The Last Werwolf in Germany

Beth Mann

It begins in Friedmann's right hand. A twitch, infinitesimal, as if someone has brushed a dry leaf over his skin. The hair rises on the nape of his neck. It is Monday, the seventeenth of July, 1916 – yesterday, by rights, was Sunday. A white, a holy day. It rained. Among the shattered trees and mud of Delville Wood, he shot seven men.

A shadow appears in the doorway of the dugout: Franz Jäger, looking at him, as always, from the corners of his eyes.

'Coffee, sir?'

Coffee: Jäger's elixir; potent, healing. Waving his assent, Friedmann turns back to the book spread-eagled on his knee; his *Sayings and Tales*, which he has been trying to read by the fluttering moth-light of his lamp. Its covers are tatty, now; torn, ingrained with mud. Yet still familiar; still feeling of other days, when he would slink down into the cellar, candle stub in hand, while his father slammed doors and cursed up above.

When the crashing comes, he almost expects his father's shouts to follow. It's a moment before he realises: the drumfire has begun again; the enemy are advancing. The print swims in front of him. *Then he put on the strap which the devil had given him and turned into a wild wolf, ravening, and rent the people with his teeth.* The twitch crawls upwards, into his jaw, pulling back his upper lip. He is very hungry. His eyes feel full of cinders.

As the drumfire growls and roars, he stands, and goes out into the pale, mist-wreathed dawn to find his men. They are sitting in a grey, draggled huddle around Jäger and his coffee can: skinny Walther Arndt; Paul Zorawski and Hans Keber; Wilhelm Müller Eins – he's the taller one – and Wilhelm Müller Zwei. No one speaks. Friedmann sits, his back wallowing in mud, and sips his coffee. Opposite, a rat scrabbles and sniffs: a fat bastard, plump with dead men's guts. Friedmann imagines sinking his teeth into it: flesh, blood, bursting over his tongue. Saliva floods his mouth. If he swallows, he knows he will spew.

Someone comes splashing along the trench, whistling; a ghost in the mist. Otto Brandis: never where he should be, yet rarely in trouble. Gifted, that's Brandis: with a ready smile, with being able to shoot a man easy as pie. Friedmann spits his coffee back into the cup. Shells whine overhead.

'Bit hot up there, eh?' Brandis comes into the group trailing mist and cigarette smoke,

fanning a set of papers in one hand, his fag smouldering in the other. ‘Now, boys. Just for you’. He leans in with his wry smile. ‘Here’s a sight for sore eyes’.

Photographs, battered and stained. In each is a woman, naked, breasts like ripe fruit, on her hands and knees, glancing back, inviting, over her shoulder. Friedmann remembers Käthe, the day he left: her soft face turned up to him, the spark of the new ring on her finger. He sees her on her knees in the mud, looking back, and feels a spurt of lust.

The werwolf has the appetites of a beast.

He comes to just in time to see Müller Zwei hawk a stream of tobacco juice into the mud. ‘Disgusting’.

‘Don’t criticise’. Brandis takes a drag on his cigarette. ‘Might be the last pair of tits you’ll see’.

Hans Keber, sixteen, beardless, goes dusky red. Brandis laughs, and passes his cigarette to Friedmann.

The drumfire ceases; machine-guns rattle. Mist wraps around them like a shroud.

Orders come through. Tomorrow, 8th Division takes the Wood; 153rd Infantry Regiment must occupy the second position on its southern edge. Friedmann can’t concentrate. His mind spins, from woman, to rat, to the burgeoning tremor in his hand, which seems to have nothing to do with him at all. It’s as if there is something, someone else under his skin.

At sunset, he puts his book in his pocket, and walks down the line beneath a furnace of a sky. He has not gone far when he finds Keber and Zorawski.

‘I can’t’. Keber’s fingers claw the pustulent mud of the revetment. ‘I can’t’.

Zorawski turns, sweating. ‘He doesn’t mean it, sir’.

‘No’. Awkwardly, Friedmann pats Keber’s stiff shoulder. ‘Get some coffee’. Weak, thin; all he can offer. He walks on.

Later that night, Hans Keber puts a bayonet through his eye. They haul him up over the lip of the trench for the rats to gnaw on, while Zorawski sits in the mud, face white with the strain of trying not to cry.

‘Stay by me tomorrow’, says Friedmann. Zorawski looks at the ground. For something to do, Friedmann goes back into the dugout, and reads.

No werwolf can be killed by rifle bullet. Only call his name three times, and once again he will become a man.

He mutters, ‘Friedmann, Friedmann, Friedmann’.

The bombardment begins at sunrise. Tuesday the eighteenth of July, overcast and mild, the sky split by a thunderstorm of German shells.

Friedmann and his men move along the sunken road with the rest, a little way north of the Wood; or what's left of it. Even here, it's a wasteland: churned mud; the scorched, clinging skeletons of trees. Friedmann looks at Zorawski beside him, shivering and stinking of sweat, and tries to smile. The boy flinches, as if Friedmann has too many teeth.

Part-way along the road, they find men to fight. South African bastards, shouts Brandis, and they slam into them, shooting, yelling. The world becomes a whirl of noise and men, the boom of the drumfire, screams and shouts. The German lines break, and Friedmann and his men, strung out like a wolf pack, quest through the blackened trees. There's a cry, and a hot spray of something on Friedmann's face, trickling down to his mouth, tasting of iron, and when he looks, Walther Arndt's kicking in the mud with half his face shot away. Under Friedmann's skin, the thing that is not him pushes against his bones.

A man darts out from behind a stump, and he slashes with his bayonet, opening a gape of red, then turns to the others. Franz Jäger meets his eyes – the first time – questioning, and then falls on his face, blood flowering on the back of his tunic. Shots ring out, but Friedmann can't think, can't move: only the thing hiding inside him seems to be alive.

Müller Zwei goes down with a South African, bellowing. He can't see Müller Eins, nor Otto Brandis, who is never where he should be. He looks round. Zorawski, too, has frozen, his bayonet half to his rifle; he is crying. More South Africans appear. One swipes at Friedmann, but he lunges and spits him; it's like sticking a pig.

He sees the man running for Zorawski too late. Drumfire shatters the clouds, and Zorawski turns, arms going all the wrong way, his rifle falling, and the bayonet tears, slick with blood, out of his back.

There is a rending inside Friedmann. His lips peel back; his arms feel as if they will burst, there is so much fury in them. He charges, and the man is down with one stab, but he can't stop: he's in the mud, clawing at the screaming face, ploughing it to hot, bloody shreds while shells light up the sky. Clarity comes, blinding, electric as lightning: this is why the tale of the werwolf draws him back, night after night; because this is what he is, this is what he has become. His heart hammers like the drumfire. Underneath him, the man bubbles blood, coughs, and falls still.

There's flesh under Friedmann's fingernails. Though he knows it is important, though he knows he must, he can't remember his name. Guns shriek. Bone weary, he drags himself

off the dead man, crawls into a scrape in the mud, and sleeps.

He wakes to a chorus of songbirds and groaning men. Light slants, young and brutal, through a break in the cloud.

Friedmann makes himself get up and walk, dizzy, shaking; two legs no longer enough. He is not shot. What point would there be? *No werwolf can be killed by rifle bullet.* The knowledge turns him numb.

Somehow he finds the sunken road again, and follows it. Then he is back in the trenches, faces swarming round him that he doesn't know: not Arndt, or Jäger and his coffee, not the twin Müllers or white, frightened Zorawski. He opens his mouth, but all that fills it is a howl.

Someone shakes his shoulder, roughly, 'For Christ's sake, sir!' and the world swings back into focus. There, in front of him, is Otto Brandis.

His mouth closes, out of surprise, out of hope. If Brandis, too, has come through, then he is not alone in this, in what he is.

'All well?' he mumbles.

Brandis' smile is sour as lemons today. He holds up his left hand, swaddled in mud-crusted linen.

'Three fingers gone', he says. 'Hard luck, eh, sir? Now, let's look at you. Blood everywhere, isn't there?'

Despair settles like a stone over Friedmann's heart.

When Brandis goes behind the lines for treatment, he takes NCO Friedmann with him. He thinks it's best. Sir can't walk well, see. Looks like he's drunk, left leg dragging like that, and then there was all that thrashing in the night, which no doubt sir doesn't remember. No, he thought not. All that muttering and whimpering. Enough to wake half the corpses in the Wood. He takes Friedmann's arm and steers him towards a medic. Explains. The medic purses his lips. He gives Friedmann a blanket, and puts him in a quiet corner, to sleep. There's nothing else, he says, that he can do.

That night, Brandis lays *Sayings and Tales* down on Friedmann's bed.

'I took the liberty', he says, 'sir. Thought you might want it'.

Friedmann picks it up, in silence; sets it down again beside his uniform. He knows the

text by heart, these days. *Then he put on the strap which the devil had given him...*

Later, he searches all about himself for it, this strap, before he realises – it's invisible. He can feel it, the same width and weight as his soldier's belt, branded into his skin.

He lies, heart pounding, sweat in his hair, and waits.

Eleven o'clock, hour of wolves. Friedmann knows it's eleven because he can see the clock on the wall, even though he's outside, under a luminous sky, cold mud oozing up between his spread toes. Nearby, a man writhes and mewls: naked stink of meat; warm, glorious. Friedmann slavers, tongue dripping desire. His nails gouge the ground as he leaps; his teeth tear into flesh, crush bones, drown in blood. Bullets ricochet around his brain. Fire crackles. The flames blind him from behind his eyes.

He puts back his head and howls.

People come running. He is sat up, examined, given water. His tongue hangs huge and loose and bloody.

Tears scald his face as they pick bits of dirt and straw from under his nails. He wants to tell them, 'You must help me find the strap, we must burn it, call me by my name and I will be a man again', but when he tries, they tell him he must be quiet. He knows then that he is lost.

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23 October 1918. I received a new patient into the Charité yesterday. Name: Karl Friedmann. Age: 24 years. NCO, promoted from the ranks, 153rd Infantry Regiment, 8th Division. Patient last saw action at the Somme. Previously treated in the Barackenlazarett Tempelhof; before this, worked in the Garrison.

No improvement.

On his arrival, I went to call on him. A quiet man. He stares at the wall a good deal.

'I am Herr Eisele', I told him. 'I am here to make you well'.

At this, he smiled. 'Are you also a priest, Herr Doktor?'

I could make no sense of this. The patient said, 'It doesn't matter, anyway. Even a priest would be no good'.

He was clutching to his chest a small book, very grubby, the covers split and falling into two. Thinking it would be prayers, I asked if I might look. It is a little book of traditions, I find: *Sayings and Tales*. He says he has carried it through all, and will not let it go.

During the night, the patient experienced a fit; the common symptoms. Increased

breathing, the body thrashing, screams. I propose treatment with the faradic brush. When asked if he remembered anything, the patient said he had run through a forest in the form of a wolf. He says this happens frequently, and next time, I must call him three times by his name.

An intriguing case.

25 October 1918. Attempted further treatment on my newest patient. The faradic brush, applied to the left leg, gave positive, if temporary results. The patient continues to walk poorly, as if unwilling to keep fully upright.

'You do not try, Herr Friedmann', I told him.

He appeared very distressed. Although experiencing no further fits, he complains of dizziness and trembling. This morning he became most excited, and spoke some dreadful nonsense.

'Wolves', he said, 'have sharper senses, isn't that so, Herr Doktor?'

I said that was so.

'Then', he said, 'that explains it'.

The nose, he says, is keener, the hearing more acute; thus he can still detect the rumble of the drumfire, and smell the rotting dead, several hundred miles away, in France.

I told him this was a very poor way of thinking.

27 October 1918. To my disappointment, Herr Friedmann remains. He continues to suffer severe nightmares, crying out very often in his sleep. A great pity. Though an intelligent young man, when he spoke of himself – his sensitivity as a child, so easily excited or hurt – it became clear that he demonstrates a pathological mental predisposition towards unpleasant situations. It was unfortunately my duty to tell him what this means.

'You must understand', I said, 'that you will be granted no compensation'.

He only nodded. I managed this morning to get him into a chair, whereas previously he would insist on sitting on the floor. I think this may be the first time we have spoken properly, as men.

'Your symptoms', I explained, 'were not a result of military service. You see? It is an abnormality in yourself, Herr Friedmann. Therefore, there will be no compensation'.

He hung his head down between his shoulders, much as I have seen a tired dog do. I am embarrassed to say he wept. But perhaps this is not surprising. It must be hard for a man to come through all this, only to be told that he can be given nothing.

30 October 1918. Herr Friedmann discharged: strange, lonely creature, man in wolf's clothing. I am growing sentimental, it seems.

'Perhaps', I said, 'you might write. Once the year is over, I shall be retiring from my post and returning to the Schwarzwald. Here is my address'.

I pressed it into his hand. He took it, without speaking, and tucked it into his pocket, beside his little book.

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On a sweltering summer's evening, Karl Friedmann sits at his oakwood desk, scratched and scored through years of writing, in a small room above his shop. He flattens out an old leaf of paper, dog-eared and yellow, then lifts a clean sheet to lay beside it, and writes the date neatly in the corner: 10 August 1922. Below, he continues: *Dear Herr Doktor Eisele, I need your advice. I have a daughter. Her name is Anneliese. Help me...*

He stops. In the next room, Käthe is crooning to the new baby. The sound frightens him. Everything about this frightens him: Anneliese's wide, red, wailing mouth; her tiny, fragile body. He is back in Delville Wood, half blind with blood, seeing Zorawski cry; seeing terror in the face of the man he is tearing to shreds. Panic rises in his throat.

It is an abnormality in yourself, Herr Friedmann.

No, he thinks, Eisele can do nothing. He can feel it beginning again: the stretch of something inside him, pulling at his bones. He springs from his chair; roams the room, back and forth. His eye is caught by the corner of the book, slightly proud from the rest on his shelf. He snatches it up, and it falls open on those familiar words.

No werwolf can be killed by rifle bullet. Only call his name... He reads on. *As any man knows, a silver bullet is the thing.*

He swallows.

He waits until Käthe finishes her song and takes the baby, wrapped in her white shawl, downstairs to look at the flowers in the window box. Then he creeps into their bedroom, hunter, hunted, goes to the clothes cupboard, and takes his father's old coat from the rail. Black wool with a deep-water sheen; silver buttons. He drapes it on the bed: it puts him in mind of a pall.

Gloved, wary, he rips every button free, leaving a dark tangle of broken threads. When he's done, he slips back into the accounts room, unlocks the drawer of the desk, and takes out his father's revolver. The buttons, he finds, are just right: he need do nothing but

push each one into the chambers. He closes the gun back up, and looks at it. It is so very tempting.

But he must go on: for Käthe; for their daughter. He drops the revolver into his pocket. Now, if he looks at Anneliese, if he feels the thing moving beneath his skin, he knows what he must do.

For Anneliese's fourth birthday, Käthe bakes a cake. She decorates it with flowers, candied in sugar; Anneliese loves flowers. Violets, pinks, daisies; whenever she goes outdoors, she comes back clutching bunches. The sweetness of the baking perfumes the house. It curls into the shop, where Friedmann, tired after a long day, is locking the money register. He has had problems sleeping, these last few nights. As he turns to the door into the back, his sleeve catches a tin on the counter, and it crashes to the floorboards.

Friedmann starts and ducks. Silence. Nothing. No screams; no hot shrapnel searing his flesh. He straightens. Another creature bulges inside his skin. He whispers, 'Friedmann, Friedmann, Friedmann'.

As if, somehow, it will make him what he was.

The bell jangles over the door. Someone says, 'Oh dear, sir', grasps him firmly, and props him against the counter, where his breathing slows. When he can see again, it's just as if he's back in the trenches, ten years ago, slathered in mud and blood and fear. The man standing before him, pinch-faced, with bright, attentive eyes, is Otto Brandis.

He fumbles for words.

Brandis says, 'Can I smell cake?'

Friedmann takes him into the living room. It's either that, or Brandis takes Friedmann; he isn't entirely sure. Hollow-voiced, he introduces his wife; the child on the rug, stretching upwards and upwards, trying to see herself in the mirror over the mantelpiece. Brandis whistles and clicks his fingers, and she spins round, looks at him a moment, and smiles, showing all the gaps between her teeth. Friedmann's jaw tightens. She never smiles so openly at him.

They sit on chintz-covered chairs, drink coffee, and eat cake.

'What brings you here?' asks Käthe; curious, innocent as a kitten. Brandis' left hand lies on his knee, just a lump with a forefinger and thumb; yet he doesn't seem ashamed of it, and Käthe does not appear revolted. Friedmann shifts uncomfortably in his chair.

Brandis, looking for work, talks about this, about that; but Friedmann struggles to

follow the thread of the conversation. He watches Anneliese on the rug. The gun is a dead weight in his pocket.

After an hour, Brandis stands to go.

'But I wanted to give you this', he says, 'sir'.

Friedmann wishes he wouldn't say that. It stinks of the trenches, of burnt trees and corpses.

'I know you like old books'. Brandis has taken something out of his jacket. 'Here'.

He lays it down, as he did with the *Sayings and Tales* ten years before. Trying not to notice the tremor in his right hand, Friedmann opens it. His eye falls at once on one of the illustrations: a woodcut. *Cranach the Elder*, the inscription reads; *Werwolf*. Around him, the world shrinks, until it is crushing the air from his lungs.

The ground is strewn with the dead. Eviscerated; scattered: a leg here, there a head; a hand, its arm naked bone, clawing at the earth. His mind screams: France. His mouth will not move.

At the back of the picture is a woman. A boy grabs in fear at her skirts, and she cries out, as Friedmann can't, throwing up her arms; then he sees why, sees what he missed, staring out at him, clear as day. A man dressed in rags, on his hands and knees, his teeth sunk into the body of a wailing child.

On the rug, Anneliese laughs and claps her hands.

He barely makes it outside before he throws up. He leans against the wall, gulping air, feeling like he's breathing gas; as if his lungs will melt.

'Sir?' Brandis, standing in the doorway, watches.

Friedmann's body shudders, fighting itself. 'I ate too much', he manages.

Brandis takes out his handkerchief; mops Friedmann's mouth. Slaps him, lightly, on both cheeks. 'Silly boy', he says, and leads him back into the house.

The next day, Friedmann stumbles and stammers so much in the shop that Käthe sends him into the back. He paces the small rooms, shivering, although outside it is cloudless and hot. Drumfire beats in his ears. The wallpaper oozes mud.

Something moves behind him. A South African – blood-crazed bastard! He swings round, roaring, in a crouch, dodges the bayonet, and pins the man, hands around his throat, to the wall.

Anneliese screams. Her mouth is open and choking. Wetness slides down her face in

streams.

Friedmann looks at his thumbs pressing into her delicate flesh, at his knuckles, struck across with wiry brown hair.

My, what big hands you have...

Then Käthe is there, and she too is screaming, woman in a woodcut. Friedmann is dizzy; the child twists, shrieking, in his grasp. He forces out words: 'My name. Call me three times by my name', but Käthe doesn't hear; she is tearing at his hands, and suddenly Brandis is beside her, fist cracking into Friedmann's jaw, sending him reeling back. He lies, panting, on the floor.

Käthe gathers Anneliese in her arms. Brandis steps in front of her, protectively; looks down at Friedmann, shuddering against the wall. He says, 'Are you mad?'

Käthe stops talking. When he's near, she flinches, as if his presence scorches her skin. She locks the bedroom door. Every night, Friedmann creeps down to the cellar, with a candle stub and his book.

As soon as day comes, he puts the book in his pocket, alongside the paper with Eisele's address, and he goes outside and walks; walks until he's exhausted. Still, he cannot sleep.

Moons wax and wane. He is coming back one night, his left leg dragging, when he decides. He must tell Käthe. He must make her understand.

He limps into the house, listening; hearing, as he always does, the distant sound of the shells. His eyelid trembles. Very quietly, he opens the living room door.

Brandis has his hands around Käthe's waist. Her fingers dig into his hair, pulling his head down as she kisses him; one of her stockings has slipped to her ankle. Brandis is wearing only his trousers and shirt.

The pressure of the drumfire grows in Friedmann's head. He feels the emptiness inside him open up into a howling wasteland, and the gun is smooth and cold in his hand, the only thing he has left to hold. The werwolf comes snarling free, cracking his bones, coursing along his arms, and everything that is Friedmann gives up fighting; he has fought too long. He takes aim, as he was taught to do, and fires.

The mirror above the mantelpiece shatters into a dozen shining shards of glass.

Brandis and Käthe are on the floor, staring up at him, two horrified faces, side by side. Tears blur his vision. Käthe begins to scream.

The gun slides from his fingers. His breathing stops; fear pulses through his body as the sound grows and grows, so human, so alien. The door is still open. Like a wild thing, he turns and flees.

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9 October 1926. Autumn is here at last. When I took my walk this morning, I found the ground carpeted in leaves, like tongues of fire, rust and gold and even a touch or two of scarlet. It will be the winds that we had last night. They raged into the early hours...

'Uncle?' says Lena.

Richard Eisele lays down his pen and closes his diary. His niece has brought him tea in a pretty china cup, decorated with rose sprays; one of those he hasn't used since Elisabeth died forty years ago. He takes off his spectacles.

'Thank you'. He feels he should say something more, but is not quite sure what. He clears his throat. They have been here together now for eight years, since a curt letter told Lena that her husband lay in a shallow grave in France; but talking has not become any easier. They move around one another quietly, living in their own parts of the house, in their own grief. He lifts the cup, his thumbnail grazing the gold outline of a rose.

'I hear they're having a dance tonight'. He sips his tea. 'You should go'.

Lena shakes her head. 'Once, maybe. Not now'. She has brought a plate of gingerbread; she puts it down beside his saucer. 'I'm not who I was'.

None of us are, he thinks. At the front door, something scratches and whimpers.

'These stray dogs!' says Lena.

'I'll send it packing'. He scrapes back his chair and reaches for his knobstick: polished ash, heavy. Lena gathers the cup and saucer, the teaspoon and unused sugar tongs, on to her tray, and follows him out into the hall.

'Be careful, Uncle. It may bite'.

'It can try.' He unlocks the door and drags it open, stick raised. His arm goes still.

It's like facing Death. A graveyard whiff comes from the man shivering on the step at his feet: his clothes are rags; his face hollow, a skull. Lice crawl in his hair. It's only when he looks up, cringing, that Eisele knows.

The werwolf.

Lena shrieks. The tray shudders in her grasp; with a quickness he thought he'd lost, Eisele turns and catches it. Cup and saucer smashing, spoons clattering to the floor – who knows what it would do to this wreck of a man?

‘Go into the kitchen, Lena’, he says. ‘I will take care of this’.

He goes down on creaking knees, and gently slips his hands under the thin shoulders. He can feel bones staring through the skin.

‘All right, Herr Friedmann’, he says. ‘I have you. It will be all right, now’.

Lena recovers swiftly from her surprise. Before Eisele has even got Friedmann fully indoors, his niece is boiling water on the range, looking out soap and towels, a comb. Together, they strip Friedmann of his stinking clothes; he sits dumb in the copper tub while they wash him. When he is clean again, they wrap him in blankets and let him lie, still shaking, on the chaise longue.

It is Lena, going through his pockets for anything of value, who finds the book.

The covers have long since gone. All that’s left is a filthy sheaf of paper, held by the string along its spine, and when Eisele takes it, it drops open on a well-thumbed page, black at the edges, bent.

Then he put on the strap which the devil had given him and turned into a wild wolf, ravening…

Friedmann twists and mutters. His face shines with sweat; fever, Eisele thinks. There’s little more left of this man than a husk.

‘Fetch some cloths and cold water’, he tells Lena; and then he takes the book to the fire. Fear tightens the back of his throat. Here there are no neat, clean hospital wards; no faradic brush, no careful, precise definitions of this illness or that. He has only instinct. He stirs the fire with the poker, and feeds the pages of the book into it, one by one, watching each disappear in a wisp of smoke.

Three times they threw the strap into the heart of the fire, yet out it leapt. Then they called on the pastor, and finally it was burnt to cinders…

The words shimmer; the paper browns and curls, and then catches in a saffron glow. Soon, there is nothing left but ash.

Behind him, Friedmann turns over and cries out.

‘The strap’, he says, his voice hoarse, growling. ‘The strap’.

Lena comes in with the water and cloths, and Eisele cools Friedmann’s forehead.

‘You need not worry’, he says, as the desperate eyes rake his face. ‘I have burnt it’.

Not long afterwards, Friedmann sleeps.

The wind cries around the house like a lament.

'What will we do with him, Uncle?' asks Lena.

He sighs. 'Call him by his name three times', he says, 'and hope he will return to the land of men'.

Puzzlement creases her face; but he himself is sure. He goes to his desk and opens his diary; gazes at the last entry. There is no more room on the page. He turns it, and holds his pen, looking at the fresh, new paper. Then he dips the pen into the inkwell, and sets down the date again: 9 October 1926. Underneath, he writes, like a prayer, an incantation: *With God's help, we will yet vanquish the last werwolf in Germany*.