

Just before dawn, a guard walked toward Rivka and Chaya, one hand stuck deep in his coat pocket. His other hand rested idly on a large black gun anchored to his belt. Rivka sat up straight and breathed deeply, trying to calm her pounding heart. The guard stopped in front of Rivka and looked around. As he pulled his hand out of his pocket, Rivka shuddered.

The guard glanced toward Chaya, who smiled up at him. Warmth flashed in the soldier's eyes, then quickly faded. With one swift motion, he took Rivka's hand and placed in it something smooth and round and perfectly white: a boiled egg.

"For your baby," he whispered.

Then he turned on his heels and walked back toward the officer's quarters.

Rivka held the egg in her hand. The shell looked almost bluish white in the sunlight. Slowly, she peeled away the shell. Then she took a tiny piece and gave it to Chaya, who opened her mouth like a hungry bird. "You can at least still nurse, but the others can't," said Rivka softly, gazing down at her hungry daughter.

Rivka looked around at all the other children, huddled with their mothers, eyeing the egg. Still holding Chaya, Rivka stood up, divided the egg into tiny pieces, and gave a taste of this secret gift to as many children as she could.

"Do you have any more?" one child asked. "I'm so hungry."

"I'm sorry. That's all I have," said Rivka sadly.

The other children looked up with the same hollow, hungry gaze.

*If only they could have a sip of water, a piece of bread,* thought Rivka. With the exception of this unexpected gift, the soldiers ignored them, and there was nothing to forage—not even a sliver of fresh grass or a wild berry.

Three days passed without food or water, and Rivka's worries were mounting. Her milk supply was waning from dehydration, and Chaya was starting to get sick. Still, Chaya didn't cry out from hunger or thirst. She kept as quiet as everyone else at the camp—eerily quiet, as though she, like the other children there, understood the vital importance of staying silent.

Rivka looked at her listless child. The parting words of her neighbor echoed in her mind: *Tell them you're Hungarian, that your husband works for the Germans...* There had been no opportunity to say anything when she was herded into the truck. Now was the time.