**CHAPTER 24, PAGES 160-161**

The gray-haired lieutenant moved among the groups of women, drawing closer to where we sat. He continued to hand out blankets that had arrived with two other trucks, bringing additional supplies. I noticed up close that the skin of his face was red and weathered like old leather and that white hair sprouted in tufts from his ears. He knelt beside each group, talking quietly to the female prisoners. His face reflected genuine concern.

He stopped before us and tipped his hat. “Hello,” he said in German with a strong Russian accent. “Are you comfortable? Do you need another blanket?”

I shook my head, but Gutcha shivered and the lieutenant wrapped a second blanket around her shoulders. “Can you tell me your names?” he asked.

“I’m Sarah,” I said, my voice hoarse. “This is my cousin Gutcha,” I added when Gutcha didn’t answer.

“Can you tell me where you are from?” he asked kindly, kneeling so he was level with our eyes.

“Olkusz,” I answered obediently.

“I have not heard of Olkusz,” he said, frowning. “Is it German?”

“It’s in Poland,” I told him. He nodded and bit his lip. “And how long have you been here?” he asked. Gutcha and I exchanged glances. I had no idea how long we had been in the camp. Time meant nothing to me anymore.

He sighed and shook his head. “Poor girls,” he murmured under his breath. “I can’t imagine what you’ve been through.” His bright blue eyes regarded us sympathetically before he stood again and wiped his hands on his trousers. “You will be all right,” he reassured us before moving to the next group. “We will take care of you.”