

WITHIN

1.Out

April 30th 1945, 4am. Berlin.

After she shot Adolf Hitler through the head and spat in his face, Hannah Shygylla, wearing a German army great coat over the fabulous Schiaparelli gown she had worn to the Fuehrer's wedding to Eva Braun, edged her way through the underground tunnel leading from Hitler's private quarters deep in the *Fuhrerbunker* up towards the far end of the smashed gardens of the Reichstag Chancellery.

After a hundred metres the tunnel ended with a steel ladder embedded in a concrete wall which she carefully and nervously climbed, her military boots, three sizes too big and one with a pouch of exquisite white diamonds hidden in the toecap, slipping on the cold, wet rungs.

At the top she slid back the bolts on the underside of the false air ventilator and pushed cautiously upwards, praying that the Russian artillery hadn't brought down a mass of debris on her escape exit.

They hadn't. Noiselessly, the ventilator tilted open and Hannah, trembling with relief, lifted her head above ground and looked warily around.

Despite the pounding the Reich Chancellery had received for the last eight days and the crumping of bombs and shrieking of shells in the distance, it was eerily quiet in the gardens, the cloudy spring moon shrouding moving shadows over the battered, spectral buildings and landscape, whilst overhead waves of Allied aircraft droned unchallenged over Berlin and the Red Army waited, like hungry wolves, at the eastern end of *Potsdamer Platz* a thousand metres away.

She pulled herself up and out, swinging the ventilator closed, and stumbled to

the wall at the western end of the gardens. Standing on some ruined brickwork she looked over. There it was, just as Eva Braun had said it would be, a black S.S. Mercedes staff car, its engine ticking over, the driver's head in dark silhouette...

2. *The Survivor*

Hannah Shygylla, who hated all Nazis with a passion that words cannot even begin to describe, was a woman of guts and character; she'd had to be, all the while suppressing her natural empathy and compassion for others.

With her blonde hair, deep blue eyes and tall, lithe figure she was the epitome of Aryan womanhood, which even the Fuhrer had noticed when they first met saying, 'My dear Hannah, if ever I have a daughter I would want her to look like you.' whilst paternally patting her face, sending a quivering revulsion through her body. Not that it showed. Her background as a young actress in Berlin's thriving, avant-garde pre-war theatre and arts movement, crushed by the Nazis, had given her a chameleon's ability to adapt to any situation, at anytime and anywhere.

That and, of course, her beauty, charm and unfathomable catch-me-if-you-can sexuality had opened doors to the very highest reaches of the Third Reich, resolutely working her way by way of high ranking Nazi lovers towards the safety of the Fuehrer's inner circle in her unflinching determination to come through the war in any way she could; whatever it took.

However, her looks, sexual allure and husky-voiced appeal could have counted for nothing were it not that Hannah also possessed a rare quality; women, nearly all women, liked her. And so, despite being the beautiful mistress to the hated and despised Machiavellian fixer *Reichsleiter* Martin Bormann, she was genuinely accepted by the wives and mistresses of the Nazi elite at the very

heart of Hitler's intrigue-riddled court who saw her, to their surprise, as a friend and not a rival. Her dirty laugh, sense of fun and intelligent and sincere interest in others was infectious whilst conveying a disarming trustworthiness that was hard to resist, never realising how much Hannah loathed them and was doing what she had to do...surviving.

Eva Braun, Adolf Hitler's naive and ingenuous secret longtime companion, was drawn to Hannah like a moth to a flame, seeing in her everything that she was not; a beautiful, intelligent and confident woman who exuded great warmth and understanding of Braun's wretched situation as the hidden and unacknowledged lover of the cold, undemonstrative man she worshipped, the man who was married to Germany with no time or consideration, as the propaganda said, for personal contentment. She ached to be Hannah's best friend and was flattered and excited that Hannah, very aware of the advantages of being close to Braun, reciprocated the friendship and quickly became her confidante; especially when, one drunken night, she took Eva Braun to her bed and cynically gave her the passion she lacked.

After the the increasingly paranoid Fuehrer had announced the war was lost, blaming his treacherous Generals, the Zionists and the Communists, and he would marry Eva Braun before they committed suicide, it came as no surprise to Hannah when Braun had taken her aside and asked, her childlike eyes dancing with excitement, if she would be her Maid of Honour at the ceremony.

Hannah had accepted with false joy, embracing Braun as she reflected on the irony that she, a proud Austrian Jew, was to be an honoured guest at Adolf Hitler's wedding...

3. Can you keep a secret?

The Fuhrer's marriage to Eva Braun took place in the Fuehrerbunker's

conference room at one o' clock in the morning of April 29th and was witnessed by Josef Goebbels and Martin Bormann with Hannah, in her Schiaparelli gown, and four others present.

A wedding breakfast followed attended by the remaining civilian and military staff in the bunker, with a smorgasbord buffet, unlimited alcohol and dancing to the jolly oom-pah-pah music on the gramophone, and it was after an hour that Eva Hitler, glass in hand, sidled up to Hannah and slurred in her ear, 'Hannah, my darling, come with me. I want to show you something. Bring your drink.' and unsteadily led Hannah by her hand to her sitting room in the Fuhrer's private quarters.

Putting down her glass, she opened a bureau and took something out, hiding it behind her back and saying teasingly, 'Close your eyes, Hannah. Don't open them until I say so.' A smiling Hannah shut her eyes and when she opened them she genuinely gasped, her acting forgotten for a split-second, at the seven magnificent fine-cut white diamonds, each the size of a giant pearl, winking with an icy fire in the hollow of Eva Hitler's hand.

'They're my wedding present from the Fuhrer,' she said. 'Aren't they beautiful?' Hannah had to agreed, marvelling at the dazzling brilliance of the stones and speculating at what settings they could be put in when Eva, quickly placing the diamonds in the velvet pouch and replacing them in the bureau, drained her glass and suddenly asked, her voice strained, 'Hannah, can you keep a secret? A really big secret?'

'Eva my darling, anything you tell me remains with me,' Hannah replied which, ironically, was true. 'You must know that. So, what's the secret?'

On Hannah's words Eva burst into tears and rushed forward, wrapping her arms around best friend. 'Oh, Hannah,' she cried, 'I knew I could trust you, I've been dying to tell you.'

Hannah held Eva comfortingly. 'Tell me what? What is it, Eva?'

Eva Hitler pulled back and looked Hannah in the face, her eyes fevered, 'Hannah,' she said urgently, almost hysterically. 'We're not going die! We're not going to die! The Fuhrer and I are escaping out of this hell and going away to safety, its all arranged!'

Hannah gave a great gasp and hugged Eva, sickened at the thought of Hitler escaping justice, 'Oh, Eva,' she said, wide-eyed, 'that's wonderful news!'

'And there's something else, something the Fuhrer has given me permission to ask you...because it involves you Hannah ...' Eva continued, before bursting out, 'Hannah, my darling Hannah, will you come with us...to Argentina?'

4. The Plan

Increasingly Hannah had realised that far from being a refuge, the Fuhrerbunker had turned into a death-trap, its razor jaws about to snap shut. For the last month, with Germany on a fraying tightrope, she had urged Martin Boorman, with all his power and influence, to get them out. Not that she had any intention of staying with him, he repulsed her and had served his purpose so far, but she realised he was still her best, maybe her only, hope to escape from the suffocating nightmare of the bunker. Bormann, who loved Hannah with a teenager-like infatuation, repeatedly assured her he would get them away, but now the situation was critical and when he presented her, almost as a ghastly love token, with the cyanide suicide capsule, 'just in case,' Hannah switched back to full-on survivor and was already actively, but discretely, putting out feelers amongst those looking to escape. And then the miracle happened; the seeds that she had been planting with Eva Braun for months blossomed into life and bore fruit. Eva Hitler needed her.

'The Fuhrer trusts nobody, not even your Martin,' Eva explained. 'He's told everybody we are going to kill ourselves but we're not Hannah, we're not, we're

notwe're going to Argentina where they love the Fuhrer and we can live without all this madness, but it frightens me, Hannah, it frightens me. I've never been anywhere in the world and without you with me I'll be all on my own; you'll know what to say when we meet new people and how to behave and...and just *how* to do things and look after me. I've told the Fuhrer all of this and he's agreed, I'm sure he thinks your good for me and secretly trusts you as much as I do. You will come Hannah, won't you?'

Hannah looked solemnly at Eva, quickly analysing all the implications and possibilities, 'If its for you Eva,' she said after a pause, 'and the Fuhrer wants it, of course I'll come.'

Eva was ecstatic, screamingly hugging Hannah saying she was her greatest and best friend and what fun they would have, and they could learn Spanish and how to dance the Tango and...

'But how do we escape?' Hannah interrupted.

'Follow me,' Eva replied and led her into Hitler's study saying again, 'Close yours eyes' and when Hannah did she heard a muted swish.

'Open them.'

A panel on the wall behind Hitler's desk had slid back, the light from the study showing a chamber equipped with military clothing, firearms and torches guarding a tunnel that stretched into darkness.

'How on earth did you do that?' Hannah asked crossing to where Eva stood by the decorative fireplace.

'By pressing this hidden button,' Eva replied, twinkling mischievously like a child revealing a secret. 'Look,' she said and pointed to the recessed buttonhead under the overmantle. 'And there's another one to close the panel behind you once your in the tunnel,'

Hannah looked in to the opening, staring into the shaft disappearing into blackness.

'Where does it go to?' she asked.

'To the very end of the gardens and comes up by the far western wall.'

'And?'

'On the other side of the wall there will be a car waiting that will take us to an airstrip from where an aircraft will fly us to Portugal and then by submarine to South America. It's so secret even the driver and the pilot don't know who they will be carrying and where they are going. All they know is that they are under the strictest, top secret orders to instantly obey whoever gives them the password.'

'The password? What is it?'

'Klara.'

'Klara?'

'Yes, it's the Fuhrer's mother's name. Isn't that sweet?'

5. The Reckoning

Other than a snatched hour here and there, no one seemed to sleep or keep track of time anymore in the bunker, certainly not when Hitler announced that after he dictated his will and wished his loyal staff farewell he would retire to his quarters in the early hours of the next morning and die with his new wife, forbidding anyone to enter his quarters for at least two hours.

At two thirty Eva smuggled Hannah, champagne in hand, into the Fuhrer's quarters where she calmly waited in the Fuhrer's study until the Hitlers came in at half past three.

'So Hannah, are you ready for our little trip,?' Hitler asked.

'Yes my Fuhrer, I am ready.'

'Have you ever been in a submarine?'

'No never, I must admit I am just a little bit nervous.'

'Don't be,' the Fuhrer, who seemed to be in a jolly mood, said. 'It is the XX1, the Third Reichs greatest and latest submarine, the most advanced in the world, and we will go all the way to South America without ever once breaking the surface. Wunderbar!'

'And won't the driver get a shock when he sees who his passenger is,' Eva Hitler giggled to her husband, 'I wonder if he will dare ask you for the password.'

'If he is a soldier of the Third Reich,' Hitler said gravely, 'he will do his duty and ask me, and if I don't tell him he will, quite rightly, refuse to drive us.'

'My Fuhrer, may I propose a toast ahead of our journey?' asked Hannah brightly.

'Of couse, my dear Hannah.'

'I know you don't drink, but can I prevail upon you to take a tiny sip of champagne, for good luck?'

Hitler indulgently agreed as Hannah turned to the table with the drinks already poured and gave a glass each to the Fuehrer and Eva Hitler.

'The toast is 'New Beginnings"', Hannah announced and raised her glass, carefully watching as Eva Hitler swallowed the deadly cyanide-laced champagne and, reaching for the concealed Walther PPK she had taken from Hitlers desk, calmly shot the Fuhrer through the head and spat in his face as Eva Hitler, her horrified eyes fixed on Hannah, writhed in a death spasm and Hannah dropped the pistol, took the diamonds from the bureau and reached for the secret button under the overmantle...

Sanctuary

'Klara!'

Hannah spat out the word as she climbed into the back of the Mercedes, 'On the Fuhrer's direct orders,' she said uncompromisingly, 'you are to take me towards

the Allied lines, American or British, where I am to deliver a crucial document.
The war depends upon it, *now drive!*

Two hours later Lieutenant Benjamin Sparrow of the U.S. Eighth army, a twenty year old virgin, stared in disbelief through his binoculars as the beautiful blonde woman in a shimmering red gown under an unbuttoned army greatcoat emerged like a ghost through the rubble and early morning mist and walked, head high, towards his advance party of Ist Infantry Rangers, a white handkerchief, attached to a car aerial in her hand, fluttering in the spring breeze.

Sparrow walked cautiously forward, his rifle at the ready, as she drew nearer.

'Hello, soldier,' Hannah Shygylla said in her smoky Viennese accent, 'have you got a cigarette?'

