

sounds, to our ears so coarse and animal-like. The table freezes, falls silent. We stop chewing, hold our breath. Hands clenched over hearts. Eyes flickering wildly. Then silence once again as the steps fade away. Someone whispers, "If things go on like this . . ."

No one answers. The refugee girl from Königsberg throws herself across the table: "I can't take any more! I'm going to end it all!" She'd been through it several times in the night, up under the roof, where she had fled an entire troop of pursuers. Her hair in tangles, covering her face, she refuses to eat or drink.

We sit, wait, listen, as the missile pipe away overhead like an organ. Shots whip through our street. It's seven o'clock by the time I creep down to our apartment, together with the widow, carefully checking to see the stair landings are secure. We stop to listen outside our door, which I left ajar—when suddenly it opens from inside.

A uniform. Shock. The widow clutches my arm. Then a sigh of relief—it's only Petka.

The widow listens to our conversation without saying a word. A minute later I, too, am standing there speechless. Petka is beaming at me, his small blue eyes glittering. He shakes my hands, assuring me that he missed me while he was away, that he hurried over as fast as he could after guard duty, that he searched the entire apartment for me, that he's happy, so happy to see me again. And he presses and squeezes my fingers with his lumberjack paws, so hard I have to pull them away. I stand there like an idiot, in the face of these unambiguous symptoms, listen to this Petka-Romeo babble on, until he finally, finally disappears—promising he'll be back soon, very soon, just as soon as he can.

I'm rooted in place, open-mouthed. The widow didn't understand a word Petka was saying, but she read his face perfectly, she knew what was up. She shakes her head. "Well . . ." Both of us are completely stunned.

And now I'm sitting here at our kitchen table. I've just refilled my pen, and am writing, writing, writing all this confusion out of my head and heart. Where will this end? What will become of us? I feel so slimy, I don't want to touch anything, least of all my own skin. What I'd give for a bath or at least some decent soap and plenty of water. That's it—enough of these fantasies.

I remember the strange vision I had this morning, something like a daydream, while I was trying in vain to fall asleep after Petka left. It was as if I were flat on my bed and seeing myself lying there when a luminous white being rose from my body, a kind of angel, but without wings, that floated high into the air. Even now as I'm writing this I can still feel that sense of rising up and floating. Of course, it's just a fantasy, a pipe dream, a means of escape—my true self simply leaving my body behind, my poor, besmirched, abused body. Breaking away and floating off, unblemished, into a white beyond. It can't be me that this is happening to, so I'm expelling it all from me. Could I be raving? But my head feels cool at the moment, my hands heavy and calm.

Tuesday, May 1, 1945, 3:00 P.M.

Looking back on Saturday, Sunday, Monday

I haven't written since Saturday morning, April 28—three days ago, three days crammed with so many frenzied images, fears, and feelings that I don't know where to begin, what to say. We're deep in the muck now, very deep. Every minute of life comes at a high price. The storm is passing overhead, and we are leaves quaking in the whirlwind, with no idea where we're being blown.

An eternity has passed since then. Today is May Day, and the war is still on. I'm sitting in the armchair in the front room. The widow's tenant is here, too, lying in bed—Herr Pauli, now discharged from the Volkssturm. He showed up on Saturday, without warning, carrying a sixteen-pound lump of butter wrapped in a towel. At the moment he's sick with neuralgia.

The wind is whistling through the windows, tugging and rattling the scraps of cardboard tacked on so pitifully; the daylight comes flickering inside, making the room now bright, now dark. But it's always bitter cold. I've wrapped myself in a wool blanket and am writing with numb fingers while Herr Pauli sleeps and the widow wanders through the building looking for candles.

Russian sounds come bouncing in from outside. Some Ivan is talking to his horses, which they treat far better than they do us; when they talk to the animals their voices sound warm, even human. Now and then the horses' scent comes wafting in as well, and you can hear a chain clinking. Somewhere someone is playing an accordion.

I peer through the flapping cardboard. The army is camped outside; horses on the sidewalks, wagons, drinking pails, boxes of oats and hay, trampled horse droppings, cow paddies. A small fire stoked with broken chairs is burning in the entranceway across the street. The Russians crouch around it in quilted jackets.

My hands are shaking, my feet are ice. Yesterday a German grenade broke the last panes we had. Now the apartment is completely defenseless against the east wind. Good thing it's not January.

Our walls are riddled with holes. Inside we scurry back and forth, listening anxiously to the clamor outside, gritting our teeth at every new noise. The splintered back door is open; we gave up barricading it long ago. Men are forever traipsing down the hall, through the kitchen, in and out of our two rooms. Half an hour

ago a complete stranger showed up, a stubborn dog, who wanted me but was chased away. As he left he threatened, "I'll be back."

What does it mean—rape? When I said the word for the first time aloud, Friday evening in the basement, it sent shivers down my spine. Now I can think it and write it with an untrembling hand, say it out loud to get used to hearing it said. It sounds like the absolute worst, the end of everything—but it's not.

Saturday afternoon around 3:00 two men banged on the front door with their fists and weapons, shouting in raw voices, kicking the wood. The widow opened the door. She's always worried about her lock. Two gray-haired soldiers come careening in, drunk. They thrust their automatics through one of the hall windows, shattering the last remaining pane and sending the shards clattering into the courtyard. Then they tear the blackout shades to shreds, kick the old grandfather clock.

One of them grabs hold of me and shoves me into the front room, pushing the widow out of the way. Without a word, the other plants himself by the front door and points his rifle at the widow, keeping her in check. He doesn't touch her.

The one shoving me is an older man with gray stubble, reeking of brandy and horses. He carefully closes the door behind him and, not finding any key, slides the wing chair against the door. He seems not even to see his prey, so that when he strikes she is all the more startled, as he knocks her onto the bedstead. Eyes closed, teeth clenched.

No sound. Only an involuntary grinding of teeth when my underclothes are ripped apart. The last untorn ones I had.

Suddenly his finger is on my mouth, stinking of horse and tobacco. I open my eyes. A stranger's hands expertly pulling apart my jaws. Eye to eye. Then with great deliberation he drops a gob of gathered spit into my mouth.

I'm numb. Not with disgust, only cold. My spine is frozen: icy, dizzy shivers around the back of my head. I feel myself gliding and falling, down, down, through the pillows and the floorboards. So that's what it means to sink into the ground.

Once more eye to eye. The stranger's lips open, yellow teeth, one in front half broken off. The corners of the mouth lift, tiny wrinkles radiate from the corners of his eyes. The man is smiling.

Before leaving he fishes something out of his pants pocket, thumps it down on the nightstand without a word, pulls the chair aside, and slams the door shut behind him. A crumpled pack of Russian cigarettes, only a few left. My pay.

I stand up—dizzy, nauseated. My ragged clothes tumble to my feet. I stagger through the hall, past the sobbing widow, into the bathroom. I throw up. My face green in the mirror, my vomit in the basin. I sit on the edge of the bathtub, without daring to flush, since I'm still gagging and there's so little water left in the bucket.

Damn this to hell! I say it out loud. Then I make up my mind.

No question about it: I have to find a single wolf to keep away the pack. An officer, as high-ranking as possible, a commandant, a general, whatever I can manage. After all, what are my brains for, my little knowledge of the enemy's language?

As soon as I am able to move again, I grab a bucket and drag myself down the stairs and out into the street. I wander up and down, peering into the courtyards, keeping my eyes open, then go back into our stairwell, very cautiously. I practice the sentences I will use to address an officer, wondering if I don't look too green and miserable to be attractive. Physically I feel a little better, though, now that I am doing something, planning something, determined to be more than mere mute booty, a spoil of war.

For half an hour there's nothing—no epaulettes with stars. I don't know their rankings and insignia, only that the officers wear stars on their caps and generally have overcoats. But all I see is a

shabby mass of uniform green. I'm just about to give up for the day, am already knocking at our door, when I see a man with stars coming out of an apartment across the street (the former tenant having managed to escape just in time). Tall, dark hair, well fed. He sees me with the bucket, then laughs and says in broken German, "Du, Frau." I laugh back and shower him with my best Russian. He's delighted to hear his own language. We chatter away, silly, just fooling around, and I learn that he's a first lieutenant. Finally we arrange to meet that night at 7:00 P.M. at the widow's. He's busy until then. His name is Anatol So-and-so—a Ukrainian.

"Will you definitely come?"

"Of course," he says, reproachfully. "As fast as I can."

But as it happened, another man showed up first, around 5:00 P.M., someone I'd almost forgotten, Petka from the previous night, with the blond bristle and the Romeo babble. He's brought two buddies, too, whom he introduces as Grisha and Yasha. Soon all three are sitting at our round table, like a bunch of farm boys invited into a house well above their class. Only Petka acts as if he's at home, showing me off to the others with clear pride of possession. The three men stretch out on the armchairs; they feel good. Yasha pulls out a bottle of vodka, and Grisha produces some herrings and bread wrapped in a greasy page of *Pravda* (the front page—unfortunately it's old). Petka calls for glasses as if he were master of the house. He pours the vodka, then slams his fist on the table and commands, "*Vypit' nado!*" You have to drink up!

The widow and I, and even Herr Pauli, who showed up out of the blue half an hour earlier, have no choice but to sit and drink with the boys. Petka sets a slice of dark, moist bread on the table in front of each of us, then divides the herrings, right there on the polished mahogany, using his thumb to press it onto the bread, all the while beaming at us as if this were a special favor and delicacy.

The widow, appalled, runs for some plates. Grisha is the silent

type, with a permanent smirk; his voice has a deep rasp. He makes sure each person receives an equal portion of bread and herring. Yasha is short, with a crew cut; he smiles and nods all around. Both are from Kharkov. Little by little I start talking to them, acting as interpreter between them and Herr Pauli. We drink to one another's health. Petka from Siberia is loud and fully at ease.

I keep listening for the door and checking the dainty lady's wristwatch on Yasha's arm. Any minute I expect First Lieutenant Anatol to show up as arranged. I'm worried because I suspect there'll be a fight. Petka is strong as an ox, of course, and clean, but he's primitive, uncouth—no protection. A first lieutenant, on the other hand, ought to guarantee a kind of taboo, or so I imagine. My mind is firmly made up. I'll think of something when the time comes. I grin to myself in secret, feel as if I'm performing on the stage. I couldn't care less about the lot of them! I've never been so removed from myself, so alienated. All my feelings seem dead, except for the drive to live. They shall not destroy me.

Meanwhile Grisha has let it be known that he's an "accountant." Then Herr Pauli, who works as an industrial salesman, makes a similar declaration. Both men have drunk a good deal, and they fall into an embrace, shouting for joy, "Me accountant, you accountant, we accountants!" And the first kiss of German-Russian brotherhood smacks across Herr Pauli's cheek. Soon the widow's tenant is completely drunk. He calls out to us, elated, "These guys are great, these Russians, full of vim and vigor!"

Another round. Here's to international accountancy. Now even the widow is feeling merry, for the moment having forgotten about the herrings being sawed right on her polished table. (None of the boys bother with the plates.) I drink very measuredly, secretly switching glasses; I want to keep my wits about me for later. Still, the mirth at the table is tainted, especially for

us two women—we want to forget what happened three hours before.

Outside, the sun is setting. Yasha and Petka sing a melancholy song, with Grisha chiming in. Herr Pauli is in a blessedly relaxed mood. It's a bit much for him; after all, only this morning he was courting death with the Volkssturm, until his troop had the sense to disband and, lacking both weapons and any orders to the contrary, dismissed themselves and went home. Suddenly he belches, falls forward, and throws up on the carpet. The widow and fellow accountant Grisha immediately spirit him into the bathroom. The others shake their heads, express their sympathy. Then Herr Pauli crumples into bed in his room next door, where he spends the rest of the day and, as it turns out, the foreseeable future. A lame duck—probably his subconscious wants him that way. Neuralgia of the soul. Even so, his simple male presence keeps things somewhat in check. The widow swears by him and his rare pronouncements about the world situation and massages his back.

Twilight, a distant howling along the front. The widow has managed to get hold of a candle; we light it and stick it onto a saucer. A meager pool of light on the table. Soldiers come and go—evening is when things get busy. People hammering on the front door, pushing through the back into the kitchen. But we are unafraid; nothing can happen to us as long as Petka, Grisha, and Yasha are sitting at our table.

Suddenly Anatol is standing in the room, filling the space with his masculine self. A regular soldier is trotting behind him carrying a canteen full of brandy and a round dark loaf of bread under his arm. The men are all at their best-fed, strong and strapping, their uniforms clean, practical, and rugged, their movements broad, very self-assured. They spit inside the room, toss their long

cigarette filters on the floor, scrape the herringbones off the table onto the carpet, and plop down into the armchairs.

Anatol reports that the front has reached the Landwehr Canal, and I have to think of that dreary old tune "Es liegt eine Leiche im Landwehrkanal . . ." A body floats down the Landwehr Canal. Lots of bodies at the moment. Anatol claims that 130 German generals have surrendered in the past few days. He takes a cellophane bag, pulls out a map of Berlin, shows us the progress of the front. The map, printed in Russian, is very exact. It's a strange feeling when, complying with Anatol's request, I show him where our house is located.

So . . . Saturday, April 28, 1945 . . . the front at the Landwehr Canal. As I write this, it's Tuesday, May 1. The rockets are singing overhead, the oily drone of Russian airplanes. Long rows of Stalin Organs are stacked in the school across the street; the Russians call them by the tender name Katyusha—"little Kate"—and the title of a popular song among the soldiers. When they're fired they howl like wolves. They don't look like much—upright balusters, made of thin tubes. But they howl and shriek and wail so loud they nearly break our eardrums as we stand in line for water, not far away. And they spew bundles of fiery streaks.

They were howling overhead this morning when I stood in line for water. The sky was full of bloody clouds. Smoke and steam rising over the center of town. The lack of water brings us out of our holes. People come creeping from all sides, miserable, dirty civilians, women with gray faces, mostly old—the young ones are kept hidden. Men with stubbly beards and white armbands to show they've surrendered stand and watch the soldiers fill bucket after bucket for their horses. Naturally the military always has priority. Still, there's never any quarrel. Quite the contrary: one time the handle broke while a civilian was using it, and a Russian nailed it right back together.

They're camped out in the garden plots, under the flowering trees. Fieldpieces mounted in the flower beds. Russians sleeping outside the sheds. Others give water to their horses, which are stabled inside the sheds. We're amazed to see so many women soldiers, with field tunics, skirts, berets, and insignia. They're regular infantry, no doubt about it. Most are very young—small, tough, their hair combed back smooth. They wash their things in tubs. Shirts and blouses dance together on hastily strung clotheslines. And overhead the organs howl away, their wall of thick black smoke cutting off the sky.

This morning was like yesterday. On my way home I ran into Herr Golz, loyal Nazi to the end. Now he's adapted. He spotted a Russian with bright rows of decorations on his breast, all wrapped in cellophane, and asked, "Ribbons?" (It's the same word in Russian and German, as he informed me, not realizing how much Russian I understand.) He gave me a little notebook, a German-Russian dictionary for soldiers, assuring me he could get hold of some more. I've looked it over; it has a lot of very useful words like *bacon*, *flour*, *salt*. Some other important words are missing, however, like *fear* and *basement*. Also the word for *dead*, which I never used on my travels but which I find myself reaching for quite often in recent conversations. Instead I substitute the word *kaput*—which works well for a lot of other things, too. The dictionary also contains a number of expressions for which I have no use at all now, despite my best intentions, such as "Hands up!" and "Halt!" At most we might hear those words being used on us.

Getting back to Saturday evening, the twenty-eighth. Around 8:00 P.M. Petka and his entourage left—official business of some sort. Petka mumbled something about coming back soon, in a low voice, so the first lieutenant wouldn't hear. Then he crushed my fingers again and tried to look me in the eye.

Incidentally, the officer's stars seem to have strangely little effect

on the enlisted men. I was disappointed. No one felt any need to restrain their happy mood because of Anatol's rank, and he himself simply sat alongside the others very peacefully and laughed and carried on with them, filling up their glasses and sharing his pot of liquor. I'm worried about my taboo. Apparently the strict Prussian order of ranks we're so used to doesn't apply here. The ones with stars don't come from any special class; they're by no means superior to the others in background or education. Nor do they have any special code of honor—especially when it comes to women. Western traditions of chivalry and gallantry never made it to Russia. As far as I know, they never had any jousting tournaments, no minnesingers or troubadours, no train-carrying pages. So why should they be expected to be chivalrous? They're all peasants, including Anatol. Of course, my Russian isn't good enough for me to tell from a given man's speech and vocabulary what his education or profession is. And I've scarcely been able to speak with any of them about literature and art. But I have the feeling that, deep inside, all these simple, indiscriminating men feel insecure in front of me, despite their blustering. They're children of the people.

Still, at least Anatol is a full two hundred pounds. So maybe his size will help even if his stars don't. In any case, I'm not changing my mind. He moves like a comet, with a tail of young people, boy-like soldiers, who in the meantime have found shelter in the apartment abandoned by the pudding sisters. One of Anatol's entourage really is just a child—Vanya, sixteen years old, with a stern face and intense black eyes. The widow takes me aside and whispers that he could have been the one, back then on the stairs; his face was small and smooth, his body slender. For his part, Vanya doesn't show any sign of recognition, although that's to be expected since he never even saw the woman he took in such a clumsy, juvenile fashion—he only felt her. Still, I have the sense he

knows who she is. After all, he heard her voice; the widow told me how she sobbed and begged. In any event, Vanya follows her around like a puppy, carrying fresh glasses and washing out the dirty ones.

I drank a lot that evening. I wanted to drink a lot, wanted to get drunk, and I did. That's why I only remember bits and scratches: Anatol next to me again, his weapons and things scattered around the bed . . . All his buttons and all his bags and everything in them . . . Friendly, helpful, childlike . . . But born in May—a Taurus, a bull . . . I felt like I was a doll, no sensation, shaken, shoved around, made of wood . . . All of a sudden someone is standing in the dark room, shining a flashlight. And Anatol's yelling at him roughly, shakes his fists, and the man disappears. Or did I dream that?

Early in the morning I see Anatol standing by the window, looking outside. A reddish glow is flaming into the room, a yellow light tugs at the wallpaper. I hear the katyushas howling away, as Anatol stretches his arms and says, "*Petukh paiot.*" The cock is singing. It's true—between shells you can actually hear a rooster crowing down below.

As soon as Anatol left I got up, washed myself in the bath with what water was left, scrubbed down the table, swept away the cigarette butts, herring tails, and horse droppings, rolled up the carpet, and stowed it in the chest. I looked in the next room, where the widow had set up camp under the protection of her tenant; both were snoring away. Ice-cold air was blowing through the cardboard on the windows. I felt rested and refreshed after five hours of deep sleep. A little hungover, but nothing more. I'd made it through another night.

I figured out that it was Sunday, April 29. But Sunday is a word for civilians, at the moment without meaning. There are no Sundays on the front.

have priority. But no sooner are we outside than an officer calls out after my Pole, "Hey, you! What are you doing, going with a German?" The Pole winks at me, hangs back, and meets up with me at the pump, where he serves himself ahead of everyone else. The people in line stare at me with bitterness and contempt. But no one says a word.

The Pole has a violent temper. On the way home he picks a fight with some soldier over nothing, snorting and roaring and swinging his fists. Then a spasm runs through his entire body, and he calms down, catches up with me, and points to the back of his head, explaining that he took a bullet there during the fighting at Stalingrad. Ever since then he's been prone to these rages and violent fits. He often has no idea what he does in his fury; he never used to be like that. I look at him, uneasy, and hurry ahead with my two buckets. He really does have the thick copper Stalingrad medal, hanging from a colorful ribbon wrapped in cellophane. I'm happy when we get to our building and he slips away. Clearly the new order won't take effect as long as their soldiers are billeted in abandoned apartments right next to our own.

Thursday, May 3,
with the rest of Wednesday

Something comic: While I was at the pump with the Pole, the widow had a visit from Petka, my ex-rapist with the blond bristle, the man who wrecked our sewing machine. But he must have forgotten all about this drunken exploit; the widow says he was exceedingly friendly. He showed up luging a beautiful yellow

leather, Petka-sized trunk that another man would have had trouble lifting. Spreading out the contents—mostly clothes—he indicated to the widow that she could take whatever she wanted, that everything was meant for her—while "nothing, nothing, nothing" was to go to me, as he made clear. But that was more for show than anything else. After all, what was to prevent the widow from giving me whatever she liked the minute he was gone? He had probably wanted to play Santa Claus for me—one final, hasty attempt to snatch some more of what he calls love, because he let the widow know that his whole troop was moving on and actually said farewell—"Do *svidanya*."

With a good deal of self-restraint, the widow declined Petka's largesse and sent him on his way, together with his trunk. Not that she'd been plagued by moral scruples: "Why should I be? After all, they carried off my trunk, too, didn't they?" And that from a woman of proper bourgeois breeding, from a good German home. No, her reservations were of a purely practical nature: "I can't wear those things. The trunk was obviously taken from one of the neighboring buildings. If I went out with those clothes on I'd risk running into their rightful owner." So she limited her take to two pairs of shoes—she couldn't resist, they were exactly her size. Brown street shoes, nondescript and easy to disguise with a little black polish, according to the widow. She wanted to give one of the pairs to me; goodness knows I could use them, since the only shoes I have are the ones I'm wearing. Unfortunately they're too small.

The afternoon passed quietly. We didn't see any of our acquaintances, not Anatol or Petka, Grisha, Vanya, Yasha, or Andrei the schoolteacher. The major, however, showed up promptly at sunset, along with his chubby Uzbek shadow and someone else—thank God not the surly lieutenant with the hiking pole. No, this time it was a little red-cheeked boy in a blue sailor's suit,

eighteen years old, Soviet navy. Apparently they've taken Berlin by sea as well. We certainly have enough lakes around. The sailor looks like a schoolboy; he smiles innocently from ear to ear as he tells me quietly he has a favor to ask.

Please, go ahead! I call him over to the window, through which we can still smell the stench of burning. And then the little sailor asks politely and very like a child whether I would be so kind as to find a girl for him, a nice clean girl, respectable and kind. He'd bring her food, too.

I stare at the boy, trying not to laugh out loud. Isn't that the limit—now they're demanding that their sexual spoils be tidy and well behaved and have a noble character to boot! Next thing they'll be asking women to present a police affidavit testifying to their clean record before they're allowed to bed down with the victors! But this one just gazes at me with hopeful eyes and looks so tender-skinned, so much like *mama's* little boy, that I can't be mad at him. So I shake my head with the proper regret and explain to him that I haven't been living in the building very long, that I hardly know a soul, and that, sad to say, I don't know where he might find such a nice girl. He takes it all in, visibly disappointed. I have an urge to check behind his ears to see if he's still wet. But I know that even the most seemingly gentle Russian can turn into a savage beast if you rub him the wrong way or offend his self-esteem. I just want to know why they keep expecting me to play matchmaker. Probably because I'm the only one around who understands them when they say what they're after.

My sailor boy held out his little paw to thank me and then took off. But why are these youngsters so eager in their pursuit of anything female? At home they'd probably wait a little longer, though it's true that most of them marry earlier than our men. They probably want to prove themselves to their older comrades, like

sixteen-year-old Vanya, the stairwell rapist, to show that they're real men, too.

Anyway, the unbridled raping sprees of the first few days are over. The spoils are now in short supply. I hear that other women have done the same thing I have, that they're now spoken for and therefore taboo. The widow has more details concerning the two drink-and-be-merry sisters: evidently they're for officers only, who don't take kindly to low-ranking poachers trespassing on their private preserve. As a rule, those who don't have marching orders in their pockets look for a more permanent arrangement, something exclusive, and they're prepared to pay. They've realized how bad off we are when it comes to food. And the language of bread and bacon and herring—their principal gifts—is internationally understood.

As for me, the major has brought all sorts of things; I can't complain. First he brought a pack of candles under his coat. Then more cigars for Pauli. Next the Uzbek showed up, heavily loaded down, and started pulling out one thing after another: a can of milk, a tin of meat, a side of bacon covered with salt, and a lump of butter wrapped in cloth—at least three pounds of it, all smeared with tiny wool fibers that the widow picked out right away. Then, when we were sure nothing more was coming, he fished out a pillowcase filled with sugar, probably five pounds' worth! Princely wedding gifts indeed. Herr Pauli and the widow were astounded.

The widow dashed off to the kitchen cupboard to squirrel away the presents. Herr Pauli and the major had a friendly smoke, and I sat there brooding. This is a new situation. By no means could it be said that the major is raping me. One cold word and he'd probably go his way and never come back. So I am placing myself at his service of my own accord. Am I doing

it because I like him or out of a need for love? God forbid! For the moment I've had it up to here with men and their male desire; I can't imagine ever longing for any of that again. Am I doing it for bacon, butter, sugar, candles, canned meat? To some extent I'm sure I am. I didn't like having to sponge off the widow. I'm happy to be able to give her something of mine—through the major, of course. That way I feel more independent, can eat with a clearer conscience. In addition, I like the major, and the less he wants from me as a man, the more I like him as a person. And he won't be wanting much, I can tell. His face is pale. His knee wound is causing him trouble. He's probably not so much after sexual contact as human companionship, female company—and I'm more than willing to give him that. For out of all the male beasts I've seen these past few days he's the most bearable, the best of the lot. Moreover, I can control him, something I didn't dare do with Anatol, not that easily, though Anatol was extremely good-natured with me. But he was so avid, such a bull, so strong! Without meaning to he might give me a little box on the ear . . . and I'd end up spitting out a tooth—just like that, from sheer excess of strength, sheer bearishness. But I can actually talk with the major. Which still isn't an answer to the question of whether I should now call myself a whore, since I am essentially living off my body, trading it for something to eat.

On the other hand, writing this makes me wonder why I'm being so moralistic and acting as if prostitution were so much beneath my dignity. After all, it's an old, venerable line of work, practiced in the highest social circles. Actually, I've had only one conversation with a bona fide member of the profession. It was on a ship in the Mediterranean, not far off the coast of Africa; I had gotten up very early and was wandering the deck as the sailors were scrubbing the planks. Another woman was up as

well, someone I didn't recognize; she was plump, modestly dressed, and smoking a cigarette. I joined her at the railing and started a conversation. She knew a little English and addressed me as "Miss." Smiling, she offered me a cigarette. Later the head steward informed me in a dramatic whisper that the woman was a "bad person," that they'd had to take her along but only let her on deck early in the morning, before the passengers were usually up. I never saw her again, but I can still see her plump, friendly female face. What is that supposed to mean, anyway—a bad person?

But morality aside, could I actually slip into that profession and still be pleased with myself? No, never. It goes against my nature, it wounds my self-esteem, destroys my pride—and makes me physically miserable. So there's no need to worry. I'll be overjoyed to get out of this line of work, if that's what I have to call my present activity, as soon as I can earn my bread in some more pleasant way better suited to my pride.

Around 10:00 P.M. the major deposits his Uzbek in the room behind the kitchen. Then once again a belt rattles against the bedpost, a revolver dangles down, a soldier's cap crowns the post. But the candle goes on burning, and we talk at length. That is, the major talks, telling me about his family and showing me some small snapshots he carries in his wallet. There's one of his mother, who has wild, slanting black eyes against a white head of hair. She comes from the south of the country, where the Tatars settled ages ago; she married an ash-blond Siberian. Judging by appearance, the major takes after his mother, but now I realize that his general demeanor comes from this mix of northern and southern temperaments—his mercurial character, the alternation of speed and gravity, of fire and melancholy, the lyrical upswings and the sudden dark moods that follow. He was married but divorced a long time ago—he himself admits he was a difficult partner. No

children, which is unusual for a Russian. I know this because they always ask if I have any, then shake their heads in wonder, amazed that there are so few children here and so many childless women. They also have a hard time accepting the fact that the widow has no children.

The major shows me one more photo, of a good-looking girl with scrupulously parted hair, the daughter of a Polish professor in whose house the major was billeted last winter.

He starts to grill me about my own situation, but I answer evasively. I don't want to talk about that. Then he wants to know about my schooling and is full of respect when I tell him about the *Gymnasium* and the languages I speak and my travels across Europe. "You have good qualifications," he says, appreciatively. Then all of a sudden he wonders why German girls are all so slender, with no fat—had we really had that little to eat? And after that he starts going on about what it would be like if he took me back to Russia, if I were his wife, if I could meet his parents. He promises to fatten me up with chicken and cream; they used to live very well at his home before the war . . . I let him go on fantasizing. It's clear how impressed he is by my "education," though admittedly his Russian standards are pretty modest. My schooling makes me desirable in his eyes. That's a far cry from our German men, for whom being well read does little to enhance a woman's appeal, at least in my experience. In fact, my instinct has always been to play down my intelligence for them, to make a pretense of ignorance—or at least to keep quiet until I know them better. A German man always wants to be smarter, always wants to be in a position to teach his little woman. But that's something Soviet men don't know about—the idea of the little woman tending her cozy home. In the Soviet Union, education is highly valued: it's so rare, so sought after, and so much in demand that it has a special aura, particularly with the authorities. It also brings special pay,

which is what the major is getting at when he explains to me that I would have no difficulty finding a "qualified job" in his homeland. Thank you very much, I know you mean well, but I've had my fill of this Russian brand of schooling. Too many night classes. And as soon as they're finally over I intend to reclaim the evenings for myself.

Once again he's singing, quietly, melodically. I enjoy hearing it. He's upstanding, frank, and clean. But he's also distant and alien and so unfinished. Whereas we Westerners are old and experienced and tremendously clever—and now no more than dirt beneath their boots.

All I remember about the night is that I slept deeply and soundly, that I even had nice dreams, and that it took me a long time to ferret the Russian word for "dream" out of the major—I spent much of the morning trying to convey the concept some other way: "movies in the head," "pictures when your eyes are closed," "not real things in sleep." Another word missing from my soldier's dictionary.

At six in the morning the major knocked on the door of the back room for the Uzbek, but there was no reply. He called me over, anxious and upset, worried that something might have happened to the Asian, that he might have fainted or been attacked or even murdered. We both rattled the handle and knocked on the wooden panel. Nothing, not a sound, but it was clear that the key was still in the door. No one, not even the Uzbek, could sleep that soundly. I ran into the front room, shook the widow awake, and whispered our concerns in her ear.

"Come on," she yawned. "He just wants to stay here alone and then try his luck with you himself."

Herr Pauli makes frequent mention of the widow's female intuition and "feminine wiles." But in this case I don't think she's right, and I just laugh at the idea.

Finally the major leaves, after repeated glances at his watch. (A Russian make, as he proved to me when we first met, by showing me the manufacturer's mark.)

Scarcely is he out the door but who appears in the hall, well rested and smartly dressed but Mr. Uzbek himself!

He moves in my direction, looking at me with his swollen little eyes, now strangely clouded over, and pulls a pair of silk stockings from his coat pocket, still in their paper wrapping. He hands them to me, saying in broken Russian, "You want? I give to you. You understand?"

Clear as day, my chubby dear! I fling the front door wide open and show him out. "And now be gone," I say, in German. He understands and saunters off, giving me a last reproachful look as he stuffs the stockings back in his pocket.

One-nothing for female intuition!

At night, between Thursday, May 3,
and Friday, May 4

A little after three in the morning, still dark. I'm all alone in bed, writing by candlelight—a luxury I can afford because the major has provided us with an ample supply of candles.

All through Thursday our apartment was bustling with activity. Three of Anatol's men showed up without warning. They sat around the table chewing the fat, raucous as ever, smoked, spat on the floor, and mucked around with the gramophone. They couldn't get enough of the C&A Textile Company advertising jingle. When I asked—in a panic—about Anatol, they shrugged

their shoulders but hinted that he was likely to be back. Before I forget: the regimental baker reappeared wearing his white smock and repeated his stock question: didn't I know of a girl for him? He'd give us flour, much flour.

No, I don't know of a girl for the baker. The drink-and-be-merry sisters are clearly spoken for by the officers. Stinchen is safely hidden away. Lately I haven't heard or seen a thing about either of the concierge's daughters; I assume they've found shelter somewhere. One of the two bakery salesgirls has left us and is said to be hiding in another basement. The other is being kept out of sight in the small room behind the shop—so the widow has learned—where they've blocked the door with a large chest and covered the window with Venetian blinds. It must be pretty dark and gloomy for her. In theory that leaves the young woman who looks like a young man—twenty-four years old and lesbian. From what we've heard she's managed to escape the Ivans up to now. She goes around in a gray suit with a belt and tie, and a man's hat pulled down over her face. As it is, she's always worn her hair short in back. So she slips right past the Russians, who think she's a man; they aren't familiar with such borderline types. She even goes for water and stands in line at the pump, smoking a cigarette.

Pauli keeps cracking jokes about her, how he hopes she gets a proper reschooling, how it would be a good deed to send some of the boys her way, Petka, for instance, with his lumberjack paws. Slowly but surely we're starting to view all the raping with a sense of humor—gallows humor.

We have ample grounds for doing so, too, as the woman with the scabby eczema discovered this morning, contrary to my prediction. She was on her way upstairs to visit some neighbors when two men jumped her and dragged her into one of the abandoned apartments. There she had to take it twice, or really one and a half times, as she explained rather enigmatically. She told us that one