

Emma Goldstein was alone and on foot when she arrived at the Rothschild palace on Prinz-Eugen-Strasse in Vienna's fourth district. It was Friday, September 16, 1938. She had no trouble finding the designated bench in the upstairs hall, and was seated on it well before nine AM. The man she was waiting for, Sturmbannführer Johann Geissinger, never arrived early; it was exactly nine when he emerged from the elevator and saw her. When he'd picked her out, downstairs, the day before, she'd been the loveliest girl he'd seen in weeks. A full day, and night, of anticipation had made her even more so. Emma was a tall, willowy eighteen year old with dark eyes, flawless, porcelain skin and a thick, unruly mane of dark curls drifting down her back. She hadn't spotted him yet, and was looking down at the parquet floor as though desperate to sink into it, to become invisible.

The Nazi regime's Central Office for Jewish Emigration had taken over the palace from its Jewish owners, a branch of the Rothschild banking dynasty, a few months earlier. The three story stone building, its eighty rooms filled with marble, crystal chandeliers, and priceless art, took up an entire city block and was one of the most elegant residences in the city. The Nazis were pulling out all the stops to promote Jewish emigration, and the head of the Central Office, Adolf Eichmann, had designed the operation to resemble a factory production line. In order to obtain the invaluable documents needed for emigration, each applicant had to first sign over all assets: real estate, stock certificates, bank accounts, even furs and jewelry. Each desk on the first floor handled a different kind of asset. Other desks, further along the line, collected taxes, both real and invented. The enterprise had been immensely profitable since day one.

Eichmann, a consummate bureaucrat, had thought of everything. Or so it seemed. Certain assets, however, were visible only to an alert eye. And there was a perennial shortage of visas for the most desirable destinations, neutral countries such as Sweden, Spain and Portugal. It was a

perfect combination. Geissinger and two other high-ranking SS officers had invented a way to extract these final, least visible assets. Among themselves, they referred to it as the Expedited Visa Program. It had only one requirement: a family's willingness to allow a particularly lovely daughter or wife to spend a few hours with one of the officers upstairs. As the violence against Jews in Vienna had grown that spring and summer, more and more families had proven willing to consider this option in exchange for a safe, guaranteed exit. Over the past few weeks, each of the officers had enjoyed several dalliances in the lavishly appointed bedrooms upstairs.

Vienna had no shortage of attractive Jewish women. But when he'd first seen Emma the day before, Johann had decided instantly that she would be next. As he approached her now, he envisioned yet again running his hands through that mane of black curls, holding the back of her head with one hand, the other around her waist, his mouth on hers for the first time. Yes. He didn't care that she was Jewish. The risk of discovery and its consequences had only sharpened his desire for her, as it had for the others.

"Emma."

She looked up at him. He was standing directly in front of her, smiling, confident in his perfectly tailored gray uniform. He held out his right hand; she gave him hers. He brought it to his mouth and kissed it in the traditional Viennese manner. She was so vulnerable, so innocent, so afraid.

"Emma. Good morning. I'm so pleased you've decided to return. Come upstairs with me." She stood and walked with him to the elevator. Two minutes later he closed the bedroom's door behind him and locked it. He turned back to look at her, to examine his prize. She was staring in awe at the enormous high-ceilinged bedroom, with its plush furniture, crystal sconces, gilt moldings, and colorful Turkish carpets.

Already, he'd decided to take his time with this one.

"Sit down, my dear." He gestured to the pale green silk-upholstered sofa, positioned across the room from the tall, intricately carved mahogany bed. A low table in front of the sofa held a silver coffee service, and the aroma rising from it was tantalizing. He sat down next to her and poured coffee into two delicate bone china cups. Each bore an elaborate gilt design, the Rothschild family crest.

"Real coffee. To celebrate this occasion. To celebrate you." He raised his cup to her and drank. Emma watched him anxiously, then picked up her cup and took a sip.

"Good, isn't it?" He smiled as if sharing a secret with her.

"Yes, sir, it is very good." A small, hushed voice, a nod.

Imagining the feel of her skin beneath his fingers, Johann wondered how long he'd be able to restrain himself from touching her. For now, he waited, leaning back against the cushions, drinking his coffee, drinking her in with his eyes.

"Do people call you Emma, or Emmy?" He could smell the fresh scent of soap rising from her skin. Her hair was pinned back, off her face, with several tortoiseshell combs. She wore a dark red dress with a modest neckline and long skirt, no jewelry.

"My friends call me Emmy."

"Then I shall call you Emmy. And for as long as we're together in this room, I want you to use my Christian name, Johann. Look at me, Emmy." She raised her eyes to meet his.

"You are giving your family a great gift by agreeing to come here today. But for now, for the next few hours, I want you to forget about them, about yesterday, about everyone and everything outside this room. Today is about you. You and me."

He stopped to light a cigarette, watching her face as he took a long drag from it. Thunder sounded in the distance; the predicted rain had arrived. Huge drops pelted the north window. It was a dark day. A brass floor lamp next to the sofa, lit before their arrival, provided the room's only light.

"Have you ever been with a man, Emmy?"

She shook her head.

"You're a virgin?"

"Yes, sir, I am." She looked away.

"Then I imagine you're feeling afraid right now. Perhaps even terrified. Am I right?"

Emma nodded again, tears glistening in her eyes.

Johann's voice softened. "You needn't be afraid, Emmy. I'm not going to harm you. And despite what you're thinking, I'm not going to rape you. What I *am* going to do this morning is lead you through an initiation. I'm going to take you across a threshold, show you what it means to become a woman." He put out his cigarette.

"Give me your hand, Emmy." She obeyed him. He began to caress her fingers and wrist, looking into her eyes, imagining how it would feel to enter her, slowly, for the first time.

"Emmy, you have a lovely body, a lovely woman's body. I'm going to show you the amazing things your body can do. I'm going to take you to places you've never been. If I do my job well, you're going to enjoy the next few hours more intensely than you've ever enjoyed anything in your life." He turned her hand over and began to trace designs on her palm with his index finger. He was already hard, but he knew from experience that it would take another twenty minutes or so to make her ready for him, to get her so aroused that the idea of stopping

would become unbearable, unthinkable. He could wait; he'd had plenty of practice. He put her hand down on his knee.

“Will you do something for me? In that dressing room by the window, there's a Japanese robe. I want you to get completely undressed, put it on, and come back here to me.” He raised his brows in a question.

A few minutes later the dressing room door opened and she emerged, looking for all the world like a woman in a Klimt painting, draped in the luxurious silks of a full-length blue, red and gold kimono, its sash tied around her narrow waist. Johann sat up, his eyes wide with appreciation.

“My God. You are a vision. Even lovelier than I had imagined. Will you let your hair down for me?”

One by one, Emma took the combs out of her hair. It fell in cascades over her shoulders, surrounding her face like a dark halo. He felt his appetite for her suddenly sharpen.

“Come here, Emmy. Come to me.”

Cautiously, she approached the sofa and sat down.

“Next to me.”

She inched closer to him. With his right hand, he reached up to touch her face, his fingers alighting on her forehead, descending over her cheek, tracing the outline of her lower lip, coming to rest on her neck. Then he plunged both hands into her hair, savoring its texture, its smell, the sheer bulk of it, his face only inches from hers now. He pulled her closer, inhaling her breath, letting his lips graze hers. Taking her upper lip between his, he sucked on it gently, reminding himself to go slow, to let her get used to the closeness of his body, the feel of his mouth on hers. He kissed her eyelids, her face, her earlobes; his fingers caressed the nape of her neck, the

skin behind her ears. He felt her breathing quicken and watched as she closed her eyes and let her head fall back into his hands.

The pale skin of her exposed throat was irresistible. He tasted it with his lips and tongue, starting at her jaw line, moving down to the valley between her breasts. Next he pushed the robe off one shoulder and bent forward to run his tongue along her collarbone. A whimper escaped from her throat and turned into a moan. It was time: he lifted her in his arms and carried her to the bed, where he untied the sash of her robe. It fell open as she lay back against the pillows, revealing breasts that were small, but rounded and firm. He cupped them in his hands and brushed his lips, his tongue, teasingly over her nipples. Emma was breathing harder now and watching him intently, her eyes alive with a potent mixture of fear and desire.

For the next several minutes he sat next to her, exploring her, moving his fingers and his mouth over the curves and valleys of her perfect body, taking his time. He stopped to undress. Returning to her, he raised her knees and spread them apart. Her body was ready for him now. But rather than enter her, he changed position in order to caress her with his mouth. She was so aroused, and he so skilled at this, that she came, explosively, in less than a minute, writhing on the bed, crying out, her hands gripping the sheets. Ten seconds later he was poised over her, ready to begin.

“Emmy, this is the part that hurts. It will only be for a few seconds. I’m going to go slow and be as gentle as I can. After I’m inside you, I want you to tell me when it starts to feel good. Will you do that?”

She looked up into his eyes, nodding, then cried out as he penetrated her. For the first half minute, he remained motionless, savoring her heat, her tightness, the certainty that he was the

first man she had opened to. Then he began to move inside her, carefully, a few inches at a time, watching her response.

Her mouth was open, her breathing fast. After a minute she spoke. "It . . . it doesn't hurt anymore, Johann. It feels good. More than good."

He grinned as he watched the expression on her face change from apprehension to passion. This was his favorite part, when this happened. It always did. He began to move faster, penetrating her more deeply, and felt her hips reaching for him, taking him in. She was far more responsive than he'd dared hope. He held her eyes with his, keeping up a steady rhythm, allowing himself to inch closer to orgasm.

"Emmy, you are a beautiful woman. You are a marvelous lover. Tell me how it feels to have me inside you like this."

She closed her eyes briefly then looked up at him with wide eyes. "It's the same feeling as before. It's getting stronger. It just feels so . . . *good*." Her movements quickened; her eyes closed. He watched with delight as she convulsed underneath him, crying out his name, and then gave in and followed her lead.

A few minutes later she was lying next to him, on her side, cradled in his arms.

"Did you enjoy that as much as I think you did?" He kissed her shoulder.

The shy smile she gave him was her first of the day. "I never knew. . . I never knew I could feel like that. Do you think . . . can we. . . ?"

"Are you trying to ask me if we can do it again?" He grinned at her.

She nodded.

“Oh, Emmy. Oh, Emmy, of course we can. We have the whole morning. I’m going to make love to you as many times as I can this morning. That was only the beginning.”

He took her hand and moved it to his penis, already growing hard again. With his fingers over hers, he showed her how to touch him. He closed his eyes to savor the feel of her hands, and was astonished a moment later to feel her mouth on him, her tongue caressing him. He groaned. Gradually she figured out how to take more of him into her mouth. It was an unbearably delicious sensation.

“Emmy, I want you on top of me this time. Now.” Without any further instruction, she straddled his body and lowered herself onto him, taking all of him inside her. Her movements were as slow and languorous as those of a skilled courtesan; their lovemaking went on for ten minutes before she was overtaken by another climax.

The coffee was still warm, but just barely, when he decided it was time for a break. Emma had relaxed, and sat up, completely at ease, when he brought some to her in bed. This time she asked for cream and sugar, and finished the entire cup. She nodded eagerly when he asked if she wanted another.

By the time they emerged from the bedroom, it was well after one. Each of his previous encounters, every session prior to this, had ended in the hallway outside the door.

“Emmy, would you like me to drive you home? It’s raining quite heavily.” *And I don’t want to let you go. Not yet. Not until I have to.*

“That would be lovely. It’s quite a long walk. Are you sure it’s all right?”

Together they descended in the elevator to the garage level. They had the elevator to themselves. The afternoon traffic was heavy due to the rain. Despite his best efforts, Johann found himself imagining her in Portugal, sitting by a tiled fountain in a sun-baked courtyard,



another man by her side: a scene that he had made possible. He shook his head, trying to regain his composure. No one had this effect on him. No one.

After twenty minutes, they reached the street where she and her family lived. He reached inside his jacket and took out the envelope with the four visas.

“These are for you. They’re completely filled out and good for three weeks. I won’t be seeing you again. Thank you for today.” Insanely, he thought of contacting her in the future, only to realize immediately how hopeless, how absurd the idea was. No. It was time to let her go, time to send her out into the world, into her life.

He pulled her to him and kissed her forehead. Then he took her into his arms and held her close for a long minute, in silence, before releasing her from his embrace. She looked up at him with tears in her eyes. Then she got out of the car and disappeared into the rainy afternoon.