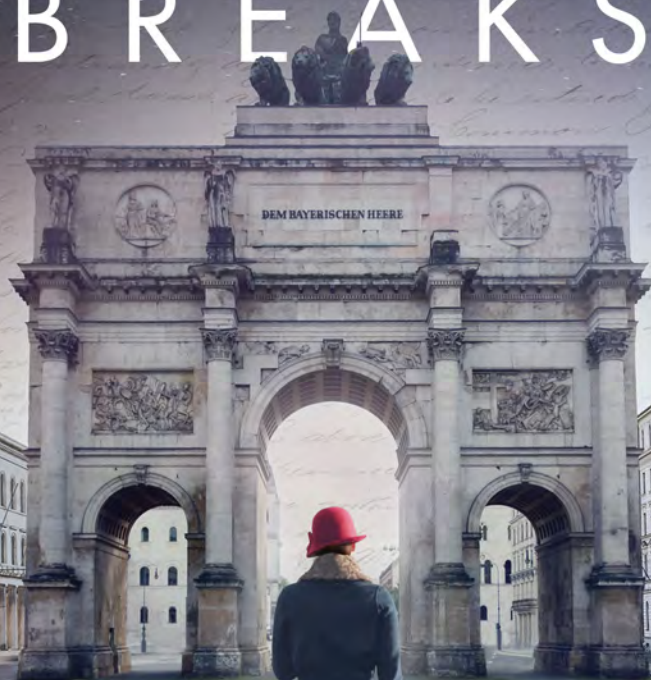


W H E N
T W I L I G H T
B R E A K S



SARAH SUNDIN

WHEN
TWILIGHT
BREAKS

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W H E N
T W I L I G H T
B R E A K S

SARAH SUNDIN



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This is a work of historical reconstruction; the appearances of certain historical figures are therefore inevitable. All other characters, however, are products of the author’s imagination, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

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In loving memory of my grandfather

John F. Ebelke.

I wish I'd known you.

ONE

BERLIN, GERMANY
TUESDAY, MARCH 15, 1938

Evelyn Brand had done a crack bit of journalism, and she hadn't even had to dress like a man to do so.

She perched her hip on the desk in the American News Service office in Berlin, while Hamilton Chase III, the European bureau chief visiting from London, reviewed her article.

George Norwood, the Berlin bureau chief, paced the office, glaring at Evelyn with each turn. If he'd arrived in Vienna on time, the story of the year would have been his, not hers. But he hadn't, so it wasn't.

After Adolf Hitler bullied the Austrian government into allowing Nazi Germany to annex the country, German troops had marched across the border without firing a shot.

And Evelyn would get the ANS byline.

She'd stood under the blood-red swastika flags as the Führer's cavalcade rolled into Vienna to thunderous cries of "*Heil, Hitler!*" In her story, she'd described the little girl in native costume tossing flowers and the black-uniformed SS officer handing the bouquet to the Führer.

But she'd also described the scene on another street, where a

mob forced two dozen Jews to scrub anti-Nazi graffiti from the sidewalk. She could still see the silver-haired man down on his knees, still see the jeering boy knock the gentleman's hat into the gutter. The man had reached for his hat, then thought better of it and returned to work.

When Hamilton Chase set down the article, Evelyn gave him a triumphant smile. "It's good, isn't it?"

He ground his cigarette in the ashtray. "Yes, it's good."

"Good?" George Norwood flung a hand in her direction. "She shouldn't have been there. She's assigned to Munich. She lives there."

"I'm in the room, Mr. Norwood." Evelyn sent her boss a thin smile. "I did call the Berlin office beforehand. Mr. O'Hara said no one from ANS was in Vienna. But I was already there."

"I was on my way." Norwood wasn't even thirty, but he glowered at Evelyn as if she were a naughty five-year-old.

Silver fanned back in Chase's sandy hair. "Why were you in Vienna, Miss Brand?"

Evelyn rearranged her houndstooth check skirt over her knees. "My roommate is a flautist, and she wanted to attend a certain concert in Vienna. I didn't think she should travel alone, given the tensions." More like she'd used the concert to lure Libby into accompanying her to Vienna. Bait and switch, Libby had said. She wasn't incorrect.

"She tried to sneak into the press conference." Norwood ran his hand through chestnut hair almost the same shade as Evelyn's.

"I didn't sneak. I presented my press pass and asked politely. With no one from ANS in town, it was worth a try." Instead of asking why Evelyn was in Vienna, Chase should have asked why Norwood wasn't. The only major news service or paper without a correspondent in town. Almost criminal.

Norwood blew out a roiling cloud of cigarette smoke. "She knew she wouldn't be admitted. She wasn't on the list."

Evelyn crossed her arms. "Bert Sorensen from the New York

Press-Herald wasn't on the list. He got in. But he's a man. I should have—"

"Don't even think about it." Chase speared her with his gaze. "I will not have a repeat of the Paris fiasco. You made the ANS a laughingstock."

Evelyn lowered her chin. "Yes, sir." If only she'd used more pomade and bobby pins that day. With her fence-post figure and a man's suit, she'd been admitted to the press conference given by that woman-hating French official. No one would have been the wiser if tendrils of hair hadn't sprung from under her fedora.

Chase handed Evelyn's article to Norwood. "Clean it up and send it to New York."

Evelyn clutched her hands in her lap. "Please keep the part about the man and the hat."

Norwood's nostrils flared. "That's the part that needs cleaning."

She'd never forget the desolation in the gentleman's eyes. He'd reminded her of Grandpa Schmidt, who had been born Jewish. He'd converted to Christianity, but the Nazis wouldn't care. To them, Judaism was about race, not religion. If Grandpa hadn't come to America, he would have been forced to scrub sidewalks too.

"Please, Mr. Norwood," Evelyn said. "The story needs to be told. America needs to know. I owe it to him."

"To him?"

"The man on his knees." If Libby hadn't held her back, Evelyn would have rushed to his aid. And she would have failed, one woman against a mob.

"Fight with words," Libby had told her. "Your words have power."

Not if edited to death by George Norwood.

"Keep as much as you can, Mr. Norwood," Chase said. "And remember, Miss Brand, we American correspondents are guests of the German government. They don't censor us, but they do have limits."

“They certainly do.” In other countries, correspondents wired their stories to the US. But the Nazis screened telegrams, and they only transmitted stories they liked. So American reporters usually phoned their stories to their London or Paris bureaus to be wired home.

Chase fished a cigarette case from inside his vest. “Never forget. You’re not in the US.”

Evelyn’s shoulders slumped, but she rolled them straight again. “I know. No freedom of speech. No freedom of the press. No freedom of anything.”

“Yes. So, what are you working on next?”

“I have an assignment for her.” Norwood rummaged through a folder on his desk. “A feature on the American students at the University of Munich and their experiences here.”

Evelyn tried to find a smile but failed. Another softball assignment.

Norwood handed her a slip of paper. “Peter Lang is one of my oldest and closest friends. We were roommates at Harvard, and his father served with mine in the House of Representatives. Peter’s earning his doctorate in German.”

Another East Coast prep school Hah-vahd man, like Norwood and Chase and every bigwig at ANS. Evelyn tucked the piece of paper into her purse.

“Lang can introduce you to the other American students. He’s a fine fellow.”

“Of course, he is.” Somehow she kept the sarcasm from her voice.

Hamilton Chase stood. “I’m looking forward to that article.”

“Thank you, sir.” After she shook his hand, she went out into the newsroom full of clacking typewriters, lively banter, and the actual news.

This was where she belonged.

Even with all the huge stories happening around the world—the Great Depression, civil war in Spain, Japan’s invasion of China,

and Stalin's purge of tens of thousands of his own people—Berlin was every reporter's top choice. But Evelyn was exiled almost four hundred miles away in Munich writing softball stories.

"In trouble again, Brandy?" Frank Keller stopped typing and pointed his cigar at her. "You know what you need? A husband to keep you in line."

Exactly why she'd never marry. She hated lines.

Evelyn leaned against Keller's desk and batted her eyelashes at the pudgy, middle-aged reporter. "Volunteering for the assignment?"

"Not on your life." His carriage return hit Evelyn in the hip.

She pressed the back of her hand to her forehead. "My poor little heart is wounded."

Keller laughed. "Beat it, sister."

Gladly. Across the room, Mitch O'Hara beckoned to her.

She grinned and joined him at his desk.

O'Hara pulled over a chair for her, always a gentleman. Pushing sixty, he'd reported the news in every major city around the world. Too bad he'd turned down Norwood's job. For O'Hara, Evelyn would be willing to stay within the lines—on occasion.

"What'd you do, Ev?"

He was the only person she let call her that. "Nothing. I got to Vienna before Norwood did. And I called here first, you know that. I tried to get into the press conference but was turned away. If any of you fellows had done the same, you wouldn't have been summoned to Berlin."

O'Hara scratched at his gray mustache. "You've only been in Germany six months."

"Seven, and two years in Paris before that. And I did my stint at the copy desk in New York."

He dipped his chin, his silvery-blue eyes fixed on her. "You're still paying your dues."

Her lips wanted to pout, but she restrained them. "My dues are twice as high as a man's."

“Yes, and the penalties are twice as high as a man’s. It isn’t right, but that’s how it is.”

Evelyn’s jaw worked back and forth, and she glanced to the closed office door. “Norwood’s going to edit the heart out of my story. I should be free to write how I want.”

“You are.” O’Hara tapped his pen on Evelyn’s wrist. “And ANS is *free* to fire you. And the Nazis are *free* to kick you out of the country if you make them look bad.”

“It isn’t hard to do.”

He chuckled. “True.”

Evelyn drummed her fingers on the red leather purse in her lap. “Getting expelled from Germany might not be so bad. Dorothy Thompson was expelled, and she’s more famous than ever.”

“She was famous to begin with, established in her career. You’re in your early twenties.”

“*Late* twenties.”

He laughed and leaned back in his chair. “I’ve been married long enough to know that only a very young woman will argue that she’s older than people think.”

Evelyn had to laugh too.

“You can do it, Ev.” O’Hara rested his elbow on his desk. “You’re a good writer, you’ve got the nose for news, and you’ve got drive and gumption in spades. Just keep your head down and try—please try—to follow the rules. The Nazis can do far worse things than expel you.”

“I know,” she said with a sigh. Her rights as an American citizen wouldn’t do any good if she met with a fatal “accident” staged by the Gestapo.

She stood and slung her purse strap over her shoulder. “Thanks for the pep talk. I have a train to catch. Norwood wants me to interview exchange students, pat the hands of the Ivy League mommies and daddies, let them know their little dah-lings are safe and happy in their junior years abroad. Softball assignment.”

O’Hara picked up a half-eaten apple from his desk and grinned

at it, then at Evelyn. “You look like the kind of gal who knows how to play ball.”

“Yes . . . ?”

He mimed winding up for a pitch. “What do you do with a softball, Ev?”

She returned his grin threefold. “Hit it out of the park.”