

A Timely Yank

"You sure this is worth the effort?" complained Dieter as he glanced at his once shiny boots kicking up dust on the footpath. "Look at these fools, they're damn peasants."

Konrad flashed a knowing grin as he glared menacingly at the old couple, the woman tightly gripping her husband's arm, as they shuffled slowly in front of him. "You know what they're like. Die Juden always have a treasure stash and we're going to need it for our trip. I can't believe they escaped detection so long."

"Probably hiding in their filthy nest up to now and thought it was safe to come to town since Americans are close to Munchen."

"Ja. Which means we can't lose any time. If we miss our ride out of Austria we'll never catch the ship to South America," Konrad growled as he raised his rifle and punched the old man in the back with the barrel. "How far to your farm?" he demanded.

The old man winced and stumbled as he grunted in reply, "Not far."

"Better be gold there," Dieter barked as he violently rammed the old woman with his rifle.

The gun punch elicited the hoped for pitiful wail from the woman, but then she tripped and fell to the ground dragging her husband with her.

Dieter's face creased into a mask of rage as he lunged and kicked the woman. "Get up you stupid, clumsy Jewish bitch," he snarled.

The old man untangled himself and tried to grab the holstered Luger on Dieter's belt. Konrad quickly slammed his rifle's barrel on the man's wrist and kicked him onto his back in one smooth motion. Leveling the battle-worn Mauser between the man's eyes Konrad grimly advised, "You know we only need one of you for our purposes. Try that again and it will most certainly be the case. Now get up and get moving."

The couple unsteadily regained their footing and continued walking. The Nazi officers followed in silence for a time, the SS badges on their collars flashing in the early spring sun like the lightning bolts they emulated. The unusually warm day caused the uniformed men to sweat profusely as they trudged along, seeming to irrigate hate with each step.

"We'll have to dump these uniforms," Dieter murmured.

Konrad smirked. "I'm sure the old man owns a sartorially resplendent wardrobe we can appropriate. As a matter of fact you can don the clothes he's wearing when we reach their hovel. Your stink will realistically reflect the disguise."

"Very humorous. See how hard I'm laughing," Dieter groused. He glanced worriedly at Konrad. "You think you can get them to talk?"

"Dieter, Dieter, have you ever known me not to get someone to talk?"

"That woman in Treblinka. She died before she could talk."

"Point taken, but I've refined my methods since that unfortunate incident," Konrad smiled in remembrance. "The things I cut off now are very painful, but not lethal. That is of course until I want them to be." He smiled again and winked at Dieter. "You can have your way with the old lady before I start. It would be fun to watch," he chuckled.

"You're just a barrel of laughs today aren't you?"

"You know me, I'm a party guy," Konrad joked as he stopped and clicked his boots together, then propelled his arm forward in an exaggerated Heil Hitler gesture.

Dieter aimed his rifle at the back of the old lady's head. "I may just shoot her now to get that sick thought out of my head."

The old couple cringed involuntarily as gunfire shattered the air. Moments later, realizing they were still alive they slowly turned to look behind them. The old lady's hand flew to her mouth in surprise as she viewed the two bleeding Nazis on the ground, and a soldier with a rifle approaching a few yards away.

The soldier smiled and waved, "It's okay folks, I'm on your side."

The woman stumbled to the soldier, fell to her knees and began kissing his hand. "American, American," she gushed.

"Hey ma'am I'm not that great a shot, I just happened to be close," he quipped. "You understand English?" he inquired, glancing at the old man coming to join them.

"Little bit," the old man sobbed in relief.

"Where ya goin' to?" the soldier asked.

"Home," he replied hugging his wife.

"How far is it? Maybe I can escort you."

The old man's smile defined redemptive joy as he softly responded, "Not far."