

Fundi

Chapter One:

One Nexion – One New Beginning

Per Sorenson was dead.

His death did nothing to ease the shelling. Katgusha rockets still shattered the buildings around. A tram burned as rubble from a nearby explosion slithered onto the tracks in front of it and the armoured troop carrier bearing Sorenson's body turned to avoid the flames.

A pretty woman wearing a Wehrmacht helmet for protection against debris looked up at the carrier and briefly smiled. But her smile did nothing to relieve Dieter's sadness, and he watched her as she walked nimbly through the rubble clutching a canteen of water. The block of buildings ahead of her shook with explosions, and smoke and dust drifted away with the slight wind. Somewhere nearby a man screamed.

Dieter and his comrades did not move as the carrier bore them and the body toward the Ploetzensee cemetery. Zhukov's Red Horde was near and Dieter imagined he could hear small arms fire in the brief pauses between shell, rocket and bomb. Despite the explosions, no one ran along the streets, and a tired Volksturm guard waved the troop carrier through the intersection. Nearby, young boys in Hitler Jugend uniform worked cheerfully, digging a trench parallel to a lane of twisted, torn trees. Their leader spoke, but Dieter heard nothing except another shell burst nearby. For a few seconds the boys stood silent, their caps removed, as the carrier passed. Sturmscharfuhrer [...] acknowledged their respect with a salute.

Sorensen's coffin was made from empty ammunition crates and Dieter helped lower them and their body into the grave. The symbolism seemed fitting for a man who had fought for three years on the Russian front, always with his machine pistol on a lanyard around his neck.

Dieter's eulogy was brief:

"Bright and glorious that warrior's Destiny who in battle-array stands for his children and home, stands for the woman of his heart, bravely opposed to

the foe. So Death may come, when it will, bringing to an end this thread of life.”

“For think not that Destiny will allow for a man to live always unharmed, great though he be, though even he boast descent from the gods. Even though the coward pass through the fury of battle safe to his home in his flight – Death will assail him there. But then he dies unlamented, unloved by his folk, while both the folk and their chiefs weep by the tomb of the brave”.

“Yes, with a nation’s tears wherever he may die, we mourn him; and if he the brave lives he is hailed all but a god upon Earth. Strong as a fortress of defence in the fight do we gaze on our hero; for his are deeds for the many, and he does them alone.”

Amid the falling shells Hermann led the last salute before the honour guard fired their three salvos over the grave. A woman flak helper threw fresh Spring flowers before the Earth protected the body: not for Sorensen the mutilation the Soviet troops inflicted on the bodies of dead SS officers.

The men, led by Hermann, were singing “I Had A Comrade” and there were tears in Dieter’s eyes. Sorensen had saved his life, twice.

The journey back to the dug-out was slow, and Dieter wished Zhukov’s troops would attack. For every bullet a kill; for every Panzerfaust a tank. Vengeance for Sorensen’s death.

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The smoke twilight from the battle bombardment was long, and Dieter was relieved when the first tank appeared, lurching over the rubble in the street. A Soviet sniper made a dash for the safety of the church façade on Dieter’s right but then stopped to clutch his throat and topple to the ground dead. The tank turned abruptly, its machine gun hitting nothing that was living. Dieter aimed the pin on the edge of the Panzerfaust at the tank, gripping the weapon under his arm. His muscles ached from the repetition and there was no elation about the kill.

Close range Soviet bombardment began while machine gun fire spattered the ground. The buildings around – or what was left of them - hid a few German snipers and Dieter was trying to judge their number from their sporadic when the bullets and the bombardment ceased. Dieter tensed while buildings and the burning tank crackled with fire.

A few grenades were thrown, then a slow rush of Soviet troops among the rubble and the bodies.

“Tank riders!” shouted Dieter.

The only thing that tank riders did was advance and die, and Dieter did not disappoint Stalin’s expendable peasants. He shot two, three, six. Hermann had run out of grenades. More Soviet snipers were seeking cover to provide cross-fire but Dieter could only target one before the others escaped into the rubble of the church. He threw his last grenade after them.

The young machine gunner in the dug-out beside Dieter was dead and he rolled the body away before quickly changing the clogged barrel of the gun. Hermann fed the ammunition belt until, without a sound, he slithered down the trench, shot in the head. The tank riders were crawling closer but Dieter held their advance with Hermann’s sub-machine gun while through the smoke filled street another tank lurched toward him.

Soon Dieter had no more ammunition, the men in the dug-outs behind him were dead and he began to throw bricks, stones and anything he could find before scrambling back to find a weapon with which to kill. From the still warm hand of one of his dead comrades he took a Mauser pistol but had no time to aim. The shell from the tank exploded near him knocking him over before burying him under earth, rubble and wood.

Dieter awoke to consciousness to hear the crackling of a nearby fire and the distant explosions of battle; to smell burning wood and flesh, and to see above him framed by the crack of light, a large brown rat.

No voices reached him and when he clawed his way cautiously into the light he could see no human movement along the street. The light drizzle refreshed him, and he let the rainwater soak his hair and trickle over his blood stained face before crawling toward his dug-out. The tank smouldered but the dead Soviet troops had been removed.

Along the street an old man pulled a wooden cart while beside him two women walked enwrapped in long coats with black shawls covering their heads. From the

end of the cart two sets of bare feet protruded. A squad of Zhukov's soldiers led by a bandy-legged officer in a peaked cap strutted toward them. They shouted and laughed. The old man tried to speak, but the officer knocked him down before three soldiers dragged one of the women into the façade of the church. She screamed and resisted and was shot.

Dieter shot the officer through the head. Surprise and his marksmanship killed four more before inaccurate fire was returned but within seconds he had shot the remaining three.

"Thank you," said the old man as Dieter approached. "You must go – there are more."

Dieter knelt down to retrieve a selection of weapons from the bodies before helping the woman to her feet. Her beauty surprised him and he forced himself to turn away.

"Where is the front line?" he asked.

"There is no front line," said the old man sadly, staring at the ground.

Before Dieter could reply, the woman spoke. "You must go - it they find you alive..."

"And you?" He asked.

The woman smiled. "We are now the children of Fate. We shall head west."

The old man knelt briefly beside the body of his dead daughter before covering her face with his coat. He dragged the two bodies of his wife and young daughter from the cart to lay them beside, covering them the best he could.

"I have no strength to carry them for a burial," he said.

A lorry smoldered at the end of the street where a building showed a liting inside of

floors.

“Where is your regiment?” the woman asked.

Dieter looked around the scene of their last battle. “I am the Regiment!” he said proudly. Dizzy and weak from loss of blood and concussion, he collapsed against the cart.

“We must help him,” he heard the woman say.

The old man sighed wearily. “Yes, I know.”

The last thing that Dieter remembered was the woman’s beautiful smile.

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Wolfram stared into the quartz sphere while outside his shuttered room the high-ranking SS Officer waited in the cool air of the Bavarian Alps.

There was no mystery in what he sensed through the medium of the crystal as, many years ago, there had been a mystery when a gaunt young man fresh from war had sought with Dietrich’s help to seek him out. Now they both were dead and he alone of the original seven was left to try and build from the ruins of the destruction a new Empire to reach toward the stars.

The Dark Gods that for most of his life he had served would be waiting among those stars and he had only to open another Gate for their power to be his for him to use it as he had used it to help that young man of vision. Yet there was something that he did not understand about the events that had brought destruction to his dreams. Some other power opposed to his own must have been invoked and he moved away from the crystal to stare for several minutes at the pieces scattered over the seven boards and one hundred and twenty six squares of the Star Game. But he could see no pattern that might explain the events and, sad, he shook his head to play perhaps for the last time upon his piano his favorite piece of music by Bach.

The music brought quiet joy and he entered his plain Temple to seek the guidance of his gods. The quartz tetrahedron glowed, a little, as it had done for the past few days

and he rested his hands on it. The coldness seemed to drain away his sadness and joy and he imagined he was traveling through the dimensions beyond the Seventh Gate. There was a presence awaiting him among the stars at the very edge of the Galaxy and he allowed it to shape his consciousness as many times in the past it had been shaped. The futures of his own planet lay in visions around him and he had only to find Her desire to make one future real

With one possibility he returned to the terrace where against the backdrop of mountains the Officer waited, holding a sheaf of files. The files contained the personal details of SS officers who had distinguished themselves in the savage combat of the last few months of the war, and Wolfram read through them all slowly and with interest. Per Sorenson, his favored, was dead but in an hour he had found a successor.

He handed the file of the chosen to the Officer. "You can make the arrangements?"

"Yes!" Replied the Officer curtly but with respect. "And the country?"

"England."

The Officer was surprised. "As you wish." He saluted, bowed slightly and left the terrace to walk down the steps toward the road.

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Dieter could recall little of his journey. Burnt by fever he heard mumbled voices, the sound of aircraft, smelt putrid smells, felt a damp cloth on his face and the bumping as the cart trundled its slow way across a ravaged land. At length, daylight stung his eyes and he saw a convoy of lorries, Soviet soldiers standing idle, the husks of burnt-out tanks. Behind the cart where he lay hidden he could see a straggle of unkempt people pushing or carrying on their backs a few possessions.

A few more miles and the old man ceased his pulling of the cart. "There is a Soviet check point ahead," someone said.

Slowly, night drew its darkness over them and the people, huddled in the small convoy for safety, stopped, exhausted and hungry.

"What shall we do?" Dieter heard the beautiful woman ask her father.

Stiffly, Dieter climbed from the cart. A haggard woman in a black skirt, coat and shawl stared at him. Even in the twilight his uniform was distinct. Soon, everyone was staring at him.

“There is a reward for the likes of him!” crooned the old woman. “It would feed us for days!”

Several of the group stood up to move toward Dieter. But the old man who had pulled the cart stepped between them.

“You make me ashamed to be a German,” he said to them.

“Germany is finished!” shouted the old woman. “And it’s due to the likes of him!” She spat on the ground. “When did you last eat, eh? A proper meal I mean. Meat and fresh vegetables!”

Dieter held the old man’s arm. “I am stronger now and shall leave.”

The old man nodded, “Hans-Peter Schemm.”

“Hauptsturmfuhrer Dieter Norkus.” They shook hands.

“My daughter, Ilse.”

Dieter bowed to her. “I have much to thank you and your father for.”

“It was nothing,” she said, “compared to the sacrifices some have made.”

“And the war?”

“Unconditional surrender.”

“The Fuhrer?”

“Dead – so they say.”

Dieter sighed. “I hope I shall see you again.”

“Koblenz – that is where we go,” Hans-Peter said. “Ask for us near the Florinsmarkt in the Old Town – if it still exists.”

“Until then, I thank you.” He brought his heels together in the Prussian manner, bowed toward Ilse and strode purposefully away from the road into the gathering darkness.

Dieter walked for several hours across fields before stopping to take a rest and check the two pistols he still carried. The night silence was strange after the bombardment of Berlin and he could not sleep only try and dispel the sadness he felt because the war was over with Germany’s defeat.

He did not know what to do except journey toward the farm of his father in Hessen. But Germany was in ruins, occupied by foreign armies and he felt himself bound still by the oath of loyalty swom those many years ago.

Dawn’s first rays found him in a small copse. Somewhere near, he knew, would be a farm, with water and food and probably foreign soldiers, and he forced himself to remain within the cover of the trees until darkness brought again the freedom he needed to resume his journey.

Sleep did not come, just insistent hunger, thirst, and the boredom of inaction. Twice he thought he heard voices and once, the distant rumble of tanks and when night came he was content with the caution born of combat to edge his way slowly through fields, avoiding all roads and tracks.

Toward dawn he came upon farm buildings. A man slept by the entrance to the

courtyard, a rifle beside him, and Dieter watched the buildings for nearly an hour before walking down the track to kick the sleeping man awake after taking his rifle.

“Good people!” the startled blurted out. He saw Dieter’s uniform and shouted several words in Polish.

“Quiet!” Commanded Dieter. “You speak German?”

“Yes!” Said the old man proudly.

“Who is in charge here?”

The man stood up to face Dieter. “Landrat von Leiden.”

“No Russians?”

“No.” replied the man nervously, “not yet”.

Dieter looked around, listening. “The Landrat – tell him I want to see him.”

“Of course!”

Dieter did not have long to wait. Von Leiden stumbled toward him, bent and shuffling because of arthritis.

“Berlin?” he asked.

“Yes.”

“You have come a long way. Alone.”

“Yes.”

“Hummmph!” He turned to speak to the Pole who was skulking behind. “Fetch some of the bread. And water.” He scowled. “And a little of that sausage that you have hidden in the urn.”

The Pole displayed no emotion, and scuttled away.

“No manners these Poles,” muttered von Leiden. “They steal my geese.”

“I am Hauptsturmfeuhrer....”

“I do not care who you are. The Russians are everywhere.”

“How far to the American lines?”

“Not far – a day, walking. Perhaps.” He stared at Dieter’s uniform. “My son – “ he began. Then abruptly; “I have some old clothes, should you wish. Your uniform –“

“No thank you.”

Von Leiden shook his head. “This war’s ending – it is not the same. No honour in peace.”

Dieter gave him the rifle and this gesture of trust brought tears to von Leiden’s eyes. “Our old world of honour lies in ruins.” Then seeing the Pole return he took the food and water and gave them to Dieter saying, “Go and quickly.”

Dieter stuffed the black bread and sausage into his pockets. The water was cold and

refreshing and he cleaned his face briefly before handing back the jug, bowing his head to von Leiden and striding along the track toward the fields.

He walked for several hours, unconcerned about being seen for he had resolved to die fighting, like all his comrades, rather than surrender. He stopped briefly, to take from an inside pocket his Knight's Cross which he pinned to his camouflage jacket, making sure all his insignia were clear and bright. Nearby, he heard someone whistle.

It was a tuneful whistle and, as it came nearer, Dieter recognized it as the Parade March of the 18th Hussars. It was whistled by a boy dressed in the striking uniform of the Napolas.

Dieter let him pass as he lay hidden by a tree before calling out to the boy.

"Heil Hitler!" the boy replied with enthusiasm. Tall and muscular, he appeared to Dieter be the perfect advertisement for the Jungmannen.

Dieter returned the salute, with less enthusiasm. "Where are you heading?" he asked.

"Home!" replied the boy cheerfully, his left hand resting on his dagger.

"Where is that?"

"Hamburg. And you, Hauptstumfehrer?"

"South. Have you eaten recently?"

"No sir."

Dieter gave him all the bread and half the sausage.

“What will you do when you reach Hamburg?”

Brightly the boy said, “Build a new Germany!”

“Germany will certainly need rebuilding.”

“Sir?” the boy said seriously.

“Yes?”

“I would consider it a great honour if you would allow me to accompany you.”

“What about your home?”

“There will be plenty of time!” He stared at Dieter’s Knight’s Cross.

“Have you seen any action?”

“Yes! Anti-aircraft battery at Grünewald. Then when the Reds came I joined some Volksturm and Hitler Jugend. When we ran out of ammunition, we split up.”

“I have no intention of surrendering. But you are Germany’s future.”

“I am not afraid to die.”

Dieter smiled, “I can see by your eyes you speak the truth.” He gave the boy one of his pistols. “You might need this.”

In silence they walked together for many miles while Dieter’s spirit grew troubled, and

he was about to order the boy to leave him and find safety in the American lines when ahead they saw a straggling line of soldiers.

“Go now,” Dieter said, “while you can”.

The boy smiled and shook his head before releasing the safety catch on the pistol. Slowly, the soldiers encircled them.

The boy was laying on the ground, his young, earnest face intently watching the advancing soldiers. Dieter took the pistol from him.

“The future is yours,” Dieter said.

“And you, sir?” the boy asked.

“At least they are American,” Dieter said, throwing the pistols away and raising his hands in the gesture of surrender.

They were taken to a small village occupied by the Americans. Several of the timbered houses, as well as the Saxon church, lay in ruins while around the largest standing building which served as American headquarters, small groups of old women and young children sat, strangely silent, on the ground. Amongst the destruction, trucks, jeeps, stores and American soldiers were littered without any appearance of order.

Pushed against a courtyard wall, they were searched for the third time.

“OK.” Shouted the American Sergeant, “turn around you Nazi bastards!”

The American Major who approached them did not smile. Behind him a small bespectacled soldier carried a clipboard.

“Rank, name and unit,” he said to Dieter.

“Hauptsturmfehrer Dieter Norkus, Waffen SS, Nordland Division....”

“Sir,” the bespectacled soldier interrupted, talking to the Major, “the boy.”

“What?”

“G2 orders, sir.”

“Take over Sergeant!” the Major strode back toward his headquarters, his clipboard bearer in tow.

With the Major gone, the Sergeant approached Dieter. “Let’s see that medal,” he grinned. “Kinda nice, ain’t it?”

He went to rip it from Dieter’s uniform when the boy sprang forward. Without speaking a word he wrenched the American’s arm and tripped him up.

The other guards laughed.

“You son of a bitch!” Enraged the Sergeant jumped up, snatched a rifle and smashed the butt into the boy’s face. Dieter moved toward him, but two guards pinned his arms against the wall. Nearby, a few birds sang their unchanging songs of spring. The Sergeant ripped the Knights Cross from Dieter’s tunic.

“Sergeant Piaggio!” Shouted the Major from his doorway. With a swaggering gait the Sergeant walked over to him and their conversation was whispered and brief.

Dieter was forced into the building and onto a chair. The Major said a few words in German before Dieter said, “I do speak English.”

“Great! Cigarette?”

“No, thank you.”

“Where is the rest of your outfit?”

“They fell in Berlin.”

Nearby, a brief burst of gunfire could be heard.

“How did you get here?”

“I walked.”

There was a knock on the door and the Sergeant entered without saluting. “That kid, Major,” he said. “Tried to escape. We had to shoot.”

Dieter stared at him, his eyes bright with anger. “How heroic of you to shoot an unarmed boy!”

“Shut your mouth!” shouted the Sergeant.

“I wish to report this to the senior American officer,” said Dieter.

The Major was smiling and the Sergeant had started to laugh when Dieter leapt across the room to grab the machine gun the Sergeant was holding. His hand was on the barrel, his finger near the trigger when his two guards beat him into unconsciousness with the butts of their rifles.

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For Dieter the next few days became a blur of impressions: a long journey in a covered lorry with other prisoners of war with whom he was forbidden to speak, an

interrogation, another journey, another interrogation, a guarded prisoner of war compound where he and the other prisoners were forced to sleep on the ground.

He lost count of the days, and weary from the months of fighting, the shock of defeat, lack of sleep, hunger, the journeys and the interrogations, he sat in the back of an American lorry watching through the open flap the stream beside the road as the lorry wound its way among some hills. The day was warm, perfumed by the scent of Spring's flowers and as Dieter began to recall the quiet beauty of the Germany he had known in Hessen as a boy, his spirit began to yearn to return to the house of his family where to renew with his own hands the cultivation of their lands. There was a family legend, he knew, connected with the farm and he possessed a desire to wander free and homeward to hear his grandfather tell it. But Germany was in ruins, he himself was a prisoner of war and he still believed he was bound by his oath of loyalty sworn in the exuberant first year of the war.

"My Honour Commands Loyalty" said the motto on his ring – and to all the questions that in the last few days he had been asked his answer was always the same: "I have done nothing," he would say with pride, "that is dishonourable."

But they did not understand.

"For my Fatherland in sadness I weep" he recalled from memory for himself when alone or when no one would listen or believe his words of truth, "for my country am I robbed. How great is the chant of our woe: tear upon tear is shed and only the unseeing dead forget how to weep..."

Enwrapped in dreams of his home, he did not notice when the lorry stopped. But the driver brought him and his two guards out into the warming sun to move the rock-fall from the narrow road.

An old man shuffled slowly toward them along the road while they worked and Dieter was dragging the last rock away when he reached them. Without speaking he walked straight to the two guards who were lounging against the side of the lorry, grabbed them and knocked their heads together. Limply, they fell to the ground. The astonished driver went to draw his holstered pistol but swift like a wolf in attack the old man leapt toward him striking at his windpipe with his hand. The driver fell still on the road.

The old man was smiling, his eyes bright and blue like the clear sky of summer.

“Come Dieter Norkus, we must leave.”

Dieter did not question his sudden freedom and followed as with surprising agility the old man led him upwards through the rocks and trees, along twisting tracks to a small wooden hut. Dieter recognized the SS officer who was waiting inside.

The officer handed him a sheaf of documents, saying: “All the documents for your new identity are there. Memorize the history you will find then destroy it. A few days from now you will be in your new country.”

Dieter looked up from the documents. “Which is?”

“England.”

Dieter was surprised. “May I ask – what for?”

“To continue what has been achieved, and prepare for what is next.” The officer saluted, bowed and left.

“I”, the smiling old man said, “am Fundi and will be your guide. Come now, for there is much to do.

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Anton Long

1977 e.v.,

Order of Nine Angles