

'They put you on the broomstick. Then things happen.' When Szymon tried to interrogate him, he diverted the questions: 'Two things to remember, young man. Save your physical energy. Protect your psychological strength.'

'How?'

'Never fight back. Let them do what they will. Never get angry. There will be a day of retribution. And a third rule, a very good one. Scream like hell when they beat you. It makes them feel superior.'

'What is the broomstick?' Apparently it was too horrible to be discussed, for the man merely said: 'You can survive, believe me, you can survive if you will husband your physical and psychological strength. Indulge in no excesses, not even hatred.'

'I interrogated escapees . . . before they caught me. But don't you tell anybody anything . . . not even me. And it's known that I was head of the Lublin committee for two years. Tell no one who you are or why. Stay quiet and conserve your energies.'

Before noon Bukowski learned what the broomstick was. He was taken from his cell, thrashed by two guards, who kicked and mauled him as they dragged him along, and delivered to a larger cell with lights. It contained four men, Gestapo he supposed, and two chairs with high, wide backs, facing outward one from the other. There was also a broomstick, a rather long length of some heavy wood like oak or ash, and with obvious delight one of the men brought this to where Szymon was standing, or rather, had been standing, for a savage blow to the back of his neck knocked him to the floor.

Adeptly, one of the men grabbed his feet and doubled his knees backward, whereupon his ankles were strapped together while the broomstick was passed under his knees. His body was then thrust brutally forward so that his elbows could be passed under the stick, and his wrists were lashed tightly and secured and forced back close to his chest. He thus formed a compact bundle, tightly compressed and twisted around the broomstick, whose ends the four men placed on the upper rims of the chair backs. Two men sat spread-legged on the chairs, holding the backs erect, and now Szymon was rolled back and forth as the four men rained blows upon him.

No one spoke, but from time to time one of the men sitting on the chairs would leap up, whereupon the weight of Szymon's bundled body would cause that chair to topple over; this meant that he would crash to the floor from a height high enough to terrify and bruise him horribly, but not high enough to kill him outright. Then he would be kicked numerous times, abused for being clumsy, and hoisted back onto the chairs. Again and again one of the men would jump up, sending him crashing to the floor. Once they placed him at the extreme end of the chair backs and started