



PASSED BY CENSOR

THINGS WE

DIDN'T SAY

a novel

Amy Lynn Green

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DIDN'T SAY



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Scripture quotations are from the King James Version of the Bible.

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

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To my parents,
for your faithful and unconditional love



Prologue

From Johanna Berglund to Charles Donohue, attorney-at-law

January 26, 1945

Dear Mr. Donohue,

If I were an expert in criminal law, I'd be sick to death of outraged clients claiming to be falsely accused, and especially of weepy female clients wringing their hands and saying things like, "How could it have come to this?" Which is why I deliberately avoided any of that in our initial meeting, though it occurred to me later that I might have come across as cold or detached.

So allow me to say thank you for agreeing to take my case. I'm aware that representing a civilian charged with involvement in prisoner-of-war-related crimes is a complicated affair.

The following file contains all of the documents I've gathered related to the incidents at Camp Ironside this past year, arranged by date received. I wasn't sure what would be of use, so I've sent everything, including

some information that might, at first glance, seem incriminating.

Many of the letters I translated for censoring and for the camp records had carbon copies, and the *Ironside Broadside* archives have been helpful as well. Quite a few of the people I wrote to had other reasons for keeping my letters to them—Brady McHenry saves all correspondence to the newspaper office because he’s paranoid about being sued for libel; Pastor Sorenson hasn’t thrown away anything larger than a Doublemint gum wrapper since the start of the Great Depression; and Peter . . . well, his reasons should be obvious as you read on.

In assembling this collection, I’ve found that every letter has two messages: the one written on the lines and the one written between them. Both are necessary to give a full picture of what really happened during my employment at the camp.

This morning I was seized by a sudden, crazed instinct to burn every last page instead of giving them to you. I even opened my nearly brand-new Acme Tires matchbook—only one match missing; you’ll get to the significance of that later—and pictured these papers curling into shriveled black ashes. Not because I’m afraid their contents will condemn me, but because they will reveal me, every detail of my personal life made public.

Since I gathered up enough common sense to present you this paper trail undestroyed and complete, I hope you’ll agree that it provides evidence to clear me of any wrongdoing. I am innocent, no matter what the outcry surrounding this case has led people to believe.

No, I should clarify. Years of reciting “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” with the rest of the congregation every Sunday

has trained me. I am guilty. I know that with certainty after reading these letters again. Guilty of selfishness and bitterness and foolish, reckless pride. Guilty of hurting the people I love the most.

But not guilty of treason.

I want others to know the truth. Not the newspapers and their readers across the country, eager for a spy scandal. Just the people closest to me: Dad and Mother. The Sorensens. Peter. I hope, whatever the judge decides, that they can forgive me for all of the hurt I've caused, starting years before the first piece of evidence.

Now I just need to forgive myself.

In any case, thank you for the book of legal terms and procedures. I read it cover to cover and now consider myself fluent in seven languages, including jurisprudence. Memorizing vocabulary is at least one thing I'm unfailingly good at.

Please let me know if you have any questions about the enclosed as I prepare my testimony.

Johanna Berglund



CHAPTER ONE

*From Major J. E. Davies to the citizens of Ironside Lake, Minnesota
To be read at the January 1944 town hall meeting*

My fellow Americans,

Yes, it is as Americans that I appeal to you, not Minnesotans or residents of Ironside Lake. This call to sacrifice goes far beyond the tenuous ties of state or even community!

After careful consideration and planning, within two months, Ironside Lake will be home to a camp of German prisoners of war, who will work at several farms requesting day laborers with the Trade Center Committee.

The army considered several factors in making this decision. First, the people of rural Minnesota have been exceedingly generous in lending us the use of your strongest and bravest sons, with thousands fighting Axis forces far from home. However, because of this sacrifice, last year's harvest from your county was minimal.

Second, if you would, imagine your community on a map of the United States, far from oceans and government

buildings, without any mountains that might provide security challenges. You are, quite plainly, the ideal location for such a camp!

Construction has already begun on the other side of the lake to repurpose the abandoned Civilian Conservation Corps facilities built there in '35. All is proceeding according to plan!

I myself was called up from the Army Reserve to serve as camp commander, overseeing twenty of our finest soldiers, who will be assuming guard duty. In addition, we will be posting open positions for a cook, secretary, and other support staff. We have a special need for a translator, as it is necessary to keep fluent German-speakers on duty at all times.

To address a possible concern, I will reassure you that most of the Germans in the prison camp will be enlisted men captured in the North Africa campaign and certainly not dangerous, as all prominent Nazi officers and SS agents are kept in a high-security camp in Oklahoma. We are confident that through the hard work of tilling the fertile American soil, our enemies will become our allies!

I will come myself in person to a special meeting at your town hall in one week's time to answer any questions you may have. Thank you in advance for your enthusiastic support of your country's efforts!

With Great Respect,
Major J. E. Davies
US Army, Fort Snelling

Editorial in the Ironside Broadside on January 20, 1944

Dear Editor,

This paper's coverage of Tuesday night's town hall meeting made me sick. Sticking in one timid quote from that backwoods politician Carl Berglund doesn't show the town's real reaction to news of a prison camp on our doorstep. "I invite you all to think carefully about the situation and raise any appropriate questions" hardly begins to cover it!

Why not mention the cry of outrage that erupted before the letter was even halfway through, I ask you? Or talk about the mothers who wanted to know why, after kissing their older sons good-bye, they have to stand by and see their young ones endangered too? Or quote from Mr. Dahl's speech about how we don't owe the German prisoners any care or courtesy?

And another thing: We may have been behind in our quotas last year, but who says putting prisoners to work will help and not hurt? We've all seen the *Sabotage Can Outweigh Production* posters. It's a warning we'd best heed, if you ask me.

As for the translators, the camp planners are crazy as loons if they think we'll stand for bringing a truckload of those foreigners from New Weimar into our town to watch over their own countrymen. We might as well tear down the fence and hand the POWs a ticket back to Germany.

We've all heard the reports on the radio and gotten letters from our boys. We know plenty about the brutality of German soldiers. None of us will be safe with them as our neighbors, mark my words.

A Soldier's Mother

From Johanna to her parents

January 23, 1944

Dear Mother (and Dad),

Your last letter certainly set me back on my heels. Something actually happening back in Ironside Lake? It makes a person wonder, What next? Will John Wayne star in an operatic ballet? Hitler send roses and an apology note to Versailles with his unconditional surrender? Roosevelt resign and join the tightrope act of the Ringling Bros. Circus?

That's not very sensitive of me, is it? I'm sure it's very upsetting and that Dad has to deal with complainers calling the mayor's office at all hours. Still, that's what he signed up for when he sold the chickens and took up politics, trading one sort of squawking for another.

I'm sure the army will be vigilant about security, and in my view, everyone should thank God for the additional help, no matter who offers it. Only a few months ago, all Dad could talk about was how low our agricultural production numbers had dropped, with so many men enlisting. It must have come up five times during my Christmas visit.

What on earth did Pastor Sorenson say about the camp? I can only assume he addressed it in his sermon, the family connection and all. Poor man. Caught between Jesus' command to love your enemies and the entire roaring collective of Ironside Lake saying they shouldn't have to. I don't envy him.

I'm hard at work, as usual, writing papers and pretending to study for exams while I actually work ahead for my planned summer courses. Besides that, Peter managed to find a used copy of *Notre-Dame de Paris* in

the original French for my birthday present, which will provide me with a week's worth of light evening reading. I used your gift money to buy a stockade of Earl Grey to accompany my reading of Victor Hugo, since coffee is hard to come by these days. When you're approaching a tragic ending, fortification with a hot beverage is essential.

Don't worry too much, Mother; I do venture from my apartment when forced to, mostly by Olive. Why I thought it was a good idea to room with the most social co-ed on campus, I have no idea.

While I'm obviously justifying my introversion, I do get along tolerably with everyone in the program. But I wish Peter were here instead of down at Camp Savage. He gets leave sometimes on weekends and comes up to help me with my Japanese—I pay him in eternal gratitude and chop suey. (Apparently Chinese food is safer to sell than Japanese these days; there's a shop next to the USO servicemen's club where we met.)

I don't report these extracurricular studies to Dr. Smythe. The university is convinced that students must remain within the borders of their assigned classes, and they hold the line like there's a minefield beyond it that would blow us to bits. I'm attempting to persuade Dr. Smythe to approve an independent study in Japanese this summer, but I assume the answer will be no. It's not that he hates women in general—he shows remarkable equity in his treatment of female students. He just hates me in particular. Every now and then I think maybe I should stop correcting him in front of the class, but I only do so when he's blatantly wrong. He shouldn't take it personally.

In other news, I'm proud to say most of my meals these days are meatless and wheatless—although admittedly it's motivated not by patriotism but by the fact that rice,

beans, and the occasional vegetable are cheap and easy to prepare. Even I can't burn boiling water, at least not yet. The one variation was last week, when Olive attempted Chelsea buns for my birthday. Evidently our American ingredients are "all wrong," and they turned out as hard as the sidewalk. I managed a few bites to be polite but nearly chipped a tooth.

Of course I miss you, and I'll try to visit sometime this summer, but train fare is expensive, and you know I haven't got a car or the gas rations to fill it. But do write back and let me know how the prison camp fracas resolves. I'm eager to hear all about it.

Love,
Jo

From Dr. Smythe to Johanna Berglund

January 27, 1944

Dear Miss Berglund,

I was told the best place to leave this note for you was with the campus head librarian. He assures me you're in at intervals as regular as the chiming of a clock and has promised to pass this along, as it contains time-sensitive information that could not wait until our next class.

Please make an appointment at your convenience to meet with me, but make sure that you find today or tomorrow convenient. I have an exciting opportunity to discuss with you.

Attached as well are my notes on your proposed study of the structural similarities between Japanese idioms and the epic poetry of ancient Greece. I'll summarize my position briefly here: I can't see how your proposed

research has any practical application and would advise you to apply yourself to a more worthy pursuit.

Dr. Sheridan Smythe
Chair of the Modern
Languages Department,
University of Minnesota

From Major J. E. Davies to Johanna Berglund

January 24, 1944

Dear Miss Berglund,

A pleasure to meet you, even if that meeting is only by means of a stamp instead of a hearty handshake. Why, I feel as if I know you already from all of the impressive things I've heard about you—child prodigy, top of your class, entire translation of Dante's *Inferno* submitted with your application to the university! It downright boggles me. Keep this up and someday you'll be secretary of state, and I'll be saluting you!

By the time you receive this letter, my old friend Dr. Smythe should have presented you with the basics of our offer of employment as camp translator, but I wanted to write you myself to convey how essential you would be to our new camp's function. Vital, in fact!

We believe you to be not only an ideal candidate, but *the* ideal candidate. Why, you ask? We are running into a bit of—how should I phrase this?—an unanticipated public relations difficulty with Ironside Lake. The other camps in Iowa and Minnesota faced scrutiny upon their founding, but not the outright hostility we're experiencing from the citizens of your hometown. It's quite unprecedented! We are hoping that having you on our staff

as a local girl made good—and the mayor's daughter, no less—will bring them reassurance.

While discussing this issue at the fort, one of our language-school instructors (from a military intelligence initiative—highly secretive, you understand) giving a report to my superior said he knew the very person for the job, qualified for the work in both skills and temperament. Namely, you! You must realize how this struck me. Two recommendations of the very same person for this translation position. An amazing godsend! Truly, it felt like the decision had been made for me. I trust you'll come to the same conclusion.

I must confess, when your parents and our language-school instructor alike assured me that “Jo Berglund” would be perfect for the job, I assumed that “Joe Berglund” was a man. It was only upon speaking with Smythe that I was informed of my mistake. Other camps are reluctant to bring female staff members into the post, even attempting to limit contact when POWs work at canneries alongside civilian women. However, I have heard nothing but praise of your character and abilities, and being a bit of a progressive, if I do say so myself, I do not anticipate any problems.

Thank you once again for considering this position, and I look forward to hearing from you shortly!

With Great Respect,
Major J. E. Davies
US Army, Fort Snelling

From Johanna Berglund to Major J. E. Davies

January 27, 1944

Dear Major Davies,

I have a friend who says it's best to start out communications with a compliment when possible. So let me say that the Fort Snelling letterhead is appropriately impressive without being gaudy.

On to the bad news. I regret that I must decline your offer of a translator position in Ironside Lake. Must emphatically decline.

My program of study here at the University of Minnesota is much too demanding to allow for any break. I had intended to take summer courses as well, so it would be impossible for me to spend nine months in a prison camp. Besides that, the scholarship donor allowing me to be here would not look kindly on a long leave of absence.

Peter Ito is quite right that I am qualified for the position. (I'm assuming he was the one who spoke to you.) Probably overqualified, since I am also fluent in French, Danish, Greek, and Latin and have begun studying Japanese. But I'm afraid you'll need to find someone else. Might I recommend asking in New Weimar? It's a forestry town, and most of their population emigrated from Germany only a generation or two back. I used to pick up phrases when my family stopped at a filling station on our annual trip to Duluth, which is what prompted my interest in the language.

As for my being a godsend, I hope this won't shake your faith, but God already sent me here. To Minneapolis. And here I will stay until I've gotten my degree and can start the work I've dreamed of all my life, hopefully in Oxford, England, and certainly not in Ironside Lake.

Again, I appreciate being considered, and the stationery really is striking. I wish you all the best in finding a better-suited candidate.

Sincerely,
Johanna Berglund

From Johanna Berglund to Peter Ito

January 27, 1944

Dear Peter,

You've really done it this time. I can't decide whether to upbraid you for your treachery or to thank you for the misplaced compliment. So I'll do both, and you can decide which one I mean more.

Why in heaven's name did you make Major What's-His-Name think I'm the perfect candidate for the translator position? Skills, I'll grant you, though you're taking my word on my fluency in German since you don't speak anything beyond *gesundheit* and *Sauerkraut*. But temperament? Were you joking? You're too kind to say it, but we both know I'm a disaster when it comes to relating to people, nothing at all like Olive or Mother or even my sister, Irene.

It's difficult even visiting Ironside Lake. Dad and Mother are happy to see me, of course, but I always time my visits so they fall over as few Sundays as possible. Church in a small town is more to see and be seen than it is to actually worship, and I'm no longer a precocious ten-year-old in a sailor dress, singing "Jesus Loves the Little Children."

Why were you even at Fort Snelling? I thought you've

been so busy at the language school that you barely have time for sleep.

Regardless, if the major contacts you again, tell him to go away. Or, since you probably wouldn't be that blunt, change the subject. Or better yet, recommend someone else for the translator position. Anyone, in fact, who isn't me.

This was my parents' idea; I'm sure of it. Mother is always writing me teary, guilt-inducing letters about how empty the house seems now that Irene's married and I'm off at school, when they probably barely noticed me when I was there. Even Dad never fully approved of the linguistics program, although I do think he admired the way I gathered the money for it. I know he and Mother would be perfectly happy if I came back to Ironside Lake, got swept off my feet by an industrious banker's son like Irene did, and gave up this nonsense of Oxford altogether.

I've spent all evening working on a tactful reply to the major, and now writing to you. Consequently, my poor volume of Ovid is entirely neglected in the corner. Real life is dreadfully tedious, the way it interrupts reading.

But enough about me and my woes. Are you finding teaching these new recruits any easier?

Your friend,
Jo

Appendix: Would you like to make a bet on when the last snow will be? I'm not as much of a weakling as you when it comes to winter, but even I might sing for joy and toss my gloves in a bonfire once it gets to fifty degrees for the first time.

From Peter to Johanna

January 31, 1944

Dear Jo,

You're a regular prophet. Major Davies did seek me out again, asking about you. I had to interrupt my class to run to the office to take his call, and the first words of it were, "Mr. Ito, why didn't you tell me that Berglund girl was so blasted difficult?" Only he didn't use *blasted*.

Honestly, Jo, what did you say to him?

What's so bad about taking a semester off, two at most, to use the skills you're learning? I know you dream of a life in England translating *Beowulf* and the tragedies of Euripides, but in case you haven't tuned in to the radio lately, the Germans are trying to bomb it into oblivion. Even if you finish your bachelor's, you won't be able to get over there just now.

But I shouldn't be too hard on you. Probably everyone else is saying the same sort of thing, and I know you love your cozy apartment and teakettle and study desk in the Modern Language section of the library. I want you to be happy, Jo. But at least think about it.

On how I came to be speaking with Major Davies: Great news, there's so much interest from *Nisei* around the country in joining our training school that they're considering moving the program to Fort Snelling. Now that some of our graduates have gone into the field and proven themselves, it's starting to dawn on the military brass that our true loyalty is to America, not Japan. (Which is exactly what we've been telling them all along.) It would mean a lot to get official recognition instead of being segregated away at the slipshod facilities here. We're at full enrollment—over a thousand now—and bursting at

the seams. Since all the bunks are taken, some of the boys are sleeping on mattresses on the floor.

The latest new arrivals are a younger crowd, averaging around twenty. All of them are eager to learn, though it's interesting interacting with the Hawaiian students, who speak a different dialect of English. The government finally allowed them to apply, and we've got the cream of the crop from the hundreds who did.

Most of the mainland students signed up primarily to get out of the internment camps, but they work hard, knowing time is short and there's a huge demand for translators in the Pacific. We've even caught a few studying in the privy after ten o'clock, since it's the only building with a lit bulb after lights-out.

The trouble is, we had to lower our requirements to fill our quota, from high-school equivalency to third grade, so our Beginning level is much more crowded than Middle and Advanced. At least total immersion seems to be helping them. (Did I tell you I dream in Japanese now? I sometimes have to struggle for the right English word when writing to you.)

There still aren't quite enough instructors for the number of students we have, so the hours are long. Most of us aren't Ivy League faculty, for sure—there was a reason I was studying accounting at the University of California—but we have good motivation to learn quickly so we can teach the students army jargon, cryptology, basic military tactics and maneuvers, and, hardest of all, cursive. (I'm not joking. Most of them have never seen writing in *sousho* before, much less tried to read it. Very difficult to master. That's why I haven't showed it to you yet.)

I'll take a last-snow bet of March 8 and hope I'm wrong and all the snow melts tomorrow, never to return. For

most of the boys, the novelty of snow has worn off—there are few of the joyful frolics we saw in our first several inches. But some of them still like the excuse for a prank. I caught one student slipping an icicle down another's shirt during class one morning. The poor fellow tried not to react, but his squirming couldn't be contained, and when he untucked his shirt and the melting shard fell to the floor, the classroom dissolved into laughter. It was all I could do to keep a straight face.

Have I mentioned I'm still mad the training school moved from San Francisco to Minneapolis? I don't know what they were thinking, bringing a bunch of Californians and Hawaiians to this frozen meat locker. Even under three layers of sweaters, I feel like a sirloin packed in ice. How do you stand it?

Your friend,
Peter

P.S. Only you would have an appendix instead of a usual P.S. Are you going to start footnoting your letters too?

P.P.S. Terry Tanabe, the icicle culprit above, went to the Nisei USO club last weekend and reported that the senior hostess asked about you, wondering why her favorite summertime junior hostess suddenly disappeared. She still doesn't realize you only crashed the USO club because you wanted to learn Japanese, does she? I figured it out right away, for the record. All I wanted was a game of Ping-Pong, and instead, the girl on the other side of the net kept missing the ball, firing linguistic questions at me between serves. How did you get away with that for three full months without being found out?

From Johanna to Peter

February 3, 1944

Dear Peter,

I promise I'll think about the position.

There. I thought about it. For a good ten seconds. And then put it right back in my mental files where it belongs, alphabetized somewhere between *Never* and *Not a chance*.

Well, it's about time the army deigns to adequately equip you for your work. You'd think they'd prefer we lose the war in the Pacific, the way they've dallied on training your linguists. I'm glad to hear the new students will live up to your expectations, particularly since you've only got six months to turn them out as experts. See, that's an example of the stress that accompanies the more "practical" applications of language study. I could never do what you do, and I don't intend to, no matter how many exclamation marks Major J. E. Davies fires at me.

As for the USO, now that I'm sure you won't turn me in, I'll confess: I forged a badge with a stencil patterned off a brochure requesting I apply as a junior hostess. I didn't have time for letters of recommendation and interviews when there were only three summer months before the start of the term. So I pinned that false badge to my blouse, then marched up to the club and distracted Mrs. Murray by responding in Japanese the first few times she greeted me (the only phrases I knew, and badly pronounced, I found out later). She was delighted to have a fluent speaker at the club, thinking it would make her Senior Hostess of the Year, I suppose.¹

It was good of you to give me lessons, though, when you were surrounded by books and study the rest of the

week. I still have those first *kanji* you penciled in on a napkin pressed in my *Naganuma Reader*. Duplicitous means or no, what would I have done if I'd never met you? One chance glance at a newspaper article to see that a Nisei USO was starting up in the Cities, and I found the luckiest choice of Ping-Pong partner I could have made.²

March 8? You're a hopeless optimist. I'm calling April 2, and not a day earlier. Loser has to buy malts once it's warm enough to ingest something frozen, which will be at least June.

Jo

¹She was under the impression that my parents were missionaries for a decade in Nagasaki, though I swear I never said so. Not directly, anyway.

²Before you criticize me for faking my hostess role, remember, you were patronizing the USO as a civilian instructor, completely nonmilitary, which is against USO rules.

From Major Davies to Johanna

February 1, 1944

Dear Miss Berglund,

Thank you for taking the time to write back so promptly. The fort's stationery also appreciates the compliment, I'm sure.

I'm sorry you felt you should decline our offer, but allow me to present you a few details that might change your mind.

We have already investigated the option of hiring a

translator from New Weimar but have encountered two obstacles: First, we can obtain B-level gas rations for a translator, but most residents of New Weimar don't have access to a car or the desire to make a daily forty-five-minute round trip, which would make transportation difficult.

Second, the citizens of Ironside Lake are not—how should I put this?—especially in favor of bringing outsiders, particular those of recent German extraction, into their fair town. This point was emphasized to me quite clearly at my visit there only a few days ago, and we promised to honor those concerns, baseless as we believe them to be.

As one of Ironside Lake's own people, you will be trusted, and your assistance will help us to build goodwill with the community. Think of all the good you can do! Why, if my own daughter were presented with such a chance to serve her country, she would be packing her bags immediately!

This is the sort of opportunity any language student should be deeply grateful for, particularly a woman who seeks independence and respect in her field.

Take a few days to think about it. I can't emphasize enough how important this is.

With Great Respect,
Major J. E. Davies
US Army, Fort Snelling

From Johanna to Major Davies

February 4, 1944

Dear Major Davies,

I'm sorry if my last letter gave the impression that there might be room to persuade me, because it was not my

intent. I won't be any help at all for good relations with Ironside Lake. Persuasion, you might have guessed by now, is not my gift. I do love words. I memorize them and enjoy finding the exact way to translate them to accurately communicate the author's meaning . . . but I am not good at putting words together on my own, especially when speaking to people.

I can assure you that I'd be no help with your public relations efforts. No doubt the people of Ironside Lake are as glad to be rid of me as I am to be gone.

Keep up the good work. I'm sure you'll find just the person you need for the job, but I'm sorry to say that it isn't me.

Johanna Berglund

From Mrs. Berglund to Johanna

February 2, 1944

Dearest Jo,

Now, dear, you know how I feel about your sarcasm. People around here are very upset by all this talk of prisoners of war, and the weight of it is falling on your father. Of course, it's our duty to make the best of it, but it's much easier for you to laugh from the safe distance of the city when it doesn't affect your life—at least not yet.

Construction on the prison camp is almost finished, as the men will be arriving at the beginning of next month. I'll admit to driving by it once so I could take a peek. Most of it looked rather ordinary—same old paint-peeling CCC buildings and wide stretches of tramped-down dirt—but that hideous barbed-wire fence! It made me shudder. I'm glad they have it, of course, but Ironside Lake has always

been a safe place, and now it seems less so. Politics aside, that's how I feel, and I can't help but say it.

As to Anders's sermon, he didn't mention a word about it. Now, I know what you're thinking, but please don't demean his faithful service to our community by implying that was cowardly of him. I've always said the church doesn't need to interfere in every civil squabble. A pastor must concern himself with heavenly things, and I'm sure I wasn't the only member of Immanuel Lutheran Church who found last Sunday's message on the Babylonian captivity very uplifting.

After the service, Annika asked about you. She does sometimes, you know, and it sounds to me that she doesn't hear from you often. That's such a shame, dear, your best friend for all those years.

Which brings me to the translation job. I'm surprised you didn't write or even call after you received the offer, but Major Davies told us all about it on his latest visit, and about your refusal. Half the town knows by now, I'm afraid, although I'm sure you know they didn't hear it from me. I would guess the leak was Major Davies's wife, who accompanied him. She seems to be the chatty sort, though very elegant. Used to New York City as she is, she probably doesn't realize that in a small town, if you speak someone else's business in a whisper, it will be shouted from the rooftops by noon the next day.

I hope you weren't rude to the major, dear. Your father is in a delicate place coming up on November's election, trying to keep the town agitators mollified and still maintain good relationships with the army and Farm Help Coordinating Committee. Your cooperation in this would certainly be appreciated. I think it would comfort people a great deal to have someone they know translating at the

camp. And your father and I would be delighted to have you back home.

Of course the decision is yours to make. After the dance-hall incident, heaven knows I've given up trying to force your hand on anything. But it's something to consider.

At the very least, you'd get some decent food here. Dear old Cornelia Knutson is quite handy with stretching ration coupons, and I've been borrowing some recipes from her to get by until the farmers market opens. I'm making potato soup now, and your mouth would water just to smell it. Rice and vegetables seven days a week—how can you stand it? Remember, if you're undernourished, you'll be susceptible to pneumonia, especially in this cold. There's nothing worse than being sick away from home, so please do take care of yourself.

Much love,
Mother

From Dr. Smythe to Johanna

February 7, 1944

Dear Miss Berglund,

It has come to my attention that the anonymous administrator of the trust from which your scholarship is drawn has decided that, for future semesters, the funds will be granted to a student using his or her language degree for patriotic purposes—diplomacy, foreign-aid efforts, government service, etc.

If you would like to reapply for the scholarship, you may do so. An essay will be required to demonstrate fulfilment of this new requirement.

Before you storm to my office to accuse me of interfering, I assure you I have done no such thing, although I agree that the timing is rather suspicious. Even though I do not know the donor's identity, I suspect Major Davies considers him (and half the city) an "old friend." Need I say more?

I have heard from Fort Snelling about your difficulties with accepting the offered position at the new POW camp. Should you change your mind, I am willing to administer your spring examinations early. Judging by your consistently flawless assignments and your frequent glazed looks in my class, I think you'll be more than ready. And I hope it's not too indiscreet to point out that the generous proposed salary will go considerably further than your wages from your current part-time employment at the campus library.

You have great potential, Miss Berglund. I'd caution you not to waste it out of stubbornness and to direct your considerable talents toward a more realistic goal.

Dr. Sheridan Smythe
Chair of the Modern
Languages Department,
University of Minnesota

From Johanna to Major Davies

February 9, 1944

Dear Major Davies,

No compliments this time. If you feel comfortable asking my scholarship donor to withdraw funds for my schooling, then I don't need to keep to rules of etiquette anymore. I've always thought of etiquette as

institutionalized insincerity anyway. Much better to say things straight out.

I find myself in the unenviable position of being blackmailed into serving my country. You army gentlemen are all about conscription, aren't you? It doesn't seem like I have any alternative other than to take a leave of absence from my studies and come to your POW camp.

I hope that's left you feeling guilty enough to make you more amenable to the compromise I would like to propose:

If I come back to Ironside Lake to serve as your translator, censor, girl-of-all-work, etc., I want you to agree to reevaluate the position on August 1 of this year. If morale in the camp is high and relations between the town and the camp are running smoothly, as I'm sure they will be, then having me around won't be necessary, will it?

I'm offering to surrender six months of my life to serve my country in a role no one else wants. I hope you'll agree that this is a reasonable compromise.

Make no mistake: I am qualified, and I will do my work with excellence. There's no need to worry on that front.

I hope you will consider these terms and respond as soon as possible.

Johanna Berglund

From Major Davies to Johanna Berglund

February 12, 1944

Dear Miss Berglund,

I can't tell you how delighted I was to receive your response in today's mail! Chatted with Smythe this

morning as well, and he said he's happy to have you going too. Very accommodating fellow. I thought he'd slap my knuckles for taking away his star pupil, but he seemed relieved that we'd found someone for the position. He also advised me that you have a slightly abrupt manner, so I interpreted your letter in that light.

My wife, Evelyn, will appreciate having another woman about the camp in addition to my secretary and some of the soldiers' wives. She's been distressed all month at the thought of leaving her friends in Manhattan, even though I assured her that we'll certainly be home for Christmas, as the camp will close for the season in November.

To that point, your recommendation of reevaluating your employment come the end of summer seems reasonable to me. Just save this letter and remind me of it in a few months, and we'll see what's what. With any luck, all will be calm as a graveyard, and off you'll go to your studies again!

I will say, though, that I had nothing to do with taking your scholarship away from you! Perhaps you might hold back on your accusations and simply consider if Providence has guided your path to the very place where you belong.

Further instructions regarding transportation, arrival, etc., will follow from my secretary, Miss Harrigan. Again, we look forward to your assistance with this essential wartime effort! America is grateful for you!

With Great Respect,
Major J. E. Davies

Telegram from Johanna to her parents on February 16, 1944

COMING HOME THIS MON TO BEGIN TRANSLATION JOB.
ARMY TO PICK ME UP FROM DULUTH STATION. WILL
ARRIVE AROUND NOON. PLEASE AIR OUT BEDSPREAD.

*From Peter to Johanna, left with her and found while on the train
to Duluth*

February 21, 1944

Dear Jo,

If you're reading this, it's because our last conversation was just what I expected: full of forced smiles and things we didn't get a chance to say. I guess that's the way good-byes usually are.

You've never said exactly why you hate the thought of going home, and I don't need to know, but I remember how hard it was when you went back for your friend's funeral last year. It was six weeks before you even smiled again. (Yes, I counted.) I'd rather you not spend the next six months stewing in misery.

So make a new friend or two. Do your work as well as I know you can. Keep praying and ask for help every now and then. And write me if you have the time. I'll even tolerate a little complaining, but only if you also report any interesting baseball stories, since I haven't got time to listen to games on the radio. (Don't even think about telling me you don't know the terms—you taught yourself Latin from books you smuggled out of your pastor's library before you were fifteen. You can learn what a pop fly is.)

One more thing. I've mentioned my grandmother

Baba Yone before, but I don't think I ever told you what she said when the news came that our family would be sent to the internment camp in Arizona. The first part wasn't a surprise, it's what all of the older generation say in response to adversity: "*Shikata ga nai.*" *It can't be helped.* But then she added (in Japanese; she doesn't speak English), "We can do anything we must. How we do it, though, is up to us."

Then again, she also didn't want me to leave the internment camp and teach here at the language school. So maybe it's harder advice to follow than either of us thought.

Anyway, you've got a right to be angry about being forced somewhere against your will. So do I. But I keep thinking about what John Aiso (the head of the language school) said in one of his motivational speeches: "We must live like the cherry trees in our nation's capital: of Japanese origin and symbol of their knightly lore, but taking root in the richness of American soil, enhancing with beauty in their season the Washington, Lincoln, and Jefferson Memorials."

It's not a perfect metaphor, but you can be Ironside Lake's cherry tree. You don't really belong, but you've been planted there for now, and this is your chance to bloom.

You can, and you will. I know it.

All that said . . . come back soon, if you can. I'm going to miss you.

Your friend,
Peter

EVIDENCE FOR THE PROSECUTION

FROM LIEUTENANT WALTER ROSS, COMMANDER OF POW CAMP
OWATONNA, TO MAJOR J. E. DAVIES

February 11, 1944

Major Davies,

I was pleased to receive your letter, having heard of you through your work in this war and the last. I share your interest in radio, though I never advanced past tinkering with a Philmore Crystal Radio set in my youth to actual cryptography. I hope the following information proves useful.

This post has been an unusual one, but for the most part, the prisoners are well behaved, expressing their requests through their spokesman and working hard enough to please their employers. Many even attend church services on Sundays.

There has only been one incident of note. Last September, three of our prisoners dug under the fence after the Saturday night bed check, knowing there would be no such check on Sunday. Two were captured nearly immediately. The third returned on his own the next day, in civilian clothes . . . after having attended the county fair, of all things. His list of “criminal activities” was as follows: buying a sandwich, playing a carnival game, and riding the Ferris wheel. Clearly no significant espionage or sabotage occurred.

However, this incident proved how simple it would be for prisoners, if inclined, to evade confinement. The trouble, as I’m sure you’re aware, is that, under the Geneva Convention, it isn’t technically a crime for prisoners to escape. It’s a mad world we live in. A guard can shoot a

POW on sight if he's seen crawling under the fence and refuses to halt . . . but if that same POW escapes and is returned days later, the maximum legal penalty is a few weeks of solitary confinement.

We simply don't have the manpower or the resources to turn the camp into a true prison. The New Ulm camp has also reported incidents of German-sympathizing individuals assisting the POWs in breaking camp regulations and even conspiring to let them outside of the camp at night for meals or entertainment.

Among this group, young women are most likely to bring you trouble. The prisoners will work alongside these women, whose natural compassion, and perhaps also the need for adventure and a lack of available American young men, will cause them to begin secret assignments with the prisoners. There have been a number of reports of such women helping the men steal away from the fields and even, on occasion, the camp itself. All of this to further their romances.

We are used to treating men as the enemies, Major. But I cannot overemphasize that, in this case, your greatest foes may be the most unlikely among you.

I wish you all the best in your new position. Please don't hesitate to write again if you need any further advice.

Lieutenant Walter Ross