**CHAPTER 12, PAGE 78 AND 79 AND 80-81**

Finally, as dusk began to fall and we had begun to give up hope, the doorknob rattled. We all jumped, turning fearfully toward the door. But to my relief, the sound I’d been waiting for all day reached my ears. “Brocha, it’s us. Please let us in!”

My mother cried out and ran to the door. The moment she lifted the bolt, my father and brothers stumbled through the doorway. Their feet appeared incapable of supporting their weight. They held on to each other tightly. Their faces were pale and filthy. Their eyes were bloodshot. Leah and Gutcha eagerly ran past them, back to their own apartment. I ran to my father and threw my arms around him in relief. He remained immobile, still as a statue in my eager embrace.

“Papa?” I asked, gazing up at him. His gray beard, usually so neatly groomed and smelling of sugar and honey, was a tangled mess on his face. Rust-colored flecks clung to the bristles, and I couldn’t tell if they were bits of dirt or dried-up blood. A nasty lump had swelled where he had been struck by the German soldier earlier that morning. Had it just been this morning? I wondered. It seemed like ages ago. He placed his hand on my head, but when his eyes met my mother’s across the room, he broke down into sobs.

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“I don’t understand,” my mother said. “Why did they do this? What have we ever done to deserve this?”

“They don’t need a reason,” Sam spat angrily. “They can do whatever they want. And they want to kill us, Mama. After today, I’m sure of it. They won’t be satisfied with just taking away our schools or our jobs or our rights. They like doing this to us. If they can do this, they can just as easily kill us without a second thought.

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Jacob finally spoke for everyone, summarizing the experience in his soft voice.

“At first they marched us into the street,” he said, his eyes never leaving the small, flickering flame in the center of the table. “Uncle Abraham and Daniel were there already. It was cold. We were all shivering. They had tables lined up in the center of town. We were told to put our hands up . . .”

“Like criminals,” Sam mumbled.

“. . . and approach the tables single file. They kept their guns on us the whole time. We weren’t allowed to lower our arms until we reached the front of the line.”

“They prodded us along like cattle,” Sam interrupted. “They jeered at us and called us ‘dirty Jews.’ I could have fought them.” Sam’s mouth twisted in a scowl.

“No,” my father finally spoke up. “No, Samuel. You would have died. You saw what happened.” His voice trailed off then, and his head slumped against his chest.

“What happened?” I asked, though I was not sure I wanted to hear more.

“There were those who did fight,” Jacob said after a moment. “And those who tried to escape. A lot of good it did them.”

“What happened to them?” I asked again. This time, it was Isaac who spoke up.

“They were shot.”

The word hung in the air. *Shot. Shot.*