

Steve

Amy blinked slowly then quickly rousing herself from slumber. She stared blankly at the ceiling trying to place herself in the world. *That was a dream*, she thought. *Now, where am I? Oh, yeah. The cabin.*

She could see it all more clearly as the nonsensical fantasy it was, but the vividness of remained. It had seemed SO real—every detail. The sun was creeping up on the shadows of the night. Morning noises echoed through the forest. She sat up shaking the confusion from her mind. Dan was already awake as were Jenny and Matt (the hitchhikers). *Well, they had survived*, she comforted herself. “Good morning,” Dan greeted with a hushed voice. He sat beside her scratching her back and surveying the barren surroundings. “And you thought we wouldn’t make it,” he jokingly mocked.

“Guten Morgen,” Matt politely gestured with his thick, German drawl. Jenny followed suit rising quickly as if startled. “Morgen!” She moved to the window to peek out—the relocation giving her a sharp shiver. Outside the Jeep was snow packed, its substantial front dent only half visible. Her eyes scanned the ground for fresh tracks. Nothing.

Matt turned his attention to the door giving its security a quick, nervous inspection. Then to the dying fire, he focused. There wasn’t much left to burn. At some point they would need to venture out for wood. They seemed to come to that realization simultaneously, which caused them all to meet eyes. Their troubled looks spoke for them. Dan broke the silence raising his arms in a threatening pose while defusing the tension with a smiling growl quickly followed by a laugh. The Germans looked at each other and then nervously chortled.

“That’s not funny!” Amy protested. “I’m sorry, but we have to keep our spirits up.” He defended. Then turning to the Germans, “*Es tut uns leid. Nur ein bisschen Humor.*” [Sorry. Just a little humor]. Fortunately, he spoke perfect German from his years in East Berlin.

Summoning leadership, Dan continued first in English then in perfect German: “Whatever that was last night, it is probably far, far away. I think it was wounded from the wreck. Probably ran off scared.”

It was now Jenny’s turn to protest in near-perfect German: “I have never seen anything move like that. It was a blitz both before and after the impact. It was watching us the entire time.” She stared at Amy to signal her agreement. “What did she say?” Amy asked. “She said it was scary, but she agrees with me it is probably over. She is mostly concerned for your comfort.”

Matt bent down to the ham radio continuing his vain efforts from the evening before. The hand crank simply wouldn’t give enough charge to get a full sentence broadcast. Even if it could, there was no promise it would be received. Watching him work, Amy’s mind wondered thinking how they might escape. She leaned against the cabin door . . . BANG! A thunderous blow slammed against the door from outside. She screamed as she struggled to move from the impending danger—her inertia restraining her panicked retreat.

Dan grabbed her swinging her away from the danger as Jenny scampered to the far corner. Looking for protection Amy took hold and began lifting the bed. Once the men caught the plan, the three of them positioned the barricade against the door. But no further danger appeared. The cabin and the surrounding forest were silent but for the hearts pounding in each chest. Their heavy breath clouded the air as they continued to brace. Suddenly, the window’s fledgling morning light flashed dark and Jenny shrieked having made first sight. Staring back at her was the creature the natives called *Chautauqua*.