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# HANS

by Richard Schultz

Hans slid over the mud and snow on the rim of the ditch and let gravity take him the rest of the way down. The pain in his legs was nearly driving him wild with pain, he thot humorously. He cried silently and bit his badly chapped lips to keep from crying out. Pain... driving him wild with pain, why that's distinctly funny....

Then a trio of bullets whacked by overhead making him forget his feverish humor. He froze for a second, but the air was silent afterwards. They hadn't sounded too near. His legs took to throbbing again, inflaming the flesh below his knees, making him aware of every heart-beat. Luckily enough it seemed to be clean wounds.

Hans looked ahead of him, peering from under his helmet. He al most shot the corpse in front of him. Part of some ancient telegraph pole, nationality unknown, lay in the ditch and the body sat against it. Hans recognized Helmut then, looking odd under charcoal make-up and leering the smile of rigor mortis. Helmut looked like he was doing nothing more than enjoying a good joke and resting for a minute. And he smiled straight at Hans, his eyes gazing happily at him. Those fine boots he had been so proud of, the ones he'd bought back in Dunaberg, were gone. He looked rather odd his feet lying in a pool of mud and snow. His greatcoat was splattered with a number of dark splotches, which could be mud or blood. Hans didn't care. A fine line of neat holes across his chest told of his fate.

Hans shakeingly pushed himself up in one hand and looked about. Barbed wire lay in great rolls, dropped by some advancing or retreating unit, filling the great ditch except where he and Helmut lay. To his rear lay a Russian private face down in a pool of mud. His hands were clasped under his head as if he too, were just resting for a moment until it came time to resume the weird game being played out there somewhere. His weapon, as was Helmut's, was gone. Evidently some wise unit had been around. And might be back.

Friend or foe? The question was academic, since Hans had to assume they were enemy. He had no idea of where he was at the moment, tho it could not be too far, since he could hear the belching sound of the giant Russian mortars somewhere. He bent to examine his wounds. The bullet, there had only been one, had passed through neatly, not going through more than the fleshy part of both legs. He tore the pants a bit more open, cursing the concertina wire which had grabbed his legs and shred his trousers.

A fit of shaking came upon him then, and Hans hunched together. He cried a bit, tears of frustration, anger and fear. He hadn't been afraid last night. But then, last night he had been one man among four and thinking of other things than his duty. He must think, he must think, he knew this, but why and how?

Helmut stared at him and the Russian still laid, saying his sad prayers for the living who must continue to suffer.

He choked, but kept quiet. Sound was an enemy when it could bring attention and death. His helmet came off and he let it roll underneath the yellow scudding sky. It looked like it might snow again, he noticed. If he knew where to go, he might be able to get back to safety and quiet and food and warmth again.

Oh, God, how long has it been since I've eaten? Hans lifted his head, long brown hair spilling over his eyes. He brushed it back and vaguely reached for his helmet and put it back on. A man soon learned to keep a shell of steel between himself and the world when that world had a habit of erupting into mortars and shrapnel. At times it seemed as if one could crawl up entirely into it, into that unsightly but very beautiful coal scut~~the~~ helmet. Like when the Stalin organs were busy crooning their obscene melody and their knee-knee-knee glide path came closer and closer and erupted into a massed choral backdrop to the soft muted opening stanzas of the 180 mm. mortars. It was then that you became an integral part of your dugout or hollowed patch of ground, hoping that it wasn't your turn.

Hans wished he had even a small slice of the hard black Russian bread, the kind that came in those huge wheels. At one time, he thot he had all the angles figured out. A few months on the front, then soon he'd be warming chairs in some rear Army HQ. He'd had it all figured. That was why he'd gone into black marketing too.... He'd had it all figured.

He must conquer the shaking, he must go back up to the lip of the ditch and find where he was. He knew he must have walked around in a



circle through the night, because there was Helmut. Lying where he<sup>3</sup> must have fallen after Hans had shot him.

A few stray shells rumbled overhead. Very high calibre, Hans dutifully noted, not even bothering to duck. Those few months had broadened out into a century, a dozen centuries, an eternity of hell and mud and cold and pain. He had been in the front almost seven months. It seemed as if there had never been anything in life but the sound of metal passing through the air at velocities over Mach five and mud creeping up over your boots and making your feet ache with effort to carry them forth.

Who was doing the shelling? It might be the railroad guns they had behind the regimental HQ area, it might be the Russians firing from God knows where with guns shipped perhaps all the way from forts on the Pacific Ocean. It was beyond him, he could hear that. The HE explosives was landing far in the distance. He tried to remember. Were they in a salient or a inner curve at this time? He forgot.

The sun, he thot, was over there and he supposed it was morning yet, so that was the east, towards the heart of Russia. But where were his own lines?

Where could he head and how soon? If only he hadn't killed Helmut... Helmut smiled at him, as if to say that it didn't matter any more. If only Hans would join him nothing would matter any more.

Damn him, why did he have to be so forgiving? His legs throbbed, it made movement difficult, his head felt funny, like he had been out in the hot sun too long, like that time back in the Kaserne.....

You were with us back then, weren't you Helmut? We were all going to finish up this war fast and get it over with, weren't we? But you wanted to be a fine soldier, you didn't think beyond that, did you? You or none of the others. You didn't see the wonderful opportunities....

But the shells seemed to be hitting closer, that was low angle stuff, high velocity, nothing whinned like that, like a nail going down a file very fast. He crouched into a new position, eyes smarting under the pain. The dressings on his legs drew on the new clots. He nulled his greatcoat closer about him and used his carbine to move to one edge of the ditch. He had slipped on that far wall...Or was it the one on the other side?

Carefully he poked his head up over the edge of the ditch, his eyes sweeping from left to right, right to left, always moving, then he turned on his back and did the same to the other side. Hans did not think of the pastures of his Hessian home, he did not think of Lisa of the plump thighs. He thought of how that hump might be a Russian..or German?...pillbox, cleverly camouflaged. Or that swell in the ground or those stunted pines, or.... It was useless to guess. He was getting panicky, he mustn't do that. He had to get back, he had so much to live for now, so very much.

Last night tho, he had thought this accursed patrol was a heaven-sent opportunity. Helmut, he was the only one who knew, he was the only one who could trace him to the missing tires and petrol. Helmut was the only one. Helmut, the one who was always right, always Helmut!

Earth geysered up in silent waves in front of him, and the sound and shock wave reached him at the same time, flipping him back into the ditch, his helmet whipping off behind him.

For a shocked moment Hans thot

that he must be dead. But clods of earth fell on him, making him aware of his very real survival. Then he heard more short whines, more short-trajectory stuff. Hans turned on his back, rolling the rest of the way down the hill into the mud of the gully. He grabbed his helmet and somehow put it on tightly in the same motion. They were hundreds of cows, bellowing over their not being milked in many a long time, Hans cried under his shell of steel that, yes, Father, he would go rihtg out and milk them, no, not the whip and the cows complained again and again. Before one was through bellowing out its protest, another was running in after it, moaning and bellowing and crushing sound itself in the climax of the null-





4/ ification of sound itself. Air turned solid and ground turned liquid and the mud beneath him seemed to turn into a living entity. The belch and fury became meaningless words, caught up in the present impact of Now!

He had to try twice to get one of his gloves back on, funny, he couldn't remember losing it. His father had not wanted him to join the SS, but that was where the smart men went. Why did he think of cows then?

Then it came to him that suddenly he could stop and think. The barrage, whoever had called it and why, had lifted it. It took up again in that second, but over to the south now. Mostly high-trajectory stuff. That first one must have been an AA gun of some kind.

The tried again to put his glove on, and decided to sit up to put it on. He had never liked to get himself muddy, you never thought of the mud whilst in the safe warm Kasernes.

Hans giggled when he saw his little finger sticking through a gaping hole in the glove. The whole world was funny, he thot to himself. He idly wondered if he was feverish. But he felt clear-headed.

Hans' father never could understand the destiny of Germany, and what could happen if one rode it to the top. Hans' father had wanted to stay in the hills of central Germany, tending to his cows, his precious cows. He cared more for those cows then he did for his own son!

Old hates, old fears....

How does it feel to be serving the destiny of the 1,000 Year Reich? Helmut himself had to smile back at the immense wit of the joke. Why his head was even bobbing with laughter. Was that laughter? Oh, it was just his head shaking in the wind that had sprung up. Hans could see now how shrapnel had nearly cut it in two, it hung in a strand of concertina wire stretched over the telephone pole.

A shell fell short and Hans once more bit into gritty yellow clay and Russian soil.

It was over before Hans had time to react, and then he sat weeping and moaning and clutching his legs in the aftermath. A little mud wiggled down his coat sleeve and fell with a dull plop into a pool of soft mud. Hans crouched his knees together and wept.

After a while, streaks washed in the dirt on his face, Hans turned to the sky. It was quite dark now, even though it must be the middle of the day. But he did not look at the clouds. Ack-sack had sprung up around him, and dull grey splotches appeared miraculously in the sky above. Then they flashed overhead!

He saw about four Heinkel bombers flash along the bottom of the clouds, and wheel slightly more to the east. At least he was sure of one thing. They had been German and they had been going somewhere.

Geysers bellowed their rage off to the south but Hans no longer cared. They had moved on. And he had a direction for sure. There were no Russian AA guns beyond the forest to the West there, because that was where the gun line had started. It couldn't be more than three kilometres, if that, to his own lines!

Helmut smiled his approval to Hans for his brilliant reasoning, smiling and laughing to himself, Hans' bullet holes in his chest forgotten over the joy of seeing his very good friend do well. Even the Russian chuckled to himself in joy that Hans was now confident of his success. Hans had never doubted his success, even back when Stores had discovered all the supplies missing.

Who cared about minute things like Reichs and artillery barrages when three old friends rolled with laughter over the immense joke they were about to play on fate?

Hans giggled again at the sight, smiling with his friends, and thinking of how rich he was with those jewels safely back in Germany.

Then Hans turned away, crying softly. Soft warm tears wearing clear clean paths through the accumulated slime melted away. He ground his forehead into the helmet liner and the helmet into the ground. As if he were relieving himself from all the aches and pains and fears that threatened to burst his head could leave. If another thot entered his head, he was sure it would burst, it must surely burst. What had he been thinking of? Helmut was dead, he was sitting there, a battered fragment of another life, of another time, back when he had stumbled through the snow last night. Back when he was with others... Was it only last night?

Where was he? He had to stop and think. Yes, that was the solution. He must have caught something last night or lately, he was too feverish too fast for his legs to have infected yet. That was another thing to look out for. He had to get back soon or he would probably die. He had no faith in the notion that his legs would not have become infected. He knew better than that.



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Therefore he had to get back, and soon. He knew now where the lines were, they were right over there, he could see them if he went back up to the lip of the ditch. That wonderful comforting ditch, how provident it was that it laid here to welcome him in safety and peace! Therefore, he only had to wait until tonight, barring his surviving an unlucky incident like a stray patrol.

No doubt Sigmund would say an SS man shouldn't hide out from dirty Russians. But then Sigmund wasn't around any more. Hans, rubbed his sweating brow. Hadn't that been Sigmund that was sent back with steel slivers in his back back when this all started? Hans couldn't remember, and he dismissed it from his mind.

But then he started thinking of all the others. The many others... There had been smiling Rudi, Hans couldn't remember if he was dead or just transferred to the gun section. Or was that Uzi? There had been so very many, it was hard to remember who of his company were left.

Helmut was right over there, of course. Dear old Helmut. Helmut of the clear conscience. Helmut who had seen him loading those tires and petrol into the truck back at Yelenets. Helmut who had to be inquisitive....

Funny, now it was all coming back to him. It had indeed been a bad night in many ways. First Helmut had come to him and told him to give himself up or he, Helmut, would turn his old comrade Hans into the security police. Dear old Helmut. Helmut laughed in the wind, Hans smiling at how easy it had been. Just a short burst as soon as they were away from the others. But first the patrol.....

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It had been so cold, so very cold. His breath burned in his throat, making Hans tie his scarf in front of his mouth and nose. It had not helped very much.

Between the stark pines the stars glistened. Mario had said that it was going to snow tomorrow. But for the moment it was frozen snow and loud crackling ice beneath them. Hans was sure they could hear them coming for a thousand yards.

His hands felt numb except where they grasped the ice cold metal of his carbine. It was so cold, God how Russia always seemed to be so very, very cold. Had it really been so hot last summer here? It seemed hard to believe.

Karl looked back at Hans, Hans could just barely make him out. He stood still and let Hans, Helmut and Metascha come up to him. When they were all together, Karl pointed at a light about fifty metres away. So well hidden had been the light, that one had to look at it from a specific angle to see it. Hans immediately thought of a light in a bunker and here a bunker meant Russians!

Hans turned to go off to the right, but Karl grabbed him and stopped him. Karl whispered in his ear, "Curse you, Hans, I'm in command here! That doesn't look like any bunker to me. And even if it is, we should see what kind. Don't forget, we're out to get a prisoner! And sometimes these pigs are out relieving themselves...."

Hans smiled. Even then, Karl had to explain himself to Hans. As if he knew Hans was going places.

Like the typical predator he was, Hans moved in slowly towards the light. He quickly lost it but then a shape showed itself and Hans almost exclaimed his surprise. It was a peasant's hut.

Even in the thin starlight Hans could see the grass growing from the earthen roof, the low thick lines of the building. Maybe.... If peasant's still lived in the area, peasant's who weren't either soldiers or guerillas, they might get more than a prisoner or two.....

After a few minutes, Hans knew it was just a hut. No bunkers or trenches. It was just a hut. In a moment the other three were there by the door. Helmut reported to Karl in a whisper that the pane of yellow glass was opaque, he could see nothing within. The other three panes were boarded up. There seemed to be no other windows. Karl pointed at a star and then they saw a thin curl of smoke rising from a pipe in the wall. As they were already sure of, someone was home.

It took only a second's hurried consultation and Metascha was at the window and Hans and Karl prepared to kick the door in. Helmut, the ever-faithful and reliable Helmut, he would post himself to cover the whole cabin.

Then, Karl and Hans hit the door together and Metascha smashed in the window with the butt of his sub-machine gun, his prize Russian toy.

"Come in, Gentlemen and make yourself comfortable. It's been a long time since I had any visitors."

There, sitting in a high-backed wooden chair, was a white-haired lady of indeterminate age. Here was warmth and comfort, even in the crude surroundings.



6 "How came you to speak German, Grandma?" queried Karl. He searched the room with his eyes, and motioned Hans into the rear with his rifle. Metascha continued to stand in the window.

"Nothing back there", Hans said. Hans started looking for a spot where the old lady might have put her little wealth. An ikon stood in a hole in the wall, but it was simple painted wood. Then his eyes flashed. The old lady was wearing a double necklace of coins which even from the curtained bed, he could tell was gold.

"I have been many places and many times, my dear Sirs," the old lady continued. "And in those times and at those places I have learned many things, including among them" she shrugged, "German".

"What do you do here in the middle of no-where?" asked Karl.

"I sit here savouring the years gone by and the dreams never dreamed and the many places where I have never yet been. Can you understand this, man of Germania?" she asked. Her thin even voice seemed to instill peace in this room.

Hans butted in and strode to her. "Quick, old woman, what is your name and where are the Russians? And do not think that we would not kill you if we had to." Hans already knew he was going to kill her. It would be very simple. Just go back for a second, a thrust of his knife and he would then take care of Helmut. With gold in his pockets to match the growing horde in the bank in Frankfurt. To join the gold and jewels of many people....

"My name is Ovia, one which was once quite common. As common as I was uncommon. And you need not threaten me with death, young growing youth. I have seen death too many times to be afraid of it now."

Karl butted in, his rifle pointing at her stomach. "Where are the Russians, Grandmother?"

"They are all around you," she said, waving her hand. "And there are many of them. I think you look for something more specific, tho, do you not?" she queried. Karl nodded his head. "Then I can help you little. They are orientals and very suspicious. An old woman does not tramp around in these woods for long."

Just then Helmut burst in, and swept the door closed. "I heard a truck. There must be a forest road nearby!"

Karl turned to the old woman and said, "Ovia, I think it is, why did you not tell us of this?"

"I did not think of it." She smiled and added, "But I do not think it is often used and only then at night. It must be what you call a small supply road, yes?"

Karl whirled to Metascha and told him to go out to aid Helmut. He would be out soon. "Old woman, we are going to leave now. You know of course we go now to that road. And we cannot leave you to yell behind us, making those wolves out there scent our blood."

Ovia pointed to a chest beneath her small neat bed. "In there is fine cordage, made by craftsmen with their hands as is everything in this countryside that is not the tools of death and war. I think you must admit an old woman cannot break through bonds very swiftly."

Karl hesitated. She was probably right, but... Hans took him to the side and pointed at her, whispering in Karl's ear. In the light of the banked peat fire, they looked menacing and satanical.

Karl hurried out the door, pausing at the sill. "Don't forget to put out the fire."

Hans walked toward her then. He pulled out his bayonet and laid it to his carbine. "Hans, you are an evil man."

Hans stood petrified. How had she known his name? Then he saw his name on his gas mask case. Of course...

He smiled and walked forward until his bayonet pricked her throat. She did not move but sat smiling faintly at him. "Hans, let me tell you a story before you kill me. It is not so very long and you will be interested."

Hans did not know what to do. So he leaned forward and snatched the two necklaces of golden coins from her throat. They snapped at the clasp and none of them fell to the floor.

"It appears that one day, many years ago when the Frenchmen's men were going the same way you were, that a Grenadier in the Royal Regiment of Nancy, sometimes known as the Tricades came upon a shack in the woods. A shack, a hut, a hovel. Much like this one. In this hovel he found a woman. There were Russians in the Great Forest, but he did not fear them. He thought he was invincible. So he killed the old woman for gold. He had much gold hidden away back in central Europe. Taken from other poor people.

So he killed her and left. He killed his comrade...." (and here Hans blanched)...and has spent the rest of his life searching for the way back. Never making it, of course."

Hans smiled. So all she wanted to do was to make some vague threat. The superstitions of these Russians amused him. He leaned



forward.....

In a second he had kicked the coals around and was leaving the small hovel behind. Far behind.

As Hans' footsteps faded, the figure in the chair stirred, as if seeking a comfortable position in which to die. Then she put her hand to her throat and wheezed, "Oh God, why keep me on here?"

Hans, of course, did not hear this.

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Hans shook his head, he felt very feverish now. The bombardment had started up again, Hans came back to reality. It had been as if he had been lying in a grave for a thousand years, he felt as though he had gone back to that hovel in the forest. He stuck his hand in his inner jacket pocket. The coin lay heavily and cold on his hand.

It was more than the cold of the Russian countryside, it was the cold of a bit of metal that could never be warmed.

What was so horrible? He had a fairly decent chance now of getting back to his own lines if he could find a way through the Russian pickets. It wasn't far, even for a weak man with wounds. After all, he had not lost any blood to amount to anything, and his legs felt strong tho painful.

Hans saw a pair of Stukas fly low overhead then, suddenly coming on him unawares. He scrambled to the lip of the ditch and watched them drop their bombs as he did so. They floated down in a flat arc and landed beyond a clump of trees to the north. Great billowing clouds of smoke followed the forcing sound of bombs going off within the earth. Within a short while flames were leaping and more explosions were following after. Hans did not know what they had hit, he could not now even tell where they had went to. The Russian AI had not even tried to follow. They had simply hit and ran back to the German lines.

It would make an excellent diversion if the explosions lasted long enough into the night, Hans thought.

Hans said, "Well, it looks like I may get home after all, what do you say to that Helmut?" Helmut smiled appreciatively at Hans' good luck and no doubt wished him a swift journey home.

A bit of white drifted down on Helmut's helmet then, and stayed. More flakes came down to join it, and some got down Hans' neck as explosions continued to quiver the mud around him. The mud slowly congealed as the snow fell. Hans shivered, pulling his great warm greatcoat about him. Only, it was soiled and wet now and wasn't nearly so warm as it should be. Hans felt that Helmut must be cold in just his uniform, without either jacket, coat, sweater or greatcoat. He wished there had been a pair of boots in the ditch, his were wet somewhat, though still water-proof. The Waffen-SS always had good boots, he thot to himself.

If the snow continued, if it became a blizzard, he should be able to make it back to his line s by nightfall instead of waiting for darkness to settle. How had he gotten into the middle of this open field without getting killed or pursued, anyways? For some reason he found he could not remember. He dismissed it, better to concentrate on how to get out of this mess.

What an immense field, it seemed almost like a plain. The white death was coming down in waves now, like some one up above was shaking a giant box of soap powder and it was coming down like the "snow" they used to have for the amateur theatrics back at the Gymnasium.... How long ago? At least five centuries, Hans felt sure. A cold wind started whipping up now, and Hans pulled his greatcoat closer, it was no good going out until it was deeper and thicker.

He wished he had a cigarette now, even one of the rose-leaf isme types they gave to those Russian battalions fighting under the Wehrmacht against the enemies of the Reich. He wondered if Helmut or the Russian had any....

Hans stared at Helmut for the longest time, sure that he had some glorious strong cigarettes, maybe even all tobacco, looted off some Russian Colonel or Commissar. But selfish Helmut wouldn't offer any of his cigarettes to Hans, that was not his way, he just laid there, getting colder and colder under a misty blanket of snow, smiling at his Russian friend about the fun he was having. By now giving Hans any of the dozens of tins of cigarettes he had in his jacket, bulging the pockets of his shirt. Helmut must have some....

Slowly Hans crept down the incline to the bottom, approaching Helmut with all the caution and care of a beaten cur approaching his master, and as fearfully. As if Helmut were about to strike out at his enemy for stealing his cigarettes and his life. But Helmut repented and even smiled as Hans approached Helmut and, taking his glove



8/ off, patted his pockets for a cigarette. There were no tins of any kind in his shirt or pockets and Hans wondered how he had that Helmut had any? Besides, he remembered he had no matches, how could he light a cigarette without one?

Helmut smiled, pitying Hans in his plight, and let a clod of snow slide off his head to remind Hans that the snow was getting deep very fast and Hans had better leave now. Hans stood up, bade farewell to his very dear friends, Helmut and the Water-Drinker and clutching his carbine to him, walked up the slope out of the ditch.

Though Hans had learned that the crouch was not really effective in presenting a smaller target, he nonetheless went into that position, simply because he felt better once he had done so. He was sure of his position, because roars and flame still occasionally belched forth from the target the Stukas had hit...when? It seemed like days ago, how odd it should still be ablaze.

How odd it seemed that he could remember a warm huge eiderdown cover, it must have been centuries ago. Certainly since he had passed through the town of Rasyvl.

Hans could vaguely remember a siding in the forests. It had been warm then... Hans wasn't very warm now. The cold was whipping up his greatcoat and plastering his pants with cold wetness. His legs ached at every step but they continued to move. His face was nearly numb, so he pulled his scarf over it. He thought he would probably come out of this with frostbite anyways. A great flame belched forth from the mist as if to accentuate his thoughts. Hans, with a new bearing, went off toward his front lines.

He could hear the tattering of a machine gun up ahead. That meant that the lines must be only a little further on. It would be duck soup getting through the Russian lines, they weren't too closely organized, as the Germans were. They relied on their masses of men, no doubt.

After a long while with no sound but occasional rumbles of war, Hans grew sleepy while walking. The snow crunched silently under Hans' high boots and the way remained clear of wire and Russians. It was as if there were no longer any such things as Russians and Germans and the cannon fire beyond was only vagrant echoes of the past. There were only the trees and the snow and the flames behind and Hans. Hans did not notice, but he remained in a crouch for almost the whole distance to the front, all the way through the trees. He crouched behind first one and then the other. He looked all around, as far as he could see in the driving snow, relying on his ears more than his eyes. He checked the action on his carbine and moved forward again.

Shells passed softly overhead again, both ways, and Hans moved on. It was very odd that he didn't see any Russians about, they should be hurrying to put out the blaze in the forest. But no scurrying groups or teams of Russians were about, though voices to his right hinted of busy Ivans. He assumed they were Russians, though they could be speaking Hindustani for all Hans could tell.

Through the forest, to the edge then, crushing branches underfoot. The open field lay ahead, and the sharp rattle of a machine gun to his right bespoke busy creatures. Secure no doubt, in their buttressed bunker of wood and dirt. Hans went off toward the left, to skirt around the murmur of the gun.

He left his crouch now, for a more lowered skipping movement. His back hurt unendurably now, but he disregarded it, his comrades must be just ahead.

A butbutbutbutbut of a Spandau on controlled fire reached his ears through the deceiving snow and he knew he was pressing closer. Now where were those Russian trenches? They must be around somewhere.

Suddenly a man rose up in front of him. A man in white from which came foreign words in rapid fire sequence. Hans rushed him quickly and clubbed him with his carbine. He mustn't have the alarm now! But the Russian was not stilled and he started yelling in a high screechy woman's voice. Hans fell on top of him and hit him time and time again until all he heard was his own breathing and voices to his sides.

The voices were close, where were they? Hans got up, he had to run. The flames behind him, dimly perceived, told him where the front must be. He had to make, surely there couldn't be too many Russians in front of him, only Germans, why weren't the Russians shooting? Hans almost lost his footing as he ran onto a slick log, slippery with ice underneath the snow.

The bouncing slow balls of tracer floated forth searching to his left. They shouldn't do that, Hans thought, they'd give their position away. The Russians must be very stupid tonight... Oooooohhhh, that was close, oh where were his lines? Hans suddenly spotted a trench before him. He leaped it in one desperate leap and was soon beyond



it, running now in earnest.

Then, suddenly, he trips over a small log and lands on his face. He feels that some of his teeth are loose or gone, but he can't stop and worry about that now. He cries, the teeth hurt, his legs are so sore, it's so cold. He sobs his rage and frustration. He hoists himself up and starts stumbling towards his lines at a trot.

Where, he asks, can the German lines be? He feels he must have been running for hours now. His breath comes fast, it's burning his lungs in this frigid air. Then one of the half dozen streams of tracer fire softly tilts toward him, brushes past him, then returns and rips first into his greatcoat flap then through his legs. Hans falls onto some barbed wire, he can see a trench ahead, no it's a ditch. He must seek cover, his legs hurt so much. He coughs blood and he notices a pain in his back, he must have been hit there too.... He seems to be breathing in a vacuum, nothing seems to be coming into his lungs. He crawls towards the ditch, tearing his shattered legs on the barbed wire in doing so. Funny, it seemed to him it had been snowing a moment ago....

Hans slid over the mud and snow on the rim of the ditch and let gravity take him the rest of the way down. The pain in his legs was nearly driving him wild with pain, he thot humorously. He cried silently and bit his badly chapped lips to keep from crying out. Pain.... Driving him wild with pain, why that's distinctly funny....

Hans looked ahead of him, peering from under his helmet. He almost shot the corpse in front of him. Part of some ancient telegraph pole, nationality unknown, lay in the ditch and the body sat against it. Hans recognized Helmut, then, looking odd under charcoal make-up and leering the smile of rigor mortis. Helmut looked like he was doing nothing more than enjoying a good joke....and resting a minute.

Hans thought for a minute he should remember being here before. But he dismissed it immediately. He had never been here before.

There is no End.

# DETROIT IRON RIP

Being, as usual, mailing comments on the multitidious products which have swelled the last OMPA mailing. Unfortunately, this is quite brief this time, for a number of reasons. Foremost being a desire to get this thing in the mail before August.

Apologies must be given for using legal length paper. Of course, it does allow more wordage per page.... But I still would not be using the stuff if I had not gotten it practically free.

Curses. Just as Cheslin gets through using it on his edition, I start up over here.... This will be the last one, though, as my SAPS-zine should absorb the rest of it. So now let's comment....

MORPH 27 My Dear Mr. Roles: Re: your being on the bacover of ENVOY #5.

Answer: My charming Herr Roles; Despite your protestations of innocence, you seem to forget that Eric Rentcliffe has been over here. Not only that, but Ford and the Kyles have informed us Yanks of those wild "matzo" parties you Biverpudlians hold frequently. We can only shudder and mentally recall the old dogma that you don't have to

This is the 9th issue of ENVOY, the moreconfusedthanhou apazine. It is issued on a revolving editorship basis. Ken Cheslin printing some of the blessed things, yours truly doing the others. This is the 5th RiP issue.

Naturally, as usual it is produced in a gigantic underground printing plant left over from The Resistance, and is popularly and infamously known as a publication of KriFenTat Publications, Unltd. This is publication #19, issued for the September, 1962 mailing of OMPA. So I guess ye might say this is the ChiCon issue. This 33rd mailing is coming to you from Ken Cheslin, apprentice pornographer.

Mail, etc. may be addressed to Richard Schultz, 19159 Helen, Detroit 34, Michigan, USA if you need to write to the editor of this rag. His name is Richard Schultz, by the way. There is no guarantee, however, that the lackeys of Pay can find it.

I do not run on tracks and there will be no more serious fiction from me in the rest of the '62 mailings. No guarantee on '63.

Keep smiling, even if it doesn't help your face any.



~~old~~ old to be a dirty old man. And mention of dirty old men is mad where mention is made of Liverpool.

So, naturally with Eric the Bent and Jeeves being hitched, you're the only OMPA Liverpoolian left to carry forth the banner of licentiousness and Harrison. Feel honored, go right ahead.

ENVOY #6 Your con report of the Harrogate do gives me an opportunity to air a few thoughts on British conventioning. Specifically about the room rental set-up.

Now, as a few of you are undoubtedly aware, the Yank cons run the room on a strictly individual basis. The Convention Committee contracts only to rent meeting halls, banquets, executive offices, suites for guests of honor and so forth. The attendees are strictly on their own as far as their rooms go.

Now mind you, the Committee may send out reservation cards with their progress reports, plug certain club-suite deals, etc. But they leave the contracting of rooms up to the attendees.

Also, the Hotel may try to get all Con attendees in a certain wing, or floor or series of floors. Or other devious arrangements, all of which are designed to lessen the irritation and noise that normally and inevitably flows to the other guests. The Hotel may do this or the Committee may do that and anything else that normally happens between management and guests at a Con. But the Hotel does not saddle the Con Committee with responsibility for more than a certain number of clearly defined things. Like, who's going to pay for the meeting rooms, be responsible for damage there, pay for the banquet, etc.

But the difference between England and the states is this. The Hotel does not, and cannot, saddle the Con Committee with the costs of the rooms and all it incurs. Namely, unfilled reservations, broken plumbing, or anything like "skipped" rooms.

In other words, the Yank Con Committees are neither saddled with the extra work, paperwork, responsibility and costs of room renting for a whole convention. Nor have that source of possible monetary loss to worry about and occasionally cope with.

So dawns the idea. Why do the BritCon Committees have to cope with the room renting? If it is just a custom, I am totally in favor of abolishing it forthwith. For it seems suicidal to belabor Con Committees with extra work which would reach its maximum load just at the very time when everything else connected with the Con also reaches its maximum load: Con time. And I'm not too hep on the financial reports of various BritCons.... But haven't there been a few Cons which went into the red (and had to be bailed out by the Committee and a few friends) simply because of this trouble with the rooms? Like men, like somehow or other I get the idea that most Hotels will trade rooms to

most anybody if they'll give them little bits of engraved notepaper in return. Or is Britfandom so feeble-minded they can't handle their own room bookings? (Okay, Ethel, Uncle, I give up, forgive me, I didn't mean it!)



ENVOY #7 And before I get lynched, I'd better translate the German headings from this issue of my ENVOYS. Walt Breen had, "Have Beard, will Travel." Ethel Lindsay was called The Enforcer. Lichtman was termed the Mailed Fist of LA OMPAdom because of being the President, ye see. Fred Hunter should have enjoyed my calling for "Home Rule for Lerwick, I say!" Don't want to get Britain into trouble over their Russian trawler raiding, you know.

Cheslin? "All hail to the new chief!" natch. We'll have a grand and bloody regime, we will.... Patrizio was certainly "our little Italian Scot". Donaho is indeed Big Bill. And Elinor Busby has been known as "that wonderful woman". Prophetically I called Mercer the Wanderer. Specifically because of his living in a caravan. I did not know of his intentions of leaving the Mealable Iron Works.

And I asked Jeeves if he was amongst the League of the Henpecked.

I think I'd better leave now....

Farewell and Asordias be with you. Nilseho & Ztluhcs too, for that matter.....

*Handwritten signature/initials*