

Five

“OPEN UP!”

*I*t was hard to get my strength back even though I was living at home again. Food rations decreased almost weekly, until we ate only one meal a day. Everyone had to tighten his belt because so much food was being sent to the German soldiers on the front lines.

Brown-shirted storm troopers were marching through the towns, terrorizing everyone and delighting in making life miserable for the Jews, whether by teasing and taunting or by acts of brutality. They ridiculed and beat Jews everywhere and randomly hauled off individuals or families to prison. Cattle cars were filled daily as trainloads of frightened Jews were shipped to secret destinations throughout the tranquil German countryside.

Pastor Hornig said that some anonymous church member had paid for all my classes and books at the Konig Wilhelm Gymnasium* in Breslau. However, Mother and I were sure that it was the Hornigs themselves who had made the financial sacrifice. The tension was thick both at school and at home, for my three aunts bickered endlessly with one another.

As I walked to the gymnasium, I saw bold signs proclaiming “No Jews Allowed” on nearly every store. Other signs warned Germans to stay away from Jews, who had been banned from theaters, parks, and all recreational areas. Everywhere I looked, I saw anti-Jewish slogans and posters. Many of the posters had the photograph of a

* Secondary school for students preparing to enter university.

Jew who had just been arrested for some concocted crime. In sharp contrast, flashing neon signs illuminated Hitler's picture.

The Nazi flag was hung proudly outside of most homes in Breslau. Inside, Germans were required to have a picture of the Führer somewhere in the house. Hitler was pressing the Christian pastors to have his picture placed at the front of church altars.

With so many German men on the battlefield, the women had taken over their jobs. The streets were strangely empty of most automobiles, for they all were being used for military purposes. As a result, streetcars were as packed as the railroad cars to concentration camps.

Hitler's contorted and strained voice blasted hate propaganda from the radio almost daily; he frantically blamed "international financial Jewry" for the war and warned Germans that every living Jew was an archenemy of the Reich. Jews had absolutely no rights and weren't entitled to own property.

More and more Jews trembled behind locked doors. We learned that a brother and a sister of Mother's had been picked up and taken to a camp. Another brother and his wife took their own lives rather than face a concentration camp ordeal. It was inevitable that the random confiscation of Jews should hit our house that winter.

Mother tried to be a peacemaker for her three quarreling sisters. However, when she attempted to help them, they would gang up on her because of her growing love for Jesus, who Pastor Hornig had told her was the Jewish Messiah. Mother could no longer deny the power of Christ in our lives. She had to talk about Him; it was a natural overflow of love. But her sisters insisted that it was Jesus' followers who had hounded the Jews since the first century. They claimed the Nazis were all Christians on the basis of them being Gentiles and having attended Catholic or Lutheran churches. Many of those very churches had now sold out to the Führer, allowing his picture to be on their church altars. It made no sense to my aunts to worship Jesus, a phony dead man in whose name millions of Jews had been persecuted, tortured, and killed.

"But those people aren't really Christians!" I insisted, not fully grasping the accuracy of my statement. "They just give real

Christians a bad name.”

“Nonsense!” insisted Aunt Elsbeth. “All Gentiles are Christians.”

They either couldn’t or wouldn’t understand. Nor would they believe Pastor Hornig when he told us that numerous Christians all over Europe were actually helping the Jews at the risk of their own lives. Ultimately, many of the believers went into concentration camps themselves just because they had aided a Jew somewhere in the Nazi world.

“You and your mother are traitors to our people!” Aunt Friede said at least once a day. “You should be ashamed of yourselves.”

Finally Mother would be quiet, but every night her sisters saw her open her New Testament and read some more. They paced and muttered to themselves about the tragedy of their sister’s “blindness.”

Since we shared the kitchen with so many others, we usually ate at about 9:00 P.M. As we sat down to our meal one night early that spring, we heard an abrupt knock on our door. Then came the familiar “Open up!” that we had heard several times in our building. Two more forceful knocks followed.

Mother went to the door, resigned to opening it and facing the Nazis. She looked into the cold eyes of two Gestapo agents, who greeted her with the familiar “Heil Hitler!”

Mother didn’t respond, but she opened the door to let them in. My aunts and I sat frozen in our chairs as the two Gestapo men marched in, proudly wearing their Nazi uniforms and swastikas.

“We are here to arrest Käte Suessman. Which one of you is she?”

“It is I,” Aunt Käte replied. “What have I done?”

Relief and horror were written on Mother’s face. At least they didn’t want me or her other two sisters, who were in poor health.

“Does it matter what the reason is for a Jew’s arrest?” the self-appointed Gestapo spokesman answered. “Jews need only exist; that is reason enough for their arrest. You have five minutes to fill one bag with things and that is all. Hurry now.”

I pushed aside my plate of lettuce. *Dear Jesus*, I pleaded silently, *Aunt Käte cannot handle prison life. Just take her swiftly, dear Jesus.* Then I remembered that Aunt Käte did not yet know Jesus, and

conflicting thoughts swept over me.

"I insist that you tell me why she's being arrested," Mother said, "and why are you taking her instead of me?"

"I only pick you people up," the Gestapo agent replied coldly, his arms folded impatiently in front of him. "I just follow my orders. I don't ask questions and neither should you. Your neighbors, the Ephraims, are also being taken today. You can check at the police station tomorrow; they might tell you where they have been sent."

Aunt Käte filled a brown bag with some small essentials and then bundled up to leave for her unknown destination. All the rest of us choked back our tears, although Aunt Käte was being very brave as she faced the ordeal. Lining up at the door, we each gave her a hug before the Gestapo agents pushed her out into the hall. Across from us, we saw the whole Ephraim family silently gathering a few belongings. It made no sense to us that some Jews were being picked up while others weren't. Some family members were taken while others were left behind, even though for all Jews the everyday life anywhere in Germany was like living in a prison. But the selection for arrests seemed to be done at random, perhaps on the whim of the Gestapo officer who was in charge for the day.

Aunt Käte was led down the stairs and put into a Gestapo wagon while Aunt Friede, Aunt Elsbeth, Mother, and I gazed sadly out our front window at the agony below. Normally an extremely nervous lady, Aunt Käte was unbelievably brave. We stared blankly as the wagon drove off down the street and grew small in the distance. Finally the war and Hitler's personal vengeance against the Jewish people had visited my immediate family.

That month Bulgaria was peacefully occupied. Then Germany invaded Yugoslavia, and soon tanks would roll into Athens. Hitler gave an injunction demanding merciless harshness in the war. Whereas at one time the German code of ethics had protected civilians and property, now everyone and everything was to be destroyed by the German soldiers. But every such act of brutality only increased the Allied assault on Germany, so in the end every German paid for the Führer's madness.

All internal affairs were being handed over to Martin Bormann, who began to carry out a ruthless assault on the Christian churches in Germany. More than ever we feared for the Hornigs and the believers at our church, for they would be prime targets for Bormann’s men because of their interest and love for the Jewish people. Gestapo agents always were planted in the church services now.

The fresh breezes of spring 1941 brought us little relief from our agony. I gave serious thought to dropping out of school because of the rampant anti-Semitism at the gymnasium. My teachers followed Nazi orders to be hard on all students who weren’t Aryans, and the other young people didn’t want to risk being my friend. I felt terribly lonely there—for a fourteen-year-old without a friend is like a violin without a bow.

One by one the apartments in our Jewish tenement were emptying as the arrests increased. In June, we heard the dreaded knock again. This time they came for Aunt Friede, who was seventy-three years old. We tried very hard to swallow our tears again, for we knew it would only upset Aunt Friede more to see us crying over her. Again, no explanation was given and no destination revealed.

A great part of the terrifying fear related to the arrests was the unknown factor of the prisoner’s destination. Was it jail or a concentration camp? Was it a work camp or a gas chamber or a firing squad? One seldom knew until sometimes family members received a postcard from prison or perhaps word was smuggled out that the person had been killed. The fate of millions would never be known. They would simply become statistics.

We sat quietly as Aunt Friede gathered a handful of belongings. Mother smiled bravely at me, trying to comfort me from across the room.

“She is a sick, old lady,” Mother protested to the Gestapo agents. “It would be better for you to take me. I am strong and healthy.”

“My orders are to pick up Friede Markuse,” one of the men replied.

“I will be back in a week,” Aunt Friede said stubbornly.

Suddenly bedbugs, crowded ghettos, and meager rations didn’t matter at all. All that mattered was staying together, praying to God,

and trusting that He had everything under control. My heart cried for the Jews who had no faith in God, their Deliverer. They would die shaking their fist at God or Jesus or anyone who happened to be there.

We kissed Aunt Friede and watched the old, white-haired lady hobble down the street on her arthritic feet. Balancing herself with her cane, she was helped into the police wagon—a pathetic and haunting sight that burned itself into my memory.

Two weeks later the ugly scene repeated as Aunt Elsbeth was picked up. The Gestapo virtually pushed our door down and then screamed at us.

“Which one of you is Elsbeth Suessman?”

Aunt Elsbeth's feeble heart nearly stopped beating as she was ordered to gather her things. Then the Gestapo agents labeled some of her few remaining possessions.

“These are now the property of the state,” they said. “We will pick them up later. You are not to touch them, do you understand?”

“This woman has a bad heart,” Mother said as they waited for Aunt Elsbeth. “She is under a doctor's care and must receive constant medical attention. Will she get that where you are taking her?”

“Shut up!” came the reply. Impatiently they paced the apartment as Aunt Elsbeth gathered her things.

“That's enough!” one said. “Come with us now!”

“Aunt Elsbeth was white with fear, but resistance would do no good.

One by one or all at once, families disappeared and were separated in the ordeal of Nazi Germany in 1941. We never saw Aunt Käte, Aunt Friede, or Aunt Elsbeth again.

Hitler's hunger for power and blood had no end. Next he invaded Russia in an effort to eliminate the “Eastern menace” of Bolshevism. The Führer didn't realize, of course, that this was a fatal miscalculation. A world war was now inevitable. America pledged economic aid, and the Allies started fighting back even harder.

Hitler was sure the Russian campaign would be swift, a fair weather war. Thus the Russian winter became as much his enemy as

the Russian soldier. More than 750,000 German soldiers would die from the winter elements as they became bogged down in their advance on Moscow. Because of the devastating defeat, the Jews would suffer even more and be made to pay for Hitler's mistake.

In that summer of 1941, Mother and I grew even closer as our safety grew yet more precarious. At least once a day we remarked how glad we were that Hella had gotten to England safely before the war began. Almost all of our friends had been arrested, although the Sandbergs were still in our building and Mother's two Hebrew Christian friends, Mrs. Czech and Mrs. Wolf, remained free.

Off and on Mother returned to forced labor, usually doing a man's heavy work to earn her pitifully small amount of welfare money. We tenderly savored the time we had together, dreaming of and imagining better days when we could return to the weekly church activities. We looked ahead longingly to the time when Mother would play with her grandchildren or even marry again.

"Mother, there's no terror like that which comes out of the sky in the middle of the night," I said as we sipped tea one cool summer evening. In Berlin the roar of an engine meant a plane would drop its bombs on us. It was fun at first; we made a game of it, and we knew we probably could skip school the next day. But then plaster began to fall into the shelters, and bomb fragments came in. Finally, the bombs exploded in some of the shelters, but they always missed mine, even though several buildings were leveled just a block away. "God must look favorably on Breslau. Mother, do you have any doubt that Jesus has been protecting you and me?"

"None at all," she answered pensively. "It was very difficult sorting through my feelings when Friede, Käte, and Elsbeth were here, but Jesus knows I don't have to give Him a parade and that I can express my appreciation silently and inwardly. You still have a child's exuberance, Anita. You are so expressive and so filled with hope. Don't lose it, even when things get worse."

"When will they?"

"I don't know, Anita, but I think Hitler made a mistake by declaring war on Russia. Someday the Americans will enter the war

and then Germany will be finished—but not before she gets what she deserves for the pain she creates for Europe. Pastor Hornig said God would judge her for her terrible treatment of the Jews, because the Bible says that will always happen to those who mistreat God's people. I believe it. But, for the madness of the guilty the innocent also suffer.

“Just so we can be together.” It was my sustaining hope.

“That we cannot be sure of. Everyday families are separated; there is no pattern to the arrests, you know.”

Mother paused a moment and then she said, “Anita, I have heard from your father. He is sorry for the way things have turned out. He gave me his telephone number, just in case there is anything he can do if you or I get arrested. I do not think he tries to trick us, Anita. I think his sorrow is real for leaving us, and he may be able to help you if you should be left alone.”

Bitterness ate at me like a cancer. Father could have prevented a lot of our hardship by sticking with us, yet the awful pressures put on him by the Nazis made it understandable that he had buckled under them and run for his life.

Reaching into her purse, Mother took out a piece of paper and handed it to me. “Your father is going to remarry soon, Anita. Here is the telephone number where you might reach him.”

I reluctantly took the paper.

“I pray I will never have to use it,” I said quietly.

That week a new family, Mr. and Mrs. Rosen and their son, Joachim, moved into the Ephraims' old apartment. Joachim was my age, and he and his parents were Orthodox Jews, just as the Sandbergs were.

Joachim quickly became a light in my life. We hovered between childhood and young adulthood; and though our games were often childish, our feelings for one another bordered on the adult level. At fourteen, we both struggled to leave our child worlds behind, yet it was only our fantasy world that made Nazi Germany tolerable. So we clung to childhood while at the same time we struggled to enter adulthood and understand what was happening to us.

I feared I would lose Joachim if I talked too much about Jesus; I bit

my tongue every time I wanted to tell him about Christ. So many of my friends had come and gone. I didn't fit into either the Aryan or the Nazi world; and my Jewish friends who were not believers accepted me only up to a point. Then fear, mistrust, or prejudice would enter, thwarting any real friendship. I knew I possessed the capacity to be a good friend; I only wanted the chance to prove it.

I prayed that Jesus would understand my cowardice, but in place of His peace I felt a nagging, haunting tug at my heart that seemed to say I must forsake everyone—even Mother—if I was to follow Him. Bible lessons I had learned from Pastor Hornig confirmed that. Christ would never permit me to place Him second or third in my life.

Joachim knew I believed in Jesus, but as long as I didn't talk about it he didn't mind. He was sure it was a passing fantasy and that the war would convince me that the Messiah could not have come yet.

“If Jesus is the Messiah,” Joachim said one summer afternoon, “where is the peace He is supposed to bring? The whole world is engulfed in war. Your Jesus was an imposter. Besides, it's ridiculous to say that God would have a son.” And with a shaking, angry voice, Joachim tried to change the subject.

I took a hundred questions a week to Pastor Hornig, for I was attending confirmation classes at his home as often as I dared venture out into Breslau's chaotic streets. After class, I always managed to linger as long as I could to ask him for answers to some of Joachim's questions.

“The peace the Messiah brings,” Pastor Hornig explained, “may be a peace that is within the heart. But the Bible says that someday Jesus will establish His kingdom on the earth, and then there will be literal peace, and the lion will lie down by the lamb. At that time Jesus will sit on the throne of David in Jerusalem, and the whole nation of Israel will acknowledge Him as the Savior and Messiah! What a glorious day that will be!”

“It's difficult for me to keep my faith hidden in my heart,” I said to the pastor.

“But too many believers make the mistake of talking too much about

Christ to their Jewish friends," he answered. "Sometimes we must win them to Jesus simply by loving them and by praying for them, Anita. We must let God impress on them their need for Christ and not ramble on about our faith if it offends them. When they see that our lives are significantly different, they will begin to ask questions. It will be like that with Joachim. I believe that is why you have been left in Germany, Anita, so you can be an effective witness by your life. Hella could not. You must show others that you have God's peace when the world around us goes to pieces. Don't ever let Satan take away your peace and joy. Remember that you are Satan's special target because you can bring hope to God's own people. I am convinced that both you and your mother will influence many Jews before the war is over. Every day my hope dims a little more for getting the two of you out of Germany. God seems to be impressing me with the fact that you and your mother must remain and be witnesses here."

Pastor Hornig's words about our staying in Germany confirmed the feeling in my own heart.

"Why is it the Jewish people seem to suffer the most?" I asked. "Is it because we killed Jesus?"

"Our *sin* killed Jesus, Anita! It was all part of God's plan of salvation that Jesus die for our sins. Besides, the Romans could have stopped the crucifixion but they didn't. They let an innocent man die, and they knew it."

Joachim and I spent the waning weeks of summer together. We knew that even darker days lay ahead, for I would soon return to the gymnasium and he to his all-Jewish school. The tenement baked in the August sun, and our playground was often the dirty halls or smelly basement of our building. Joachim's faded yellow Star of David instantly branded him as a Jew wherever he went, so he usually chose to stay indoors.

"We will always be friends," Joachim told me one day as we sat on the front steps of our building. "When the war is over I want to take you to the theater and other nice places. If we ever get separated, will you promise to write me?"

"I promise," I said, "but we need to pray that the war ends before

we are separated. Look at our empty ghetto," I continued, pointing to the deserted streets. "Almost everyone is gone."

How I wanted Joachim to know that we worshiped the same God and hoped in the same Messiah! We were so close in our beliefs and yet so far away.

But life in the steaming ghetto was bearable as long as I had Mother and now Joachim. At night when I put my head on my pillow, an unexplainable peace came over me. Perhaps it was just a secure feeling because I was loved by Mother, Pastor Hornig, the believers at the church, and Joachim. Whatever it was, I felt sure God was giving it to me as a special gift. It was His way of compensating for my life in Germany under Hitler. Perhaps it was God's still, small voice saying, "I love you, Anita Dittman, and I am demonstrating my love by sending people to you who love you very much. Even if you are left alone, I will show my love for you in special ways, for I will never leave you."

With that quiet assurance, I would fall asleep and rest peacefully, even with the strange conviction that darker days lay ahead for Germany—and for Mother and me.

Life at the gymnasium was bearable only because my nineteen-year-old teacher, Helga Fritsch, secretly hated the Nazis and chose not to persecute me. In fact, she even took the risk of inviting me to a party at her home during the fall of 1941. I saw it as another manifestation of God's goodness to me amid life's turmoil.

Pastor Hornig continued to make sure that I had enough money to buy the expensive school books and keep up my tuition payments. I was even more convinced that the money came directly from his family.

Mother frequently arrived home well after dark from laboring on her assigned jobs. Often her earnings were just pennies an hour. It was hard for me to come home to a dark, empty apartment, but perhaps God was preparing me for long, lonely days ahead.

As fall turned into early winter, two startling events occurred: Pearl Harbor was attacked and Hitler declared war on the United States. Mother's expression as she came home on the night when we

heard the news revealed to me the seriousness of the situation. Just as Mother predicted, America would enter the war and Germany would really be finished. It was no longer a European war; it had become a world war. But every day that the battlefield got a little hotter for the German soldier, the persecution got more severe for the Jew.

“Joachim,” I exclaimed as we met in the hall that night, “have you heard the news? America is entering the war.”

“Maybe they will bring it to an end,” he said optimistically. “Perhaps it’s a blessing in disguise for us. Do you suppose so?”

But two days later, early in the morning before I left for school, the Gestapo marched into our building once again. We could hear their shiny Nazi boots stomping defiantly upstairs. As they walked down the long hall, all the residents shuddered in their rooms, each waiting for that fateful knock on the door. When the heavy footsteps marched past a room, the occupants breathed a sigh of relief but grieved for those who would hear the knock. Today the Nazis pounded on the Rosens’ door.

“Open up!” I heard the Gestapo agents yell. I didn’t dare open our door, but I glued my ear to the door to listen.

I heard the Gestapo men push their way into the Rosens’ apartment across the hall. “You have five minutes to gather



Anita with two of her friends from school.
Anita is on the right—14 1/2 years old—1941.

your things," came the familiar command. "The three of you will come with us to the synagogue. You each may fill one bag with possessions. Don't ask questions; just do as you are told, and it will be to your advantage."

"Mother," I whispered loudly as tears filled my eyes, "Joachim is being taken with the Rosens!"

"You knew it would happen, Anita." I agonized because I hadn't been able to share Christ with him, blaming myself for my unbelievable cowardice. No matter what Pastor Hornig had said about sharing Christ with our lives more than our words, it had been inexcusable of me not to try to make Joachim a believer.

"They're being taken to the synagogue," I said to Mother, who was getting ready for work. "I will visit him tonight, Mother. I must say goodbye to him."

Only one synagogue was left in Breslau after the burnings of 1938 and 1939. Recently it had been made into a prison for Jews who were waiting for processing before being sent off to the camps.

I could almost see Mother's thoughts written across her face. She had even formulated the words in her mind to insist that I not visit Joachim; but as she saw the tears run down my cheeks, she kept silent. In the end, she thought my fighting endurance would be my salvation. Why should she try to squelch it?

"Your furniture now belongs to the state," I heard one of the Gestapo men say to the Rosens.

I knew Joachim wanted to come and say goodbye but that it was impossible. The Gestapo had no time for silly sentimentality or young love. Arrests were a hurry-up-and-wait scene when Jews were hauled off to the processing centers, where they sometimes sat for days until they were deported to Bergen-Belsen, Treblinka, Dachau, Auschwitz, Theresienstadt, and other infamous camps.

The Rosens hardly said a word as they gathered their things.

Finally I heard their door close and all of them march down the hall. Running to the front window, I peeked out and watched them climb into the back of a snow-covered police wagon. Joachim didn't even look up my way, but I knew he didn't want to give me away or

even admit to our friendship for fear it would endanger me more. My eyes followed that familiar police wagon as it disappeared down the street again, leaving only a trail of vapor in the cold morning air.

After school that day, I made my way to the crumbling synagogue. During the long walk in the December cold, I considered the paradox of Nazi Germany. As Christmas approached, Germans celebrated the birth of Jesus; yet they worshiped the godless Nazis. The peace, joy, love, and hope that are synonymous with Christmas were strangely muted in Hitler's Germany, but few gave up the futile dream of the marvelous thousand-year Reich. Few were ready to allow the idea of defeat to enter their minds, even though smoke from burning Berlin rose five miles high in the sky and uncounted thousands of German soldiers were dying on the Russian battlefield. Routinely the Russians announced the names of their captured German prisoners over the airwaves of underground radio stations. The prisoners' relatives knew they would never see their husbands or brothers again when they heard their names; the camps in Siberia never sent anyone home.

I wrapped my scarf around my face as the bitter cold wind stung me. My fingers felt frozen, but it was a small price to pay to see Joachim just once more. I walked for nearly an hour before the synagogue came into view. I saw a hastily built fence around the structure, with a number of Gestapo and SS men standing guard.

Please, dear Jesus, allow me to go inside and see Joachim one more time, I prayed as I neared the building. I'll tell him about You this time. Maybe he's so scared he will listen now.

I stood for several long moments outside the gate leading to the synagogue, for once wanting to be noticed by the Gestapo so that I wouldn't have to call to them. As they chatted among themselves and moved frequently in and out of the building, I could hear them laughing and making jokes about the "pitiful specimens of humanity" that sat trapped inside the synagogue walls. Finally, one guard spotted me.

"What do you want, kid?" he shouted as I leaned on the entrance gate.

"I want to see my friend, Joachim Rosen. I have a very important

message for him. It will take only a minute.

He strolled toward me with a smirk on his face, "Where he's going, it doesn't matter if he gets your message." He balanced his rifle as though he were on the battlefield.

"Sir, you can be with me when I give him the message," I said politely. The guard looked at me through the bars of the gate for several long seconds. Since I still wasn't wearing the Star of David and because my hair had Aryan blond streaks, he obviously didn't recognize my Jewish heritage.

"What is the message? Give it to me, and I will determine if it is important or not."

"I just want to tell him that I love him," I said.

"Why would a pretty girl like you want to love a Jew?" he said angrily. "Don't you know it is a sin against the Reich to be a Jew-lover?"

My honesty had really gotten me into trouble. Germans could be shot on sight if they sympathized with the Jews.

"Well, hurry up about it!" he commanded as he opened the gate. "I will give you exactly three minutes to deliver your silly message, and then I will drag you out."

I ran past the guards, into the dimly lit synagogue. As I entered the front door, I stopped abruptly, hit by an air of despair. Hundreds of Jews sat on the straw-covered synagogue floor, while a dozen small children and babies cried because of the cold and confusion. Some people chatted with family or friends to ease their tension, but most stared blankly ahead. At least these prisoners had been taken as families, and they would probably be sent to prison together. Even the bearded old men and weary old women sat on the floor, resigned to their ominous fate.

By the time I saw the Rosens sitting together in a corner, I knew my three minutes were rapidly ticking away. Finally, Joachim spotted me in the doorway, and we ran toward each other and embraced.

"What are you doing here, Anita?" Joachim scolded. "How did you get in? Don't you know how dangerous this is?"

"I don't care. I just had to say goodbye. Jesus has assured me that He will protect you, Joachim! Maybe we could meet here in

Breslau when the war is over.”

“Sure, but you get out of here now, Anita! They could close the door and lock you in here, too. It would save them a trip to your apartment.” He put his arm around me and kissed me on the cheek.

“I love you, Anita. We’ll meet after the war is over. I’ll find you somehow. Go now.”

“Joachim, Jesus loves you very much. I do, too.”

He pushed me away as the Gestapo guard came toward me, took me by the arm, and escorted me out of the synagogue and to the front gate. As we reached the gate, he opened it and pushed me outside.

“Beat it, kid. By rights, I should turn you in; but since it’s almost Christmas, I won’t. Go home.”

Thank You Jesus, I prayed silently.

As I headed home against the strong wind, I thought of the wonderful months Joachim and I had together as friends. He would always have a special place in my heart. A strange sense of peace about him came over me and would always remain, even though I would never see him again. [Click here](#) to see more information on *Trapped in Hitler's Hell* or to order.

