**CHAPTER 44, PAGES 271-272**

We sat at long tables, our fingers sore from the repetitive motion of building small gauges and compasses for German planes. I was lucky I had found a pair of worn gloves that warmed at least part of my hands. Most of the girls around me had to suffer the bitter winter draft in the small shed where we worked, fumbling with the minute parts as they shivered, their fingers purple from cold.

I had been in Blechhammer for almost six months. I had befriended three girls from Czechoslovakia: blonde-haired sisters Sophia and Risa and a beautiful girl named Lotte whose family had owned a jewelry store. She spoke often of how her mother’s diamond necklace was torn from her throat by a female guard when they’d first arrived at the camp, and how her own ruby ring had been forced from her finger by other prisoners as they were sorted into lines. Lotte and her mother, Miriam, had managed to stay together. Miriam had to report to the kitchen when we were sent to build parts for the planes, and every evening when we returned to the barracks, Lotte cried with relief when she saw her. Miriam became a surrogate mother to us all, wrapping her arms around us at night and singing soft lullabies in Czech that made me long for home.

I felt the eyes of the *Oberfeldwebel* (Nazi sergeant) on us as we worked in silence. Lotte sat beside me, and I couldn’t help but notice how she kept dropping small bolts and screws onto the floor. Her cheeks were chapped and red, and her hands were so unsteady she kept rubbing them together and clutching them to her chest.

“Here,” I whispered, pulling off one of my gloves and handing it to her.

She took it gratefully, but immediately stiffened as the Oberfeldwebel walked behind us.