

All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing.

Edmund Burke 1729-1797

PART ONE

In the Shadow of the Wolf

Chapter One

Walt slid his chisel into its slot at the back of his bench and sipped the tea he'd let go cold. He eased a sepia photograph from his wallet. For thirty-four years he'd carried Miriam's likeness, faded and tattered around the edges: she'd left footprints in his heart, trodden deep and clear. Her voice echoed and his heartbeat quickened. The tramp of feet, marching from the spring of 1944, jarred the brick floor beneath him into hard-packed grey earth. Left, right, left, right...

He marched with them: dust scoured his eyes and throat, and gritted the sweat on his back. The kommando of haefling, striped berets and coats creating an army of Colorado beetles, kept time with the SS guards. Despair choreographed their movements: their strings jerked by an evil puppeteer, they stared straight ahead, their stick-like arms hanging limp, their wasted faces blank. Behind them, ambulances rattled to a stop.

The sound of boots and clogs faded beneath the hiss of steam and the clatter of couplings as the rumble of iron on iron ground to a halt. The line of cattle wagons, each bearing the insignia of their country of origin, and some with a roughly-painted yellow star, snaked into Stygian distance.

Smoke and steam mingled with the sickly-sweet pall that hung over the camp day and night. Flakes of ash from the chimneys danced with smuts of smoke, and floated to the ground with the grace of angels. Already the day was hot. Inside the wagons it would be suffocating.

‘Öffnen die Wagen!’

Wagon doors rolled back with squeals and grinding crashes, drowning the swing tune belted out by the camp orchestra. Eyes stark with bewilderment blinked against the light.

‘Aussteigen.’ An SS officer waved his pistol. ‘Schnell! Schnell!’

Men tumbled onto the ramp. Women clutched babies to their breasts and gathered children to their skirts, their eyes searching the faces around them.

A woman cupped her hands in supplication. ‘Vis.’ A yellow star emblazoned her coat. Hungarian. Jewish. They’d been arriving by the wagon-load. ‘Viz... kérem.’

The words for water, bread and help were burned into his memory in every European language. The woman begged for water. He could offer no drop of water, no morsel of bread or shred of hope.

‘Viz. Wasser... Bitte.’ A stooped, grey-bearded figure held up four fingers. The journey from Hungary had taken four days: four days without food or water.

The crowd swelled across the ramp as the wagons vomited more souls than they could possibly contain, bringing with them the stench of excrement. A guard hustled the men and older boys from the women and children, forming them into two ragged lines along the tracks.

A detachment of haefling quick-stepped forward and heaved bodies from the wagons, laying them in rows upon the aching ground. The old, the little children: their bodies weren't heavy even for those barely fleshed themselves.

A young woman bent to retrieve her possessions. An SS officer strode past. 'Leave. Luggage afterwards.'

She stood, wide-eyed like a startled deer, one arm cradling a baby. Beside her an elderly woman clutched a battered suitcase. The girl's eyes darted from soldier to painted signboard and back. 'What are we doing here, Grandmother? Why have they brought us *here*?' The wind teased at her cheerful red shawl, revealing and lifting long black hair. She straightened and attempted a smile. 'It'll be all right, Grandmother. God has protected us on our journey.'

'Where's your Father?' The old lady adjusted her shawl, covering shock-white hair. 'Miriam, I can't see my Jani.'

'Father will be helping Efah and Mother with the children.'

'And where are our precious things...'

'They're here, Grandmother.'

Voices rasped, whips cracked, dogs barked. The men and boys were marched away, craning necks for a glimpse of wives, mothers, sisters and children. At a signal, the remaining haefling broke ranks and began searching wagons, and carrying bundles and suitcases to waiting lorries. Miriam's grandmother's case fell open: a beetle snapped it shut and scurried it away. Something had fallen out: in the bustle no one saw him pick up the small wallet and tuck it inside his shirt.

More orders followed: more cracking whips and snarling dogs. The line of women and children stumbled forward across the railway sleepers, leaving behind tumbled heaps of abandoned lives.

The march through the camp took forever, yet it was over too soon. At the junction, guards ordered the women to halt. Smoke from the chimneys obliterated the sky: a wind from the west blew the stench of it across their path.

‘Zwillinge, heraus!’ *He*, the hated Hauptsturmführer, stood before them dark hair smoothed back, his Iron Cross worn with casual pride. His eyes pierced the crowd; his gloved hand held a cane with which he pointed bewildered women to the left or the right.

He shuddered, knowing what the man sought.

An SS officer pushed towards a woman of about fifty. ‘How old?’ She didn’t respond so the officer shouted the question.

He edged closer. As a doctor he held a privileged position, but he’d also discovered a gift for languages. He translated the German to stilted Hungarian, adding quietly, ‘Say you’re under forty-five. Say you are well. Stand here with the younger women.’ He moved from woman to woman, intercepting those he could. ‘Say you are well. Tell them your daughter’s sixteen. Say she’s well. Say you can work or have a skill. Tell them you’re not pregnant.’

The Hauptsturmführer waved his cane. ‘You, to the right. No, the children to the left.’

A woman clutched her children’s hands. ‘I can’t leave my babies.’

He froze, fearing for them all. The thunder of another train grew closer and the SS officer gestured her to the left with her children. He breathed again, ashamed at feeling relief, and hurried to intercept the next group.

The girl with the red shawl was there, in front of him: the old lady had called her Miriam. He touched her arm. 'Say you're well, Miriam. Say you can work. Give the baby to your grandmother. She must stand to the left with the children. You must stand to the right.'

'My grandmother isn't well. I'm a nurse. I can look after her and Mary.'

A guard strode past. 'Together afterwards.'

He nodded, compounding the conspiracy of silence. 'Together afterwards.'

The old lady held out her arms for the baby. 'Go, Miriam. God be with you.'

Miriam's eyes glistened. 'May He rescue us from the hand of every foe.' She touched her grandmother's cheek, a gentle, lingering movement, and placed a tender kiss on her baby's forehead.

She moved where he pointed to stand with a group of about thirty young women: only thirty? Her eyes followed her grandmother and daughter as they were swallowed into the thousands that straggled towards the anonymous buildings beneath the smoke. Ambulances passed, carrying those who couldn't walk; a truck bearing a red cross followed behind. She watched until they disappeared from sight and then searched the faces of the women that remained.

Miriam's eyes met his. He had no way to tell her he had given her life: no right to tell her to abandon hope. *Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and in the hour of our death.*

The doorknob rattled, jolting Walt back to the workshop at the end of the garden: Kettering, England, 1978. He slipped the photograph away and covered his work, heart thudding. He turned the doorknob. ‘Charlotte... Did you want me, little one?’

‘You promised us a story, Grandpa.’

He shoed Charlotte outside ahead of him and turned the key in the lock. He clipped the key to a chain, alongside a smaller brass one, and put both keys in his pocket.

‘Grandpa...’ Charlotte plucked his sleeve.

Lucy, her mirror-image, mimicked Granny’s best exasperated sigh. ‘The little girls, Grandpa. Tell us about the little girls.’

Machines, clattering from open windows in the shoe-factory behind the workshop, settled into a rhythm steadier than his heart. He ruffled Charlotte’s blonde curls absently and sank into his deckchair, already standing outside the snow-wrapped building, many miles and years from the garden of the back-street terrace. A wolf stalked the edges of his mind and long-dead faces pleaded for help he couldn’t give.

‘A woodcutter lived deep in the forests of Günsburg with his wife and two little girls, and some chickens. They were happy and free, except for the wolf.’

Blue eyes widened. ‘A wolf?’

He nodded. ‘The woodcutter was afraid to let his daughters into the forest alone so he decided to slay the wolf. He put on his green jacket, and his hat with a feather, and went outside to kill a chicken.’

Charlotte sobered. ‘Why?’

‘His daughters’ lives were more important to him than the chicken’s. He put poison inside the chicken and set off to find the wolf’s lair. He dropped the chicken onto the ground and climbed a tree to watch.’ He pushed away memories of electrified barbed-wire, hunger, thirst and relentless cold. ‘The wolf crept from his lair. *Sniff, sniff, sniff. I smell chicken...* He dragged the chicken inside.’

Charlotte tilted her head to one side. ‘Did the wolf die, Grandpa?’

He brushed a stray curl from her face. ‘The woodcutter thought he was dead but he was only sleeping a long, long sleep.’

Lucy screwed up her face. ‘So he might still eat the little girls?’

He sought for a prettier tale to distract her, but he’d been only three when the mud of The Somme had sucked the life from his father and his mother’s struggle to raise him alone hadn’t included fairytales.

Charlotte slashed at an imaginary foe. ‘Grandpa won’t let the wolf eat us, Lucy. Grandpa will kill him, dead, like this.’

She had the courage he’d lacked. Would it have made a difference? ‘It’s not good to kill, Charlotte. No-one has the right to take another’s life.’

‘But if he’s going to eat me...’

Why had he got into a moral debate with five year-olds? They always found holes in his logic big enough to fall through.

Lucy picked at a scab. ‘Granny says eating people is a sin.’

‘She did?’

‘She says it’s a comment from God.’

‘A commandment. People believe different things, Lucy. A long time ago people believed in lots of gods.’

‘When we were little?’

‘Longer ago than that... long before even I was born.’ Charlotte’s mouth made a circle round enough to fit a whole plum. He smiled. ‘They thought the sun was a god, and the moon was a goddess.’ It made more sense than the Catholic dogma he’d absorbed from his mother. *Pray for us sinners, now and in the hour of our death...* Her plea had struck terror into his young heart. *Take me from the dark. Hear me now, O Lord.* Her God hadn’t heard him in his darkest hours; He hadn’t heard her when the aerial bombardment razed her home to the ground, burying her and his sister, when the Second World War was all but over.

Jane arrived with drinks and biscuits, and drove both wolf and God from the twins’ minds with an ease he envied.

‘I’ll take my tea in the workshop, love... do a bit more to Dobbin. Come and see what you think.’ He opened the door, making dust motes dance in the beam of sunlight. The rocking horse stood on the brick floor waiting for a coat of primer: it was a present for the twins fifth birthday. Arturas and Peti had been five.

Jane put the mug on the bench among shapes hidden beneath dustsheets. ‘The twins will love him.’ Dimples chased the wrinkles from the corners of her mouth. ‘Don’t let your tea go cold again.’

His gaze lingered on his wife’s plump form as she retreated down the path towards the kitchen, measuring the too-rapid drip of time they had left together. He breathed in the scents of roses, lavender and leather before locking the door and removing the shroud from his other, secret, more pressing task.

He brushed back a strand of grey hair. He took no pleasure from the work for each stroke of mallet on chisel laid his soul bare. With a surgeon's precision, he gouged his nightmares into the tortured shapes, sanded truth into each curve and wrote in them his guilt.

Five carvings. Four were living flames in burr elm. The fifth, carved from straighter-grained lime-wood, depicted a wolf leaping through flames. Two short burr-elm cylinders, shaped like lighted candles, echoed the theme of fire and completed the work. Thoughts of mortality had made him take up his chisels, but he was desperately afraid of what would happen if he re-awakened the wolf too soon.

He mentally checked the fail-safes he'd put in place to protect Jane, Jennie and the twins. He'd made a promise before God, though he and God had long since reached a mutual understanding: neither believed in the other. Nor would he be a party to his mother's Hail-Mary forgiveness: at least the Greek goddesses spoke to him of a price to pay. He owed his dead their truth.

A shadow fell across the window above the bench, fighting the naked bulb that hung from twisted flex and darkening the workshop's interior. Only Jennie. He covered his work and the rocking horse, and opened the door. Charlotte ran into his open arms. He hugged her, a lump forming in his throat. Lucy stood in the doorway, the sun gifting her bleached-straw hair with the touch of Midas and lighting her delicate features.

'Don't get in Grandpa's way, you two. Send them in if they're a nuisance, Dad.'

Jennie took a deep breath. 'I love this place. The smells, the junk. Nothing changes.'

He rubbed the back muscle he'd pulled digging: bending to catch Charlotte had tweaked it. 'We can't hold back time, love.'

‘Or turn it back.’

‘If you want to talk...’

‘Since Vince’s accident... It’s like I’m walking out of step.’

‘Charlotte, Lucy, go and ask Granny how long tea will be.’

‘Okay, Grandpa.’

Jennie nodded her thanks.

He held her close. ‘You’re doing really well, love. It takes a while to find a way through grief. I had an aunt who used to say a little mantra. *God grant me the strength to bear what can’t be changed, the courage to change what can be changed, and the wisdom to know the difference.*’

She caught a breath. ‘Maybe it’s wisdom I need.’

‘She’d put each problem in its own mental box, deal with those she could and close the lid on those she couldn’t. You’ll find the strength to move on.’

‘How could I lie beside someone at night and not think of Vince?’

She couldn’t, as he knew too well. ‘You mustn’t think like that. A candle doesn’t burn dimmer because you light another one.’

‘You sound as if...’ Jennie’s eyes searched his. ‘Dad?’

What part of his soul had she read?

‘Who was she?’

‘Just a girl.’

‘What happened to her?’

‘The war happened... to both of us.’ He pursed his lips: subject closed.
‘Sweetheart, don’t build a prison out of grief. Vince would want you to be happy.’

Lucy ran up the path. ‘Granny says five minutes.’

Jennie caught Charlotte at the door and shepherded her outside. ‘Come on, you two. We’ll help Granny.’

The kitchen door closed behind them and he felt for the wallet in his back pocket.
He drew out the sepia photograph. Just a girl...

Chapter Two

Walt rode the bus home from the library, flicking through *Out of Chaos: A Classical Treatise*. According to Hesiod's *Theogony*, 700BC, in the beginning was Chaos, a primal emptiness, dark and formless with no trace of life. Out of Chaos came Gaea – Mother Earth. It was as good a Creationist theory as any. *Day, Night...*

Nemesis, a daughter of Night, and Goddess of Justice and Retribution, fitted his view of morality: a price to pay for the gifts bestowed by her half-sister, Tykhe, Goddess of Fortune. He sighed; when Nemesis decided his debt was paid, and he could find peace in death, it would be her sisters, the Keres, the personification of plague, slaughter and violent death who decided the manner of his dying.

He locked the entry door behind him and tested the lock. The back door stood open, as welcoming as the smell of fresh bread and the singing of the kettle. He put his books on the table and pictured the contents of the biscuit barrel. 'Have we got any custard creams to go with that cuppa, love?'

Jane tapped out a loaf onto a cooling rack. 'I'll nip and fetch some.'

The front door clicked shut. Mrs Mobbs would keep her talking. He thumbed through the phone book. Solicitors... a box-advert boasted Harris, Harris and Mason

had been established before the war. Their offices were in Northampton and no-one knew him there. He dialled the number.

‘Harris, Harris and Mason.’ The voice sounded efficient.

‘I’d like to make an appointment, please.’

‘Mr Harris, senior, has half an hour tomorrow at ten?’

Jane was visiting her sister, Elisabeth, tomorrow. ‘Ten o’clock it is, then.’

‘What name is it?’

‘Alb...’ He swung round.

‘Jane, you there?’ It was Lil from next door, come in the back way.

He cupped his hand over the receiver. ‘She’s popped to the shop, Lil. I’ll send her round when she comes back.’

‘I brought a sponge cake for us to try.’

A voice enquired his name a second time. Why hadn’t he been more careful?

‘Blundell, William Blundell. Thank you. I’ll see you tomorrow.’

Walt clicked on the workshop light and checked the blackout curtain for chinks before uncovering the five pieces. They were weird, alien almost, yet the truth they concealed individually was obvious when they stood together. He fixed the last piece into his vice and planed the final flat surface before sanding the last sweeping curve. He placed it centrally, between its neighbours. Perfect.

He dipped a brush into stained wax. The carved wolf sprang to life as he polished and buffed. He’d been stupid and cruel to drag Jane into his nightmare. An island of

hope in a sea of despair, he'd clung to her love like a limpet to rock and once he'd got her pregnant... He dipped the brush into wax again. Then, marriage had been the only honourable course. He added carelessness to his list of sins.

All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

Christian beliefs, not his.

The hatred which divides nation from nation, race from race, class from class.

Father Forgive.

Forgive... He weighed the small brass key in his hand and took the photographs from his wallet: dark eyes smiled out at him. He couldn't fail Jane like he'd failed the girl in his sepia past. 'Goodbye, dear one. Your story will be told. I promised, but it makes no difference, now, if it waits a little longer. You do understand? I couldn't hurt Jane then, and now there's Jennie and the twins... I can't endanger them.' Her smile exacted its own price, as always.

He could watch, listen and wait... Maybe, if the wolf didn't wake, he could stay forever.

The door handle rattled: the taps on the door urgent. He covered his secrets and unlocked the door.

Jane smiled with obvious relief. 'Have you forgotten the time, Walt? It's almost midnight.'

'Sorry, love. I'll be there in a minute.'

Her brow furrowed. 'You feeling all right?'

'Bit tired, that's all.'

‘That chair leg for Ester Todd can wait. You are retired.’ She squeezed his hand.
‘I’ll put the cocoa on.’

He put his arms around her and kissed her. ‘Did I did tell you how much I love you?’

She smiled. ‘Every day, you old reprobate.’ She planted soft lips on his. ‘I love you too.’

‘Then go and get that cocoa on, woman.’

She twisted away laughing. Torchlight bobbed down the path, highlighting the uneven bricks and throwing shadowy fingers into the gloom. He wrapped the key in a torn-off scrap of polishing cloth and placed it carefully in its new home, where it would be found when the time was right. He took a last look at his sepia girl. It was time to let her go.

Walt had been up since first light and still had one carving to pack. He wrapped it in newspaper, placed it in a cardboard box and added an envelope containing instructions for Harris, Harris and Mason. It needed extra packing. He found more newspaper, replaced the envelope and the wrapped carving, and tucked the newspaper securely around it.

Five identical packages: each one tied with string and neatly labelled, each one containing a letter of instruction and a piece of his soul. He melted sealing wax in a spoon, and dripped it bubbling and smoking onto the knots. A metal punch, used to mark his work, pressed his initials into the hot wax.

But for Lil, he’d have made the appointment as Albert Carr and avoided using the name Blundell: the risk to Charlotte and Lucy would have been virtually non-existent.

Now, one final letter needed writing and his promise to Miriam must wait even longer.

He thought the letter through to the drumming of rain on the workshop roof. Albert Carr... How many years was it since they'd met in that snow-covered forest in Poland? Albert's signature was on the original instruction, when the box had been hidden, but now that box must be gifted to him, William Blundell. It was his responsibility to make sure the truth was told, at a time of his choosing. All he needed was Albert's signature, and Harris, Harris and Mason could do the rest. He consulted a notebook of copperplate writing, and reached in his jacket pocket for the paper and envelope he'd smuggled out of the house. He wrote *The Manager*, and the address, and rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

The letter written he checked his watch: the house would still be wrapped in dreams. He settled in the chair he should be mending and lit a cigarette. Rain streaked the window panes with the dust of summer. Through the window, clipped lawns and neat borders of delphiniums, snapdragons and roses framed the rear of the house, enclosing everyone he loved: safe, cocooned. The solid bricks wavered behind the rivering rain. The lush summer growth gave way to the bare earth of the camp.

He was almost glad of the rain that settled the grey dust as he set off for his barrack but, set amid mosquito-infested swamp, the camp would soon become a sea of stinking mud. The gates to the quarantine compound clanged shut behind him. It had been a long day, the quarantine camp full with suspected and confirmed typhus cases. Many doctors and nurses had been lost to the last epidemic.

'Doctor!'

The soldier high on the guard post beckoned. It paid to keep on friendly terms with the guards, and he knew this one; he climbed the ladder to the look-out platform.

‘Cigarette, Doctor?’

‘Thank you.’ The cigarette smoke fought the sickening stench of burning flesh and chemicals.

The soldier pressed a hand to his stomach. ‘Gut cramps... Suppose it’s typhus...’

‘Fever, muscle pain, headache?’

‘Just keep running to the latrines.’

This wasn’t a guard who got closer to the inmates than the bullet in his rifle; it wasn’t likely he had typhus. ‘They’ll give you kaolin at the hospital camp. Nothing to worry about.’

‘It’ll be on my record. I’ve been promised promotion... an end to this bloody night duty.’

‘So?’

‘I’m stuck here all night.... If I leave my post, and that whore moves from that spot, Gustav will get my promotion.’

He shrugged, the soldier’s promotion of no importance to him. In front of the command centre, a short distance away, a young woman knelt facing the guard post. Her arms hung limply at her sides; her head was tilted back, mouth open to catch the life-giving drops of rain. She’d knelt there since the pre-dawn Zählappell: he’d watched her, on and off, all day.

Her long dress had once graced an altogether grander woman. Now her only possession, it was ragged and faded a muddy green; it clung to her thin, boyish figure,

the lace at the neck incongruous against the yellow star sewn to her left breast. Her shorn hair was pimpled with bright droplets of rain like dew on grass. Her face was as mute as her voice, though blisters on her nose, cheekbones and the corners of her mouth testified to long hours working in the sun and made her look as if she were smiling. Rain streaked from her open eyes for she was far beyond tears. She lived at the whim of the camp officials, or her own Blockälteste, or the guard on this tower.

Her crime was sabotage. Working too slowly was sabotage, or fainting during roll call or having a missing button; according to the guards her sin was vomiting outside her barrack and women had been kicked to death for less.

A chill wind lifted her wet rags and slapped them against her skin. She didn't move apart from the constant trembling of her body: it was death to move.

The soldier drew on his cigarette, the butt glowing, his rifle loaded and ready, as he watched the girl. 'If I have to go to the latrines I'll shoot the whore.'

His fists curled and uncurled at his sides. 'I don't feel like sleep tonight. You mind if I keep you company? If you need to run to the latrines I can watch the girl.'

The guard's finger moved to the trigger.

He hadn't spent months building trust to lose it now. 'She's not going to run far in that state, is she? Anyway, there's no escape. I give you my word as a doctor. I won't take my eyes off her.'

'And my medicine?'

Kaolin was precious: better souls than this guard needed it. He weighed the benefits. 'I'll bring you kaolin, tomorrow. No-one need know.'

The guard rubbed his stomach and waved his rifle at the girl. 'I'm going for a shit.'

‘No-one will realise you’ve gone.’

The man climbed quickly down the ladder: avoiding the bright pools of light he made for the latrines at a shambling run.

The lights on the perimeter guard-towers illuminated the slight figure, alone in the mud like a collapsed scarecrow. The lights in the barracks went out one by one and deep shadows fingered closer. He would wait with her, try to keep her safe. It was a small gesture of resistance. Her courage touched him: her still figure epitomised everything that was pure and indestructible amid this relentless evil. He wished he could tell her that in her trial she was not alone.

It was eerie, isolated above the rows of barracks that stretched, seemingly without end, like rows of neatly-spaced dominoes awaiting a game with no winners. Lives without a future huddled in misery beneath the smoking ruin of their past, everything they loved gone: if man could make hell on earth this was surely it. Footsteps on the rungs of the ladder broke his reverie: the guard’s leer was an obscenity.

The girl kept her silence, kneeling against her will at the altar of evil: the slow night broken by wails and screams and sobs. At midnight the rain stopped. Somewhere above were stars. Somewhere God watched this girl, this abomination of a place. Why did He do nothing? Why did He not care? What sin had they committed?

At three in the morning the barracks’ windows once more lit with a yellow glow and the camp echoed with the calls of Aufstehen... Wstać... Felkel... Get up... Zählappell. The girl raised her head and her eyes met his: they held the blank look of a Muselmann, one of the walking dead... He nodded to her, as if his willpower alone could help her endure, but her expression didn’t change. Was she dreaming of the

ration of black bread, or the jealously-counted swallows of thin soup that she'd foregone the previous evening, or did she dream of some other, more distant reality?

Guards approached and his night's companion shouldered his rifle, ready to go off-watch. The man accompanied him to the transit camp for Hungarian women, where he was expected for this morning's selection. 'Don't forget that kaolin.'

The camp was alive with the noise of prisoners tumbling from their bunks, and muffled curses as they trod on one another in their haste to drink their ration of coffee, and wash at the faucets. The slick-wet earth was churned by hundreds of pairs of ill-fitting shoes as the women in the compound lined up in rows of five, the night's dead and sick laid out in front of them. Death was no excuse to avoid being counted.

Guards deposited the girl beside him. She knelt where they left her. She'd missed her ration of coffee. Two women attempted to make her stand.

'You have to try, Miriam.'

'You must be at Zählappell.'

Miriam? *This* was the girl he'd urged to leave her baby daughter with her grandmother? He hadn't recognised her. Had she known his face on the guard tower? Did she curse him for saving her for this?

The older woman stroked the rain tenderly from Miriam's face. 'Miriam, please...' She turned to the younger woman. 'Ilse, help me.' They lifted her, and carried her to the lines of waiting women, supporting her between them.

He looked anxiously along the lines of shivering women in their thin dresses, assessing their health. Another train had arrived in the night. This morning's selection would make room for fresh labour. As if God or Satan hadn't yet finished with them, it began to rain again.

Lips moved in silent prayer. Did they pray for death or to live through the selection and another day's work... and another night's exhausted sleep, only to hear the dreaded *Aufstehen... Wstać... Felkel... Get up... Wake up...*

'Wake up... wake up, Grandpa.'

He dropped the burnt-out stub of cigarette and knuckled sleep from his eyes.
Zählappell...

