the stairs. Maybe he'd found another exciting passage from Kierkegaard.

"Dear Nancy," I read as Sister Crane unlocked the door. "You must be surprised that I am writing again so soon. But there's something you should know about a change that is about to occur in my present situation."

Ha! I thought, settling down at the table. He must be getting married.

"Since I last wrote you, something has happened touching my relationship with the Mormon Church. I won't burden you with details, but two or three experiences have shown me once again that the Mormons here in Utah may only be described as narrow-minded and selfish. They care first for themselves, ignoring their brothers in the gospel who might need help—for example, financial support."

A ball of disgust welled up inside me.

"And this trait, Nancy, you may also observe in your own family. I recently asked your father to co-sign for a loan I was certain to receive . . . ."

"Yuk," I said out loud.

Sister Crane came over to the table.

"Rudi's mad at all the Mormons," I said. "My father wouldn't co-sign his loan. Or anybody else, either. Listen:
'Since my eyes have been opened to the true nature of the Mormon people, I have decided to separate myself completely from the Church. I shall apply for excommunication as soon as possible. That, however, is only a formality—in my heart I have long since returned to the Catholic Church.'"

"Oh, that's terrible," Sister Crane said.

I shrugged and kept reading. "I only regret that I can no longer wish you success in your missionary efforts, as I do not want that other Germans should be fooled as I was. Since this will be my last letter to you, let me say goodbye forever, and thank you for your friendship. You meant a lot to me once. Sincerely, Rudi."

Sister Crane had been reading over my shoulder. Now she squeezed my arm gently and returned to the stove.

"What's with the Germans, anyway?" I said. "It doesn't matter where they are, they never change inside."

"He's only one German," she reminded me, twisting open a can of soup. "And maybe he doesn't really mean it. He probably just wants you to worry and make a fuss over him."

Well, I wasn't going to. Heavens, I hadn't even thought about him in weeks, especially not since Elder Dunn . . .

Elder Dunn. I laid my head down on my arms. Another jerk. He might have a testimony, but deep down he was pure Casanova. Writing his love notes to Francene, and then stringing me along, too, telling me I was going to be important to his
future . . . or whatever it was he'd said. And then playing it so
cool, acting like he'd forgotten the matter completely . . . .

"Don't worry about him," Sister Crane said, bringing over
a plate of cheese. "He'll come back when he's sorted out his
feelings."

"Huh?"

"He's not leaving the Church for good."

Oh . . . Rudi. What a dink. Elder Dunn, too. Neither of
them was worth worrying about.

Sister Crane put a bowl of soup in front of me, and I
stirred it vacantly. Ochsenschwanzsuppe, from a can. It looked
good.

She came back again with the bread. "What's on for this
afternoon?" she asked, sliding her chair up to the table.

I pulled out my kalender and thumbed through the pages.
We didn't have any definite appointments. Actually I didn't feel
like doing much of anything.

"How about call backs?" she asked. "Anybody we need to
check back on?"

I knew who she meant. We probably should be checking back
on Kruegers, just to see if there was anything more we could do.
Especially with Rolf.

"I was thinking about Kruegers," she said. "Don't you
think it's time we saw them again?"

"Uh huh," I said. "But we'll have to wait for a free
evening. Tonight we've got Frau Schlege."
"Right," she said quickly.

"We could check on inactive members," I said. "Or we could make call-backs over by the Friedrichstrasse. I remember somebody over there telling us to come back some afternoon."

The Friedrichstrasse was a good long way off. Maybe by the time we got there I'd feel like working.

As evening drew near, however, I began to feel very much like working. In fact, I would have gladly worked until midnight rather than go back to Frau Schlege's. But why? She needed to see us. Just two days ago she'd been golden. And yesterday... well, anything might have come up. And now today she was probably wondering why we hadn't come yet. I reviewed these positive thoughts in my mind as we headed for Mozartstrasse.

We arrived at her door at a quarter to eight. Sister Crane hadn't said a word for the last half hour. For once she wasn't smiling. I drew myself up resolutely and pushed the doorbell.

There were footsteps inside the hall. The key turned once in the inner lock and the door opened.

Frau Schlege stood in the doorway, reeling slightly. Her face was dull, almost aged, and her gray-brown hair hung in a limp tangle around her jaw. Her eyes stared out from deep hollow pits, startled for a moment--then their dull film returned.

"Good evening, Frau Schlege," I said as kindly as I could, trying to smile into her eyes. "We wanted to pay you a short visit this evening."
She turned away slowly and disappeared into the parlor. I moved closer to the door, trying to see down the hallway. Were we supposed to go in?

There was a soft murmuring voice in the parlor, then a sharp retort, and brisk footsteps. A thin, white-haired woman appeared in the hallway and came to the door, her eyes cool with authority. She looked at me first, then at Sister Crane, her neck twisting like an owl's.

I opened my mouth to explain, but she stopped me.

"The Mormons!" She spat out the words. "Angels from heaven! Do you know that because of your visits my daughter has suffered a total relapse?"

Frau Schlegel reappeared, a mute shadow behind her mother, gazing at us darkly. The old woman glanced quickly over her shoulder, and then back at us.

"Do you see what you've done to her?" she demanded. "My daughter may never be well again. Angels of mercy . . . baah! Go try your luck on somebody else!"

Her eyes burned one final insult; then she closed the door in our faces.

* * *

We walked home slowly in the darkness. All that worry, and all that work, for nothing. And Frau Schlegel was worse off now than before. Why did we even try?

The narrow downtown streets were empty and silent, with their closed-up shops and dim taverns. The ancient buildings
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"Sure," I said. "This is comfortable." I sat cross-legged on the cold linoleum floor, my back braced against the foot of her bed. "I'll pay attention better like this," I said. "OK." She smiled and went back to her reading. "'And Ether was a prophet of the Lord . . . .'"

We were cheating—reading from our English scriptures—but it had been Sister Crane's idea. I didn't care one way or the other.

"'. . . for he could not be restrained because of the Spirit of the Lord which was in him. For he did cry from the morning, even until the going down of the sun . . . .' That's it!' she broke in eagerly. "That's the part Elder Magleby was talking about." She looked at me over the foot of her bed again. "Imagine Ether preaching all day long. He must have been discouraged, like we are, but he was so full of the Spirit he couldn't give up."

I nodded. Sure. But for all his hard work he still hadn't converted anybody. Just like us.

She kept reading. "'. . . exhorting the people to believe in God unto repentance, saying unto them that by faith all things are fulfilled . . . .'"

Poor Ether, caught up in a futile cause.

"'And it came to pass that Ether did prophesy great and marvelous things unto the people, which they did not believe, because they saw them not . . . .'"

Just like the Germans. Unbelievers.
"'... wherefore, dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith.'" She stopped short. "Hey, I like that! Dispute not, because ye see not ... ."

"That's us," I said. "If anybody ever 'saw not,' it's gotta be us."

She looked over the edge of the bed again. "It's good to know we're just being tried. If we keep working hard, we have to succeed eventually."

"That's right," I said.

She turned back to her book. "'Behold, it was the faith of Nephi and Lehi that wrought the change upon the Lamanites, that they were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost.'"

Sure, they could do it with the Lamanites, but I would have liked to see them try it here in Germany. They would have been laughed out of the country!

"'And I said unto him, Lord, the Gentiles will mock at these things because of our weakness in writing; ... .'

Boy, would they ever. Especially the Germans. There never was such a mocking nation. Frau Schlegel's mother, and Rudi, and Kruegers ... they couldn't do anything but mock.

"'And when I had said this, the Lord spake unto me, saying, Fools mock, but they shall mourn ... .'

Ha! I thought. Fools mock ... they're all fools here, every one of them. Fools mock, but they shall mourn. That's cool!
"... and if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble . . . ." Sister Crane stopped again. "Is that right?"

She pushed herself up on her thin elbows and looked at me over the foot of the bed again. "I never knew that! All our weaknesses are blessings from the Lord!"

"Then we're really blessed," I said.

She laughed and settled down again. "'And my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me, for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then I will make weak things become strong unto them!'" She stopped again. "Sister Harper, that's the neatest thing I ever read! If we humble ourselves, the Lord will make all our weaknesses strengths. Think what great missionaries we can become!"

"Uh huh," I said. "Want me to read now?"

"OK." She settled back down again.

"'Behold I will show unto the Gentiles their weakness.'" I didn't pay much attention until we got over into the next column: "'And it came to pass that I prayed unto the Lord that he would give unto the Gentiles grace, that they might have charity. And the Lord said unto me, if they have not charity, it mattereth not to thee, thou hast been faithful, wherefore, thy garments shall be made clean . . . .!"

Good deal, I thought. They can all go to hell, and it won't hurt us a bit. They're not going to wreck our salvation!
I was chuckling to myself, finding my place again, when
the doorbell rang. Now that was odd. Nobody ever rang our
doorbell.

"I'll get it," I said, jumping up, a strange feeling of
excitement rising within me. I padded to the door in my slippers.
Sister Crane was right behind me. "Who is it?" she wanted
to know.

I looked out the peephole ... two dark suits, one of
them brown. "The elders," I said, opening the door.

Elder Dunn smiled down at me. "Sister Harper. We didn't
think you'd be home yet." His deep brown eyes lingered on me.

Elder Madsen stood beside him, swinging his briefcase and
gazing around. "This is real cool," he said. "This is a real
cool wohnung."

"Wish we could ask you in," I said. "What's up?"
Elder Dunn was still looking at me. "This may come as a
shock," he said, "but I just called the mission office, and they
said ...."

"She's transferred," Sister Crane said behind me. "I knew
it."

Elder Dunn nodded slowly. "The official letter won't get
here till Thursday, but they thought you ought to know sooner.
You're going to Offenbach. Friday morning."

Offenbach. That was up by Frankfurt.
"I'll be sorry to lose you from the district." He gave me that intent look, which would have turned me on a week ago. "I asked them if they wouldn't take Madsen instead."

Elder Madsen snickered.

Friday morning. Wednesday, Thursday, Friday—three, no, two more days. I'd be getting out of here!

"That's what I get for writing to President Rogers about you," Dunn said. "I should have known better."

"What if I won't let her go?" Sister Crane said behind me.

Friday morning ....

"You'll take the 8:07 train out of here," Elder Dunn said, "and get there around eleven. Sister Nord will meet you at the bahnhof."

"She's in Mainz."

"For now. You're both going to Offenbach now. That should be a challenge." He swung his briefcase toward me.

"You'll like it there. Offenbach was my first city."

I looked up at him. After Friday I might never see him again.

"Too bad you're not going Saturday, instead," he said.

"You'll miss Gina's taufe. She'll be disappointed."

"I will too," I said vaguely.

"Well," Dunn said, "that's what we came to tell you, mainly. Have a good evening, still."

"You guys, too," I said.
"Remember tausch-out Thursday." He gave me one final
look. "It'll be our last chance to work together for a while."
Chapter 15

THE TRAIN

"It'll work out all right," I told Sister Crane as I lugged my white suitcase up the concrete steps to the bahnsteig. "You'll be surprised what you can do when you have to."

"I just wish they'd given me more time," she puffed behind me. "I'm not even prepared yet. And I'll practically be a senior companion to Sister Price while I show her around the city."

This was the fifth time this morning she'd told me she was terrified of being a senior companion. I knew she was going to love it.

I set down my suitcase next to a bench and walked out to look down the tracks.

"Is your train coming yet?" she called to me.

"Nope."

My train wasn't due in for ten more minutes. But another train was coming from the opposite direction, curving in around the mountain, growing larger, bearing up on the station with a regular beat that worked into a roar. It swelled and loomed gigantic, blocking out the sun, then the whole sky as it rushed through the station, shuddering violently. A clattering tail of passenger cars rocked behind it, then shrank away into the
distance. But the tracks below me still hummed with tension, like a fine tuning fork.

I turned back to the bench.

"... and I don't know what we'll do about the member program," Sister Crane was saying. "Sister Price won't know any of our members, and I'll have to take her around to visit them."

I sat down beside her on the bench. But I could still see the tracks, quivering in the sunlight. They were so open and bare—so horribly inviting. It would be so easy . . . .

"I hope she won't mind working long hours," Sister Crane was saying, "because we'll still have all our tracting to get done . . . ."

The elders in Mannheim had seen a man fall down onto the tracks, just as a train roared in. "It was gruesome," they'd said. "Just pieces . . . ." A quick shudder raced through me, but the idea clung. It would be so easy, just to walk out there, when the train came roaring in, and step down . . . .

Sister Crane was fidgeting beside me, checking her watch against the big clock over the tracks, clucking to herself, and settling back again. "Isn't it nice to just sit here and relax for a few minutes," she said.

"Uh huh."

She sighed fondly and looked at me. "It's been a good seven weeks, hasn't it," she said.

"Sure has."
"I just wish it could have been longer," she said. "I don't even know my way around the city, and now I'll practically be a senior to Sister Price..." She drew a piece of paper out of her purse; it was the old contact list I'd made out for her last night--people we'd never gone back to. Now I wouldn't have to feel guilty about them.

She pulled the list slowly through her fingers, pronouncing each name to herself.

"I put Kruegers on there, too," I said.

She nodded. "We'll drop by tonight. I think there's still a lot we can do with Rolf."

I looked out toward the tracks.

"Herr Krueger will be sorry you left without saying goodbye," she said.

"I know. Too bad we couldn't see him last night." I tried to sound like I really meant it. "Be sure and keep in touch with our members, too," I said. "Especially Ebert. Remember what she said about her sister?"

"The one she's working on."

"Right. That's a good prospect for you."

Sister Crane nodded again and made a note at the bottom of the sheet. Then she started reading it over again from the top. There was one name I'd deliberately left off--Frau Schlege. They could go back to her again if they wanted to, but it wouldn't do any good.
I glanced up at the clock over the tracks. The minute hand jerked straight up. Eight o'clock. My train would be coming through in seven minutes. I'd take it as far as Mannheim, where I'd umsteig and catch another train north to Offenbach. The whole trip would take about three hours.

And I'd be alone the whole time. That was the neatest thing about a transfer—being alone for a while, and doing anything you wanted to. Oh, nothing bad—just walking into a bäckerei without asking your companion, and buying a whole loaf of crusty white bread and eating it with your hands, if you wanted to, or buying a liter of milk and drinking it all, and not worrying if she wanted half. Now that was freedom. I remembered a neat little bäckerei in Mannheim, about three steps from the bahnhof.

Sister Crane was fidgeting beside me, synchronizing her watch again, darting anxious glances down the tracks, then over her shoulder at the bahnhof.

"Shouldn't Bell and Magleby be here by now?" she asked me.

"Any minute," I said. Bell and Magleby were supposed to pick her up here and work with her until Sister Price came in this afternoon. I wished Dunn and Madsen were coming instead.

But Elder Dunn had said goodbye last night, after our tausch-out, in the privacy of the coat room. "Just think," he'd said, taking down my coat, "if I'd met you back home, I never could have gone tracting with you. And I never would have seen you in this ratty old blue coat." Then he'd held it for me,
carefully, at arms' length, but he'd buttoned the top button for me, before he stepped back again. And then he'd given me that long, intent look that would have fooled me if I hadn't known better. Well, that was one more thing I didn't have to worry about now.

I stood up and walked down the bahnsteig. There was a vending machine, of the typical bahnhof variety; one side was for coffee, and around on the other side were two dusty windows, one with Viva mints showing through and the other with a dried-up looking chocolate bar. I probably didn't have the right change, anyway.

I looked down the tracks again. My train ought to be coming now. As I watched, a black dot appeared, and grew larger. The tracks below me began to hum again, open and bare, wickedly inviting. In just a minute now, if I stepped down . . .

I turned away just as the train roared into the station, shuddering and pulling to a halt. Sister Crane had picked up my suitcase and was handing it to me. Then I noticed that tears had welled in her eyes.

"So long, Sister Harper," she said, holding out her thin hand.

"Bye," I responded, shaking it. "It's been real."

I turned to the nearest car and climbed the metal steps. Inside, I found a seat near the middle and hoisted my suitcase onto the overhead rack. Then I opened the window so I could talk to Sister Crane until the train pulled out.
She was dabbing at her eyes with a handkerchief, smiling bravely.

I put my face out the window. "Sure hope the elders get here soon," I said.

She nodded without speaking.

The train hissed and lurched forward; then the platform began to move away from me. Sister Crane waved weakly, still dabbing at her eyes. I saw Bell and Magleby join her on the platform, pulling out their white handkerchiefs and waving vigorously, growing smaller and fainter. I waved back; then I drew my head in and closed the window and settled back in my seat.

The train picked up speed, clicking faster on the rails, rocking and swaying. Outside my window the eisenwerke shot by, then another factory, the sports field . . . and finally the woods closed over us. Goodbye, K-Town. How easy it was to leave.

We clicked effortlessly through the forest. The trees arched high overhead, filtering the light to a greenish gloom, and their trunks grew so close together that they seemed to form walls on both sides of the tracks. We seemed to be passing through a magical, sinister tunnel, and in the pale half-light I could easily imagine Hansel and Gretel wandering lost, caught by the witch's spell.

We shot out into a clearing, and sunlight flooded the car. I looked out at stretches of green fields, rolling away to the hills. Then we entered the woods again.
It was strange, leaving K-Town after seven months. I didn't feel a thing. Kruegers, and Frau Schlege—I'd practically forgotten them already. And all those other people we'd tracted out—I was glad to let Sister Crane worry about them now.

The woods thinned out and we entered a lush green valley. There were patches of brown fields, freshly ploughed, and miniature story-book houses with low-hanging eaves and rough timberwork. They looked so quaint and picturesque, compared with the bleak city buildings back in K-Town.

I stood up and walked toward the back of the car. There were other people, sitting here and there . . . I should talk to somebody and ask the golden questions. Supposedly, people were converted that way all the time. That was what they'd told us in the mission home.

But I walked on through the car. Those mission home techniques just didn't work here in Germany. Germans didn't trust foreigners. They were always suspicious when you tried to talk to them.

I walked out into the passageway, rocking with the motion of the train. The floor swung to one side and then the other each time we rounded a curve. I stood by the exit door, holding onto the metal bars for support, looking out the rounded window.

The brown patchwork fields stretched away to the edge of the valley, where the woods began again—clumps of dark green foliage that faded to a misty gray on the horizon. We passed a farmer guiding his plow behind a dappled horse, tilling up the
brown earth. Now that was something I'd never seen at home. Too bad my camera was packed away.

We passed two women hoeing, chopping methodically, their kerchieved heads bent to the morning sun. Neither of them glanced up as we sped past.

This was a part of Germany we missionaries hardly knew. These level fields, bright in the sunshine, the woods, and the picture-book farm houses ... the wide-open spaces. All we knew of Germany were the narrow city streets, the dim stairwells with their bare hanging bulbs, and the musty parlors. We ground out the endless hours of tracting, trapped in our grim routine.

I left the window and walked back to my seat. Too bad we had to wait for transfers, to see the real Germany. Too bad we couldn't just hop a train any time, and stay on it. Too bad the rules were so strict.

I sat down again and opened the window, letting the breeze blow across my face. How would it be to just stay on this train, to ride wherever it was going--to Munich, I remembered, from the placard on the side of the car. Saarbrücken-München, written upside-down and right-side up on the white cardboard.

Ah, Munich--where they held the Oktoberfest, and drank beer in tents. Munich was completely out of the mission, so none of us could go there without breaking the rules. But what a shame, to spend two years in Germany and never see Munich.

I settled back in the seat and closed my eyes. Munich, the swinging city, the fun city ... . What if I actually had
the nerve—wouldn't that gross out the elders? "Sister Harper hopped a train to Munich--took off just like that!" I could just see them shaking their heads, chuckling, wondering why they'd never had the nerve to do it themselves.

And Elder Dunn . . . that brought me up short. Elder Dunn had thought so much of me--but what did I care now? I'd love to see his face . . . Sister Harper, the pride of his district, his future . . .

But I still felt uncomfortable. Maybe someday . . . no, I shook the thought from my mind. He hadn't meant it. He was still writing to Francene. That fluff head! What did she know of missionary work? I'd like to see her make it through one day here. She'd probably cry when the first hausfrau waved a mop in her face. And then Elder Dunn would comfort her with some meaningful promises about their future. Ha!

"Fahrschein, bitte."

The conductor was coming through, punching tickets. He stopped by my seat and I fumbled in my purse for the little cardboard rectangle. There it was. I handed it to him.

He looked it over quizzically, then held it up to the light and examined both sides. "Sie umsteigen in Mannheim," he said with mock gravity.

"Ich weiss."

He chuckled, punching the ticket. "Sonst befinden Sie sich in München."
I knew that, too. But it was nice of him to remind me, so I wouldn't end up in Munich.

He handed back my ticket, tipped his hat, and moved on.

I looked out the window again. We were passing a cemetery, with its rows of polished headstones, and wooden crosses glittering in the sun, and the flowers—daisies, poppies, and bright marigolds, alongside a gravel path. It was beautiful. The Germans loved their graveyards. But why not? The Germans loved death.

I remembered Arthur Belitz's funeral—the wooden chairs clattering on the stone floor, the black hats and armbands, his mother's uncontrollable sobbing. And we'd thought we could change all that. We'd thought Elder Bell's sermon would get through to them, or at least our singing "O My Father"—we'd thought we could change a thousand years of morbid tradition with a few cheery words. I remembered the procession behind the cross, the thud of dirt on the coffin. And we'd thought that funeral was going to be different. I laughed now to think of it.

Missionaries were incredibly naive, in what they thought they could accomplish. What did we do, really? All those hours of tracting ... What had I done? In K-Town ... there were Kruegers. We'd thought we were getting through to them, and all the time their minds had been far away, on the new home they were building, and their car payments. We'd never stood a chance. And Frau Schlege, with her spirits and her dancing thermometer—to
think we'd tried to make her over in just three weeks! I laughed at that now, too.

The Germans just didn't change. Even Rudi, my prize convert from back home— the gospel hadn't softened him a bit. It hadn't even made a dent in his thinking.

I gazed gloomily out the window, and soon I noticed that the landscape was beginning to change. The wooded hills were behind us now, and we were crossing the broad flatlands of the Rhine. There were more houses, too—even a few new ones going up near the tracks. They had the same basic design as the older homes—two stories, with low hanging eaves and a high peaked roof, and square windows with shutters. The Germans had been building their houses the same way for hundreds of years, as if there were one accepted design, and you couldn't improve on it.

I settled back in my seat. Germany was so unchangeable, so permanent. Why fight it? Why not just sit back and enjoy it? Here we were missing so much, appreciating so little, because all we cared about was changing Germany. We trudged up and down stairs, pushing doorbells, meeting goals, counting hours—all along vaguely suspecting that we weren't accomplishing much.

The train swayed and rocked harder now, clattering over a suspension bridge. We were nearing Ludwigshafen—I could tell by the yellow-gray smoke on the horizon. And over the river was Mannheim, where I'd catch another train up to Offenbach and start the whole missionary routine all over again.
Well, who was making me do it? I hadn't signed any contract, and I wasn't being paid. There was nothing but social pressure keeping me in the groove.

But then, it was a commitment I'd made, and a calling from the Lord. You just didn't walk out on a job like that.

Besides, if you did . . .

We were passing through Ludwigshafen now, with its awful yellow smoke from the BASF.

No, nobody quit. There was too much pressure. We got it from the mission office, and DL's like Dunn, who kept after us about our goals, and getting our hours, so we'd baptize, and they'd look good. And we practically worshipped them, and they were having their own little ego trips. And nobody had the nerve to break loose. We all wanted to look good.

Oh, a few elders ran off now and then, when they couldn't learn the language and cracked up.

But this mission had never had a Sister Harper before—a super missionary who knew the discussions backwards and forwards, in English and German, and could do the work, but didn't see the point any longer.

It wasn't that I hadn't tried. I'd done as much as three or four elders put together, and I'd followed the program, and kept the rules. And it still hadn't paid off. We'd lost Kruegers, after all that fasting and prayer, and we'd lost Frau Schlege, just when she was starting to look good. All that work for nothing. And now they expected me to plunge right back in, to
start knocking my head against a wall again, because they knew I couldn't imagine doing anything else.

The conductor was coming through again, calling out "Mannheim, nächste Station!" He caught my eye and winked slightly, reminding me that I'd need to get off.

We rocked upward onto a trestle, over the Rhine. I looked down on the river, brownish green and rippled by the sluggish barges. Then we rocked downward, crossing mud flats, and a broad green park. Then the train began to slow down and some of the passengers were already pulling their suitcases from the overhead racks.

I took mine down and lugged it to the door, bracing myself for the jolt when we stopped. Too bad I was so gutless.

The metal door swung open, and I stepped down onto the platform. But instead of going into the station, I stood there with my suitcase watching the other passengers spill out—waddling hausfraus with their tote bags, workmen with their briefcases, two servicemen smoking cigarettes—all of them headed for the station doors. Finally I followed, walking slowly alongside the train. There was that sign again, posted on the side—Saarbrücken–München. The train was still going to Munich, with or without me.

The conductor stepped down from the last car, saluted a colleague, and walked on into the station. The colleague hopped up in his place, glanced at the clock, and put a whistle to his lips.
Diligent Sister Harper, the super missionary. They knew I didn't have the guts. Two years in Germany, and I'd never see Munich, because they couldn't let us out of the harness for even a minute, for fear we might think too much about what we were doing and not come back. And they knew I didn't have the nerve to do it on my own.

But why not? Who did I want to impress? Elder Dunn, still? He probably thought I was so in love with him, I wouldn't dare risk my future, if there were any chance... And I was still dumb enough to hope...

The conductor blew his whistle, and a long, slow hiss escaped from the engine. My suitcase was still in my hands, and the car was only two steps away.

I was back on the train again when it started to move.