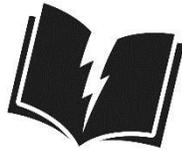


Love
Out of
Reach

Jack A. Saarela



Can't Put it Down
BOOKS

2 Jack Saarela

Love Out of Reach

Copyright 2019 by Jack Saarela

ISBN: 978-0-9994623-5-5

All rights reserved

Printed in the United States of America

No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without the written permission of the author except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews.

This is a work of historical fiction. The characters and the events portrayed are based on extensive historical research. A few of the characters are composites of multiple people. While there are no recordings or transcripts of many of the personal conversations held between the characters, many of the conversations are paraphrases of statements made to others, or emotions expressed in letters.

Published by

Can't Put It Down Books

An imprint of

Open Door Publications

2113 Stackhouse Dr.

Yardley, PA 19067

www.CantPutItDownBooks.com

Cover Design by Eric Labacz

www.labaczdesign.com

BOOK ONE

First they came for the communists, and I did not speak out
because I am not a communist.

Then they came for the trade unionists, but I did not speak out
because I am not a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out
because I am not a Jew.

Finally they came for me and there was no one left
to speak for me.

—Pastor Martin Niemöller, Confessing Church

Chapter One

Has something happened? I am afraid that something bad has happened or will happen.

I don't know how I know this, but I feel it in my bones. Someone's life is about to change and not for the better.

—Maria von Wedemeyer

Berlin: April 5, 1943

The air over Berlin in this fourth year of the war was charged with fear and pervasive suspicion. It wearied Maria's body as well as her mind and spirit. Despite her misgivings, the day held promise. Any day that she could be with her love, Pastor Dietrich Bonhöffer, was a delightfully cheerful day, no matter what else was happening in the world. She could hardly believe that he was actually, finally, her fiancé. It seemed as if she had loved him almost all of her life. She knew that many people, perhaps including Dietrich himself, found it surprising.

Though Maria was far less reserved than her fiancé, her friends and family had certainly never called her giddy—a word that would definitely describe her on the infrequent days she could spend with Dietrich. He himself was a rather serious and earnest man, and for all the public speaking he did, truly very shy and reticent. It had occurred to her that her own optimistic temperament was one of the reasons he enjoyed being with her.

This day he planned to spend a significant amount of time in the small third-floor room in his parents' new home on Marienburgerallee in Charlottenburg, a suburb of Berlin. He was working on the manuscript of his latest book, *Ethics*, which he had been working on since the day in the previous year when he and Maria reconnected again. Although still very young for his world-renowned status as a theologian, Dietrich had received his doctorate in theology at age 21 years. A prolific writer, he had already gained respect as a theologian as far away as Great Britain and the United States.

And though when she finally met him their relationship had at first been that of pastor and young parishioner, she had always felt a special, secret attraction to him. It had taken many years for the

serious theologian to realize that she had grown into a woman who could accept and return his love. It had taken her mother even longer. She shook her head, unwilling to let thoughts of her stubborn *Miitti* get in the way of her enjoyment of today. She knew not to bother Dietrich when he was writing, but she wasn't very far away. They had been invited to dinner by the Schleichers, Dietrich's older sister Ursula and her husband Rüdiger, whose home was right next door to Dietrich's parents'. Dietrich's family had been much more accepting of their courtship and romance than her own family, and she was grateful for their acceptance of her as an equal, even though she was younger by several years than his many brothers and sisters.

It was handy that Ursula lived so close, and truly a miracle, Maria thought, when the two homes were spared from an Allied bomb that demolished the house just across the street a month before. Maria shuddered to think that Dietrich could have been killed that day. That he had been spared seemed like a sign to her that their future together was guaranteed now, despite the roadblocks her mother had put before them. A future with Dietrich—a home and children—was just one more happy thought to dispel the gloomy premonitions she had woken with.

Dinner was scheduled for 2 p.m. Maria arrived at 1:10 p.m. on the tram from her great-aunt's flat where she was staying temporarily while training to be a nurse. She had come early to share in some casual, relaxed conversation with Rüdiger and Ursula while lending a hand in the kitchen. Dietrich would walk over to join them when dinner was ready.

The visit was pleasant enough, although the vague cloud of disquiet, which continually tried to penetrate her happy mood, prevented her from focusing on what they were chatting about. She felt as though she wasn't altogether there at the Schleichers'. She would much rather have been next door with Dietrich. She checked the time often to see when he would arrive.

While Rüdiger began to set the dining room table, Maria joined Ursula in the kitchen. She stood by the stove from which the aroma of sautéing mushrooms emanated and filled the room. Maria put on an apron and began peeling the cooked beets. They continued their talk about small, inconsequential things as they worked: the difficulty in getting certain foods, news of Dietrich and Ursula's large family, how Maria was enjoying her training. When all was prepared, she and

Ursula sat at the small breakfast table in the corner of the kitchen and continued their conversation while they waited for Dietrich. Slowly, Maria's undefined sense of foreboding began to evaporate like steam from the pot of boiled potatoes on the stove.

From their new vantage point, Ursula could see the clock on the kitchen wall. "My goodness, it's already after ten minutes past two. Little Brother has picked up the very un-German habit of being late. I noticed it after he returned from his year at that church in Barcelona in 1928."

Ursula called Dietrich "Little Brother" even though he had turned 37 years old in February.

"I'm sure he's nearing the end of a sentence or paragraph and doesn't want to lose his train of thought," Maria said in her fiancé's defense. "He's wrapping up his work and will be here shortly."

"I'd telephone over to the house myself to remind him, but I don't want to interrupt *Papa* and *Mütti's* midday nap," Ursula replied, getting up to stir the mushrooms again.

Just then, there was a knock at the back door.

"Who could that be knocking at the back door, not the front? Would you go see who it is, please, Maria?"

Eager to appear competent and helpful, despite how scattered she felt, Maria got up quickly and went to the door.

"Who is it?" Ursula shouted from the kitchen. Not bothering to wait for a reply, she came to look for herself.

Maria was both happy and startled by the sight of Dietrich standing on the threshold. Usually he entered his sister's house without the formality of a knock.

"Dietrich, dear, why are you just standing there like a beggar or a door-to-door salesman? Come on in, silly man," Maria said, gesturing for him to enter the kitchen.

"Dietrich, *Gott in Himmel*, you look as white as a clean sheet!" Ursula exclaimed. "I've never seen you like this."

Neither had Maria, she noticed, looking at him more closely. She had barely had ten months to become reacquainted with him, but she knew that it took a lot to rattle Dietrich. Whatever had caused him to appear so shaken must be serious.

She took his almost limp hand and led him through the kitchen to a chair at the table in the dining room where Rüdy was already seated. She sat down beside Dietrich and placed her hand on this forearm,

offering her support no matter what had happened.

Looking up from his newspaper, Rüdý said playfully, “My, you look like you’ve just been hit by lightning or something, Dietrich. Funny, I haven’t heard any thunder out there.”

Dietrich was slowly starting to emerge from his catatonia. “Rüdý, my call-up orders came in this morning’s mail. They were waiting for me on my desk when I got there.” He spoke in a near-monotone, his eyes staring ahead almost blankly at the wall behind Rüdý.

“You hadn’t been expecting them?” Rüdý asked, surprised.

“Actually, no. Hans said he’d take care of it all, that he would write a letter of explanation and get me an exemption.” Dietrich avoided Maria’s eyes; he knew what he would see there, and he couldn’t bear the thought of falling from the pedestal he knew she had him on. He knew she would be confused and disappointed, and he was right. Though she said nothing out loud, her thoughts were in turmoil.

What? An exemption from serving the Vaterland? Father and Max didn’t get exemptions. Or seek them. In true German form, they obeyed when the Vaterland ordered. And it killed them.

But this wasn’t the time to pursue that line of thought. She knew that. She schooled her face and listened intently to what Dietrich was saying, hoping for an explanation that would make his distress at the thought of fighting for Germany understandable.

“That’s why I picked up the telephone to call Hans right away, to see if he had any ideas,” Dietrich continued.

Maria was having difficulty keeping up. “You mean your brother-in-law Hans, or some other Hans that I don’t know?”

“Yes,” Dietrich said, limiting his words, as usual lately, to the bare minimum of what needed to be said.

“And? What did Hans say?” Rüdý prompted.

“That’s just it. No one at all answered my first attempt.”

“Oh, Dietrich, Hans probably stepped out to retrieve something from the *Abwehr* office,” Maria exclaimed. Surely Dietrich was making a mountain out of a molehill, she thought.

“I thought of that. But I was with Hans and our sister yesterday, and I swear he told me he was looking forward to working at home all day today.”

There was a pause while Ursula, Rüdý, and Maria looked at one another to see if anyone understood why Dietrich was so concerned

about no one answering a telephone. Maria could almost detect the waves of anxiety emanating from Dietrich's gut like radio signals. This was all so strange to her. Dietrich's apprehension seemed much greater than was called for.

"I tried again, and that time someone did answer," Dietrich continued. "But it wasn't Hans or Christel. It was a deep male voice that said, 'The von Dohnányi residence.' I hung up immediately."

This was beginning to feel like a mystery novel. Maria remembered her premonition. *Something bad is happening.*

"So, it turns out someone was home all along," Ursula offered in an effort to get dinner on the table.

"Ursel, I called Hans on his *private* line."

"I didn't know he even had such a thing as a private line."

"Ursel, just think. How can the Deputy *Kommandant* of the *Abwehr* discuss military intelligence matters on a regular telephone line that can be so easily compromised?" Dietrich paused to allow the question to hover in the air. Ursula seemed flummoxed. Maria was, too.

"Now, can anyone tell me why a total stranger should be in Hans and Christel's home, apparently without either of them being home, or able to come to the phone?"

Were the others experiencing the same feeling of dread, Maria wondered.

"Who do you think the voice belonged to, Dietrich?" Rüdý asked nervously.

"I can't say for sure. I didn't recognize the voice. But these days, who else would it be but the *SS* or *Gestapo*?"

"The *Gestapo*! *Mein Gott*, Dietrich!" Maria exclaimed uninhibitedly, raising her hand to her mouth in an expression of horror. "Why in heaven's name would the *Gestapo* be roaming about in Hans and Christel's house?"

Ursula looked inquisitively at her husband. Did he know more about this than she did? He maintained a stoic face, revealing little.

"I suspect they are rooting through their belongings looking for credible evidence that would stand up in their so-called 'courts,'" Rüdý answered.

"Evidence of what?" Maria questioned.

"For anything that ties Hans in any way to the recent failed attempts to kill Hitler."

“Kill Hitler! That seems rather drastic! It’s doubtful, *isn’t it*, that Hans would ever be involved in something like that?” She stressed the phrase “isn’t it,” looking for reassurance that no one in Dietrich’s family—no one she knew—could be involved in something as dangerous as an attempt to kill the *Führer*.

“There are those who have concluded that killing Hitler is the best solution,” Rüdý said slowly and solemnly.

Maria looked around quickly. It wasn’t safe to talk about something so treasonous—even in the safety of one’s home, was it?

“But doesn’t Hans work for the *Abwehr*?” she continued. “I don’t understand. Isn’t he on the same side of this war as Hitler and the *Gestapo*?”

“Yes, in part, Maria. But I think the *Gestapo* suspects that Hans is buttering his bread on both sides of the slice.”

This was out of Maria’s league, and her face showed it. Dietrich was familiar with that look of confusion. He continued where his brother-in-law had left off. “It means that while he is working for the *Abwehr*, he’s aiding the resistance at the same time.”

“The resistance! That’s dangerous, isn’t it, Dietrich? It means the penalty of death if he’s ever caught.”

“Of course, Maria.” Dietrich was always patient with Maria when she said the obvious—just one of the many reasons she loved him. “That’s why I’m so anxious about the voice on the telephone. It threw me for a loop. Not to mention that I have a strong intuition that they will be coming to Marienburgerallee next. Very shortly, in fact.”

“Here!” Ursula shouted, in panic, and her hand going to her face again. She looked at her husband, who was finally displaying some urgency on his face. “We love you, Little Brother, but don’t get Rüdý and me mixed up with the *Gestapo*.”

Maria made a mental note about Rüdý’s expression. The *Gestapo* has the power to inspire such urgency in people. *Especially if you think you may have something to hide from them.* Rüdý, it was obvious, knew more than he was letting on about Hans’s—and Dietrich’s—business.

“No, not here, Ursel. They’ll come next door,” Dietrich answered.

“Surely, not to bother your parents! They cannot possibly be part of the resistance,” Maria said wishfully. Was everyone she knew involved in some great plot of which she had been totally unaware?

Maria's earlier feelings of dread were changing to a distinct feeling of falling down the rabbit hole.

"No, Maria," Rüdý said patiently, and clearly for her benefit. "I think Dietrich means that they are coming to inspect his room."

"Dietrich's room! "Maria's voice cracked in a high pitch, her fear in full view. Instinctively, she stepped away from Dietrich and raised her hand over her mouth, unconsciously mimicking Ursula's gesture.

"Dietrich, you see now just what *Papa* and *Mütti* and the rest of us have been fearing?" asked Ursula. At that moment, she sounded more like Dietrich's parent than his sister.

Dietrich nodded and closed his eyes in reluctant acknowledgment. Something told Maria, though, that only a part of him was really repentant.

"Ever since Hitler became Chancellor," Ursula continued, "you've been openly saying things that the *Gestapo* has taken notice of. That radio speech, the lectures at the university, at Finkenwalde, from the pulpit, anytime you have a chance."

"I couldn't remain silent on the sidelines."

"Dietrich, the family has been proud of you for taking a brave stand against the devil's disciple. But you don't seem to know when to keep silent—for your own sake or the sake of your family. I pray to God that you—that we—aren't being asked now to pay the price."

As though knowing his cue, Rüdý added the finish to his wife's point. "This regime considers anything that doesn't support or endorse all that it decrees and does to be treason, or at least the seeds of dissension. Any freedom of speech we've had disappeared a decade ago."

"In a way, you know, I'm not surprised by this," Dietrich interjected philosophically. "I've been expecting it. Hans and I have warned each other to be prepared. For the past few months, I've been stashing papers that could potentially give the *Gestapo* even the slightest cause to be suspicious of me into a file. Before I came over here, I added a few more papers to the file at the last minute. Then I burned it behind the forsythia bushes between the two houses and buried the ashes."

"Little Brother, are you sure you got everything and that you didn't leave anything to chance?" Ursula asked, once again in that older sister tone.

"Yes, Ursel, there's nothing left in my room that even the *Führer*

himself would find incriminating. There are certain other files and documents, but Hans has taken care of them. He has hidden them in the safe of the library of the military post in Zossen.”

Dietrich looked directly and reassuringly into Maria’s eyes and said, “I placed the fake diary of my foreign travels plainly on my desk, as well as the last pages of the manuscript of *Ethics* I was working on today.” He chuckled, “The *Gestapo* won’t be able to make heads or tails of those, I assure you. They’ll be convinced that I am no more than a run-of-the-mill theologian doing what those boring fellows do.”

It was past 4 o’clock now, and dinner still hadn’t been served. The whole group sat mum at the table, all talked out, exhausted from expending nervous energy. Suddenly, the elder Doctor Bonhöffer appeared, almost stealthily, in the room. He must have let himself in. He nodded his greeting and bowed toward his daughter but wasted no time on pleasantries before addressing Dietrich.

“Dietrich, there are two men at the house asking for you, from the *Gestapo* they told us. They are waiting in your room. *Mütti* is beside herself with fear. It’s time to come home, son.”

“*Mein Gott!* You must go, Dietrich,” Ursula pleaded urgently, “lest they come here instead.”

Dietrich stood up immediately, as Maria had seen him do whenever he received an order from his parents or his older sisters. Mechanically, he thanked Ursula and Rüdý for their hospitality, then turned to smile at Maria warmly and place his hand on her forearm.

“All will be well, Maria,” he promised.

She wanted to believe him. He seemed so confident now that it was true, despite his obvious distress earlier in the afternoon. Was he just saying this for her benefit? *If he believes that, then I will choose to do so as well.*

As Dietrich and his father opened the door to leave, Maria darted impulsively toward it. “I’m coming with you, Dietrich!”

Rüdý caught her firmly, almost painfully, by the arm before she could get through the door. He shook her. “We understand, Maria, why you wish to accompany him. But you will be able to help Dietrich more if you are not in the custody of the *Gestapo*, too.”

Tears of frustration rolled down her cheeks, but she saw the sense of Rüdý’s words and fell back, away from the door, leaning on him for support.

Dietrich and his father walked quickly out of sight. They heard the barking of the neighbors' German shepherds as they stood, stunned, in the doorway, beyond speech. *Dietrich arrested by the Gestapo? How unreal. Beyond belief or comprehension. Could this be happening?*

Suddenly, as though each of them had the thought at the same time, they ran almost in unison to the kitchen window and watched in silence as the two men strode across the lawn to Marienburgerallee 42. Maria began to tremble as though chilled. Ursula kindly put one arm around her and squeezed her comfortingly. She lifted her hand to her lips and tenderly kissed it. Maria was overcome by fear and utter disbelief, but the trembling subsided. She would never forget how bravely and with what aristocratic dignity father and son walked homeward together across the lawn, their heads raised high almost defiantly, their posture erect. She would try to be as brave.

They heard no news by telephone from Dietrich's parents' house. They took turns serving as a sentry at the windows. Maria was the first to spot activity next door about fifty minutes later. "I see movement next door!" she exclaimed.

The others rushed to their posts at the windows. In the gathering dusk, Maria caught a glimpse of Dietrich being led away from his parents' home into a waiting black limousine. *God, they had his hands in handcuffs! As though he were just a common criminal!*

It was a scene she would never forget. Ursula drew their attention to the backseat window as the car proceeded slowly down the driveway toward the street. There was Dietrich, trying valiantly to smile, struggling to lift his shackled hands in greeting in the direction of his parents who waved tearfully from the rear veranda of their house. It was a scene too sad for words. The neighbors' German shepherds were roused again by the bright headlights of the car violating the block's darkness and silence and barked their angry protest.

"A black Mercedes, the official vehicle of *Gestapo* brass. I just pray that they aren't taking him to that hellhole of a prison of theirs in the God-forsaken basement of Number 8 *Prinz Albrecht Strasse*," said Rüdý.

That struck a deeper chord of fear in Maria. Perhaps Rüdý didn't intend for her to hear it. But she trusted that she would eventually learn what he meant by the remark. What was this place he spoke of?

10 Jack Saarela

For now, her uncontrollable trembling returned. She wondered if Dietrich would ever see the inside of either house again. She also wondered when he and she would see each other again—or, for that matter, if.

Chapter Two

Silence in the face of evil is evil itself.

—Dietrich Bonhöffer

Ten years earlier

Pätzig: 1933

Hans von Wedemeyer surprised his younger daughter by calling to her after dinner while she was in the kitchen, helping to clean up.

“Maria, dear. Can you come to the parlor for a few minutes?”

“Right now, Papa? I’m helping Ruth-Alice clean up after dinner. I’m up to my elbows in soapy water, as Inge is fond of saying.”

“Now, Mia, if you would, please.”

Maria glanced over at her older sister who had been gathering the dinner dishes on the counter next to the sink for Maria to place gently into the water in the sink to wash. Ruth-Alice looked back at Maria, shrugged reluctantly, and nodded in agreement.

“You’d better go, Mia. I can pick up here where you left off,” she said in a voice that made it clear she was not happy about having to finish the dishes so soon after the task has been assigned to Maria by their mother, but their father’s orders took precedence. Her mother had reckoned that having turned nine years old, Maria was now ready to assume some of the women’s household duties. Their servant, Inge, who usually did the dishes, was enjoying a free evening on Friday, her only one of the week.

Maria entered the parlor where her father stood by the family’s new radio on the mantle of the fireplace, his left arm resting on the rounded edge of the mantle. He turned and started fiddling with the knobs on the *Telefunken*, turning one slowly to the left and then to the right until he was satisfied that he had set it accurately to the station he wanted.

“There’s going to be a lecture on the radio in a few minutes that I’d like you to hear.” He nodded his head toward the sofa in the center of the parlor, a silent command to sit there.

A lecture? Maria was dumbfounded. Would a lecture be understandable to a nine-year-old? Her father hadn’t invited Ruth-Alice, four years older than she, into the parlor to hear the lecture, only Maria. Then again, this was not new. Her father took great

delight in exposing Maria to new ideas and experiences, and she was open to them. He had taught her to ride horses several years ago and to care for them afterward. Her mother, also named Ruth, thought Maria was too young for that. Hans gave Maria a book of poems by Rainer Maria Rilke. Maria didn't think any of her friends had such a book on their bookshelf. When her friends came to the von Wedemeyer home to play *Kätz und Maus*, Hans could see that as hard as Maria may be trying not to show it to her friends, this game was too easy for her. Later he introduced her to more advanced games, sometimes even ones that usually only the grown-ups played, such as *Doppelkopf*.

Maria and her father adored each other.

"Despite the change in the radio service in the last couple of days," her father explained, "I'm relieved that the *Reichsradio* and Doctor Göbbels will continue the tradition of the informative and uplifting Friday evening lectures. Dr. Göbbels is interested in promoting anything that elevates the minds of Germans, or at least so he says."

"What's the subject tonight, Papa?" Maria asked.

"The schedule in the newspaper says the speaker will be a young professor from Berlin University. He's also a pastor, only 26 years old. His name is Bonhöffer."

Maria had never heard a university lecture before. She was a little nervous about letting her father down. But, she thought, if her father had invited her to hear it, he must have a good reason. He must be confident that she would understand.

"Bonhöffer?" the girl asked. "If you put the French part of his name with the German, it means 'hope life is good,' correct?"

Her father smiled at his daughter approvingly. He had never thought of that. Maria had a proud, self-satisfied glint in her eye.

"That's mighty clever, Mia. I am hoping that tonight especially we hear someone who hopes for good, for the best, in fact."

"What do you mean, Papa?" she asked.

"Shh," he ordered, placing his index finger over his lips. "Let's listen and talk after the lecture."

A deep, terse male voice came on the air to welcome listeners to the program. Without giving any of the usual information about the speaker other than his name and academic title, he passed the microphone to the invisible Bonhöffer.

The speaker began his address in a higher-pitched voice than Maria was expecting of a university lecturer. It sounded to her more like a girl's voice.

“Good evening, Germany. The title of my lecture this evening is ‘The *Führer* Principle: The Younger Generation's Altered Concept of Leadership.’”

In spite of his own desire for silence during the lecture, her father said to her, “You are part of the younger generation, too, Mia. That's why I thought it might be good for you to hear this.”

Professor Bonhöffer continued. “The War and the subsequent near-collapse of the German economy in the decades since have brought about crises in which the average citizen has lost all confidence in the government such as it was. That is particularly true of my own generation.”

Maria interrupted. “Papa, he says ‘of my own generation.’ I'm not really of his generation, am I?”

“Just be patient, Mia,” he responded, although she sensed he was impatient with her interruption. “He may be one of those speakers who anticipates what the future might be for the generation after his, your generation.”

Her father was always concerned about “the next generation.”

She added, “Some of the other children at school say that *Herr* Hitler is like that.” She wanted to give him the impression that she had some familiarity with this topic.

Her father looked at her but didn't say a word. He just nodded his head toward the radio, suggesting for her to be silent again and just listen.

Bonhöffer continued. “It seems to me and to many informed observers of the situation in Germany that since the Great War, Germany's concept of a leader has evolved so that a leader is one who submits to no one and as such is seen as the ‘anointed one.’ I ask, are the German people leaning so heavily on our political and military leaders to rescue us from the financial chaos and political confusion of the present time? Are we willing to surrender our freedom, to renounce our newly adopted democracy? Will we abdicate our responsibility as free citizens to shape our own future? Or are we allowing ourselves to become dependent on a strong individual, or a party of individuals, to make sense of the chaos and make our decisions for us?”

“Even if a leader is selected by the people,” Bonhöffer continued, “he needs to know that the voice of the people can be fickle. The *vox populi* is not necessarily always the *vox Dei*.”

The look on his daughter’s face indicated to Hans that she was puzzled so he explained kindly. “I think the speaker means that the preferences of the people do not always reflect the preferences of God.”

Bonhöffer’s voice kept on. “There have been leaders in our nation and others who declare themselves before the masses to be one of them. But they are actually despisers of humanity. All the while, such a leader praises himself with repulsive vanity and despises the rights of every individual. He considers them weak and pliable. The more he seeks the favor of those whom deep down he actually despises, the more he rouses the masses to declare him a god. This is how such a nation becomes a tyranny.”

Maria noticed her father nodding his head slowly in agreement.

“The real leader must know the limitations of his power,” the speaker picked up where he had left off. “He would be misusing his office if he does not continually tell his followers quite clearly about his limited nature and wisdom and of their responsibility as the people. If he allows himself to pander to the wishes of his followers, they would make him their idol. They surrender their own power to augment his. They relinquish to him their independent judgment. Then the image of their leader will evolve into the image of a misleader. He will be acting in a criminal way, not only towards those he leads but also against God, who is the Ultimate Authority before whom all penultimate authorities are accountable. This is what is called ‘The *Führer* Principle.’”

“Papa, what does that word the ‘penultimate’ mean?” she asked hesitantly. She would have preferred to show her father that she understood completely.

She actually had been thinking about a certain girl at school, the one who loved Hitler so much. She wore such nice dresses, Maria thought, and even after recess her blond pigtailed were still in place, unlike Maria’s own. Suddenly, Maria heard Pastor Bonhöffer pause to take a breath. She became aware that she’d been letting her mind wander during this part of the broadcast.

“What does what the man is saying have to do with us, Papa?” she asked, hoping her father hadn’t noticed her distraction.

Her father thought for a while before saying, "I fear for the future that you and Ruth-Alice and Max are inheriting."

Now she looked a little concerned. "Fear" was not a word she heard Hans utter very often. "Fear?"

"Yes, I admit to having some fear. Or maybe it's more regret about what we Germans may be allowing to happen. I know you won't understand this completely now, and I sincerely hope I am wrong."

"You mean that we are already allowing what this speaker fears to be happening?" she asked. She knew her father thought things through carefully. Many times she had found him to be right about something that many others, sometimes even her mother, thought wrong. "That we are following what he calls a 'misleader'?"

"We can't know for sure, of course. No one can know the future perfectly. But this man, Dr. Bonhöffer, makes sense to me."

The speaker wasn't finished. "The current danger, I humbly fear, is that we forget that man stands alone before the Ultimate Authority, and that a leader who lays an unjust hand on any of his subjects to bolster his own power is infringing on eternal law and taking upon himself superhuman authority. This will, I believe, eventually crush him and his people. He sets himself as a god that mocks God. If Germany yields to the temptation of worshiping a Messianic leader, it would be incinerating its own future as a free people."

Suddenly the radio went mute. There were a few initial moments of crackling static, then total silence except for the hiss of the radio itself. The voice was gone. Hans tried to adjust the volume button on the radio, but it was no use. He gave up, sighed, and plopped down on the wing chair opposite Maria. It was his turn to look confused.

"Why did the man stop speaking, Papa?"

"I wonder that myself, Mia. I don't think it was by his own volition. I hope it's not what the darker part of me suspects."

Maria wondered what he meant by "the darker part." Did he mean the part of him that thought evil thoughts, that was instinctively suspicious of others? Or was it the part of himself he didn't like? If so, Maria was beginning to recognize that she had a side like that, too.

"What do you suspect, Papa?"

"Oh, various things. Maybe that some technician at the radio station accidentally pressed the wrong button that cut off the

broadcast. It may be something as simple and innocent as that. Or possibly that *Herr* Göbbels was listening at home, decided he didn't think the speech was 'elevating the minds of the German people,' and called the station to order one of his men to terminate the broadcast."

"Should I also fear, Papa?" the girl asked in all earnestness.

"Perhaps not fear, Mia. Nine-year-old girls should not spend their precious days of childhood being afraid. But I'd advise you not to stop thinking for yourself. Inspiring fear in a person can only succeed if we allow ourselves to be afraid."