



Turn over



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On March 18th in 1945, my brother had his confirmation. For weeks my mother had been saving flour, sugar and fat for baking. And there really has to be a beautiful buttercake waiting to be eaten in the afternoon.



Then we went to church. It was a bright, mild day in Spring. In the church it was very ceremonious.



The mass was right over, when the sirens started to wail. Within six long years of war, the siren has become a frightening monster to us.



There was not even enough time to run home.

In the crowd was a big rushing and pushing. Nobody wanted to sit next to an outer wall.



Suddenly I thought that sky and earth unite.



In the ears a stulting pain, I thought, the ceiling could come down every moment. My little sister screamed and my aunt squeaked like a piglet.



Then hailing of bombs again. We also heard a quiet roaring.



It was water, rising slowly. The main watersipe was hit.



Then some exciting moments followed.

Because of digging and scratching, more bricks were sliding down. This led to two persons being buried, luckily not completely. Their legs had been smashed.



Outside on the street, what a mess!



Our house wasn't damaged that much. Only half of the front building was in pieces. In the kitchen, there was our beautiful cake, all dusty and bristled with broken glass. I was very sad because of that.

How I went through the last days of war

For days you could hear a dull roaring of cannons from the east.
One morning they finally reached our place.



Suddenly artillery grenades hissed over our heads.



I wanted to enter the bakery, but it was already closed.



When I came home, all the women and men were running down in the cellar, with boxes, planks and mattresses.
My mother already took up residence there.



Thus, days and nights were shortly creeping by. We would go up for lunch.
It wasn't exceptionally comfortable. Imagine: 85 persons with household effects in one room and beside that the power blockade.



Mostly there was a lack of water. So me and my friend flames went run for it.





We had to wait for four hours, until we finally could fill our buckets.



In the long run, queuing bored us. Next night, we stood up and ran for the pumps.



Most delighted we come back with the precious liquid. But soon the party was over. A morder changed the pumps in a worthless piece of iron.

Now we had to take the water from a pool for fire prevention. This was very dangerous. In the few minutes you needed to scoop water, you could easily get perforated with splinters.



A horse was hit and broke down. Soon, people armed with knives and buckets, started to cut the best parts of the horse.



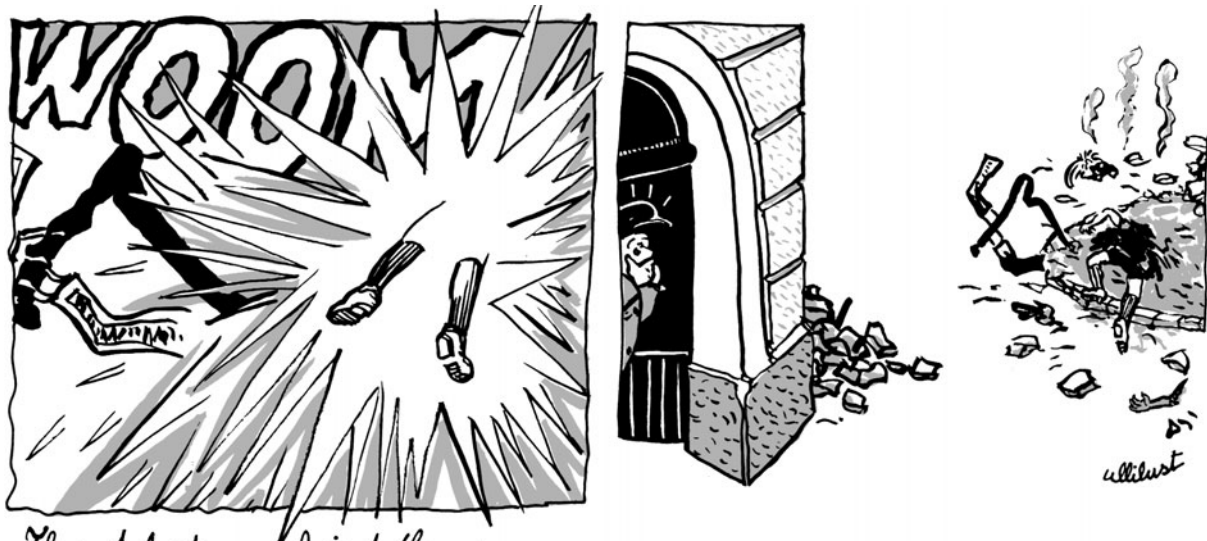
When we came back from with the water, we should have to stay in the dark and stinking cellar. We slipped away on the pretext of getting some fresh air. Outside the door we observed the Russian battle planes gliding over Weissensee, shooting the front.



It was a marvellous spectacle.

Once I was getting fresh air again. Hammes was already standing on the other side of the street.





Thus I lost my friend Glemus.

The Russians arrive

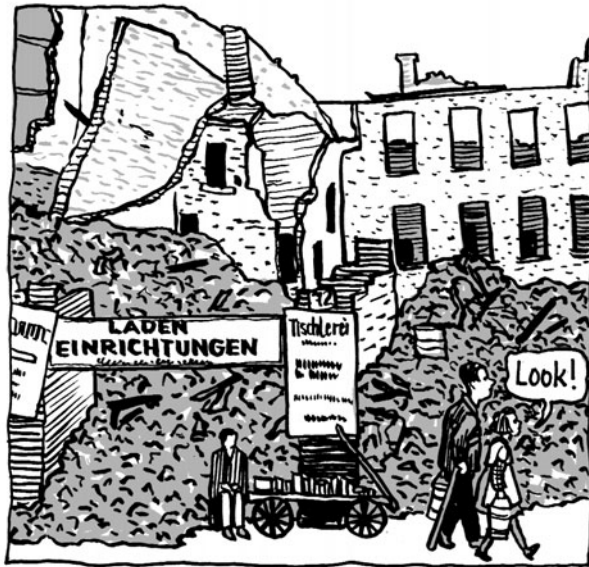
Our father was called to the arms, shortly before the Soviet Army would storm Berlin.



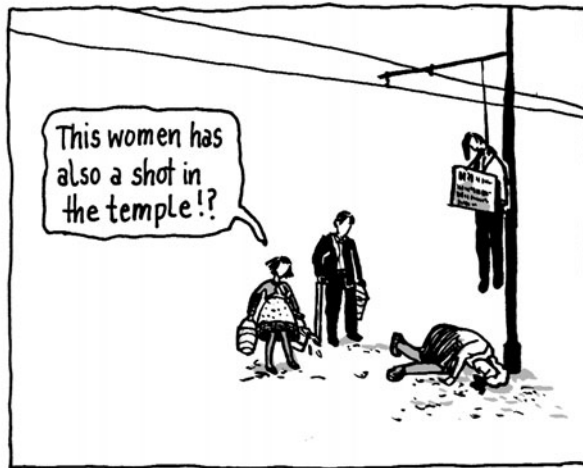
My father came home frequently, to eat his fill, because their food supply was very bad.



When he came to us once again, we were run out of water. So I went with him to the Schultheiss Brewery to get some.



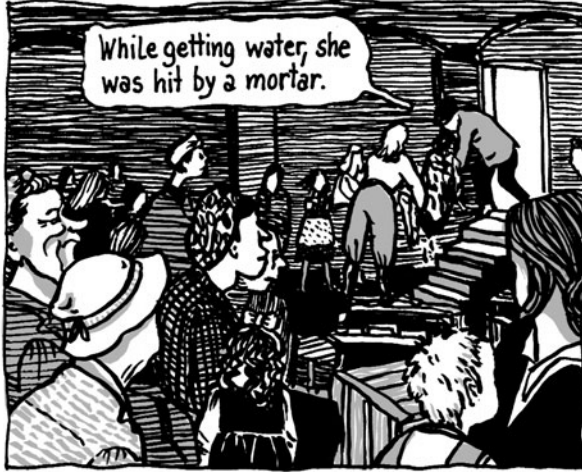
Attention! This will happen to every cowardly soldier, who doesn't defend the Capital of the Reich until the end!



For eleven days we've been living in the cellar now. Everybody was terrified because the SS had entrenched itself at the other side of the street.



Yesterday they dragged our aunt in the cellar, covered with blood.



Countless fine and coarse shell splinters stuck in her body. We couldn't even dress her wounds. She sat there whimpering.

The mortars caused a lot of disaster. In the evening, when the men came home, they told us horrible things. They had to recover the wounded people and drag the dead bodies off the street.



But the Russians were stuck there, that's why it lasted still very long.



In the afternoon on May 2nd 1945, a single Russian went through our street.
He had his machine gun stuck under his arm. So the bottle was finished also
in our street. I will never forget this time.

Text extracts out of "Ich schlug meiner Mutter die brennenden Funken ab" (school essays from the year 1946), KONTEXTverlag Berlin 1996, with friendly permission of KONTEXTverlag, translation by Kai Pfeiffer, shortened & drawn by Ulli Lust, 2003

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