
UNEXPECTED NEWS

“It is no longer safe here, I will have to go.”

Maria sat up in bed, startled. What had her father just said? She strained to hear the soft voices of her parents in the other room.

“Don’t be silly,” Maria heard her mother say. “You don’t have to do this. You will be perfectly safe. We will all be safe. The war is over now.”

“No,” said her father, his voice getting louder. “The Russian soldiers are coming. If they find out I fought with the Hungarian army, and that I am here, I will be captured.”

Maria held her breath. She had never heard her parents speak about this before.



“Don’t forget that they imprisoned me just because I refused to give up our farm,” he continued. “They are taking control of everything.”

“But how can they do that?” asked her mother. “You’re not fighting them anymore.”

“I know, but that’s just the way it is now,” her father replied. “If they capture me again, they might not let me go. I can’t let them take me away from you.”

Maria couldn’t sit still any longer. She got out of bed and walked to the doorway. “But Papa, the war is over,” she said. “Why would the Russians want to capture you?”

Her parents looked up, alarmed. “Go back to bed, little one,” said her mother. “We didn’t mean to wake you.”

Maria shook her head. “No,” she said, running to her father and climbing into his lap. “You won’t go away, will you, Papa?” she said, burying her face in his chest. “Promise me you won’t go away.”

Her father stroked her hair, speaking gently. “I have to,” he said. “It could be dangerous. You see, I was fighting against the Russian army.”



“Even though the war is over, the Russians would be happy to catch an enemy soldier. I have to make sure that you and Mama are safe.”

Maria started to cry. “But where will you go?” she said. “Will it be far away? When will I see you again?”

"It won't be long," said her father. "I will go to Germany, to a refugee camp there. You and your mother will follow soon on the train." He smiled down at her. "You mustn't worry. We'll all be together again before the new baby is born."

Her mother smiled too, her hands folded protectively over her pregnant belly. "You know how you love trains, Maria," she said. "You and I will have a little adventure. It will be fun, don't you think?"

Maria didn't answer. She shrugged her shoulders, burying her face once more in her father's chest.

"Come on, little one," said her father, picking her up in his arms. "It's late. Back to bed with you."

Maria looked up at him. "You won't go tonight, will you?" she pleaded.

Her father shook his head. "No, little one. We will talk again in the morning."

In her room, Maria tossed and turned, unable to get to sleep. What was happening? Earlier that day, she had played in the garden and picked flowers for her mother. Her father had read her a bedtime story as usual.