Outs from D1

185pp

STORM ISLAND

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A spy story set in World War Two

105,000 words

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PART ONE

1

It was the coldest winter for forty-five years. Villages in the English countryside were cut off by the snow, and the Thames froze over. One day in January the Glasgow-London train arrived at Euston twenty-four hours late. The snow and the blackout combined to make motoring perilous: ~~the~~ road accidents doubled, and people told each other jokes about how it was more risky to drive an Austin Seven along Piccadilly at night than to drive a tank across the Siegfried Line.

Then, when the spring came, it was glorious. Barrage balloons floated majestically in bright blue skies, and soldiers on leave flirted with girls in sleeveless dresses on the streets of London.

The city did not look like the capital of a nation at war. Cycling from Waterloo Station toward Highgate, Henry Faber noted the signs: piles of sandbags outside important public buildings, Anderson shelters in suburban gardens, propaganda posters about evacuation and Air Raid Precautions. Faber watched such things - he was unusually observant, for a railway clerk. He saw crowds of children in the parks, and concluded that evacuation had been a failure. He marked the number of motor cars on the road, despite petrol rationing; and he read about the new models announced by the motor manufacturers. He knew the significance of night-shift workers pouring into factories where, only months previously, there had been hardly enough work for the day shift. Most of all he monitored the movement of troops around Britain's railway network: all the paperwork passed through his office. One could learn a lot from that paperwork. Today, for example, he had rubber-stamped a batch of forms which led him to believe that a new Expeditionary Force was being gathered. He was fairly sure that it would have a complement of about 100,000 men, and that it was for Finland.

Still, there was something jokey about it all. There was community singing

in the air-raid shelters, radio programmes satirised the red tape of wartime regulations, and fashionable women carried their gas masks in coutourier-designed containers. They talked about the Bore War. It was at once larger-than-life and trivial, like a moving-picture show. All the air-raid warnings, without exception, had been false alarms.

Faber had a different point of view - but then, he was a different kind of person.

He steered his cycle into Archway Road and leaned forward a little to take the uphill slope, his long legs pumping as regularly as the pistons of a railway engine. He was very fit for his age, which was thirty-nine, although he lied about it, of course: he lied about everything - he believed it was safer that way. ~~Keeping his coat on regardless of the weather was another habit, and~~ He began to perspire as he climbed the hill into Highgate.

The house where he lived was one of the highest in London, which was why he lived there. It was at one end of a Victorian brick terrace: all the houses had three storeys and a basement with a servants' entrance - the English middle class of the nineteenth century liked a servants' entrance, even if they had no servants. Faber was a cynic about the English.

The house had been owned by Mr Harold Garden, of Garden's Tea and Coffee, a small company which went broke in the Slump. Garden died soon afterwards, and the house was all he bequeathed to his widow, who was then obliged to take in lodgers. She enjoyed it, although etiquette demanded she pretend otherwise. Faber had a room at the top of the house. He lived there from Monday to Friday, and he told Mrs Garden that he spent weekends with his mother in Erith. He had another landlady in Blackheath who thought he was a commercial traveller and spent all week on the road.

He wheeled his cycle up the garden path and put it in the shed, padlocking it to the lawn-mower - it was against the law to leave a vehicle unlocked. The seed potatoes in boxes all around the shed were sprouting. Mrs Garden had turned her flower beds over to vegetables for the war effort.

Faber entered the house, hung his hat on the hall-stand, washed his hands and went in to tea.

Three of the other lodgers were already sitting down: a pimply boy from Yorkshire who was trying to get into the Army; a confectionery salesman with receding sandy hair; and a retired naval officer who Faber was convinced was a degenerate.

Faber nodded to them and sat down. The salesman was telling a joke. "So the Squadron-Leader says, 'You're back early!' so the pilot says, 'Yes, I dropped my leaflets in bundles, wasn't that right?' so the Squadron-Leader says, 'Good God! You might've hurt somebody!'" The naval officer cackled and Faber smiled.

Mrs Garden came in with a teapot. "Good evening, Mr Faber. We started without you - I hope you don't mind." She poured tea.

Faber spread margarine thinly on a slice of wholemeal bread, and momentarily yearned for sausages. "Your seed potatoes are ready to plant," he told her.

The naval officer spoke. "I was just saying, Faber - good job they got rid of that Belisha fellow. Man's a damned socialist!" He glanced at Mrs Garden. "Pardon my French, Mrs G."

"At least he had some go in him," she said. She was a blowsy woman, a little overweight. She was about Faber's age, but her clothes were those of a woman of thirty: he guessed she wanted another husband. She said: "What do you think, Mr Faber?"

"At least he was an energetic Minister of War," Faber said.

"It's Chamberlain they should sack," said the boy. "Put Churchill in, I say."

They all looked at him in surprise. The naval officer said: "It's not like you to speak when you could be using your mouth for eating, lad."

Mrs Garden turned on the radio, and it hummed. The salesman said: "A customer was telling me today, they're building planes like nobody's business. His son joined the RAF and he's already flying. Training on bombers."

"Shouldn't repeat that sort of thing," the naval officer said. "Careless talk costs lives. You never know - young Faber here could be a fifth columnist!"

"Oh, Commander," Mrs Garden giggled. "Don't be silly."

The radio said: "This is the BBC Home Service. It's that man again!"

Faber had heard the programme. It regularly featured a German spy called Funf. Faber excused himself and went up to his room.

Mrs Garden was left alone after It's That Man Again: the naval officer and the salesman went to the pub and the boy from Yorkshire, who was religious, went to a prayer meeting. She sat in the parlour with a large bottle of gin and a small bottle of tonic water, looking at the blackout curtains and thinking about Mr Faber. She wished he wouldn't spend so much time in his room. She needed company, and he was the kind of company she needed.

Such thoughts made her feel guilty. To assuage the guilt she indulged in memories of Mr Garden. The memories were familiar but blurred, like an old print of a movie with worn sprocket-holes and an indistinct soundtrack; so that, although she could easily remember what it was like to have him here in the room with her, it was difficult to imagine his face, or the clothes he might be wearing, or the comment he would make on the day's war news. He had been a small, dapper man, successful in business when he was lucky and unsuccessful when he was not, undemonstrative in public and insatiably affectionate in bed. She had loved him a lot. There would be many women in her position if this war ever got going. She poured another drink.

Mr Faber was a quiet one - that was the trouble. He didn't seem to have any vices. He didn't smoke, she had never smelled drink on his breath, and he spent every evening in his room, listening to classical music on his radio. He read a lot of newspapers and went for walks on summer evenings. She suspected he was quite clever, despite his humble job: his contributions to the conversation in the dining-room were always a shade more thoughtful than anyone else's.

He surely could get a better job if he tried. He seemed not to give himself the chance he deserved.

It was the same with his appearance. He was a fine figure of a man: tall, quite heavy around the neck and shoulders, not a bit fat, with long legs. And he had a strong face, with a bigh forehead and a long jaw and bright blue eyes; not pretty, like a film star, but the kind of face that appealed to a woman. Except for the mouth - that was small and thin, and she could imagine him being cruel. Mr Garden had been incapable of cruelty.

And yet at first sight he was the kind of man a woman wouldn't look at twice. The trousers of his worn old suit were never pressed - she would have done that for him, but he never asked - and he always wore a shabby raincoat and a flat cap, like the dockers wore. He had no moustache and he bad his hair cut short and trimmed every fortnight. It was as if he wanted to look like a nonentity.

He needed a woman, there was no doubt of that. She wondered for a moment whether he might be what people called effeminate, but she dismissed the idea quickly. He needed a wife to smarten him up and give him ambition. She needed a man to keep her company and for - well, love.

Yet he had never made a move. Sometimes she could scream with frustration. She was sure she was attractive. She looked in a mirror as she poured another drink. She had a nice face, and fair curly hair, and there was something for a man to get hold of - she giggled at that thought. She was getting tiddly.

She sat down, drank some more gin, and decided that she would have to make the first move. Mr Faber was obviously shy - chronically shy. He <u>wasn't</u> sexless - she could tell by the way he looked when be saw her in her nightdress, which had happened twice. She would overcome his shyness by being brazen. What did she have to lose? She tried to imagine the worst, just to see what it felt like. Suppose he rejected her. Well, it would be embarrassing - even humiliating. It would be a blow to her pride. But nobody other than the two of them need ever know it had happened. He might leave, and find digs elsewhere.

What if he stayed on, taunting her daily by his presence? No, he was not that kind. Besides, she could always throw him out.

But thinking about rejection had put her off the idea. She got up, slowly, thinking: I'm just not the brazen type. It was bedtime. If she had one more gin in bed she would be able to sleep. She took the bottle upstairs.

Her bedroom was below Mr Faber's, and she could hear violin music from his radio as she undressed. She put on a new nightdress - pink, with an embroidered neckline, and no one to see it! - and made her last drink. She wondered what Mr Faber looked like undressed. He would have a flat stomach, and hairs on his nipples, and you would be able to see his ribs, because he was slim. He probably had a small bottom. She giggled again, thinking: I'm a disgrace.

She took her drink to bed and picked up her book, but it was too much effort to focus her eyes on the print. Besides, she was getting bored with vicarious romance. Stories about dangerous love affairs were fine when you yourself had a perfectly safe love affair with your husband; but a woman needed more than Barbara Cartland. She sipped her gin, and wished Mr Faber would turn the radio off. It was like trying to sleep at a tea-dance!

She could, of course, ask him to turn it off. She looked at her bedside clock: it was past ten. She could put on her dressing-gown, which matched the nightdress, and just comb her hair a little, then step into her slippers - quite dainty, with a pattern of roses - and just pop up the stairs to the next landing, and just, well, tap on his door. He would open it, perhaps just wearing his trousers and singlet, and then he would <u>look</u> at her the way he <u>looked</u> when he saw her in her nightdress on the way to the bathroom ...

"Silly old fool," she said to herself aloud. "You're just making excuses for going up there."

And then she began to wonder why she needed excuses. She was a grown-up, and a widow, and it was her house, and in ten years she had not met another man who was just right for her, and what the <u>hell</u>, she needed to feel someone strong and hard and hairy on top of her, squeezing her breasts and panting in her ear

and parting her thighs with his broad flat hands, and tomorrow the gas bombs might come over from Germany and they would all die choking and gasping and poisoned and she would have lost her last chance.

So she drained her glass, and got out of bed, and put on her dressing-gown, and just combed her hair a little, and stepped into her slippers, and picked up her bunch of keys in case he had locked his door and couldn't hear her knock above the sound of his radio.

She paused for a moment at her door, wondering what she would say if she passed the Commander on the landing. She thought: I'm drunk enough to pinch his bottom; and she imagined the look of surprise on his face, and she giggled and went out.

There was nobody on the landing. She found the stairs in the darkness. She intended to step over the stair that creaked, but she stumbled on the loose carpet and trod on it heavily, but it seemed that nobody heared, so she went on up and tapped on the door at the top. She tried it gently. It was locked.

The radio was turned down, and Faber said: "Yes?"

He was well-spoken: not cockney, or foreign - not anything really, just a pleasantly neutral voice.

She said: "Can I have a word with you?"

He seemed to hesitate, then he said: "I'm undressed."

"So am I," she giggled, and she opened the door with her duplicate key.

She stepped inside and shut the door behind her. He was standing in front of the radio, wearing his trousers and <u>no</u> singlet. His face was white and he looked scared to death.

She did not know what to say, then she remembered a line from an American film, and said: "Would you buy a lonely girl a drink?" It was silly really, because she knew he had no drink in his room, and it wasn't as if she was dressed to go out, but it sounded vampish.

It seemed to have the desired effect. Without speaking, he came slowly toward her. He <u>did</u> have hair on his nipples. She took a step forward, and then

his arms went around her, and she closed her eyes and turned her face upward, and he kissed her, and she moved slightly in his arms, and then there was a terrible, awful, unbearable sharp pain in her back and she opened her mouth to scream.

Because she moved slightly, Faber missed her heart with the first jab of the stiletto, and he had to thrust his fingers down her throat to stop her crying out. He jabbed again, but she moved again and the blade struck a rib and merely slashed her superficially. Then the blood was spurting and he knew it would not be a clean kill, it never was when you missed with the first stroke.

She was wriggling too much to be killed with a jab now. Keeping his fingers in her mouth, he gripped her jaw with his thumb and pushed her back against the door. Her head hit the woodwork with a bang, and he wished he had not turned the radio down, but how could he have expected this?

He hesitated before killing her, because it would be much better if she died on the bed - much better for his plan - but he could not be sure of getting her that far silently. He tightened his hold on her jaw, kept her head still by jamming it against the door, and brought the stiletto around in a wide slashing arc that ripped away most of her throat, for the stiletto was not a slashing knife and the throat was not Faber's favoured target.

He jumped back to avoid the first horrible gush of blood, then stepped forward again to catch her before she hit the floor. He dragged her to the bed, trying not to look at her neck, and laid her down.

He had killed before, so he knew the reaction was coming. He went over to the sink in the corner of the room and waited for it. He could see his face in the tiny shaving mirror. He was white, and his eyes were staring. He looked at himself and thought: killer. Then he threw up.

When that was over he felt better. He could go to work now. He knew what he had to do: it had come to him in the few seconds during which Mrs Garden had been unlocking the door.

He washed his face, brushed his teeth, and cleaned the washbasin. Then

he sat down at the table beside his radio. He looked at his notebook, found his place, and began tapping the key.

It was a long message, about the mustering of an army for Finland, and he had been half way through when he was interrupted. It was written down in cipher on the pad. He signed off with: "Regards to Willi."

The transmitter packed away neatly into a suitcase, along with the ordinary English receiving set which disguised it when not in use. Faber put the rest of his possessions into a second suitcase.

He took off his trousers and sponged the bloodstains, then washed himself all over.

At last he looked at the corpse.

He was able to be cold about her now. It was wartime; they were enemies; if he had not killed her, she would have caused his death. She had been a threat, and all he felt was relief that the threat had been disposed of. She should not have frightened him.

Nevertheless, his last task was distasteful. He opened her robe and lifted her nightdress, pulling it up around her waist. She was wearing knickers. He tore them, so that the hair of her pubis was visible. Poor woman: she had only wanted to seduce him. But he could not have got her out of the room without her seeing the transmitter; and the British propaganda had made these people alert for spies – ridiculously so: if the Abwehr had as many agents as the newspapers made out the British would have lost the war already.

He stepped back and looked at her with his head on one side. There was something wrong. He tried to think like a sex maniac. If I were crazed with lust over a woman like Una Garden, and I killed her just so that I could have my way with her, what would I then do?

Of course: that kind of lunatic would want to look at her breasts. Faber leaned over the body, gripped the neckline of the nightdress, and ripped it to her waist. Her large breasts sagged sideways.

The police doctor would soon discover that she had not been raped, but

Faber did not think that mattered. He had taken a criminology course at Heidelberg, and he knew that many sexual assaults were not consummated. Besides, he could not have carried the deception that far, not even for the Fatherland. He was not in the SS. Some of those would queue up to rape the corpse ... He put the thought out of his mind.

He washed his hands again and got dressed. It was almost midnight. He would wait an hour before leaving: it would be safer later.

He sat down to think about how he had gone wrong.

There was no question that he had made a mistake. If his cover were perfect, he would be totally secure. If he were totally secure no one could discover his secret. Mrs Garden had discovered his secret - or rather, she would have if she had lived a few seconds longer - therefore he had not been totally secure, therefore his cover was not perfect, therefore he had made a mistake.

He should have put a bolt on the door. Better to be thought chronically shy than to have landladies with duplicate keys sneaking in at night in their bedwear.

That was the surface error. The deep flaw was that he was too eligible to be a bachelor. He thought this with irritation, not conceit. He knew that he was a pleasant, attractive man, and that there was no apparent reason why he should be single. He turned his mind to thinking up a cover that would explain this without inviting advances from the Una Gardens of this world.

He ought to be able to find inspiration in his real personality. Why <u>was</u> he single? He stirred uneasily: he did not like looking in mirrors. The answer was simple. He was single because of his profession. If there were deeper reasons, he did not want to know them.

He would have to spend tonight in the open. Highgate Wood would do. In the morning he would take his suitcases to a railway station, then tomorrow evening he would go to his room in Blackheath.

He would have to set up a new identity now - he always kept two. He needed a new job, fresh papers - passport, identity card, ration book, birth

certificate. It was all so risky. Damn Una Garden. Why couldn't she have drunk herself asleep as usual?

He had little fear of being caught by the police. The commercial traveller who occupied the room at Blackheath on weekends looked rather different from the railway clerk who had killed his landlady. The Blackheath persona was expansive, vulgar, and flashy. He wore loud ties, bought rounds of drinks, and combed his hair differently. The police would circulate a description of a shabby little pervert who would not say boo to a goose until he was inflamed with lust, and no one would look twice at the handsome salesman in the striped suit, who was obviously the type that was more or less permanently inflamed with lust and did not have to kill women to get them to show him their breasts.

It was one o'clock. Faber took a last look around the room. He was not concerned about leaving clues - his fingerprints were obviously all over the house, and there would be no doubt in anybody's mind about who had killed Mrs Garden. Nor did he feel any sentiment about leaving the place that had been his home for several years: he had never thought of it as home. He had never thought of anywhere as home.

He would always think of this as the place where he had learned to put a bolt on a door.

He turned out the light, picked up his suitcases, and crept down the stairs and out of the front door into the night.

2

Henry II was a remarkable king. In an age when the term "flying visit" had not yet been coined, he flitted between England and France with such rapidity that he was credited with magical powers; a rumour which, understandably, he did nothing to quash. Peter of Blois says he could ride four or five times as far in a day as anyone else. He once rode 140 miles, from Rouen to Dol, in two days and a night. In 1173 - either the June or the September, depending upon

which secondary source one favours - he arrived in England and left for France again so quickly that no contemporary writer ever found out about it. Later historians discovered the record of his expenditure in the Pipe Rolls. At the time his kingdom was under attack by his sons at its north and south extremes - the Scottish border and the South of France. But what, precisely, was the purpose of his visit? Whom did he see? Why was it secret, when the myth of his magical speed was worth an army? What did he accomplish?

This was the problem that taxed Percival Godliman in the summer of 1940, when Hitler's armies swept across the French corn fields like a scythe, and the British poured out of the Dunkirk bottleneck in bloody disarray.

At 12.30 on a splendid June day in London, a secretary found Professor Godliman hunched over an illuminated manuscript, laboriously translating its medieval Latin, making notes in his even less legible handwriting. The secretary, who was planning to eat her lunch in the garden of Gordon Square, did not like the manuscript room because it smelled dead. You needed so many keys to get in there, it might as well have been a tomb. Very little light got through the narrow windows high in the walls, and some of the books were chained to the floor. Godliman's face was bleakly lit by a spotlight above the desk, and he stood on one leg like a bird: he might have been the ghost of the monk who wrote the book, standing a cold vigil over his precious chronicle.

She cleared her throat and waited for him to notice her. He was a short man in his fifties, with round shoulders and weak eyesight. He wore a tweed suit. He could be perfectly sensible, once you dragged him out of the Middle Ages. She coughed again and said: "Professor Godliman?"

He looked up, and when he saw her he smiled, and then he did not look like a ghost, more like someone's dotty father. "Hello!" he said, in the tone of one who meets his next-door-neighbour quite by chance in the middle of the Sahara.

"You asked me to remind you that you have lunch at the Savoy with Colonel Terry."

"Oh, yes." He took his watch out of his waistcoat pocket and peered at it.

"If I'm going to walk it, I'd better leave now."

She nodded. "I brought your gas mask."

"You are thoughtful!" He smiled again, and she decided he looked quite nice. He took his gas mask.

"Do I need my coat?"

"You didn't wear one this morning. It's quite warm. Shall I lock up after you?"

"Thankyou, thankyou." He jammed his notebook into his jacket pocket and went out.

The secretary looked around, shivered, and followed him.

Andrew Terry was a red-faced Scot, pauper-thin from a lifetime of heavy smoking, with sparse dark-blond hair ~~heavily~~ thickly brilliantined. Godliman found him at a corner table in the Savoy Grill, wearing civilian clothes. There were three cigarette stubs in the ashtray. He stood up to shake hands.

Godliman said: "Morning, Uncle Andrew." Terry was his mother's baby brother.

"How are you, Percy?"

"I'm writing a book on the Plantaganets." Godliman sat down.

"Are your manuscripts still in London? I'm surprised."

"Why?"

Terry lit another cigarette. "Move them to the country in case of bombing."

"Should I?"

"Half the National Gallery has been shoved into a bloody big hole in the ground, up in Wales somewhere. Young Kenneth Clark is quicker off the mark than you. Might be sensible to take yourself off out of it too, while you're about it. I don't suppose you've many students left."

"That's true." Godliman took a menu from a waiter and said: "I don't want a drink."

Terry did not look at his menum. "Seriously, Percy, why are you still in Town?"

Godliman's eyes seemed to clear, like the image on a screen when the projector is focussed, as if he had been forced to think for the first time during the conversation. "It's all right for children to leave, and for national institutions like Bertrand Russell. But for me – well, it's a bit like running away and letting other people fight for you. I realise that's not a strictly logical argument. It's a matter of sentiment, not logic."

Terry smiled like one who is pleased to have his expectations confirmed. But he dropped the subject and looked at the menu. After a moment he said: "Good God. 'Le Lord Woolton Pie'."

Godliman grinned. "I'm sure it's still just potatoes and vegetables."

When they had ordered, Terry said: "What do you think of our new Prime Minister?"

"The man's an ass. But then, Hitler's a fool, and look how well he's doing. You?"

"We can live with Winston. At least he's bellicose."

Godliman raised his eyebrows. "'We'? Are you back in the game?"

"I never really left it, you know."

"But you said – "

"Percy. Can't you think of a department whose staff all say they don't work for the Army?"

"Well I'm damned. All this time ... "

Their first course came, and they started a bottle of wine. Godliman ate potted salmon and looked pensive.

Eventually Terry said: "Thinking about the last lot?"

Godliman nodded. "Young days, you know. Terrible time." But his tone was wistful.

"This war isn't the same at all. My chaps don't go behind enemy lines and count bivuoacks like you did. Well, they do, but that side of things is much less

important. Nowadays we just listen to the wireless."

"Don't they broadcast in code?"

Terry shrugged. "Codes can be broken. Candidly, we get to know just about everything we need to know these days."

Godliman glanced around, but there was no one within earshot, and it was not for him to tell Terry that careless talk costs lives.

Terry went on: XXxxxx "In fact my job is to make sure they don't have the information they need about us."

They both had chicken pie to follow. There was no beef on the menux. Godliman fell silent, but Terry talked on.

"Canaris is a funny chap, you know. Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, head of the Abwehr. I met him before this lot started. Likes England. My guess is he's none too keen on Adolf. Anyway, we know he's been told to mount a major intelligence operation against us, in preparation for the invasion - but he's not doing much. We arrested their best man in England the day after war broke out. He's in Wandsworth prison now. Useless people, Canaris's spies. Old ladies in boarding-houses, mad Fascists, petty criminals - "

Godliman said: "Look here, old boy, this is too much." He was angry. "All this stuff is secret. I don't want to know!"

Terry was unperturbed. "Would you like something else?" he offered. "I'm having chocolate ice-cream."

Godliman stood up. "I don't think so. I'm going to go back to my work, if you don't mind."

Terry looked up at him coolly. "The world can wait for your reappraisal of the Plantaganets, Percy. There's a war on, dear boy. I want you to work for me."

Godliman stared at him for a long moment. "What on earth would I do?"

Terry smiled a wolfish smile. "Catch spies."

Walking back to the college, Godliman felt depressed despite the weather. He would accept Colonel Terry's offer: no doubt about that. His country was at war; it was a just war; and if he was too old to fight, he was young enough to help.

The thought of leaving his work - and for how many years? - depressed him. He loved history, and he was totally absorbed in the lives of the medieval kings he had been studying for twenty years. He liked the unravelling of mysteries; the discovery of faint clues; the resolving of contradictions; the unmasking of lies and propaganda and myth. His book would be the best on its subject written in the last hundred years, and there would not be another to equal it for another century. It had ruled his life for so long that the thought of abandoning it was almost unreal, as difficult to digest as the discovery that one is an adopted child and no relation at all to the people one has always called Mother and Father.

An air-raid warning stridently interrupted his thoughts. He contemplated ignoring it: so many people did now, and he was only ten minutes' walk from the college shelter. But he had no real reason to return to his study - he knew he would do no work today. So he hurried into a Tube station and joined the solid mass of Londoners crowding down the staircases and on to the grimy platform. He stood close to the wall, staring at a Bovril poster, and thought: But it's not just the things I'm leaving behind.

Going back into the game depressed him, too. There were some things he liked about it: the importance of <u>little</u> things, the value of simply being clever, the meticulousness. the guesswork. But he hated the blackmail and the treachery, the deceit, the desperation, and the way one always stabbed the enemy in the back.

The platform was becoming more crowded. Godliman sat down while there was still room, and found himself leaning against a man in bus-driver's uniform. The man smiled and said: "Oh to be in England, now that summer's here. Know who said that?"

"Now that April's there," Godliman corrected him. "It's Browning."

"I heard it was Adolf Hitler," the driver said. A woman next to him squealed with laughter, and he turned his attention to her. "Did you hear what the evacuee said to the farmer's wife?"

Godliman tuned out and remembered an April when he had longed for England, crouching on a high branch of a plane tree, peering through a cold mist across a French valley behind the German lines. He could see nothing but vague dark shapes, even through his telescope, and he had been about to slide down and walk a mile or so farther when three German soldiers had come from nowhere to sit around the base of the tree and smoke. After a while they took out cards and began to play, and young Percival Godliman realised they had found a way of skiving off and were here for the day. He stayed in the tree, hardly moving, until he began to shiver and his muscles knotted with cramp and his bladder felt as if it would burst. Then he took out his revolver and shot the three of them, one after another, through the tops of their close-cropped heads. And three people, laughing and cursing and gambling their pay, had ceased to exist. It was the first time he killed, and all he could think was: Just because I had to pee.

Godliman shifted on the cold concrete of the station platform and let the memory fade away. There was a warm wind from the tunnel and a train came in. The people who got off found spaces and settled to wait. Godliman listened to the voices.

"Did you hear Churchill on the wireless? We was listening in the Duke of Wellington. Old Jack Thornton cried. Silly old bugger ... "

"From what I can gather Kathy's boy's in a stately home and got his own footman! My Alfie milks the cow ... "

"Haven't had fillet steak on the menu for so long I've forgotten the bally taste ... wine committee saw the war coming and bought in twenty thousand dozen, thank God ... "

"We got married - well, what's the point in waiting when you don't know what the next day's going to bring?"

"They call it Spring, Ma, he says to me, and they have one down here every year ... "

"She's pregnant again, you know ... yes, thirteen years since the last ... I thought I'd found out what was causing it!"

"No, Peter never came back from Dunkirk ... "

The bus driver offered him a cigarette. Godliman refused, and took out his pipe. Someone started to sing.

A blackout warden passing yelled
"Ma, pull down that blind -
Just look at what you're showing," and we
Shouted "Never mind." Oh!
Knees up Mother Brown ...

The song spread through the crowd until everyone was singing. Godliman joined in, knowing that this was a nation losing a war and singing to hide its fear, as a man will whistle past the graveyard at night; knowing that the sudden affection he felt for London and Londoners was an ephemeral sentiment, akin to mob hysteria; mistrusting the voice inside him which said "This, this is what the war is about, this is what makes it worth fighting,"; knowing but not caring, because for the first time in so many years he was feeling the sheer physical thrill of comradeship and he liked it.

When the all-clear sounded they went singing up the staircases and into the street, and Godliman found a phone box and called Colonel Terry to ask how soon he could start.

3

The small country church was old and very beautiful. A drystone wall enclosed a graveyard where wild flowers grew. The church itself had been there - well, bits of it had - the last time Britain was invaded, almost a millenium ago. The north wall of the nave, several feet thick and pierced with only two tiny

windows, could remember that last invasion; it had been built when churches were places of physical as well as spiritual sanctuary, and the little round-headed windows were better for shooting arrows out of than for letting the Lord's sunshine in. Indeed, the Local Defence Volunteers had detailed plans for using the church if and when the current bunch of European thugs crossed the Channel.

But no jackboots sounded in the tiled choir in this August of 1940; not yet. The sun glowed through stained-glass windows which had survived Cromwell's iconoclasts and Henry VIII's greed, and the roof resounded to the notes of an organ which had yet to yield to woodworm and dry rot.

It was a lovely wedding. Lucy wore white, of course; and her five sisters were bridesmaids in apricot dresses. David wore the Mess uniform of a Flying Officer in the Royal Air Force, all crisp and new for it was the first time he had put it on. They sang Psalm 23, The Lord's my Shepherd, to the tune Crimond.

Lucy's father looked proud, as a man will on the day his eldest and most beautiful daughter marries a fine boy in a uniform. He was a farmer, but it was a long time since he had sat on a tractor: he rented out his arable land and used the rest to raise racehorses, although this winter of course his pasture would go under the plough and potatoes would be planted. Although he was really more gentleman than farmer, he nevertheless had the open-air skin, the deep chest, and the big stubby hands of agricultural people. Most of the men on that side of the church bore him a resemblance: barrel-chested men, with weathered red faces, those not in tail coats favouring tweed suits and stout shoes.

The bridesmaids had something of that look, too; they were country girls. But the bride was like her mother. Her hair was a dark, dark red, long and thick and shining and glorious, and she had wide-apart amber eyes and an oval face; and when she looked at the vicar with that clear, direct gaze and said "I do" in that firm, clear voice, the vicar was startled and thought "By God she means it!" which was an odd thought for a vicar to have in the middle of a wedding.

The family on the other side of the church had a certain look about them,

too. David's father was a lawyer: his permanent frown was a professional affectation, and concealed a sunny nature. (He had been a Major in the Army in the last war, and thought all this business about the RAF and war in the air was a fad which would soon pass.) But nobody looked like him, not even his son who stood now at the altar promising to love his wife until death, which might not be all that long, God forbid. No, they all looked like David's mother, who sat beside her husband now, with almost-black hair and dark skin and long, slender limbs. They looked as if their ancestors might have come from a country where oranges grow in dusty groves behind cactus hedges and peasant women in black robes tread grapes for wine; except that in that country they would have been a good foot taller than the national average.

David was the tallest of the lot. He had broken high-jump records last year at Cambridge University. He was rather too good-looking for a man - his face would have been feminine were it not for the dark, ineradicable shadow of a heavy beard. He shaved twice a day. He had long eyelashes, and he looked intelligent - which he was - and sensitive, which he was not.

The whole thing was idyllic: two happy, handsome people, children of solid, comfortably-off, backbone-of-England-type families, getting married in a country church in the finest summer weather Britain can offer.

When they were pronounced man and wife both the mothers were dry-eyed, but both the fathers cried.

Kissing the bride was a barbarous custom, Lucy thought as yet another middle-aged pair of champagne-wet lips smeared her cheek. It was probably descended from even more barbarous customs in the Dark Ages, when every man in the tribe was allowed to - well, anyway, it was time we got properly civilised and dropped the whole business.

She had known she would not like this part of the wedding. She liked champagne, but she was not crazy about chicken drumsticks or dollops of caviar on squares of cold toast, and as for the speeches and the photographs and the

honeymoon jokes, well ... But it could have been worse. If she had got married in peacetime Father would have hired the Albert Hall.

So far nine people had said "May all your troubles be little ones" and one person, with scarcely more originality, had said "I want to see more than a fence running around your garden." Lucy had shaken countless hands and pretended not to overhear remarks like "I wouldn't mind being in David's pyjamas tonight." David had made a speech in which he thanked Lucy's parents for giving him their daughter, as if she were an inanimate object to be gift-wrapped in white satin and presented to the most deserving applicant. Lucy's father had been crass enough to say that he was not losing a daughter but gaining a son. It was all hopelessly gaga, but one did it for one's parents.

A distant uncle loomed up from the direction of the bar, swaying slightly, and Lucy repressed a shudder. She introduced him to her husband. "David, this is Uncle Norman."

Uncle Norman pumped David's bony hand. "Well, m'boy, when do you take up your commission?"

"Tomorrow, sir."

"What, no honeymoon?"

"Just twenty-four hours."

"But you've only just finished your training, so I gather."

"Yes, but I could fly before, you know. I learned at college. Besides, with all this going on they can't spare pilots. I expect I shall be in the air tomorrow."

Lucy said quietly: "David, don't," but she was ignored.

"What'll you fly?" Uncle Norman asked with schoolboy enthusiasm. "Hurricane?"

"Spitfire. I saw her yesterday. She's a lovely kite." David had consciously adopted all the RAF slang, kites and crates and the drink and bandits at two o'clock. "She's got eight guns, she does three hundred and fifty knots, and she'll turn around in a shoe box."

"Marvellous, marvellous. You boys are certainly knocking the stuffing

out of the Luftwaffe, what?"

"We got sixty yesterday for eleven of our own," David said, as proudly as if he had shot them all down himself. "The day before, when they had a go at Yorkshire, we sent the bally lot back to Norway with their tails between their legs - and we didn't lose a single kite!"

Uncle Norman gripped David's shoulder with tipsy fervour. "Never," he quoted pompously, "was so much owed by so many to so few. Churchill said that the other day."

David tried a modest grin. "He must have been talking about the mess bills."

Lucy hated the way they trivialised bloodshed and destruction. She said: "David, we should go and change now."

They went in separate cars to Lucy's home. Her mother helped her out of the wedding dress and said: "Now, my dear, I don't quite know what you're expecting tonight, but you ought to know - "

"Oh, Mother, don't be embarrassing," Lucy interrupted. "You're about ten years too late to tell me the facts of life. This is 1940, you know!"

Her mother coloured slightly. "Very well, dear," she said mildly. "But if there is anything you want to talk about, later on ... "

It occurred to Lucy that to say things like this cost her mother considerable effort; and she regretted her sharp reply. "Thankyou," she said. "I will."

"I'll leave you to it, then. Call me if you want anything." She went out.

Lucy sat at the dressing-table in her slip and began to brush her hair. She knew exactly what to expect tonight. She felt a faint glow of pleasure as she remembered.

It was a well-planned seduction, although at the time it did not occur to Lucy that David might have plotted every move beforehand.

It happened in June, a year after they had met at the Glad Rag Ball.

They had been meeting every week lately, and David had spent part of the Easter vacation with Lucy's people. In June she went to his family home for a weekend. The place was a Victorian copy of an eighteenth-century grange, a square-shaped house with nine bedrooms and a terrace with a vista. What impressed Lucy about it was the realisation that the people who planted the garden must have known they would be long dead before it reached maturity. The atmosphere was very easy, and the two of them drank beer on the terrace in the afternoon sunshine. That was when David told her that he had been accepted for officer training in the RAF, along with four pals from the university flying club. He wanted to be a fighter pilot.

"I can fly all right," he said, "and they'll need people once this war gets going - they say it'll be won or lost in the air, this time."

"Aren't you afraid?" she said quietly.

"I'd be a liar if I denied it."

She thought he was very brave, and touched his hand. A little later they put on swimming costumes and went down to the lake.

The water was clear and cool, but the sun was still strong and the air was warm. They splashed about gleefully, as if they knew this was the end of their childhood.

"Are you a good swimmer?" he asked her.

"Better than you!"

"All right. Race you to the island."

She shaded her eyes to look into the sun. She held the pose for a minute, pretending she didn't know how desirable she was in her wet swimsuit with her arms raised and her shoulders back. The island was a small patch of bushes and trees about three hundred yards away, in the centre of the lake.

She dropped her hands, shouted "Go!", and struck out in a fast crawl.

David won, of course, with his enormously long arms and legs. Lucy found herself in difficulty when she was still fifty yards from the island. She switched to breaststroke, but she was too exhausted even for that, and she had

to float. David, who was already sitting on the bank blowing like a walrus, slipped back into the water and swam to meet her. He turned her away from him and held her beneath her arms, in the correct lifesaving position, and pulled her slowly to shore. His hands were just below her breasts.

He said: "I'm enjoying this," and she giggled despite her breathlessness.

A few moments later he said: "I suppose I might as well tell you."

"What?" she panted.

"The lake is only four feet deep."

"You rogue!" She wriggled out of his arms, spluttering and laughing, and found her footing.

He took her hand and led her out of the water and through the trees. He pointed to an old wooden rowing-boat, rotting upside-down beneath a hawthorn. "When I was a boy I used to row out here in that with one of Papa's pipes, a box of matches, and a pinch of St Bruno in a twist of paper. This is where I used to smoke it."

They were in a clearing, completely surrounded by bushes. The turf underfoot was clean and springy. Lucy flopped on the ground.

"We'll swim back slowly," David said.

"Let's not even talk about it just yet," she replied.

He sat beside her and kissed her, then pushed her gently backwards until she was lying down. He stroked her hip and kissed her throat, and soon she stopped shivering. When he laid his hand gently, nervously, on the soft mound between her legs, she arched upwards, willing him to press harder. She pulled his face to hers and kissed him open-mouthed and wetly. His hands went to the straps of her swimsuit, and he pulled them down over her shoulders. She said: "No."

He buried his face between her breasts. "Lucy, please."

"No."

He looked at her. "There's a war on. It may be my last chance."

She rolled away from him and stood up. Then, because of the war, and

because of the pleading look on his flushed young face, and because of the glow inside her which would not go away, she took off her costume with one swift movement, and removed her swimming-cap so that her dark red hair shook out over her shoulders, and knelt in front of him, taking his face in her hands and guiding his lips to her breast.

She lost her virginity painlessly, enthusiastically, and only a little too quickly.

The spice of guilt made the memory more pleasant, not less. If it had been a well-planned seduction, she had been a willing, not to say eager, victim, especially at the end.

She began to dress in her going-away outfit. She had startled him a couple of times, that afternoon on the island: once when she wanted him to kiss her breasts, and again when she had guided him inside her with her hands. Apparently such things did not happen in the books he read. [illegible] Like most of her friends, Lucy read D.H.Lawrence for information about sex. She believed in his choreography and mistrusted the noises-off: the things his characters did to one another sounded nice, but not that nice; she was not expecting trumpets and thunderstorms and the clash of cymbals at her sexual awakening.

They had done it only once since the first time. Exactly a week before their wedding they had made love again, and it caused their first row.

This time it was at her parents' house, in the morning after everyone else had left. He came to her bedroom in his dressing-gown and got into bed with her. She almost changed her mind about Lawrence's trumpets and cymbals. He got out of bed immediately afterwards.

"Don't go," she said.

"Somebody might come in."

"I'll chance it. Come back to bed." She was warm and drwsy and comfotable, and she wanted him beside her.

He put on his dressing-gown. "It makes me nervous."

"You weren't nervous five minutes ago." She reached for him. "Lie with me. I want to get to know your body."

"My God, you're brazen."

She looked at him to see whether he was joking, and when she realised he was not, she became angry. "Just what the hell does that mean?"

"You're just not ... ladylike!"

"What a stupid thing to say - "

"You act like a - a - tart."

She flounced out of bed, naked and furious, her lovely breasts heaving with anger. "Just how much do you know about tarts?"

"Nothing!"

"How much do you know about women?"

"I know how a virgin is supposed to behave!"

"I am ... I was ... until I met you ... " She sat on the edge of the bed and burst into tears.

That was the end of the quarrel, of course: David would not have been a normal, healthy twenty-two-year-old lad if he had been able stubbornly to remain cross with a beautiful naked woman crying on a bed. He put his arms around her and apologised and consoled her and dried her tears. But they did not go back to bed.

Lucy's friend Joanna said that couples always quarreled before the wedding, usually the night before. It was the last chance to test the strength of their love for one another. Lucy had told Joanna about the row, but she said it was about a dress David had thought to be brazen.

She was just about ready. She examined herself in a full-length mirror. Her suit was faintly military, with square shoulders and epaulettes, but the blouse ~~beneath it~~ was feminine, for balance. Her hair fell in sausage curls beneath a natty pill-box hat. It would not have been right to go away gorgeously dressed, not this year; but she felt she had achieved the kind of briskly

practical yet attractive look which was rapidly becoming fashionable.

David was waiting for her in the hall. He kissed her and said: "You look wonderful, Mrs Rose."

They were driven back to the reception to say goodbye to everyone. They were going to spend the night in London, at Claridge's; then David would drive on to Biggin Hill and Lucy would come home again. She was going to live with her parents: she had the use of a cottage for when David was on leave.

There was another half-hour of handshakes and kisses, then they went out to the car. Some of David's cousins had got at his open-top MG. There were tin cans and an old boot tied to the bumpers with string, the running-boards were awash with confetti, and "Just Married" was scrawled all over the paintwork in bright red lipstick.

They drove away, smiling and waving, the guests filling the street behind them. A mile down the road they stopped and cleaned up the car.

It was dusk when they got going again. David's headlights were fitted with blackout masks, but he drove very fast just the same. Lucy felt very happy.

David said: "There's a bottle of bubbly in the glove box."

Lucy opened the compartment and found the bottle and two glasses carefully wrapped in tissue paper. It was still quite cold. The cork came out with a loud pop and shot off into the night. David lit a cigarette while Lucy poured the wine.

"We're going to be too late for supper," he said.

"Who cares?" She handed him a glass.

She was too tired to drink, really. She became sleepy. The car seemed to be going terribly fast. She let David have most of the champagne. He began to whistle St Louis Blues.

Driving through England in the blackout was a weird experience. One missed lights which one hadn't realised were there before the war: lights in cottage porches and farmhouse windows, lights on cathedral spires and inn signs, and - most of all - the luminous glow, low in the distant sky, of the thousand lights

of a nearby town. Even if one had been able to see, there were no signposts to look at: they had been removed to confuse the German parachutists who were expected any day. (Just a few days ago in the Midlands farmers had found parachutes, radios and maps; but since there were no tracks leading away from the objects, it was concluded that this was a feeble Nazi attempt to panic the population.) However, David knew the way to London.

They climbed a long hill. The little sports car took it nimbly. Lucy gazed through half-closed eyes at the blackness ahead. The downside of the hill was steep and winding. Lucy heard the distant roar of an approaching lorry.

The MG's tyres squealed as David raced around the bends. "I think you're going too fast," Lucy said mildly.

The back of the car slid on aleft-hander. David changed down, afraid to brake in case he skidded again. On either side, the hedgerows were dimly picked out by the shaded headlights. There was a sharp right-hand bend, and David lost the back again. The curve seemed to go on and on forever. The little car slid sideways and turned through 180 degrees, so that it was going backwards; then continued to turn in the same direction.

Lucy screamed: "David!"

The moon came out suddenly, and they saw the lorry. It was struggling up the hill at a snail's pace, with thick smoke, made silvery by the moonlight, pouring from its snout-shaped bonnet. Lucy glimpsed the driver's face, even his cloth cap and his moutache; his mouth was open in terror as he stood on his brakes.

The car was travelling forwards again now. There was room to pass the lorry if David could regain control of the car. He heaved the steering wheel over and touched the accelerator. It was a mistake.

The car and the lorry collided head-on.

The lorry driver was a regular churchgoer and a devout man: he was praying aloud as he climbed down from his cab. "Our father, who art in heaven ... "

He went to the girl first. She had been thrown out of the car, high into the air, past the side window of his cab. She lay in a ditch, on her side, with her pretty blouse ripped. He shone his torch into her face. She was very beautiful. Carefully, nervously, he felt for her heartbeat. She was alive. She might even be uninjured. "Hallowed be thy name."

He turned back. Most of the bonnet of the car was underneath his lorry's front wheels. He stood on the running-board to look inside. "Thy kingdom come ... "

He saw a champagne bottle on the floor and a few scraps of coloured paper on the seat. "Thy will - " The beam of his torch lit up the boy's Air Force uniform, and just as he realised that the scraps of coloured paper were confetti, he saw the boy's legs.

"Thy will - "

He closed his eyes tightly tc shut out the sight, but it was still there, behind his eyelids; all of it: the beautiful girl, and the confetti, and the uniform, and the boy's legs -

"Thy will be - "

The lorry driver opened his eyes and forced himself to look at it again. Then he got control of himself. He put his coat over the girl, checked the handbrake of his lorry, and ran for help.

But he never finished his prayer.

4

Foreigners have spies: Britain has Military Intelligence. As if that were not euphemism enough, it is abbreviated to MI. In 1940, MI was part of the War Office. It was spreading like couch grass at the time - not surprisingly - and its different sections were known by numbers: MI9 ran the escape routes from prisoner-of-war camps through Occupied Europe to neutral countries; MI8 monitored enemy wireless traffic, and was of more value than six regiments;

MI6 sent agents into France.

It was MI5 that Professor Percival Godliman joined in the autumn of 1940. He turned up at the War Office in Whitehall on a cold September morning after a night spent putting out fires all over the East End: it was the height of the Blitz and he was an Auxiliary Fireman.

Military Intelligence was run by soldiers in peacetime, when (in Godliman's opinion) espionage made no difference to anything anyway; but now, he found, it was populated by amateurs, and he was delighted to discover that he knew half the people in MI5. On his first day he met a barrister who was a member of his club, an art historian he had been to college with, an archivist from his own university, and his favourite writer of detective stories.

He was shown in to Colonel Terry's office at ten a.m. Terry had been there for several hours: there were two empty cigarette packets in the waste-paper bin.

Godliman said: "Should I call you 'sir' now?"

"There's not much bull around here, Percy. 'Uncle Andrew'will do fine. Sit down."

All the same, there was a briskness about Terry which had not been present when they had had lunch at the Savoy. Godliman noticed that he did not smile, and his attention kept wandering to a pile of unread signals on the desk.

Terry looked at his watch and said: "I'm going to put you in the picture, briefly - finish the lecture I started over lunch."

Godliman smiled. "This time I won't get up on my high horse."

Terry lit another cigarette.

Canaris's spies in Britain were useless people (Terry resumed, as if their conversation had been interrupted five minutes ago). Dorothy O'Grady was typical: we caught her cutting military telephone wires on the Isle of Wight. She was writing letters to Portugal in the kind of secret ink you buy in joke shops.

A new wave of spies began in September. Their task was to reconnoitre Britain in preparation for the invasion: to map beaches suitable for landings, fields and roads which could be used by troop-carrying gliders, tank traps and road blocks and barbed-wire obstacles.

They seemm to have been badly selected, hastily mustered, inadequately trained and poorly equipped. Typical were the four who came over on the night of 2-3 September: Meier, Kieboom, Pons and Waldberg. Kieboom and Pons landed at dawn near Hythe, and were arrested by Private Tollervey of the Somerset Light Infantry, who came upon them in the sand-dunes tucking in to a dirty great wurst.

Waldberg actually managed to send a signal to Hamburg: ARRIVED SAFELY. DOCUMENT DESTROYED. ENGLISH PATROL 200 METRES FROM COAST. BEACH WITH BROWN NETS AND RAILWAY SLEEPERS AT A DISTANCE OF 50 METRES. NO MINES. FEW SOLDIERS. UNFINISHED BLOCKHOUSE. NEW ROAD. WALDBERG.

Clearly he did not know where be was, nor did he even have a code name. The quality of his briefing is indicated by the fact that he knew nothing of the English licensing laws: he went into a pub at nine o'clock in the morning and asked for a quart of cider.

(Godliman laughed at this, and Terry said: "Wait - it gets funnier.")

The landlord told Waldberg to come back at ten. He could spend the hour looking at the village church, he suggested. Amazingly, Waldberg was back at ten sharp, whereupon two policemen on bicycles arrested him.

("It's like a script for It's That Man Again," said Godliman.)

found
Meier was pickedxxp a few hours later. Eleven more agents were picked up over the next few weeks, most of them within hours of landing on British soil. Almost all of them were destined for the scaffold.

("Almost all?" said Godliman. Terry said: "Yes. A couple have been handed over to our section Bla - I'll come to that in a minute.")

Others landed in Eire. One was Ernst Weber-Drohl, a well-known acrobat who had two illegitimate children in Ireland - he had toured music-halls there

as "The World's Strongest Man". He was arrested by the Garde Siochana, fined three pounds, and turned over to Bla.

Another was Hermann Goetz, who parachuted into Ulster instead of Eire by mistake, was robbed by the IRA, swam the Boyne in his fur underwear, and eventually swallowed his suicide pill. He had a torch marked "Made in Dresden".

("If it's so easy to pick these bunglers up," Terry said, "why are we taking on brainy types like yourself to catch them? Two reasons. One: we've got no way of knowing how many we haven't picked up. Two: it's what we do with the ones we don't hang that matters. This is where Bla comes in. But to explain that I have to go back to 1936.")

Alfred George Owens was an electrical engineer with a company that had a few ~~several~~ government contracts. He visited Germany several times during the thirties, and voluntarily gave to the Admiralty odd bits of technical information he picked up there. Eventually Naval Intelligence passed him on to MI6 who began to develop him as an agent. The Abwehr recruited him at about the same time, as MI6 discovered when they intercepted a letter from him to a known German cover address. Clearly he was a man totally without loyalty: he just wanted to be a spy. We called him "Snow"; the Germans called him "Johnny".

In January 1939 Snow got a letter containing (i) instructions for the use of a wireless transmitter and (ii) a ticket from the cloakroom at Victoria Station.

He was arrested the day after war broke out, and he and his transmitter were locked up in Wandsworth Prison. He continued to communicate with Hamburg, but now all the messages were written by MI5-Bla.

The Abwehr put him in touch with two more German ~~in~~ agents in England, whom we immediately nabbed. They also gave him a code and detailed wireless procedure, all of which was invaluable.

Snow was followed by Charlie, Rainbow, Summer, Biscuit, and eventually a small army of enemy spies, all in regular contact with Canaris, all apparently trusted by him, and all totally controlled by the British.

At that point MI5 began dimly to glimpse an awesome and tantalizing prospect: with a bit of luck, they could control and manipulate the entire German espionage network in Britain.

"Turning agents into double agents instead of hanging them has two crucial advantages," Terry wound up. "Since the enemy thinks his spies are still active, he doesn't try to replace them with others who may not get caught. And, since we are supplying the information the spies tell their masters, we can deceive the enemy and mislead his strategists."

"It can't be that easy," said Godliman.

"Certainly not." Terry opened a window to let out the fug of cigarette and pipe smoke. "To work, the system has to be very nearly total. If there is any substantial number of genuine agents here, their information will contradict that of the double agents and the Abwehr will smell a rat."

"It sounds tremendously exciting," Godliman said. His pipe had gone out.

Terry smiled for the first time that morning. "The people here will tell you it's hard work - long hours, high tension, frustration - but yes, of course it's exciting." He looked at his watch. "Now I want you to meet a very bright young member of my staff. Let me walk you to his office."

They went out of the room, up some stairs, and along several corridors. "His name is Frederick Bloggs, and he gets annoyed if you make jokes about it," Terry continued. "We pinched him from Scotland Yard - he was an inspector with Special Branch. If you need arms and legs, use his."

Godliman was not sure what that meant, but they had arrived and it was too late to ask. The room he was ushered into was small and bare and looked out on to a blank wall. It had no carpet. There was a photograph of a pretty girl on the wall, and a pair of handcuffs hanging from the hat-stand.

Terry said: "Fred Bloggs, Percy Godliman. I'll leave you toit."

The man behind the desk was blond, stocky and short - he must have been only just tall enough to get into the police force, Godliman thought. His tie was an

eyesore, but he had a pleasant, open face and an attractive grin. His handshake was firm.

He said: "Tell you what, Percy - I was just going to nip home for lunch - why don't you come along? The wife makes a lovely sausage and chips." He had a broad Cockney accent.

Sausage and chips was not Godliman's favourite meal, but he went along. They walked to Trafalgar Square and caught a bus to Hoxton. Bloggs said: "I married a wonderful girl, but she can't cook for nuts. I have sausage and chips every day."

East London was still smoking from last night's air raid. They passed groups of fireman and volunteers digging through rubble, playing hoses over dying fires, and clearing debris from the streets. They saw an old man carry a radio out of a half-ruined house.

Bloggs' home was a three-bedroom semi in a street of exactly similar houses. The tiny front gardens were all being used to grow vegetables. Mrs Bloggs was the pretty girl in the photograph on Bloggs' office wall. She looked tired. Bloggs said: "She drives an ambulance during the raids, don't you, love?" He was proud of her. Her name was Christine.

She said: "Every morning when I come home I wonder if the house will still be here."

"Notice it's the house she's worried about, not me," Bloggs said.

Godliman picked up a medal in a presentation case from the mantelpiece. "How did you get this?"

Christine answered. "He took a shotgun off a villain who was robbing a post office."

"You're quite a pair," Godliman said.

"You married, Percy?" Bloggs asked.

"I'm a widower."

"Sorry."

"My wife died of tuberculosis in 1931. We never had children."

"We're not having any yet," Bloggs said. "Not while the world's in this

state."

Christine said: "Oh, Fred, he's not interested in that!" She went out to the kitchen.

They sat around a square table in the centre of the room to eat. Christine's cooking was truly awful. The sausages were burned. Bloggs drowned his meal in tomato ketchup.

When they got back to Whitehall Bloggs showed Godliman the file on unidentified enemy agents thought to be still operating in Britain.

There were three sources of information about such people. The first was the immigration records of the Home Office. Passport control had long been an arm of/Military Intelligence, and there was a list - going back to the/last war - of aliens who had entered the country but had not left or been accounted for in other ways, such as death or naturalisation. At the outbreak of war they had all gone before tribunals which classified them in three groups. At first only "A" class aliens were interned; but by July of 1940, after agitation by Fleet Street, the "B" and "C" classes were taken out of circulation. There was a small number of immigrants who could not be located, and it was a fair assumption that some of them were spies.

Their papers were in Bloggs' file.

The second source was wireless transmissions. Section C of MI8 patrolled the airwaves nightly, recorded everything they did not know for certain to be ours, and passed it to the Government Code and Cypher School. This outfit, which had recently been moved from London's Berkeley Street to a country house at Bletchley Park, was not a school at all but a collection of chess champions, musicians, mathematicians and crossword-puzzle enthusiasts dedicated to the belief that if a man could invent a code a man could crack it. Signals originating in the UK which could not be accounted for by any of the Services were assumed to be messages from spies.

The decoded messages were in Bloggs' file.

Finally there were the double agents; but their value was largely hoped-for rather than actual. Messages to them from the Abwehr had warned of several incoming agents, and had given away one resident spy: Mrs Mathilde Krafft of Bournemouth, who had sent money to Snow by post and was subsequently incarcerated in Holloway Prison. But the doubles had not been able to reveal the identity or location of the kind of quietly effective professional spies who are most valuable to a secret intelligence service. No one doubted that there were such people. There were clues: someone, for example, had brought Snow's transmitter over from Germany and deposited it in the cloakroom at Victoria Station. But either the Abwehr or the spies themselves were too cautious to be caught by the doubles.

However, the clues were in Bloggs' file.

Other sources were being developed: the boffins were working to improve methods of triangulation (the directional pin-pointing of radio transmitters); and MI6 were trying to establish agents of their own in Germany.

What little information there was, was in Bloggs' file.

"It can be infuriating at times," he told Godliman. "Look at this."

He took from the file a long radio intercept about British plans for an expeditionary force to Finland. "This was picked up early in the year. The information is impeccable. They were trying to get a fix on him when he broke off in the middle, for no apparent reason - perhaps he was interrupted. He resumed a few minutes later, but he was off the air again before our boys had a chance to plug in."

Godliman said: "What's this - 'Regards to Willi'?"

"Now, that's important," said Bloggs. He was getting excited. "Here's a fragment of another message, quite recent. Look - 'Regards to Willi'. This time there was a reply. He's addressed as 'Der Nadel'."

"The Needle."

"This bloke's a pro. Look at his messages: terse, economical, yet detailed and totally unambiguous."

Godliman studied the fragment of the second message. "It appears to be about

the effects of the bombing."

"He's obviously toured the East End. A pro, a pro."

"What else do we know about Der Nadel?"

Bloggs' expression of youthful eagerness collapsed comically. "That's it, I'm afraid."

"He signs off 'Regards to Willi', his code name is Der Nadel, and he has good information - and that's it?"

"'Fraid so."

Godliman sat on the edge of the desk and stared out of the window. On the wall of the opposite building, underneath an ornate windowsill, he could see the nest of a house-marten. "On that basis, what chance have we got of catching him?"

Bloggs shrugged. "On that basis, absolutely none."

5

It is for places like this that the word "bleak" has been invented.

The island is a J-shaped lump of rock rising sullenly out of the North Sea. It lies on the map like the top half of a broken walking-stick; lying parallel with the equator but a long, long way north; its curved handle towards Aberdeen, its broken, jagged stump pointing threateningly at distant Denmark. It is ten miles long.

Around most of its coast the cliffs rise out of the cold sea without the courtesy of a beach. Angered by this rudeness the waves pound on the rock in impotent rage; a ten-thousand-year fit of bad temper which the island ignores with impunity.

In the cup of the J the sea is calmer, for there it has provided itself with a more pleasant reception. Its tides have thrown into that cup so much sand and seaweed, driftwood and pebbles and seashells, that there is now, between the foot of the cliff and the water's edge, a crescent of something closely resembling dry land, a more-or-less beach.

Each summer the vegetation at the top of the cliff drops a handful of seeds

on to the beach, the way a rich man throws loose change to beggars. If the winter is mild and the spring comes early, a few of the seeds take feeble root; but they are never healthy enough to flower themselves and spread their own seeds, so the beach exists from year to year on handouts.

On the land itself, the proper land, held out of the sea's reach by the cliffs, green things do grow and multiply. The vegetation is mostly coarse grass, only just good enough to nourish the few bony sheep, but tough enough to bind the topsoil to the island's bedrock. There are some bushes, all thorny, which provide homes for rabbits; and a brave stand of conifers on the leeward slope of the hill at the eastern end.

The higher land is ruled by heather. Every few years the man - yes, there is a man here - the man sets fire to the heather, and then the grass will grow and the sheep can graze here too; but after a couple of years the heather comes back, God knows from where, and drives the sheep away until the man burns it again.

The rabbits are here because they were born here; the sheep are here because they were brought here; and the man is here to look after the sheep; but the birds are here because they like it. There are thousands of them: long-legged rock pipits whistling peep peep peep as they soar and pe-pe-pe-pe as they dive like a Spitfire coming at a Messerschmidt out of the sun; corncrakes, which the man rarely sees, but he knows they are there because their bark keeps him awake at night; ravens and carrion crows and kittiwakes and countless gulls; and a pair of golden eagles which the man shoots at when he sees them, ~~despite the law~~, for he knows - regardless of what naturalists and experts from Edinburgh may tell him - that they do prey upon live lambs and not just the carcases of those already dead.

The island's most constant visitor is the wind. It comes mostly from the north-east, from really cold places where there are fiords and glaciers and icebergs; often bringing with it unwelcome gifts of snow and driving rain and cold, cold mist; sometimes arriving empty-handed, just to howl and whoop and raise hell, tearing up bushes and bending trees and whipping the intemperate ocean

into fresh paroxysms of ~~fury~~ foam-flecked rage. It is tireless, this wind; and that is its mistake. If it came occasionally it could take the island by surprise and do some real damage; but because it is almost always here, the island has learned to live with it. The plants put down deep roots, and the rabbits hide far inside the thickets, and the trees grow up with their backs read-y-bent for the flogging, and the birds nest on sheltered ledges, and the man's house is squat and sturdy, built with a craftsmanship that knows this wind of old.

This house is made of big grey stones and grey slates, the colour of the sea. It has small windows and close-fitting doors and a chimney in its pine end. It stands at the top of the hill at the eastern end of the island, close to the splintered stub of the broken walking-stick. It crowns the hill, defying the wind and the rain, not out of bravado but so that the man can see the sheep.

There is another house, very similar, at the opposite end of the island near the more-or-less beach; but nobody lives there. There was once another man. He thought he knew better than the island; he thought he could grow oats and potatoes and keep a few cows. He battled for three years with the wind and the cold and the soil before he admitted he was wrong. When he had gone, uobody wanted his house.

This is a hard place. Only hard things survive here: hard rock, coarse grass, tough sheep, savage birds, sturdy houses and strong men. Hard things and cold things, and cruel and bitter and pointed things, rugged and slow-moving and determined things; things as cold and hard and ruthless as the island itself.

It is for places like this that the word "bleak" has been invented.

"It's called Storm Island," said Alfred Rose. "I think you're going to like it."

David and Lucy Rose sat in the prow of the fishing-boat and looked across the choppy water. It was a fine November day, cold and breezy yet clear and dry. A weak sun sparkled off the wavelets.

"I bought it in 1926," Papa Rose continued, "when we thought there was going to be a revolution and we'd need somewhere to hide from the working class.

It's just the place for a convalescence."

Lucy thought he was being suspiciously hearty, but she had to admit it looked lovely: all windblown and natural and fresh. And it made sense, this move. They had to get away from their parents and make a new start at being married; and there was no point in moving to a city to be bombed, not when neither of them was really well enough to help; and then David's father had revealed that he owned an island off the coast of Scotland, and it seemed too good to be true.

"I own the sheep, too," Papa said. "Shearers come over from the mainland each spring, and the wool brings in just about enough money to pay Tom McAvity's wages. Old Tom's the shepherd."

"How old is he?" Lucy asked.

"Good Lord, he must be - oh, seventy?"

"He must be eccentric." The boat turned into the bay, and Lucy could see two small figures on the jetty: a man and a dog.

"Eccentric? No more than you'd be if you'd lived alone for twenty years. He talks to his dog."

Lucy turned to the skipper of the small boat. "How often do you call?"

"Once a fortnight, missus. I bring Tom's shopping, which isna much, and his mail, which is even less. You just give me your list, every other ~~Friday~~ Monday, and if it can be bought in Aberdeen I'll bring it."

He cut the motor and threw a rope to Tom. The dog barked and ran around in circles, beside itself with excitement. Lucy put one foot on the gunwale and sprang out on to the jetty.

Tom shook her hand. He had a face of leather and a huge briar pipe with a lid. He was shorter than she, but wide, and he looked ridiculously healthy. He wore the hairiest tweed jacket she had ever seen, with a knitted sweater that must have been made by an elderly sister somewhere, plus a checked cap and army boots. His nose was huge, red, and veined. "Pleased to meet you," he said politely, as if she was his ninth visitor today instead of the first human face he had seen for fourteen days.

"Here y'are, Tom," said the skipper. He handed two cardboard boxes out of the boat. "No eggs this time, but there's a letter from Devon."

"That'll be from ma niece."

Lucy thought: That explains the sweater.

David was still in the boat. The skipper stood behind him and said: "Are you ready?"

Tom and Papa Rose leaned into the boat to assist, and the three of them lifted David in his wheelchair on to the jetty.

"If I don't go now I'll have to wait a fortnight for the next bus," Papa Rose said with a smile. "The house has been done up quite nicely, you'll see. All your stuff is there. Tom will show you where everything is." He kissed Lucy, squeezed David's shoulder, and shook Tom's hand. "Have a few months of rest and togetherness, get completely fit, then come back: there are important war jobs for both of you."

They would not be going back, Lucy knew; not before the end of the war: but she had not told anyone about that yet.

Papa got back into the boat. It wheeled away in a tight circle. Lucy waved until it disappeared around the headland.

Tom pushed the wheelchair, so Lucy took his groceries. Between the landward end of the jetty and the cliff top was a long, steep, narrow ramp rising high above the beach. Lucy would have had trouble getting the wheelchair to the top, but Tom managed without apparent exertion.

The cottage was perfect.

It was small and grey, and sheltered from the wind ~~wxx~~ by a little rise in the ground. All the woodwork was frshly painted, and a wild rose bush grew beside the doorstep. Curls of smoke rose from the chimney to be whipped away by the breeze. The tiny windows looked over the bay.

Lucy said: "I <u>love</u> it!"

The interior had been cleaned and aired and painted, and there were thick

rugs on the stone floors. It had four rooms: downstairs, a modernised kitchen and a living-room with a stone fireplace; upstairs, two bedrooms. One end of the house had been carefully remodelled to take modern plumbing.

Their clothes were in the wardrobes. There were towels x in the bathroom and food in the kitchen.

Tom said: "There's something in the barn I've got to show you."

It was a shed, not a barn. It lay hidden behind the cottage, and it housed the small petrol-driven generator which supplied alternating-current electricity. Beside it was a jeep.

"Mr Rose says it's been specially adapted for young David to drive," Tom said. "It's got automatic gears, and the throttle and brake are operated by hand. That's what he said." He seemed to be repeating the words parrot-fashion, as if he had very little idea of what gears, brakes and throttles might be.

Lucy said: "Isn't that super, David?"

"Top-hole. But where shall I go in it?"

Tom said: "You're always welcome to visit me and share a pipe and a drop of whisky. I've been looking forward to having neighbours again."

"Thankyou," Lucy said.

They went back to the cottage. Tom said: "Well, you'll want to settle in, and I've got sheep to tend, so I'll say good-day. Oh! I ought to tell you: in an emergency, I can contact the mainland by wire-less radio."

David was surprised. "You've got a radio transmitter?"

"Aye," Tom said proudly. "I'm an enemy aircraft spotter in the Royal Observer Corps."

"Ever spotted any?" David asked.

Lucy flashed her disapproval of the sarcasm in David's voice, but Tom seemed not to notice. "Not yet," he replied.

David said: "Jolly good show."

When Tom had gone Lucy said: "He only wants to do his bit."

"There are lots of us who want to do our bit," David said bitterly.

And that, Lucy reflected, was the trouble. She dropped the subject, and wheeled her crippled husband into their new home.

When Lucy had been asked to visit the hospital psychologist, she had expected to be told that David had brain damage. It was not so. "All that's wrong with his head is a nasty bruise on his left temple," the psychologist said. She went on: "However, the loss of both his legs is what we call a trauma, and there's no telling how it will effect his mental state. Did he want very much to be a pilot?"

Lucy pondered. "He was afraid, but I think he wanted it very badly, all the same."

"Well, he'll need all the reassurance and support that you can give him. And patience, too: one thing we can predict is that he will be resentful and ill-tempered for a while. He needs love and rest."

However, during their first few months on the island he seemed to want neither. He did not make love to her, perhaps because he was waiting until his injuries were fully healed. But he did not rest, either. He threw himself into the business of sheep farming, tearing about the island in the jeep with his wheelchair in the back. He built fences along the more treacherous cliffs, shot at the eagles, helped Tom train a new dog when Betsy began to go blind, and burned-off the heather; and in the spring he was out every night delivering lambs. One day he felled a great pine tree near Tom's cottage, and spent a fortnight stripping it, hewing it into manageable logs, and carting them back to the house for firewood. He relished really hard manual labour. He learned to strap himself tightly to the wheelchair to keep his body anchored while he wielded an axe or a mallet. He carved a pair of Indian clubs and exercised with them for hours when Tom could find nothing more for him to do. The muscles of his arms and back became grotesque, like those of the men who win body-building contests.

He refused point-blank to wash dishes, cook food or clean house.

Lucy was not unhappy. She had been afraid he might sit by the fire all day and brood over his bad luck. The way he worked was faintly worrying because it

was so obsessive, but at least he was not vegetating.

She told him about the baby at Christmas.

In the morning she gave him a petrol-driven saw, and he gave her a bolt of silk. Tom came over for dinner, and they ate a wild goose he had shot. David drove him home after tea, and when he came back Lucy opened a bottle of brandy.

Then she said: "I have another present for you, but you can't open it until May."

He laughed. "What on earth are you talking about? How much of that brandy did you drink while I was out?"

"I'm having a baby."

He stared at her, and all the laughter went out of his face. "Good God, that's all we bloody well need."

"David!"

"Well, for God's sake ... When the hell did it happen?"

"That's not too difficult to figure out, is it?" she said bitterly. "It must have been a week before the wedding. It's a miracle it survived the crash."

"Have you seen a doctor?"

"Huh - when?"

"So how do you know for sure?"

"Oh, David, don't be so boring. I know for sure because my periods have stopped and my nipples hurt and I throw up in the mornings and my waist is four inches bigger than it used to be. If you ever <u>looked</u> at me <u>you</u> would know for sure."

"All right."

"What's the matter with you? You're supposed to be thrilled!"

"Oh, sure. Perhaps we'll have a son, and then I can take him for walks and play football with him, and he'll grow up wanting to be like his father the war hero, a legless fucking joke!"

"Oh, David, David," she whispered. She knelt in front of his wheelchair. "David, don't think like that. He will respect you. He'll look up to you because

you put your life together again, and because you can do the work of two men from your wheelchair, and because you carried your disability with courage and cheerfulness."

"Don't be so damned condescending," he snapped. "You sound like a sanctimonious priest."

She stood up. "Well, don't act as if it's my fault. Men can take precautions too, you know."

"You can't take precautions against invisible lorries in the blackout!"

That was a silly, feeble excuse, and they both knew it, so Lucy said nothing. The whole idea of Christmas seemed utterly trite now: the bits of coloured paper on the walls, and the tree in the corner, and the remains of a goose in the kitchen waiting to be thrown away – none of it had anything to do with her life. She began to wonder what she was doing on this bleak island with a man who seemed not to love her, having a baby he didn't want. Why shouldn't she – why not – well, she could ... Then she realised she had nowhere else to go, nothing else to do with her life, nobody else to <u>be</u> other than Mrs David Rose.

Eventually David said: "Well, I'm going to bed." He wheeled himself out out of the chair and up the
to the hall and dragged himself/upstairs backwards. She heard him scrape across the floor, heard the bed creak as he hauled himself on to it, heard his clothes hit the corner of the room as he undressed, then heard the final groaning of the springs as he lay down and pulled the blankets up over his pyjamas.

And still she wouldn't cry.

She looked at the brandy bottle and thought: If I drink all of this now, and have a bath, perhaps I won't be pregnant in the morning.

She thought about it for a long time, until she came to the conclusion that life without David and the island and the baby would be even worse because it would be empty.

So she did not cry, and she did not drink the brandy, and she did not leave the island; but instead she went upstairs and got into bed, and lay awake beside her sleeping husband listening to the wind and trying not to think,

until the gulls woke up and began to call, and a grey rainy dawn crept over the North Sea and filled the little bedroom with a cold, cheerless, silver light, and then at last she went to sleep.

A kind of peace settledover her in the spring, as if all threats were postponed until after the baby was born. When the February snow had thawed she planted some flowers and vegetables in the patch of ground between the kitchen door and the barn, not really believing they would grow. She cleaned the house thoroughly and told David that if he wanted it done again before August he would have to do it himself. She wrote to her mother and did a lot of knitting and ordered nappies by post. They suggested she go home to have the baby, but she knew that if she went she would never come back. She went for long walks over the moors, with a bird book under her arm, until her own weight became too much for her to carry very far. She kept the bottle of brandy in a cupboard David never used, and whenever she felt depressed she went to look at it and remind herself of what she had almost lost.

Three weeks before the baby was due she got the boat into Aberdeen. David and Tom waved from the jetty. The sea was so rough that both she and the skipper were terrified she might give birth before they reached the mainland. She went into the hospital in Aberdeen, and four weeks later brought the baby home on the same boat.

David knew none of it. He probably thought that women gave birth as easily as ewes. He was oblivious to the pain of contractions, and that awful, impossible stretching, and the soreness afterwards, and the bossy, knowall nurses who didn't want you to touch your baby because you weren't brisk and efficient and trained and sterile like they were; he just saw you go away pregnant and come back with a beautiful, white-wrapped, healthy baby boy and said: "We'll call him Jonathan."

They added Alfred for David's father, and Malcolm for Lucy's, and Thomas for old Tom, but they called the boy Jo, because he was too tiny for Jonathan, let

alone Jonathan Alfred Malcolm Thomas Rose. David learned to give him his bottle and burp him and change his nappy, and he even dangled him on his ~~knee~~ lap occasionally, but his interest was distant, uninvolved; he had a problem-solving approach, like the nurses; it was not for him as it was for Lucy. Tom was closer to the baby than David. Lucy would not let him smoke in the room where the baby was, and the old boy would put his great briar pipe with the lid in his pocket for hours and gurgle at little Jo, or watch him kick his feet, or help Lucy bath him. Lucy suggested mildly that he might be neglecting the sheep. Tom said they did not need him to watch them feed - he would rather watch Jo feed. He carved a rattle out of driftwood and filled it with small round pebbles, and was overjoyed when Jo grabbed it and shook it, first time, without having to be shown how.

And still David and Lucy did not make love.

First there had been his injuries, and then she had been pregnant, and then she had been recovering from childbirth; but now the reasons had run out.

One night she said: "I'm back to normal, now."

"How do you mean?"

"After the baby. My body is normal. I've healed."

"Oh, I see. That's good." And he turned away.

She made sure to go up to bed with him, so that he could watch her undress, but he always turned his back.

As they lay there, dozing off, she would move so that her hand, or her thigh, or her breast, brushed against him, a casual but unmistakeable invitation. There was no response.

She believed firmly that there was nothing wrong with her. She wasn't a nymphomaniac: she didn't want simply sex, she wanted sex with David. She was sure that, even if there had been another man under seventy on the island, she would not have been tempted. She wasn't a sex-starved tart: she was a love-starved wife.

The crunch came on one of those nights when they lay on their backs, side by side, both wide awake, listening to the wind outside and the small sounds of Jo

from the next room. It seemed to Lucy that it was time he either did it or came right out and said why not; and that he was going to avoid the issue until ~~he~~ she forced it; and that she might as well force it now as live in miserable incomprehension any longer.

So she brushed her arm across his thighs and opened her mouth to speak - and almost cried out with shock to discover that he had an erection. So he could do it! And he wanted to, or why else - And her hand closed triumphantly around the evidence of his desire, and she shifted closer to him, and sighed: "David - "

He said: "Oh, for God's sake!" ~~And~~ He gripped her wrist and thrust her hand away from him and turned on to his side.

But this time she was not going to accept his rebuff in modest silence. She said: "David, why not?"

"Jesus, Christ!" He threw the blankets off, ~~and~~ swung himself to the floor, ~~and~~ grabbed the eiderdown with one hand, and dragged himself to the door.

Lucy sat up in bed and screamed at him: "Why not?"

Jo began to cry.

David pulled up the empty legs of his cut-off pyjama trousers, ~~and~~ pointed at the pursed white skin of his stumps, and said: "That's why not! That's why not!"

He slithered downstairs to sleep on the sofa, and Lucy went into the next bedroom to comfort Jo.

It took a long time to lull him back to sleep, probably because she herself was so badly in need of/~~anything~~ comfort. He tasted the tears on her cheeks, and she wondered whether he had any inkling of their meaning: wouldn't tears be one of the first things a baby came to understand? She could not bring herself to sing to him, nor could she with any sincerity murmur that everything was all right; so she held him tight and rocked him, and when he had soothed her with his warmth and his clinging, he went to sleep in her arms.

She put him back in the cot and stood looking at him for a while. There

was no point in going back to bed. She could near David's snoring from the living-room. She needed to get right away from him, where she could neither see nor hear him, where he couldn't find her for a few hours even if he wanted to. She put on trousers and a sweater, a heavy coat and boots, and crept downstairs and out into the night.

There was a swirling mist, damp and bitterly cold, the kind the island specialised in. She put up the collar of her coat, thought about going back inside for a scarf, and decided not to. She squelched along the muddy path, welcoming the bite of the fog in her throat, the small discomfort of the weather taking her mind off the larger hurt inside her.

She reached the cliff top and walked gingerly down the steep, narrow ramp, placing her feet carefully on the slippery boards. At the bottom she jumped off on to the sand and walked to the edge of the sea.

The wind and the water were carrying on their perpetual quarrel, the wind swooping down to tease the waves and whine "I'll get yooooooou" and the sea hissing and spitting "Liiiike hellyouWILL" as it crashed against the land, the two of them doomed to bicker forever because neither could he calm while the other was there, but neither had any place else to go.

Lucy walked along the hard sand, letting the noise and the weather fill her head, until the beach ended in a sharp point where the water met the cliff, when she turned around and walked the other way. She paced the shore all night. Toward dawn a thought came to her, unbidden: It is his way of being strong.

As it was, the thought was not much help; holding its meaning in a tightly clenched fist. But she worked on it for a while, and the fist opened to reveal what looked like a small pearl of wisdom nestling in its palm: for perhaps David's coldness to her was of one piece with his chopping down trees, and undressing himself, and driving the jeep, and throwing the Indian clubs, and coming to live on a cold cruel island in the North Sea ...

What was it he had said? " ... his father the war hero, a legless joke ... " He had something to prove, something that would sound trite if it were put into

words; something he could have done as a fighter pilot, but now had to do with trees and fences and Indian clubs and a wheelchair. They wouldn't let him take the test, and he wanted to be able to say "I could have passed it anyway, just look how I can suffer."

It was cruelly, hopelessly, screamingly unjust: he had had the courage, and he had suffered the wounds, but he could take no pride in it. If a Messerschmidt had taken his legs the wheelchair would have been like a medal, a badge of courage. But now, all his life, he would have to say "It was during the war - but no, I never saw any action, this was a car crash, I did my training and I was going to fight, the very next day, I had seen my kite, she was a beauty, and I would have been brave, I know ... "

Yes, it was his way of being strong. And perhaps she could be strong, too. She might find ways of patching up the wreck of her life so that it would sail again. She might learn to wait patiently while David battled to become the complete man he used to be. She could find new hopes, new things to live for. Other women had found the strength to cope with bereavement, and bombed-out homes, and husbands in prisoner-of-war camps.

She picked up a pebble, drew back her arm, and threw it out to sea with all her might. She did not hear or see it land: it might have gone on forever, circling the earth like a satellite in a space story.

She shouted: "I can be strong, too!"

Then she turned around and started up the ramp to the cottage. It was almost time for Jo's first feed.

6

It looked like a mansion; and, up to a point, that was what it was: a large house, in its own grounds, in the leafy town of Wohldorf just outside North Hamburg. It might have been the home of a mine owner, or a successful importer, or an industrialist. However, it was owned by the Abwehr.

It owed its fate to the weather - not here, but two hundred miles south-east in Berlin, where atmospheric conditions were unsuitable for wireless communication with England.

It was a mansion down to ground level. Below that were two huge concrete shelters and several million Reichsmarks worth of radio equipment. The electronics system had been put together by one Major Werner Trautmann, and he did a good job. Each hall had twenty neat little soundproofed listening posts, occupied by radio operators who could recognise a spy by the way he tapped out his message, as easily you can recognise your mother's handwriting on an envelope.

The receiving equipment was built with quality in mind, for the transmitters that were sending the messages had been designed for compactness. Most of them were the little suitcase sets called Klamotten which had been developed by Telefunken for Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, the head of the Abwehr.

On this night the airwaves were relatively quiet, so everyone knew when Der Nadel came through. The message was taken by one of the older operators. He tapped out an acknowledgement, transcribed the signal quickly, tore the sheet off his notepad and went to the phone. He read the message over the direct line to Abwehr headquarters in Sophein Terrace in Hamburg, then he came back to his booth for a smoke.

He offered a cigarette to the youngster in the next booth, and the two of them stood together for a few minutes, leaning against the wall and smoking.

The youngster said: "Anything?"

The older man shrugged. "There's always something when he calls. But not much, this time. The Luftwaffe missed St Paul's Cathedral again."

"No reply for him?"

"We don't think he waits for replies. He's an independent bastard, that one. Always was. I trained him in wireless, you know: and once I'd trained him, he thought he knew it better than me."

The youngster was awestruck. "You've met Der Nadel?"

"Oh, yes," said the old-timer, flicking ash.

"What's he like?"

"As a drinking companion, he's about as much fun as a dead fish. I think he likes women, on the quiet, but as for sinking a few steins with the boys - forget it. All the same, he's the best agent we've got."

"Really?"

"Definitely. A real pro. And the Fuehrer knows it."

"Hitler knows him?"

The older man nodded. "At one time he wanted to see all Der Nadel's signals. I don't know if he still does. Not that it would make any difference to Der Nadel. Nothing impresses that man. You know something? He looks at everybody the same way: as if he's figuring out how he'll kill you if you make a wrong move."

"I'm glad I didn't have to train him."
"He learned quickly, I'll give him that."

"Good pupil?"

"The best. He worked at it twenty-four hours a day, then when he'd mastered it, he wouldn't give me a Good-morning. It takes him all his time to remember to salute Canaris."

"Scheisse."

"Oh, yes. Didn't you know - he always signs off 'Regards to Willi'. That's how much he cares about rank."

"No. Regards to Willi? Scheisse."

They finished their cigarettes, dropped them on the floor, and trod them out. Then the older man picked up the stubs and pocketed them, because smoking was not allowed in the dugout. The radios were still quiet.

"Yes, he won't use his code name," the older man went on. "Von Braun gave it to him, and he's never liked it. He's never liked von Braun. Do you remember the time - no, it was before you joined us - Braun told Nadel to go to the airfield in Farnborough, Kent. The message came back, quick as a flash: 'There is no airfield at Farnborough, Kent. There is one at Farnborough, Hampshire. Fortunately

the Luftwaffe's geography is better than yours, you cunt.' Just like that."

"I suppose it's understandable. When we make mistakes we put their lives at risk."

The older man frowned. He was the one who delivered such judgements, and he did not like his audience to weigh in with opinions of its own. "Perhaps," he said grudgingly.

The youngster reverted to his original wide-eyed role. "Why doesn't he like his code name?"

"He says it has a meaning, and a code word with a meaning can give a man away. Von Braun wouldn't listen."

"A meaning? Der Nadel? What does it mean?"

But at that moment the old-timer's radio chirped, and he returned to his station; so the youngster never did find out.

PART TWO

7

The message annoyed Faber, because it forced him to face issues which he had been avoiding.

Hamburg had made damn sure the message reached him. He had given his call-sign, and instead of the usual 'Acknowledge - proceed' they had sent back 'Make rendezvous one'.

He acknowledged the order, transmitted his report, and packed the wireless set back into its suitcase. Then he wheeled his bicycle out of Erith Marshes - his cover was that of a bird-watcher - and got on the road to Blackheath. As he cycled back to his cramped two-room flatlet, he wondered whether to obey the order.

He had two reasons for disobedience: one professional, one personal.

The professional reason was that "Rendezvous one" was an old code. It had been set up by Canaris back in 1937. It meant he was to go to the doorway of a certain shop between Leicester Square and Piccadilly Circus to meet another agent. The agents would recognise each other by the fact that they both carried a Bible. Then there was a patter:

"What is today's chapter?"

"One Kings thirteen."

Then, if they were certain they were not being followed, they would agree that the chapter was "most inspiring". Otherwise one would say: "I'm afraid I haven't read it yet."

The shop doorway might not be there any more, but that was not what bothered Faber. He thought that Canaris had probably given the code to most of the bumbling amateurs who had crossed the Channel in 1940 and landed in the arms of MI5. Faber knew they had been caught because the hangings had been publicised, no doubt to reassure the public that something was being done about Fifth

Columnists. They would certainly have given away secrets before they died, so the British now probably knew the old rendezvous code. If they had picked up the message from Hamburg, that shop doorway was by now swarming with well-spoken young Englishmen carrying Bibles and practising saying "Most inspiring" in a German accent.

The Abwehr had thrown professionalism to the wind, back in those heady days when the invasion seemed so close. Faber had not trusted Hamburg since. He would not tell them where he lived, he refused to communicate with their other agents in Britain, he varied the frequency he used for transmission without caring whether he walked all over someone else's signal.

If he had always obeyed his masters, he would not have survived this long.

At Woolwich Faber was joined by a mass of other cyclists, many of them women, as the workers came streaming out of the munitions factory at the end of the day shift. Their cheerful weariness reminded Faber of his personal reason for disobedience: he thought his side was losing the war.

They certainly were not winning. The Russians and the Americans had joined in, Africa was lost, the Italians had collapsed; the Allies would surely invade France this year, 1944.

Faber did not want to risk his life to no purpose.

He arrived home and put his bicycle away. He met his landlady in the hall. She said: "Did you have a good day, Mr ~~Faber~~ Baker?"

"Excellent. I saw a red-tailed fern finch." There was no such bird, but she would not know.

"Oh! Is that unusual?"

"Very rare in January. I wish I'd had film for my camera."

"Oh, well, we all have to make sacrifices. But I've got some sardines for your tea."

"Splendid. I'll be down directly."

As he washed his face it dawned on him that, against all logic, he <u>wanted</u> to make the rendezvous.

It was a foolish risk, taken in a lost cause, but he was itching to get to it. And the simple reason was that he was unspeakably bored. The routine transmissions, the bird-watching, the bicycle, the sardines: it was four years since he had experienced anything remotely like action. He seemed ~~xtxh~~ to be in no danger whatsoever, and that made him jumpy, because he imagined invisible perils. He was happiest when every so often he could identify a threat and take steps to neutralise it.

Yes, he would make the rendezvous. But not in the way they expected.

There were still crowds in the West End of London, despite the war; Faber wondered whether it was the same in Berlin. He bought a Bible at Hatchard's bookshop in Piccadilly, and stuffed it into his inside coat pocket, out of sight. It was a mild, damp day, with intermittent drizzle, and Faber was carrying an umbrella.

This rendezvous was timed for either between nine and ten o'clock in the morning or between five and six in the afternoon, and the arrangement was that one went there every day until the other party turned up. If there was no one there for five successive days, one went every other day for a fortnight. After that one gave up.

Faber got to Leicester Square at ten past nine. The contact was there, in the tobacconist's doorway, with a black-bound Bible under his arm, pretending to shelter from the rain. Faber spotted him out of the corner of his eye and hurried past, head down. The man was youngish, with a blond moustache and a well-fed look. He wore a black double-breasted showerproof coat, and he was reading the Daily Express and chewing gum. He was not familiar.

Faber spotted the tail when he walked by the second time on the opposite side of the street. A short, stocky man, he was standing just inside the foyer of an office building, looking out through the glass doors. He wore the coat and hat beloved of English plain-clothes policemen.

It was possible that the agent did not know he had been rumbled; in which case Faber had only to get him away from the rendezvous and lose his tail. However,

the alternative was that the man in the doorway was a substitute, and that meant that Faber's face must be unseen by him as well as by his tail.

Faber assumed the worst, then figured out a way to deal with it.

There was a telephone kiosk in the Square. Faber went inside and memorised the number. Then he found I Kings 13 in the Bible, tore out the page, and scribbled in the margin: "Go to the phone box in the square."

He walked around the back streets behind the National Gallery until he found a small boy, aged about ten or eleven, sitting on a doorstep throwing stones at puddles.

Faber said: "Do you know the tobacconist in the Square?"

The boy said: "Yerst."

"Do you like chewing gum?"

"Yerst."

Faber gave him the page torn from the Bible. "There's a man in the doorway of the tobacconist's. If you give him this he'll give you some gum."

"All right," the boy said. He stood up. "Is this geezer a Yank?"

Faber said: "Yerst."

The boy ran off. Faber followed him. As the boy approached the agent, Faber ducked into the doorway of the building opposite. The tail was still there, peering through the glass. Faber stood just outside the door, blocking the tail's view, and opened his umbrella. He pretended to be struggling with it. He saw the agent give something to the boy and walk off. He ended his charade with the umbrella, and walked in the direction opposite to the way the agent had gone. The tail ran into the street, looking for the vanished agent.

Faber stopped at the nearest call box and dialled the number of the kiosk in the Square. It took a few minutes to get through. At last a deep voice said: "Hello?"

Faber said: "What is today's chapter?"

"One Kings Thirteen."

"Most inspiring."

"Yes, isn't it."

The fool has no idea of the trouble he's in, Faber thought. Aloud he said: "Well?"

"I must see you."

"That is impossible."

"But I must!" There was a note in the voice which Faber thought close to despair. "The message comes from the very top - do you understand?"

Faber pretended to waver. "All right, then. I will meet you in one week's time under the arch at Euston Station at nine a.m."

"Can't you make it sooner?"

Faber hung up and stepped outside. Walking quickly, he rounded two corners and came within sight of the phone box in the Square. He saw the agent walking in the direction of Piccadilly. There was no sign of the tail. Faber followed the agent.

He went into Piccadilly Circus underground station and bought a ticket to Stockwell. Faber immediately realised he could get there by a more direct route. He came out of the station, walked quickly to Leicester Square, and got on a Northern Line train. The agent would have to change trains at Waterloo, so Faber would reach Stockwell first; or, at the worst, they would arrive on the same train.

In fact Faber had to wait outside the station at Stockwell for twenty-five minutes before the agent emerged. Faber followed him again. He went into a cafe.

There was absolutely nowhere near where a man could plausibly stand still for any length of time: no shop windows to gaze into, no benches to sit on or parks to walk around, no bus stops or taxi ranks or public buildings. It was a dreary, blank suburb. Faber had to walk up and down the street, always looking as if he were going somewhere, carrying on until he was just out of sight of the cafe then returning on the opposite side, while the agent sat in the warm, steamy cafe drinking tea and eating hot toast.

He came out after half an hour. Faber trailed him through a succession

of residential streets. The agent knew where he was going, but was in no hurry: he walked like a man who is going home with nothing to do all day. He did not look back, and Faber thought: another amateur.

At last he went into a house - one of the poor, anonymous, inconspicuous lodging-houses used by spies everywhere. It had a dormer window in the roof: that would be the agent's room, high up for better wireless reception.

Faber walked past, scanning the opposite side of the street. Yes - there. A movement behind an unpstairs window, a glimpse of a jacket and tie, a watching face withdrawn: the opposition was here too. The agent must have gone to the rendezvous yesterday and allowed himself to be followed home.

Faber turned the corner and walked down the next parallel street, counting the houses. There was a bomb-damaged shell of a house almost directly behind the place the agent had entered.

As he walked back to the station he felt a buzz of excitement. His step was springier, his heart beat a shade faster, and he looked around him with bright-eyed interest. It was good. The game was on.

He dressed in black that night: a woollen hat, a roll-neck sweater under a short leather flying jacket, trousers tucked into socks, rubber-soled shoes; all black. He would be almost invisible, for London, too, was blacked out.

He cycled through the quiet streets with dimmed lights, keeping off main roads. It was after midnight, and he saw no one. He left the bike a quarter of a mile away from his destination, padlocking it to the fence in a pub yard.

He went, not to the agent's house, but to the bombed-out shell in the next street. He picked his way carefully across the rubble in the front garden, entered the gaping doorway, and went through the house to the back. It was very dark. A thick screen of low cloud hid the moon and stars. Faber had to walk slowly with his hands in front of him.

He reached the end of the garden, jumped over the fence, and crossed the next two gardens. In one of the houses a dog barked for a minute.

The garden of the lodging-house was unkempt. Faber walked into a blackberry bush and stumbled. The thorns scratched his face. He ducked under a line of washing - there was enough light for him to see that.

He found the kitchen window and took a small tool with a scoop-shaped blade from his pocket. The putty around the glass was old and brittle, and already flaking away in places. After twenty silent minutes' work he took the pane out of the frame and laid it gently on the grass. He shone a torch through the empty hole to make sure there were no noisy obstacles in his way, then climbed in.

The darkened house smelled of boiled fish and disinfectant. Faber unlocked the back door - a precaution for fast escape - before entering the hall. He flashed his pencil torch on and off quickly, once. In that instant of light he took in a tiled hallway, a kidney table he must circumvent, a row of coats on hooks and a staircase, to the right, carpeted.

He climbed the stairs silently.

He was half way across the landing to the second flight when he saw the light under the door. A split-second later there was an asthmatic cough and the sound of a toilet flushing. Faber reached the door in two strides and froze against the wall alongside it just as the door opened.

Light flooded the landing. Faber slipped his stiletto out of his sleeve. The old man came out of the toilet and crossed the landing, leaving the light on. At his bedroom door he grunted, turned, and came back.

He must see me, Faber thought. He tightened his grip on the handle of his knife. The old man's sleepy eyes were directed to the floor. He looked up as he reached for the light cord, and Faber almost killed him then - but the man fumbled for the switch, and Faber realised he was half-blind.

The light died, the old man shuffled back to bed, and Faber breathed again.

There was only one door at the top of the second flight of stairs. Faber tried it gently. It was locked.

He took another tool from the pocket of his jacket. The noise of the

cistern filling covered the sound of Faber picking the lock. He opened the door and listened.

He could hear deep, regular breathing. He stepped inside. The sound came from the opposite corner of the room. He could see nothing. He crossed the pitch-dark room very slowly, feeling the air in front of him at each step, until he was beside the bed.

He had the torch in his left hand, the stiletto loose in his sleeve, and his right hand free. He switched on the torch and grabbed the sleeping man's throat in a strangling grip.

His eyes snapped open, full of fear, but he could make no sound. Faber straddled the bed and sat on him. Then he whispered: "One Kings thirteen," and relaxed his grip.

"You!" the agent said. He peered into the torchlight, trying to see Faber's face. He rubbed his neck where Faber's hands had squeezed.

Faber hissed: "Be still!" He shone the torch into the agent's eyes, and with his right hand drew the stiletto.

"Aren't you going to let me get up?"

"I prefer you in bed where you can do no more damage."

"Damage?"

"You were watched in Leicester Square, you let me follow you here, and they are observing this house. Should I trust you to do anything?"

"My God, I'm sorry."

"Why did they send you?"

"The message had to be delivered personally. The orders come from the Fuehrer himself." The agent stopped.

"Well? What orders?"

"I ... have to be sure it is you."

"How can you be sure?"

"I must see your face."

Faber hesitated, then shone the torch briefly at himself. "Satisfied?"

"Der Nadel," the man breathed.

"And who are you?"

"Major Friedrich Kaldor, at your service, sir."

"Then I should call you Sir."

"Oh, no, sir. You've been promoted twice in your absence. You are now a lieutenant-colonel."

"Have they nothing better to do in Hamburg?"

"Aren't you pleased?"

"I should be pleased if I could go back and put Major von Braun on latrine duty."

"May I get up, sir?"

"Certainly not. What if Major Kaldor is languishing in Wandsworth Jail, and you are a substitute, just waiting to give some kind of signal to your watching friends in the house opposite?"

"Very well."

"So - what are these orders from Hitler himself?"

"Well, sir, the Reich believes there will be an invasion of France this year."

"Brilliant, brilliant. Go on."

"They believe that General Patton is massing an army in the part of England known as East Anglia. If that army is the invasion force, then it follows that they will attack via the Pas de Calais."

"That makes sense. But I have seen no signs of this army of Patton's."

"There is some doubt in the highest circles in Berlin. The Fuehrer's astrologer - "

"What?"

"Yes, sir, he has an astrologer, who tells him to defend Normandy."

"My God. Are things that bad there?"

"He gets plenty of earthbound advice, too. I personally believe he uses the astrologer as an excuse when he thinks the generals are wrong but he cannot fault their arguments."

Faber sighed. He had been afraid of news like this. "Go on."

"Your assignment is to assess the strength of the East Anglian army: numbers of troops, artillery, air support - "

"I know how to measure armies, thankyou."

"Of course." He paused. "I am instructed to emphasise the importance of the mission, sir."

"And you have. Tell me: are things so bad in Berlin?"

The agent hesitated, and said: "No, sir. Morale is high, output of munitions increases every month, the people spit at the bombers of the RAF - "

"Never mind," Faber interrupted him. "I can get the propaganda from my radio."

The younger man was silent.

Faber said: "Do you have anything else to tell me? Officially, I mean."

"Yes. For the duration of the assignment you have a special bolthole."

"They do think it's important," Faber said.

"You rendezvous with a U-boat in the North Sea, ten miles due east of a town called Aberdeen. Just call them in on your normal radio frequency and they will surface. As soon as you or I have told Hamburg that the orders have been passed from me to you, the route will be open. The boat will be there every Friday and Monday, six p.m. to Six a.m. ~~midnight to midnight~~."

"Aberdeen is a big town. Do you have an exact map reference?"

"Yes." The agent recited the numbers, and Faber memorised them.

"Is that everything, Major?"

"Yes, sir."

"What do you plan to do about the gentlemen from MI5 in the house across the road?"

The agent shrugged. "I shall have to give them the slip."

Faber thought: It's no good. "What are your orders for action after you have seen me? Do you have a bolthole?"

"No. I am to go to a town called Weymouth and steal a boat in which to return to France."

So, Faber thought: Canaris knew how it would be. Very well. He said: "And if you are caught by the British, and tortured?"

"I have a suicide pill."

"And you will use it?"

"Most certainly."

Faber looked at him. "I think you might," he said. He placed his left hand on the agent's chest and put his weight on it, as if he were about to get off the bed. That way he was able to feel exactly where the rib cage ended and the soft belly began. He thrust the point of the stiletto in just under the ribs and stabbed upwards to the heart.

The agent's eyes widened for a terror-stricken instant. A cry came to his throat but did not escape. His body convulsed. Faber pushed the stiletto an inch farther in. The eyes closed and the body went limp.

Faber said: "You saw my face."

8

"I think we've lost control of it," said Percival Godliman.

Frederick Bloggs nodded agreement, and added: "It's my fault."

The boy looked weary, Godliman thought. He had had that look for almost a year, ever since the night they dragged the crushed remains of his wife from underneath the rubble of a bombed house in Bermondsey.

"I'm not interested in apportioning blame," Godliman said briskly. "The fact is that something happened in Leicester Square during the few seconds for which you lost sight of Blondie."

"Do you think the contact was made?"

"Possibly."

"When we picked him up again back in Stockwell, I thought he had simply given up for the day."

"If that were the case he would have made the rendezvous again yesterday and today." Godliman was making patterns with matchsticks on his desk, a thinking

habit he had developed. "Still no movement at the house?"

"Nothing. He's been in there for forty-eight hours." Bloggs repeated: "It's my fault."

"Don't be a bore, old chap," Godliman said. "It was my decision to let him run, so that he would lead us to someone else; and I still think it was the right move."

Bloggs sat motionless, his expression blank, his hands in the pockets of his raincoat. "If the contact has been made, we shouldn't delay picking Blondie up and finding out what his mission was."

"That way we lose whatever chance we have left of following Blondie to somebody really dangerous."

"Your decision."

Godliman had made a church with his matches. He stared at it for a moment, then took a halfpenny from his pocket and tossed it. "Tails," he observed. "Give him another twenty-four hours."

Tha landlord was a middle-aged Irish Republican from Lisdoonvarna, County Clare, who harboured a secret hope that the Germans would win the war and thus free the Emerald Isle from English oppression forever. He limped athritically around the old house, collecting his weekly rents, thinking how much he would be worth if those rents were allowed to rise to their true market value. He was not a rich man - he owned only two houses, this and the smaller one he lived in. ~~- and the bombing was a standing threat to his precarious livelihood.~~ He was permanently had-tempered.

The tenant of the ground floor was in Egypt, and his wife out at work in a factory. The landlord collected the money from the tenant's mother, who stayed at home to look after the baby. She pointed out the damp in the front room again, and said it was giving the baby a cough, again. The landlord said he couldn't get a builder for love nor money, again; it was probably true, although in fact he hadn't tried.

The schoolteacher on the first floor had left her rent in an envelope on her table, as usual. She was an ideal tenant: she always paid on the dot and the landlord never saw her. Her room was neat and tidy, and she did little repairs herself.

The other first-floor tenant was the old man, and he was always there. The landlord tapped on his door and went in.

The old man was [redacted] pleased to see him. He was probably pleased to see anybody. He said: "Hello, Mr Riley, would you like a cup of tea?"

"No time today."

"Oh well." The old man handed over the money. "I expect you've seen the kitchen window."

"No, I didn't go in there."

"Oh! Well, there's a pane of glass out. I patched it over with blackout curtain, but of course there is a draft."

"Who smashed it?" the landlord asked.

"Funny thing, it ain't broke. Just lying there on the grass. I expect the old putty just gave way. I'll mend it myself, if you can get hold of a bit of putty."

You old fool, the landlord thought. Aloud he said: "I don't suppose it occurred to you that you might have been burgled?"

The old man looked astonished. "I never thought of that."

"Nobody's missing any valuables?"

"Nobody's said so to me."

The landlord went to the door. "All right, I'll have a look when I go down." He went out.

The old man followed him. "I don't think the new bloke is in, upstairs," he said. "I haven't heard a sound for a couple of days."

The landlord was sniffing. "Has he been cooking in his room?"

"I wouldn't know, Mr Riley."

The two of them went up the stairs. The old man said: "He's very quiet,

if he is there."

"Whatever he's cooking, he'll ~~af~~ have to stop. It smells bloody awful."

The landlord knocked on the door. There was no answer. He opened it and went in, and the old man followed him.

"Well, well, well," the old sergeant said heartily. "I think you've got a dead one."

He stood in the doorway, surveying the room. "You touched anything, Paddy?"

"No," the landlord replied. "And the name's Mr Riley."

The policeman ignored this. "Not long dead, though. I've smelled worse." His survey took in the old chest of drawers, the suitcase on the low table, the faded square of carpet, the dirty curtains on the dormer window, and the rumpled bed in the corner. There were no signs of a struggle.

He went over to the bed. The young man's face was peaceful, his hands clasped over his chest. "I'd say heart attack, if he wasn't so young." There was no empty sleeping-pill-bottle to indicate suicide. He picked up the leather wallet on top of the chest and looked through its contents. There was an identity card and a ration book, and a fairly thick wad of notes. "Papers in order and he ain't been robbed."

"He's only been here a week or so," the landlord ventured. "I don't know anything about him at all. He came from North Wales to look for factory work."

The sergeant observed: "If he was a healthy as he looked he'd be in the Army." ~~I don't even know if it's worth bothering the coroner's officer.~~ He opened the suitcase on the table. "Bloody hell, what's this lot?"

The landlord and the old man had edged their way into the room now. The landlord said: "It's a radio" at the same time as the old man said: "He's bleeding."

"Don't touch that body!" the sergeant said.

"He's had a knife in the guts," the old man persisted.

The sergeant gingerly lifted one of the dead hands from the chest. "He was bleeding," he said. "Where's the nearest phone?"

"Five doors down," the landlord told him.

"Lock this room and stay out until I get back."

The sergeant left the house and knocked at the door of the neighbour with the phone. A woman opened it. "Good morning, madam. May I use your telephone?"

"Come in." She showed him the phone, on a stand in the hall. "What's happened - anything exciting?"

"A tenant died in a lodging-house just up the road," he told her as he dialled.

"Murdered?" she asked, wide-eyed.

"I leave that to the experts," he said. "Hello? Superintendent Jones, please. This is Canter." He looked at the woman. "Might I ask you just to pop in the kitchen while I talk to my governor?"

She went, disappointed.

"Hello, Super. This body's got a knife wound and a suitcase radio."

"What's the address again, Sarge?"

Sergeant Canter told him.

"Yes, that's the one they've been watching. This is an MI5 job, Sarge. Go to number forty-two and tell the surveillance team there. I'll get on to their chief. Off you go."

The sergeant thanked the woman and crossed the road. He was quite thrilled: this was only his second murder in thirty-one years as a Metropolitan Policeman, and it turned out to involve espionage! He might make Inspector yet.

He knocked on the door of number forty-two. It opened, and two men stood there.

Sergeant Canter said: "Are you the secret agents from MI5?"

Bloggs arrived at the same time as a Special Branch man, Detective-Inspector Harris, whom he had known in his Scotland Yard days. Sergeant Canter showed them the body.

They stood still for a moment, looking at the peaceful young face with its blond moustache.

Harris said: "Who is he?"

"Codename Blondie," Bloggs told him. "We think he came in by parachute a couple of weeks ago. We picked up a radio message to another agent arranging a rendezvous. We knew the code, so we were able to watch the rendezvous. We hoped Blondie would lead us to the resident agent, who would be a much more dangerous specimen."

"So what happened here?"

"Buggered if I know," Bloggs said.

Harris looked at the wound in the agent's chest. "Stiletto?"

"Looks like it. A very neat job. Under the ribs and straight up into the heart. Quick."

"There are worse ways to die."

Sergeant Canter said: "Would you like to see the method of entry?"

He led them downstairs to the kitchen. They looked at the window-frame and the unbroken pane of glass lying on the lawn.

Canter said: "Also, the lock on the bedroom door had been picked."

They sat down at the kitchen table, and Carter made tea. Bloggs said: "It happened the night after I lost him in Leicester Square. I fouled it all up."

Harris said: "Nobody's perfect."

They drank their tea in silence for a while. Harris said: "How are things with you, anyway? You don't drop in at the Yard."

"Busy."

"How's Christine?"

"Killed in the bombing."

Harris's eyes widened. "You poor bastard."

"You all right?"

"Lost my brother in North Africa. Did you ever meet Johnny?"

"No."

"He was a lad. Drink? You've never seen anything like it. Spent so much on booze, he could never afford to get married - which is just as well, the way things turned out."

"Most people have lost somebody."

"If you're on your own, come round our place for dinner on Sunday."

"Thanks, I work Sundays now."

Harris nodded. "Well, whenever you feel like it."

A detective-constable poked his head around the door and addressed Harris. "Can we start bagging-up the evidence, guv?"

Harris looked at Bloggs.

"I've finished," Bloggs said.

"All right, son, carry on," Harris told him.

Bloggs said: "Suppose he made contact after I lost him, and arranged for the resident agent to come here. The resident might have suspected a trap - that would explain why he came in through the window and picked the lock."

"It makes him a devilishly suspicious bastard," Harris observed.

"That might be why we've never caught him. Anyway, he gets into Blondie's room and wakes him up. Now he knows it isn't a trap, right?"

"Right."

"So why does he kill Blondie?"

"Maybe they quarrelled."

"There were no signs of a struggle."

Harris frowned into his empty tea cup. "Perhaps he twigged that Blondie was being watched, and he was afraid we'd pick the boy up and make him spill the beans."

Bloggs said: "That makes him a ruthless bastard."

"That might be why we've never caught him."

"Come in. Sit down. I've just had a call from MI6. Canaris has been fired."

Bloggs went in, sat down, and said: "Is that good news or bad?"

"Very bad," said Percival Godliman. "It's happened at the worst possible moment."

"Do I get told why?"

Godliman looked at Bloggs through narrowed eyes, then said: "I think you need to know. At this moment we have forty double agents broadcasting to Hamburg false information about Allied plans for the invasion of France."

Bloggs whistled. "I didn't know it was quite that big. I suppose the doubles say we're going in at Cherbourg, but really it will be Calais, or vice versa."

"It's vice versa, and it's more complex than that: we're letting them think the Normandy thrust is a diversion, a preliminary to the real thing."

Bloggs' eyes gleamed as he took it in. "So even after we've landed they'll still be concentrating on Calais! That's very good."

"And the whole thing is in danger. We knew Canaris; we knew we had him fooled; we could have gone on fooling him. A new broom will probably mistrust his predecessor's agents. There's more: we've had some defections from the other side, people who could have betrayed the Abwehr's people over here if we hadn't already got them. It's another reason for the Germans to begin to mistrust our doubles.

"Then there's the possibility of a leak. Literally thousands of people now know about the double-cross system. There are doubles in Iceland, Canada and Ceylon. We ran a double-cross in the Middle East.

"And we made a bad mistake last year by repatriating a German called Erich Carl. We later learned he was an Abwehr agent - a real one - and that while he was in internment on the Isle of Man he may have learned about Tate and about Jeff.

"So we're skating on thin ice. If one decent Abwehr agent in Britain gets to know about Fortitude - that's the codename for the deception plan - the whole strategy will be endangered. Not to mince words, we could lose the fucking war."

Bloggs suppressed a smile: he could remember a time when Professor Godliman did not know the meaning of such words.

The Professor went on: "The Twenty Committee has made it quite clear that

they expect me to make sure there aren't any decent Abwehr agents in Britain."

Bloggs said: "Last week we would have been quite confident that there weren't."

"Now we know there's at least one."

"And we let him slip through our fingers."

"So now we have to find him again."

"I don't know," Bloggs said gloomily. "We don't know what part of the country he's operating from, we haven't the faintest idea what he looks like. He's too crafty to be pinpointed by triangulation while he's transmitting - otherwise we would have nabbed him long ago. We don't even know his codename, because we didn't get all of that signal. So where do we start?"

"Unsolved crimes," said Godliman. "Look: a spy is bound to break the law. He forges papers, he steals petrol and ammunition for his pistol, he evades checkpoints, he enters restricted areas, he takes photographs, and when people rumble him he kills them. The police are bound to get to know of some of these crimes, if the spy has been operating for any length of time. If we go through the unsolved crimes files since the war, we'll find traces."

"Don't you realise that <u>most</u> crimes are unsolved?" Bloggs said incredulously. "The files would fill the Albert Hall!"

Godliman shrugged. "So, we narrow it down to London, and we start with murders."

They found what they were looking for on the very first day of their search.

It happened to be Godliman who came across it, and at first he did not realise its significance.

It was the file on the murder of a Mrs Una Garden in Highgate in 1940. Her throat had been cut and she had been sexually molested, although not raped. She had been found in the bedroom of her lodger, with considerable alcohol in her bloodstream. The picture was fairly clear: she had had a tryst with the lodger, he had wanted to go farther than she was prepared to let him, they had

quarrelled, he had killed her, and the murder had neutralized his libido. But the police had never found the lodger.

Godliman had been about to pass over the file: spies did not get involved in sexual assaults. But he was a meticulous man with records, so he read every word, and consequently discovered that the unfortunate Mrs Garden had received stiletto wounds in her back, as well as the fatal wound to her throat.

Godliman and Bloggs were on opposite sides of a wooden table in the records room at Old Scotland Yard. Godliman tossed the file across the table and said: "I think this is it."

Bloggs glanced through it and said: "The stiletto."

They signed for the file and walked the short distance to the War Office. When they returned to Godliman's office, there was a decoded signal on his desk. He read it casually, then thumped the table in excitement. "It's him!"

Bloggs read: "Orders received. Regards to Willi."

"Remember him?" Godliman said. "Der Nadel?"

"Yes," Bloggs said hesitantly. "The Needle. But there's not much information here."

"Think, think! A stiletto is like a needle. It's the same man: the murder of Una Garden, all those signals in 1940 that we couldn't trace, the rendezvous with Blondie ... "

"Possibly." Bloggs looked thoughtful. "If you're right, he's been operating in London for at least five years and it's taken us until now to get on to him. He won't be easy to catch."

Godliman suddenly looked wolfish. "He may be clever, but he's not as clever as me," he said tightly. "I'm going to nail him to the fucking wall."

Bloggs laughed out loud. "My God, you've changed, Professor."

Godliman said: "Do you realise that's the first time you've laughed for a year?"

9

The supply boat rounded the headland and chugged into the bay at Storm Island under a blue sky. There were two women in it: one was the skipper's wife - he had been called up and now she ran the business - and the other was Lucy's mother.

Mother got out of the boat. She was wearing a utility suit - a mannish jacket and an above-the-knee skirt. Lucy hugged her mightily.

"Mother! What a surprise!"

"But I wrote to you."

The letter was with the mail in the boat - Mother had forgotten that the post came only once a fortnight on Storm Island.

"Is this my grandson? Isn't he a big boy?"

Little Jo, almost three years old, turned bashful and hid behind Lucy's skirt. He was dark-haired, pretty, and tall for his age.

Mother said: "Isn't he like his father?"

"Yes," Lucy said. Her assent held a note of disapproval. "You must be freezing - come up to the house. Where did you get that skirt?"

They picked up the groceries and began to walk up the ramp to the cliff top. Mother chattered as they went. "It's the fashion, dear. It saves on material. But it isn't as cold as this on the mainland. Such a wind! I suppose it's all right to leave my case on the jetty - nobody to steal it! Jane is engaged to an American soldier - a white ~~nig~~ one, thank God. He comes from a place called Milwaukee, and he doesn't chew gum. Isn't that nice? I've only got four more daughters to marry off now. Your father is a Captain in the Home Guard, did I tell you? He's up half the night patrolling the common waiting for German parachutists. Uncle Stephen's warehouse was bombed - I don't know what he'll do, it's an Act of War or something - "

"Don't rush, Mother, you've got fourteen days to tell me the news," Lucy laughed.

They reached the cottage. Mother said: "Isn't this lovely?" They went in.

"I think this is just lovely."

Lucy parked Mother at the kitchen table and made tea. "Tom will get your case up. He'll be here for his lunch shortly."

"The shepherd?"

"Yes."

"Does he find things for David to do, then?"

Lucy laughed. "It's the other way around. I'm sure he'll tell you all about it himself. You haven't told me why you're here."

"My dear, it's about time I saw you. I know we're not supposed to make unnecessary journeys, but once in four years isn't extravagant, is it?"

They heard the jeep outside, and a moment later David wheeled himself in. He kissed his mother-in-law and introduced Tom.

Lucy said: "Tom, you can earn your lunch today by bringing Mother's case up, as she carried your groceries."

David was warming his hands at the stove. "It's raw today."

Mother said: "You're really taking sheep-farming seriously, then?"

"The flock is double what it was three years ago," David told her. "My father never farmed this island seriously. I've fenced six miles of the cliff top, improved the grazing, and introduced modern breeding methods. Not only do we have more sheep, but they give us more meat and wool."

Mother said tentatively: "I suppose Tom does the physical work and you give the orders."

David laughed. "Equal partners, Mother."

They had hearts for lunch, and both men ate mountains of potatoes. Mother commented favourably on Jo's table manners. Afterwards David lit a cigarette and Tom stuffed his pipe.

Mother said: "What I really want to know is when you're going to give me more grandchildren." She smiled brightly.

There was a long silence.

Tom liked Lucy's mother, but he was sure she would cause trouble. It would be hard

not to, walking into a situation like that.

Exactly what the situation was, Tom did not know. Things weren't right between man and wife, to be sure, but as for the reason ...

He thought about them a lot as he walked the downs, crook in hand, pipe in mouth, dog at his heels. They were good people, both of them. She was a pretty girl, a good mother, and cooked beautifully - and he had never heard her complain or nag. The boy did not speak much, but when he did he was pleasant enough, and a good farmer, although he had probably never dirtied his hands before he came here. And there was the bairn, so that side of things must be all right, he supposed. Yet he had never seen David touch Lucy, never heard either of them speak a word of affection, never caught the kind of secretive glance that usually passed between young marrieds. It was as if each was blaming the other for something in the past which neither of them would speak of. They were like old enemies who meet unexpectedly at a party which neither can afford to leave.

It certainly had not been like that with Tom and his Jean. They had married in wartime - the Boer War. Tom had fought in South Africa. In those days people just weren't so open about their feelings - a man would never kiss his wife in public, not in Scotland, though what they did in England was the subject of much prurient speculation. Nevertheless Tom and Jean used to hold hands, even after they were married, and he would put his arm around her in company; and sometimes, when it was getting near bedtime, he would give her a wink.

They had been content. A shepherd's job was badly paid but steady, and the tied cottage was better than most had in those days. There was no electric light, of course, nor hot water from the tap, nor wireless sets or gramophone records or vacuum cleaners. Yet with all these modern trinkets David and Lucy definitely were not happy.

It saddened Tom, because their presence had been so good for him. He would not let them know it, but he had been overjoyed when he heard he was to have neighbours again after twenty years of solitude. And when Lucy had the bairn, well, it was as good as a grandchild of his own. He was a marvellous little chap -

upright and talkative and full of laughter.

Tom rarely cooked for himself, now. He always had lunch with the youngsters, so he just made a bowl of porage for his breakfast and cut a piece of cheese for supper.

He still did his own washing and cleaning and mending, for he was proud of his independence, and did not want to become obligated. But life was much sweeter with good home cooking, pies and puddings and cake; and it was good to have someone to talk to again.

Yes, they had brought him happiness; he was sorry they had none for themselves.

"Well, I think it's wonderful, the way David copes," said Mother.

Lucy said: "Yes," and again there was that note of disapproval.

They were walking along the cliff top. The wind had dropped on the third day of Mother's visit, and it was mild enough to go out. They took Jo, dressed in a fisherman's sweater and a fur coat. They had stopped at the top of a rise to watch David, Tom and the dogs herding sheep. Lucy could see in Mother's face an internal struggle as concern vied with discretion. She decided to save her mother the effort of asking.

"He doesn't love me," she said.

Mother looked quickly to make sure Jo was out of earshot. "I'm sure it's not that bad, dear. Different men show their love in diff - "

"Mother, we haven't been man and wife - properly - since we were married."

"But ... ?" She indicated Jo with a nod.

"That was a week before the wedding."

"Oh! Oh, dear." She looked shocked. "Is it, you know, the accident?"

"Yes, but not in the way you mean. It's nothing physical. He just ... won't." Lucy was crying quietly, the tears trickling down her wind-browned cheeks.

"Have you talked about it?"

"I've tried. Mother, what shall I do?"

"Perhaps with time - "

"It's been almost four years!"

There was a pause. They began to walk on across the heather, into the weak afternoon sun. Jo chased gulls. Mother said: "I almost left your father, once."

It was Lucy's turn to be shocked. "When?"

"It was soon after Jane was born. We weren't so well-off in those days, you know - Father was still working for his father, and there was a slump. I was expecting for the third time in three years, and it seemed that a life of having babies and making ends meet stretched out in front of me with nothing to relieve the monotony. Then I discovered he was seeing an old flame of his - Brenda Simmons, you never knew her, she went to Basingstoke. Suddenly I asked myself what I was doing it for, and I couldn't think of a sensible answer."

Lucy had dim, patchy memories of those days: her grandfather with a white moustache; a more slender edition of her father; extended-family meals in the great farmhouse kitchen; a lot of laughter and sunshine and animals. Even then her parents' marriage seemed to represent solid contentment, happy permanence. She said: "Why didn't you? Leave, I mean."

"Oh, people just didn't, in those days. There wasn't all this divorce, and a woman couldn't get a job."

"Women work at all sorts of things now."

"They did in the last war, but everything changed afterwards with a bit of unemployment. I expect it will be the same this time. Men get their way, you know, generally speaking."

"And you're glad you stayed." It was not a question.

"People my age shouldn't make pronouncements about Life. But my life has been a matter of making-do, and the same goes for most of the people I know. Steadfastness always looks like a sacrifice, but usually it isn't. Anyway, I'm not going to give you advice. You wouldn't take it, and if you did you'd blame your problems on me, I expect."

"Oh, Mother," Lucy smiled.

Mother said: "Shall we turn around? I think we've gone far enough for one day."

In the kitchen one evening Lucy said to David: "I'd like Mother to stay another fortnight, if she will."

Mother was upstairs putting Jo to bed, telling him nursery rhymes.

David said: "Isn't one fortnight long enough for you to dissect my personality?"

"Don't be silly, David."

He wheeled himself over to her chair. "Are you telling me you don't talk about me?"

"Of course we talk about you - you're my husband."

"What do you say to her, then?"

"Why are you so worried?" Lucy said, not without malice. "What are you so ashamed of?"

"Damn you, I've nothing to be ashamed of. No one wants his personal life talked about by a pair of gossiping women."

"We don't gossip about you."

"What do you say?"

"Aren't you touchy!"

"Answer my question."

"I say I want to leave you, and she tries to talk me out of it."

He spun around and wheeled away. "Tell her not to bother for my sake."

She called: "Do you mean that?"

He stopped. "I don't need anybody, do you understand? I can manage alone. I'm self-sufficient."

"And what about me?" she said quietly. "Perhaps I need somebody."

"What for?"

"To love me."

Mother came in, and sensed the atmosphere. "He's fast asleep," she said.

"Dropped off before Cinderella got to the ball. I think I'll pack a few things, not to leave it all until tomorrow." She went out again.

"Do you think it will ever change, David?" Lucy asked.

"I don't know what you mean."

"Will we ever be ... the way we were, before the wedding?"

"My legs won't grow back, if that's what you mean."

"Oh, God, don't you know that doesn't bother me? I just want to be loved."

David shrugged. "That's your problem." He went out before she started to cry.

Mother did not stay the second fortnight. Lucy walked with her down to the jetty the next Monday. It was raining hard, and they both wore mackintoshes. They stood in silence waiting for the boat, watching the rain pit the sea with tiny craters. Mother held Jo in her arms.

"Things will change, in time, you know," she said. "Four years is nothing in a marriage."

Lucy said: "I don't think he'll change, but there's not much I can do, other than give it a chance. There's Jo, and the war, and David's disability - how can I leave him?"

The boat arrived, and Lucy exchanged her mother for three boxes of groceries and five letters. The water was choppy. Mother sat in the boat's tiny cabin. They waved her around the headland. Lucy felt very lonely.

Jo began to cry. "I don't want Gran to go away!"

"Nor do I," said Lucy.

10

Godliman and Bloggs walked side by side along the pavement of a bomb-damaged London shopping street. They were a mismatched pair: the stooped, bird-like professor, with pebble-lensed spectacles and a pipe, not looking where he was going, taking short, scurrying steps; and the flatfooted youngster, blond and

purposeful, in his detective's raincoat and melodramatic hat; a cartoon looking for a punch line.

Godliman was saying: "I think Der Nadel is well-connected."

"Why?"

"The only way he could get away with being so insubordinate. It's this 'Regards to Willi' line. It must refer to Canaris."

"You think he's pals with Canaris."

"He's pals with somebody. If not with Canaris, then with someone equally powerful - or rather, as powerful as Canaris used to be."

"I have the feeling this is leading somewhere."

"People who are well-connected generally make those connections at school, or university, or staff college. Look at that."

They were outside a shop which had a huge empty space where once there had been a plate-glass window. A rough sign, hand-painted and nailed to the window-frame, said: "Even more open than usual."

Bloggs laughed, and said: "I saw one outside a bombed police station: 'Be good. We are still open.'"

"It's become a minor art form."

They walked on. Bloggs said: "So, what if Der Nadel did go to school with someone high in the Wermacht?"

"People always have their pictures taken at school. Midwinter down in the basement at Kensington - that house where MI6 used to be before the war - he's got a collection of thousands of photographs of German officers: school photos, binges in the Mess, passing-out parades, shaking hands with Adolf, newspaper pictures - everything."

"I see," Bloggs said. "So if you're right, and Der Nadel has been though Germany's equivalent of Eton and Sandhurst, we've probably got a picture of him."

"Almost certainly. Spies are notoriously camera-shy, but they don't become spies until they're well into adulthood. It will be a youthful Der Nadel that we find in Midwinter's files."

They skirted a huge crater outside a barber's. The shop was intact, but the traditional red-and-white striped pole lay in shards on the pavement. The sign in the window said: "We've had a close shave - come and get one yourself."

Bloggs said: "How will we recognise him? Nobody has ever seen him."

"Yes, they have. They've seen him in Highgate."

The Victorian house stood on a hill overlooking London. It was built of bright red brick, and Bloggs thought it looked angry at the damage Hitler was doing to its city. It was high up; a good place from which to broadcast. Der Nadel would have lived on the top floor. Bloggs wondered what secrets the spy had transmitted to Hamburg from this place in the dark days of 1940. Map references for aircraft factories and steelworks, details of coastal defences, political gossip, gas masks and Anderson shelters and sandbags, British morale, bomb damage reports, "Well done, boys, you got Christine Bloggs at last - " Shut up.

The door was opened by an elderly man in a black jacket and striped trousers.

"Good morning. I'm Inspector Bloggs, from Scotland Yard. I'd like a word with the householder, please."

Bloggs saw fear leap to the man's eyes, then a young woman appeared in the doorway behind him and said: "Come in, please."

The tiled hall smelled of wax polish. Bloggs hung his hat and coat on a stand. The old man disappeared into the depths of the house, and the woman led Bloggs into a lounge. It was expensively furnished in a rich, old-fashioned way. There were bottles of whisky, gin and sherry on a trolley: all the bottles were unopened. The woman sat on a floral armchair and crossed her legs.

Bloggs said: "Why is the old man frightened of the police?"

"My father-in-law is a German Jew. He came here in 1935 to escape Hitler, and in 1940 you put him in a concentration camp. His wife killed herself at the prospect. He has just been released from the Isle of Man. He had a letter from the King, apologizing for the inconvenience to which he had been put."

Bloggs said: "We don't have concentration camps."

"We invented them. In South Africa. Didn't you know? We go on so about our history, but we forget bits. We're so good at blinding ourselves to unpleasant facts."

"Perhaps it's just as well."

"What?"

"In 1939 we blinded ourselves to the unpleasant fact that we couldn't win a war with Germany - and look what happened."

"That's what my father-in-law says. He's not a cynical as I. What can we do to assist Scotland Yard?"

Bloggs had been enjoying the debate, and now it was with reluctance that he turned his attention to work. "It's about a murder that took place here four years ago."

"So long!"

"Some new evidence may have come to light."

"I know about it, of course. The previous owner was killed by a tenant. My husband bought the house from her executor - she had no heirs."

"I want to trace the other people who were tenants at that time."

"Yes." The woman's hostility had gone, now, and her intelligent face showed the effort of recollection. "When we arrived there were three ~~xxxx~~ who had been here before the murder: a retired naval officer, a salesman, and a young boy from Yorkshire. The boy joined the Army - he still writes to us. The salesman was called up, and he died at sea. I know because two of his five wives got in touch with us! And the Commander is still here."

"Still here!" That was a piece of luck. "I'd like to see him, please."

"Surely." She stood up. "He's aged a lot. I'll take you to his room."

They went up the carpeted stairs to the first floor. She said: "While you're talking to him, I'll look up the last letter from the boy in the Army." She knocked on the door: it was more than Bloggs' landlady would have done, he thought wryly. A voice called: "It's open," and Bloggs went in.

The Commander sat in a chair by the window with a blanket over his knees.

He wore a blazer, a collar and a tie, and spectacles. His hair was thin, his moustache grey, his skin loose and wrinkled over a face that might once have been strong. The room was the home of a man living on memories: there were paintings of sailing ships, a sextant and a telescope, a photograph of himself as a boy aboard HMS Winchester.

"Look at this," he said without turning around. "Tell me why that chap isn't in the Navy."

Bloggs crossed to the window. A horse-drawn baker's van was at the kerb outside the house, the elderly horse dipping into its nose-bag while the deliveries were made. That "chap" was a woman with short blonde hair in trousers. She had a magnificent bust. Bloggs laughed. "It's a woman in trousers," he said.

"Bless my soul, so it is!" The Commander turned around. "Can't tell, these days, you know. Women in trousers!"

Bloggs introduced himself. "We've re-opened the case of a murder committed here in 1940. I believe you lived her at the same time as the main suspect, one Henry Faber."

"Indeed! What can I do to help?"

"How well do you remember Faber?"

"Perfectly. Tall chap, dark hair, well-spoken, quiet. Rather shabby clothes - if you were the kind who judges by appearances, you might well mistake him. I didn't dislike him - wouldn't have minded getting to know him better, but he didn't want that. I suppose he was about your age."

Bloggs suppressed a smile: he was used to people assuming he must be older simply because he was a detective.

The Commander added: "I'm sure he didn't do it, you know. I know abit about character - you can't command a ship without learning - and if that man was a sex maniac, I'm Hermann Goering."

Bloggs suddenly connected the blonde in trousers with the mistake about his age, and the conclusion depressed him. He said: "You know, you should always ask to see a policeman's warrant card."

The Commander was slightly taken aback. "All right, then, let's have it."

Bloggs opened his wallet and folded it to display the picture of Christine. "Here."

The Commander studied it for a moment, then said: "A very good likeness."

Bloggs sighed. The Commander was very nearly blind.

He stood up. "That's all, for now," he said. "Thankyou."

"Any time. Whatever I can do to help. I'm not much value to England these days - you've got to be pretty useless to get invalided out of the Home Guard, you know."

"Goodbye." Bloggs went out.

The woman was in the hall downstairs. She handed Bloggs a letter. "The address is a Forces box number," she said. "No doubt you'll be able to find out where he is."

"You knew the Commander would be no use," Bloggs said.

"I guessed not. But a visitor makes his day." She opened the door.

On impulse, Bloggs said: "Will you have dinner with me?"

A shadow crossed her face. "My husband is still on the Isle of Man."

"I'm sorry - I thought - "

"It's all right. I'm flattered."

"I wanted to convince you that we're not the Gestapo."

"I know you're not. A woman alone just gets bitter."

Bloggs said: "I lost my wife in the Blitz."

"Then you know how it makes you hate."

"Yes," said Bloggs. "It makes you hate." He went down the steps. The door closed behind him. It had started to rain.

It had been raining then. ~~The nation had been praying for bad weather since August, and now that it had come before the RAF was crippled, people were saying Hitler might not invade, after all.~~ Bloggs was late home. He had been going over some new material with Godliman. Now he was hurrying, so that he would have half

an hour with Christine before she went out to drive her ambulance. It was dark, and the raid had already started. They would ease up soon, people said. If there was a God in heaven they would ease up soon: the things Christine saw at night were so awful she had stopped talking about them.

Bloggs was proud of her, proud. The people she worked with said she was better than two men: she hurtled through blacked-out London, driving like a veteran, taking corners on two wheels, whistling and cracking jokes as the city turned to flame around her. Fearless, they called her. Bloggs knew better: she was terrified, but she would not let it show. He knew because he saw her eyes in the morning, when he got up and she went to bed; when her guard was down and it was over for a few hours; he knew it was not fearlessness, but courage, and he was proud.

It was raining harder when he came out of the Underground station. He pulled down his hat and put up his collar. At a kiosk he bought cigarettes for Christine: she had started smoking recently, like a lot of women. The shopkeeper would let him have only five, because of the shortage.

A policeman stopped him and asked for his identity card: another two minutes wasted. An ambulance passed him, similar to the one Christine drove; a requisitioned fruit lorry, painted grey.

He began to get nervous as he approached home. The explosions were sounding closer, and he could hear the aircraft clearly. The East End was in for another bruising tonight: he would sleep in the Morrison shelter. There was a big one, terribly close, and he quickened his step. He would eat his supper in the shelter, too.

He turned into his own street, saw the ambulances and the fire engines, and broke into a run.

The bomb had landed on his side of the street, around the middle. It must be close to his own home. Jesus in heaven, not us, no –

There had been a direct hit on the roof, and the house was literally flattened. He raced up to the crowd of people, neighbours and firemen and

volunteers. "Is my wife all right? Is she out? IS SHE IN THERE?"

A fireman looked at him with compassion. "Nobody's come out of there, mate."

Rescuers were picking over the rubble. Suddenly one of them shouted: "Over here!" Then he said: "Bugger me, it's Fearless Bloggs!"

Frederick dashed to where the man stood. Christine was underneath a huge chunk of brickwork. Her face was visible: the eyes were closed.

The rescuer called: "Lifting gear, boys, sharp's the word."

Christine moaned and stirred.

Bloggs said: "She's alive!" He knelt down beside her and got his hands under the edge of the lump of rubble.

The rescuer said: "You won't shift that, son."

The brickwork lifted.

The rescuer said: "Streuth, you'll kill yourself," and bent down to help.

When it was two feet off the ground they got their shoulders under it. The weight was off Christine now. A third man joined in, and a fourth. They all straightened up together.

Bloggs said: "I'll lift her out."

He crawled under the sloping roof of brick and cradled his wife in his arms.

Someone shouted: "Fuck me it's slipping!"

Bloggs scurried out from under with Christine held tightly to his chest. As soon as he was clear the rescuers let go of the rubble and jumped away. It fell back to earth with a sickening thud; and when Bloggs realised that that had landed on Christine, he knew she would die.

He carried her to the ambulance, and it took off immediately. She opened her eyes again once, before she died, and said: "You'll have to win the war without me, kiddo."

Three years later, as he walked downhill from Highgate into the bowl of London, with the rain on his face mingling with the tears again, he thought the woman in the spy's house had said a mighty truth: it makes you hate.

In war boys become men, and men become soldiers, and soldiers get promotions; and this is why Billy Parkin, aged 18, who should have been an apprentice in his father's tannery at Scunthorpe, was believed by the Army to be twenty-one, made up to sergeant, and given the job of leading his ~~xxx~~ advance squad through a hot, dry forest toward a dusty whitewashed Italian village.

The Italians had surrendered but the Germans had not, and it was the Germans who were defending Italy against the combined British-American invasion. The Allies were going to Rome, and for Segeant Parkin's squad it was a long walk.

They came out of the forest at the top of a hill, and lay flat on their bellies to look down on the village. Parkin got out his binoculars and said: "What I wouldn't fookin give for a fookin cup of fookin tea." He had taken to drinking, and cigarettes, and women, and his language was like that of soldiers everywhere. He no longer went to prayer meetings.

Some of these villages were defended and some were not. Parkin recognised that as sound tactics: you didn't know which were undefended, so you approached them all cautiously, and caution cost time.

The downside of the hill held little cover - just a few bushes - and the village began at its foot. There were a few white houses, a river with a wooden bridge, then more houses around a little piazza with a town hall and a clock tower. There was a clear line-of-sight from the tower to the bridge: if the enemy were here at all, he would be in the town hall. A few figures worked in the surrounding fields: God knew who they were. They might be genuine peasants, or any one of a host of factions: fascisti, mafia, Corsos, partigianos, communisti ... or even Germans. You didn't know whose side they would be on until the shooting started.

Parkin said: "All right, Corporal."

Corporal Watkins disappeared back into the forest and emerged, five minutes later, on the dirt road into the village, wearing a civilian hat and a filthy old blanket over his uniform. He shambled, rather than walked, and over his shoulder was a bundle that could have been anything from a bag of onions to a dead rabbit.

He reached the near edge of the village and disappeared into the darkness of a low cottage.

After a moment he came out, keeping the house between himself and the river, and waved at the top of the hill: one, two, three.

The squad scrambled down the hillside into the village.

Watkins said: "All the houses empty, Sarge."

Parkin nodded. It meant nothing.

They moved through the houses to the edge of the river. Parkin said: "Your turn, Smiler. Swim the Mississippi here."

Private "Smiler" Hudson put his equipment in a neat pile, took off his helmet, boots and tunic, and slid into the narrow stream. He emerged on the far side, climbed the bank, and disappeared among the houses. This time there was a longer wait: more area to check. Finally Hudson walked back across the wooden bridge. "If they're 'ere, they're 'iding," he said.

He retrieved his gear and the squad crossed the bridge into the village. They kept to the sides of the street as they walked toward the piazza. A bird flew off a roof and startled Parkin. Some of the men kicked open a few doors as they passed. There was nobody.

They stood at the edge of the piazza. Parkin nodded at the town hall. "You go inside that place, Smiler?"

"Yes, sir."

"Looks like the village is ours, then."

"Yes, sir."

Parkin stepped forward across the piazza, and then the storm broke. There was a crash of rifles, and bullets hailed all around them. Someone screamed. Parkin was running, dodging, ducking. Watkins, in front of him, shouted with pain and clutched his leg: Parkin picked him up bodily. A bullet clanged off his tin hat. He raced for the nearest house, charged the door, and fell inside.

The shooting stopped. Parkin risked a peep outside. One man ~~was still~~ lay wounded in the piazza: Hudson. Rough justice. Hudson moved, and a solitary shot rang out.

Then he was still. Parkin said: "Fookin bastards."

Watkins was doing something to his leg, cursing. Parkin said: "Bullet still in there?"

Watkins yelled: "Ouch!" then grinned and held something up. "Not any more."

Parkin looked outside again. "They're in the clock tower," he said. "You wouldn't think there was room. Can't be many of them."

"They can shoot, though."

"Yes. They've got us pinned." Parkin frowned. "Got any fireworks?"

"Aye."

"Let's have a look." Parkin opened Watkins's pack and took out the dynamite. "Here. Fix me a ten-second fuse."

The others were in the house across the street. Parkin called: "Hey!"

A face appeared at the door. "Sarge?"

"I'm going to throw them a tomato. When I shout, give me covering fire."

"Right."

Parkin lit a cigarette. Watkins handed him a bundle of dynamite. Parkin shouted: "Fire!" He lit the fuse with the cigarette, stepped into the street, drew back his arm, and threw the bomb at the clock tower. He ducked back into the house, the fire of his own men ringing in his ears. A bullet shaved the woodwork, and he caught a splinter under his chin. He heard the dynamite go off.

Before he could look, someone across the street shouted: "Bullseye!"

Parkins stepped outside. The ancient clock tower had crumbled. A chime sounded incongruously as dust settled over the ruins.

Watkins said: "You ever play cricket? That was a bloody good shot."

Parkin walked to the centre of the piazza. It looked as if there were enough human spare parts to make about three Germans. He said: "The tower was pretty unsteady anyway. It would probably have fallen down if we'd all sneezed at it in unison." He turned away. "Another day, another dollar." It was a phrase the Yanks used.

"Sarge? Radio." It was the R/T operator.

Parkin walked back and took the handset from him. "Sergeant Parkin."

"Major Roberts. You're discharged from active duty as of now, Sergeant."

"Why?" Parkin's first thought was that they had at last discovered his true age.

"The brass want you in London. Don't ask me why because I don't know. Leave your Corporal in charge and make your way back to base. A car will meet you on the road."

"Yes, sir."

"The orders also say that on no account are you to risk your life. Got that?"

Parkin grinned, thinking of the clock tower and the dynamite. "Got it."

"All right. On your way. You lucky sod."

Everyone had called him a boy, but they had known him before he joined the Army, Bloggs thought. There was no doubt he was a man now. He walked with confidence and grace, looked about him sharply, and was respectful without being ill-at-ease in the company of superior officers. Bloggs knew that he was lying about his age, not because of his looks or manner, but because of the small signs that appeared whenever age was mentioned - signs which Bloggs, an experienced interrogator, picked up out of habit.

He had seemed amused when they told him they wanted him to look at pictures. Now, in his third day in Mr Midwinter's dusty Kensington vault, the amusement had gone and tedium set in. What irritated him most was the no-smoking rule.

It was even more boring for Bloggs, who had to sit and watch him.

At one point Parkin said: "You wouldn't call me back from Italy to help in a four-year-old murder case that could wait until after the war. Also, these pictures are mostly of German officers. If this case is somehting I should keep mum about, you'd better tell me."

"It's something you ~~'d better~~ should keep mum about," said Bloggs.

Parkin went back to his pictures.

They were all old, mostly browned and fading. Many were cut out of books, magazines and newspapers. Sometimes Parkin picked up a magnifying glass Mr Midwinter had thoughtfully provided, tom peer more closely at a tiny face in a group; and each time this happened Bloggs' heart raced, only to slow down when Parkin put the glass to one side and picked up the next photograph.

They went to a nearby pub for lunch. The ale was weak, like most wartime beer, but Bloggs still thought it wise to restrict young Parkin to two pints – on his own he would have sunk a gallon.

"Mr Faber was the quiet sort," Parkin said. "You wouldn't think he had it in him. Mind you, the landlady wasn't bad looking. And she wanted it. Looking back, I think I could've had her myself if I'd known how to go about it. There, I was only – eighteen."

They ate bread and cheese, and Parkin swallowed a dozen pickled onions. When they went back, they stopped outside the house while Parkin smoked another cigarette.

"Mind you," he said, "he was a biggish chap, good-looking, well-spoken. We all thought he was nothing much because his clothes were shabby, and he rode a bike, and he'd no money. I suppose it could have been a subtle kind of disguise." His eyebrows were raised in a question.

"It could have," Bloggs said.

That afternoon Parkin found, not one but three pictures of Mr Faber.

One of them was only nine years old.

And Mr Midwinter had the negative.

Henrik Rudolph Hans von Muller-Guder ("Let's just call him Faber," said Goldman with a laugh) was born on 26 May 1900 at a village called Oln in West Prussia. His father's family had been substantial landowners in the area for generations. His father was the second son; so was Henrik. All the second sons were Army officers. His mother, the daughter of a senior official of the Second Reich, was born and raised to be an aristocrat's wife, and that was what she was.

At the age of thirteen he went to the Karlsruhe cadet school in Baden; two years later he was transferred to the more prestigious Gross-Lichterfelde, near Berlin. Both places were hard, disciplinarian institutions where the minds of the pupils were improved with canes and cold baths and bad food. However, Henrik learned to speak English and French and studied history, and passed the Reifeprufung with the highest mark recorded since the turn of the century. There were only three other points of note in his school career: one bitter winter he rebelled against authority to the extent of sneaking out of the school at night and walking 150 miles to his aunt's house; he broke the arm of his wrestling instructor during a practice bout; and he was flogged for insubordination.

He served briefly as an ensign-cadet in the neutral zone at Friedrichsfeld, near Wesel, in 1920; did token officer training at the War School at Metz in 1921, and was commissioned Second Lieutenant in 1922.

("What was the phrase you used?" Godliman asked Bloggs. "The German equivalent of Eton and Sandhurst.")

Over the next few years he did short tours of duty in half-a-dozen places, in the manner of one who is being groomed for the General Staff. He continued to distinguish himself as an athlete, specialising in longer-distance running. He made no close friendships, never married, and refused to join the National Socialist party. His promotion to lieutenant was somewhat delayed by a vague incident involving the pregnancy of the daughter of a lieutenant-colonel in the Defence Ministry, but eventually came about in 1928. His habit of talking to superior officers as if they were equals came to be accepted as pardonable in one who was both a rising young officer and a Prussian aristocrat.

In the late twenties Admiral Wilhelm Canaris became friendly with Henrik's Uncle Otto, his father's elder brother, and spent several holidays at the family estate at Oln. In 1931 Adolf Hitler, not yet Chancellor of Germany, was a guest there.

In 1933 Henrik was promoted to Captain, and went to Berlin for unspecified duties. This is the date of the last photograph.

About then, according to published information, he seems to have ceased to exist.

"We can conjecture the rest," said Percival Godliman. "The Abwehr trains him in wireless transmission, codes, map-making, burglary, blackmail, sabotage, and silent killing. He does some work in France, then comes to London in about 1937 with plenty of time to set himself up with a solid cover – perhaps two. His loner instincts are honed sharp by the spying game. When war breaks out, he considers himself licensed to kill." He looked at the photograph on his desk. "He's a handsome fellow."

It was a picture of the 5,000 metres running team of the 10th Hanoverian Jaeger Battalion. Faber was in the middle, holding a cup. He had a high forehead, with cropped hair; a long chin; and a small mouth decorated with a narrow moustache.

Godliman passed the picture to Billy Parkin. "Has he changed much?"

"He looks a lot older, but that might be his ... bearing." He studied the photograph thoughtfully. "His hair is longer now, and the moustache has gone." He passed the picture back across the desk. "But it's him, all right."

Frederick Bloggs said: "Where do we go from here?"

Godliman considered. "Let's have Sergeant Parkin transferred to us. He's the only man we know who has actually seen Der Nadel. Besides, he knows too much for us to risk him in the front line: he could get captured and interrogated, and give the game away. Next, make a first-class print of this photo, and have the hair thickened and the moustache obliterated by a re-touch artist. Then get twenty thousand copies made."

"Do we want to start a hue and cry?" Bloggs said doubtfully.

"No. For now, let's tread softly. If we put the thing in the newspapers he'll get to hear of it, and vanish. Just send the photo to police forces for the time being."

"Is that all?"

"I think so. Unless you've got other ideas."

Parkin cleared his throat. "Sir?"

"Yes."

"I really would prefer to go back to my unit. I'm not really the administrative type, if you know what I mean."

"You're not being offered a choice, Sergeant. At this stage of the ~~war~~ conflict, one Italian village more or less makes no difference - but this man Faber could lose us the war. As the Americans say, I'm not kidding."

11

Faber had gone fishing.

He was stretched out on the deck of a thirty-foot boat, enjoying the spring sunshine, moving along the canal at about three knots. One lazy hand held the tiller, the other rested on a rod which trailed its line in the water behind the boat.

He hadn't caught a thing all day.

As well as fishing, he was bird-watching - both out of interest (he was actually getting to know quite a lot about the damn birds) and as an excuse for carrying binoculars. Earlier today he had seen a kingfisher's nest.

The people at the boatyard in Norwich had been delighted to rent him the vessel for a fortnight. Business was bad: they had only two boats nowadays, and one of them had not been used since Dunkirk. Faber had haggled over the price, just for the sake of form. In the end they had thrown in a locker full of tinned food.

He had bought bait in a shop nearby; the fishing tackle he had brought from London. They had observed that he had nice weather for it, and wished him good fishing. Nobody wanted to see his identity card.

So far, so good.

The difficult bit was to come. For assessing the strength of an army was difficult. First you had to find it.

In peacetime the Army would put up its own road signs to help you. Now they had taken down, not only their own but everybody else's road signs.

The simple solution would be to get in a car and follow the first military vehicle you saw until it stopped. However, Faber had no car; it was close to impossible for a civilian to hire one; and even if you got one you couldn't get petrol for it. Besides, a civilian driving around the countryside following Army lorries and looking at Army camps was hardly inconspicuous.

Hence the boat.

Some years ago, before it had become illegal to sell maps, Faber had discovered that Britain had thousands of miles of inland waterways. The original network of rivers had been augmented during the nineteenth century by a spider-web of canals. In some areas there was almost as much waterway as there was road. Norfolk was one of those areas.

The boat had many advantages. On a road, a man was going somewhere: on a river he was just sailing. Sleeping in a parked car was conspicuous: sleeping in a moored boat was natural. The waterway was lonely. And who ever heard of a canal-block?

There were disadvantages. Airfields and barracks had to be near roads, but they were located without reference to access by water. Faber had to explore the countryside at night, leaving his moored boat and tramping the hillsides by moonlight, exhausting forty-mile round trips during which he could easily miss what he was looking for because of the darkness or because he simply did not have enough time to check every square mile of land.

When he returned, a couple of hours after dawn, he would sleep until midday then move on, stopping occasionally to climb a nearby hill and check the outlook. At locks, isolated farmhouses and riverside pubs he would talk to people, hoping for hints of a military presence. So far there had been none.

He was beginning to wonder whether he was in the right area. He had tried to put himself in General Patton's place, thinking: If I were planning to invade France east of the Seine from a base in eastern England, where would I locate

that base? Norfolk was obvious: a vast expanse of lonely countryside, plenty of flat ground for aircraft, close to the sea for rapid departure. And the Wash was a natural place to gather a fleet of ships. However, his guesswork might be wrong for reasons unknown to him. Soon he would have to consider a rapid move across country to a new area: perhaps the Fens.

Meanwhile, he was enjoying the weather, the countryside, and the soporific motion of the boat. It reminded him of another holiday, in another country, and he frowned slightly as he recalled the details. Osnabruck. That was it: Osnabruck, August 1913. A tent in a wood.

His brother Werner was there, and his cousins Nicklaus and Heinz. Heinz was the eldest at eighteen, and he was in charge. They had backpacks, a tent, a huge iron saucepan, hunting knives, and a week to themselves. The weather was warm, like this, and they had made a hammock - it was of this that the motion of the boat was reminiscent. Heinz and Werner used bad language all the time, far from grown-up ears. On the first night they gave young Henrik a cigarette and told him about sexual intercourse: he could never decide which of the two had made him throw up.

They trekked deeper into the forest, Heinz navigating with a compass. The big boys set the pace. Henrik and Nicklaus were exhausted. They stayed up late at nights, sitting around a fire, telling dirty jokes and singing bawdy songs. Soon they were sleeping late and walking much more slowly. Henrik had a wonderful time. Werner shot a rook with his catapult.

In the late afternoon of the fifth day they were walking in single file and looking for a camp site when Heinz stopped them, with a finger to his lips, and pointed. They looked through the bushes and saw a couple in a clearing. A well-dressed man in his thirties was playing with a girl's breasts. Heinz and Werner were delighted. They all lay down silently to watch.

Nicklaus sniggered softly when the man took his trousers down. It made them all giggly. But the sight of the man's fat, naked arse humping up and down

was just too hilarious. As he moved faster, the boys had more and more difficulty controlling their amusement; and when his legs and his head went up in the air and he started to shout, they all burst out laughing and ran.

That was when the holiday turned sour. The man heard them - he could not fail to - and gave chase. Henrik would never forget the sheer blind terror of running through a strange wood in the twilight, crashing through bushes and banging his head on low branches, running until he was exhausted then running some more, with the steady pounding footsteps of an enraged and guilty man following him.

The man caught up, of course. When Henrik knew it was no use he stopped and faced him, and the man stopped too, breathing hard.

Henrik pleaded: "I'm sorry, Mister, please don't hit me, I didn't mean to laugh ... "

The man said: "You little shit - I'm going to kill you."

Henrik ran again, just a few yards, and picked up a stone the size of his own head. He turned and threw it at the man.

It was only luck that the stone hit the man such a resounding blow on the forehead: Henrik had thrown blind, panicking. But the man fell down unconscious, with blood flowing freely from the gash.

Henrik yelled: "Heinz! Werner!"

There was an answering cry far away to his left, and Henrik followed the sound, calling and getting answers repeatedly until he found his companions.

Heinz said: "What happened?"

"I killed him," Henrik answered.

Looking back, he was quite sure the man had not died. At the time he had read the newspapers avidly for a few weeks, looking for news of a murder hunt in the woods near Osnabruck, but nothing had transpired. No doubt the man had recovered consciousness within minutes, and realised how foolish he would look if he told anyone about the boy who had watched him fornicate then knocked him out with a

store. Still, at the time Henrik had no doubt he had committed murder and got away with it.

He had learned two lessons from the incident. One was never to trust the big boys. The other was that anyone, no matter how big and strong and threatening, could die.

They were good lessons. He still lived by them.

A lock appeared ahead of him, and he trimmed his sails to slow his pace. He glided gently into the lock and bumped softly against the gates. The lock-keeper's house was on the bank. Faber cupped his hands around his mouth and halloaed. Then he settled down to wait. He had learned that lock-keepers were a breed that could not be hurried. Moreover, it was tea-time, and at tea-time they could hardly be moved at all.

A woman came to the door of the house and beckoned. Faber waved back, then jumped on to the bank, tied up the boat, and went into the house. The lock-keeper was in his shirt-sleeves at the kitchen table. He said: "You're not in a hurry, are you?"

Faber smiled. "Not at all."

"Pour him a cup of tea, Mavis."

"No, really," Faber said politely.

"It's all right, we've just made a pot."

"Thankyou." Faber sat down. The little kitchen was airy and clean, and his tea came in a pretty china cup.

"Fishing holiday?" the lock-keeper asked.

"Fishing and bird-watching," Faber answered. "I'm thinking of tying-up quite soon and spending a couple of days on land."

"Oh, aye. Well, best keep to the far side of the canal, then. Restricted area this side."

"Really? I didn't know there was Army land hereabouts."

"Aye, it starts about half a mile from here. As to whether it's Army, I wouldn't know. They don't tell me."

"Well, I suppose we don't need to know," Faber said.

"Aye. Drink up, then, and I'll see you through the lock. Thanks for

letting me finish my tea."

They left the house and Faber got into the boat and untied it. The gates behind him closed slowly, and then the keeper opened the sluices. The boat gradually sank with the level of the water in the lock, then the keeper opened the front gates.

Faber made sail and moved out. The lock-keeper waved.

He stopped again about four miles away and moored the boat to a stout tree on the bank. While he waited for night to fall he made a meal of tinned sausage-meat, dry biscuits, and bottled water. He dressed in his black clothes, put into a shoulder-bag his binoculars, camera and copy of Rare Birds of East Anglia, pocketed his compass and picked up his torch. He was ready.

He doused the hurricane lamp, locked the cabin door, and jumped on to the bank. Consulting his compass by torchlight, he entered the belt of woodland alongside the canal.

He had done this sort of thing before, at Biggin Hill, Aldershot, and a host of military areas all over southern England. Their security was not designed to keep out spies: that was impossible in open country. Instead, they just prevented spies entering casually, for a man who is forced to be furtive is hampered.

Faber walked due south from his boat until he hit the fence. It was a token: two strands of wire strung between poles, with "Restricted area" signs hung at intervals. Beyond the fence was open land, a gentle rise. Faber stepped across.

There was scattered cloud above. The moon showed through fitfully. Faber continued due south: when all directions are equal, a straight line is best. He did not use his flashlight. The sparse countryside was an abstract in black, grey and silver. The ground underfoot was a little soggy, as if there might be marshes nearby. A fox ran across a field in front of him, as fast as a greyhound, as graceful as a cat.

It was 11.30 p.m. when he came across the first indications of military

activity - and very odd indications they were.

The moon came out and he saw, perhaps a quarter of a mile ahead, several rows of one-storey buildings laid out with the unmistakeable precision of an Army barracks. He dropped to the ground immediately, but he was already doubting the reality of what he apparently saw. There were no lights, which was possible; no noise, which was unlikely; and no sentries, which was ridiculous.

He lay still for ten minutes, to give explanations a chance to emerge, but nothing happened, except that a badger lumbered into view, saw him, and made off again.

He stood up and walked forward.

As he got closer he realised that the barracks were not just unoccupied, but unfinished. Most of them were little more than a roof supported by cornerposts. Some had one wall.

The place was obviously deserted, so he walked right into the camp. On closer inspection it appeared that the half-built huts had no floors and no foundations.

There were no construction vehicles around, no wheelbarrows, concrete mixers, shovels or piles of bricks. A mud track led away from the camp across the fields, but spring grass was growing in the ruts: it had not been used much lately.

It was as if someone had decided to billet ten thousand men here, then changed his mind a few weeks after building started.

Yet there was something about the place that did not quite fit that explanation.

There was a group of military vehicles in the centre of the camp. They were all old and rusting, and had been degutted - none had an engine or any interior components. But if one was going to cannibalise obsolete vehicles, why not take the shells for scrap?

Those huts that did have a wall were on the ~~outside~~ outermost rows, and their walls faced out. It was like a movie set, not a building site.

He decided he had learned all he could from this place. He left the camp walking due east. Half a mile away, at the top of a rise, he looked back. Now it looked exactly like a barracks again.

The glimmer of an idea formed in his mind. He gave it time.

The land was still relatively flat, relieved only by gentle folds. There were patches of woodland and marshy scrub which Faber skirted. Once he had to detour around a lake, its surface a silver mirror under the moon. He heard the hoot of an owl, and looked in that direction to see a tumbledown barn in the distance.

Five miles farther on he saw the airfield.

There were more planes here than he thought were possessed by the entire Royal Air Force. There were Pathfinders to drop flares, Lancasters and American B-17s for softening-up bombing, Hurricanes and Spitfires and Mosquitos for reconnaissance and strafing: enough planes for an invasion.

Without exception their undercarriages had sunk into the soft earth, and they were up to their bellies in mud.

Once again there were no lights, no noise, and no sentries.

Faber approached the planes, walking downhill.

As he came down to their level they seemed to become flatter, as if they had all been squashed.

He reached the nearest and touched it in amazement. It was a piece of half-inch plywood, cut out in the outline of a Spitfire, painted with camouflage, and roped to the ground.

Every other plane was the same.

There were more than a thousand of them.

Faber wandered dazedly around the phoney airfield, looking at the phoney fighters and bombers, connecting them with the movie-set barracks, reeling at the implications of what he had found.

He knew that if he continued walking he would find more airfields like this, more half-built barracks. If he went to the dash he would find a fleet of plywood destroyers and troop ships.

It was a vast, meticulous, costly, outrageous trick.

It could not possibly fool an onlooker for very long, of course. But it was not designed to deceive observers on the ground.

It was meant to be seen from the air.

Even a low-flying reconnaissance plane equipped with the latest cameras and fast film would come back with pictures which xxxx indisputably showed an enormous concentration of men and machines.

No wonder the General Staff were anticipating an invasion east of the Seine.

There would be other elements to the deception, of course. The British would refer to the East Anglian army in signals, using codes they knew to be broken. There would be phoney espionage reports channelled through the Spanish diplomatic bag to Hamburg. The possibilities were endless.

The British had had four years to arm themselves for this invasion. Most of the German army was fighting Russia. Once the Allies got a toehold on French soil, they would be unstoppable. The Germans' only chance was to catch them on the beaches and annihilate them as they came off the troop ships.

If they were waiting in the wrong place, they would lose that one chance.

The whole strategy was immediately clear. It was simple, and it was devastating.

Faber had to tell Hamburg.

He wondered whether they would believe him.

War strategy was rarely altered on the word of one man. His own standing was particularly high, but was it that high?

He needed to get proof, and then take it to Berlin.

He needed photographs.

He would take pictures of this gigantic dummy army, then he would go to Scotland and meet the U-boat, and he would deliver the pictures personally to the Fuehrer. He could do no more.

For photography he needed light. He would have to wait until dawn. There

had been a ruined barn a little way back: he could spend the rest of the night there.

He checked his compass and set off. The barn was farther than he thought, and the walk took him an hour. It was an old wooden building with holes in the roof. The rats had long ago deserted it for lack of food, but there were bats in the hayloft.

Faber lay down on some planks, but he could not sleep for the knowledge that he was now personally capable of altering the course of the greatest war in history.

Dawn was due at 05.21. At 01.20 Faber left the barn.

Although he had not slept, the two hours of immobility had rested his body and calmed his mind, and he was now in fine spirits. The cloud was clearing with a west wind, so although the moon had set there was starlight.

His timing was good. The sky was growing perceptibly lighter as he came in sight of the "airfield".

He selected his position and loaded the Leica with a 36-frame roll of 35mm Agfa fast film. He hoped the film's light-sensitive chemicals had not spoiled, for it had been stored in his suitcase since before the war: you couldn't buy film in Britian nowadays. It should be all right, for he had kept it in a light-proof bag away from any heat.

When the red rim of the sun edged over the horizon he began shooting. He took the first photo from a tree a quarter of a mile away. Then he moved gradually closer, taking pictures every hundred yards, and finishing with a close-up of one dummy plane. The first shot would show the illusion: a field of a thousand aircraft. The series would gradually reveal how the trick was done. He could not help imagining his conversation with Hitler: "This is what the reconnaissance planes show, my Fuehrer. But as one gets closer" - flicking through the prints - "one can see that the planes are not real ... " Never mind the schoolboy fantasy, he thought; get on with the job.

Walking away from the dummies he took a few more shots from different angles, then he headed west, toward the Honey barracks.

Schoolboy fantasies aside, this would be more than an ordinary espionage coup. Hitler had had a life of being the only one in step. The man who brought the proof that, yet again, the Fuehrer was right and all the experts were wrong, could look for more than a pat on the back. Faber knew that already Hitler thought he was the Abwehr's best agent: this triumph would probably get him Canaris's job.

If he made it.

He increased his pace, jogging twenty yards, walking the next twenty, and jogging again, so that he reached the barracks by 03.30. He took a similar set of photos there, starting far enough away for the illusion to work, then moving closer to reveal the truth.

When he headed back toward the boat he had exposed twenty-four frames. Again he hurried, for he hated to do nightwork in the day. He was now terribly conspicuous, a black-clad man carrying a canvas bag of equipment, jogging across the open fields of a restricted area.

He reached the fence an hour later, having seen nothing but wild geese. As he stepped over the wire, he felt a great release of tension. Inside the fence, the balance of suspicion was against him; outside it was in his favour. He could revert to his bird-watching, fishing, sailing role. The period of greatest risk was over.

He strolled through the belt of woodland, catching his breath and letting the strain of the night's work seep away. He would sail a few miles on, he decided, before mooring again to catch a few hours' sleep.

He reached the canal. It was over. The boat looked pretty in the morning sunshine. As soon as he was under weigh he would make some tea, then —

A man in uniform stepped out of the cabin of the boat and said: "Well, well. And who might you be?"

Faber stood stock still, letting the icy calm and the old instincts come

into play. The intruder wore the uniform of a captain in the Home Guard. He had some kind of handgun in a holster with a buttoned flap. He was tall and rangy, but he looked to be in his late fifties. White hair showed under his cap. He made no move to draw his gun. Faber took all this in as he said: "You are on my boat, so I think it is I who should ask who you are."

"Captain Stephen Langham, Home Guard."

"James Baker." Faber stayed on the bank. A captain did not patrol alone.

"And what are you doing?"

"I'm on holiday."

"Where have you been?"

"Bird-watching."

"Since before dawn? Cover him, Watson."

A youngish man in denim uniform appeared on Faber's left, carrying a shotgun. Faber looked around. There was another man to his right and a fourth behind him.

The captain called: "Which direction did he come from, Corporal?"

The reply came from the top of an oak tree. "From the restricted area, sir."

Faber was calculating odds. Four to one - until the corporal came down from the tree. They had only two guns, the shotgun and the captain's pistol. And they were amateurs. The boat would help, too.

He said: "Restricted area? All I saw was a bit of fence. Look, do you mind pointing that blunderbuss away? It might go off."

The captain said: "Nobody goes bird-watching in the dark."

"If you set up your hide under cover of darkness, you're concealed before the birds wake up. It's the accepted way to do it. Now look, the Home Guard is jolly patriotic and keen and all that, but let's not take it too far, what? Don't you just have to check my papers and file a report?"

The captain was looking a shade doubtful. "What's in that canvas bag?"

"Binoculars, a camera, and a reference book." Faber's hands went to the bag.

"No, you don't," the captain said. "Look inside it, Watson."

There it was: the amateur's error.

Watson said: "Hands up."

Faber raised his hands above his head, his right hand close to the left sleeve of his jacket. Faber choreographed the next few seconds: there must be no gunfire.

Watson came up on Faber's left side, pointing the shotgun at him, and opened the flap of Faber's canvas bag. Faber drew the stiletto from his sleeve, moved inside Watson's guard, and plunged the knife downwards into Watson's neck up to the hilt. Faber's other hand twisted the shotgun out of the young man's grasp.

The other two soldiers on the bank moved toward him, and the corporal began to crash down through the branches of the oak.

Faber tugged the stiletto out of ~~the~~ Watson's neck as the man collapsed to the ground. The captain was fumbling at the flap of his holster. Faber leaped into the well of the boat. It rocked, sending the captain staggering. Faber struck at him with the knife, but the man was too far away for an accurate thrust. The point caught in the lapel of his uniform jacket, then jerked up, slashing his chin. His hand came away from the holster to clutch the wound.

Faber whipped around to face the bank. One of the soldiers jumped. Faber stepped forward and held his right arm rigidly forward. The leaping soldier impaled himself on the eight-inch needle.

The impact knocked Faber off his feet, and he lost his grip on the stiletto. The soldier fell on top of the weapon. Faber got to his knees: there was no time to retrieve it, for the captain was opening his holster. Faber jumped at him, hands going for the officer's ~~thraatx~~ face. The gun came out. Faber's thumbs gouged at the captain's eyes, and he screamed in pain and tried to push Faber's arms aside.

There was a thud as the fourth guardsman landed in the well of the boat. Faber turned from the captain, who would now be unable to see to fire his pistol even if he could get the safety off. The fourth man held a policeman's truncheon.

He brought it down hard. Faber shifted to the right, so that the blow missed his head and caught his left shoulder. His left arm suddenly went nerveless. He chopped the man's neck with the side of his hand, a powerful, accurate blow. Amazingly, the man survived it, and brought his truncheon up for a second swipe. Faber closed in. He took the man's face in both his hands, pushed, twisted, and pushed again. There was a sharp crack as the man's neck broke. At the same instant the truncheon landed again, this time on Faber's head. He reeled away, dazed.

The captain bumped into him, still staggering. Faber pushed him. His cap went flying as he stumbled backwards over the gunwale and fell into the canal with a huge splash.

The corporal jumped the last six feet from the oak tree on to the ground. Faber retrieved his stiletto from the impaled guard and leaped to the bank. Watson was still alive, but it would not be for long: blood was pumping out of the wound in his neck.

Faber and the corporal faced each other. The corporal had a gun.

He was utterly terrified. In the few seconds it had taken him to climb down the oak tree, this man had killed three of his mates and thrown the fourth in the canal. Horror shone from his eyes like torchlight.

Faber looked at the gun. Christ, it was old - it looked like a museum piece. If the corporal had any confidence in it, he would have fired it already.

The corporal took a step forward, and Faber noticed that he favoured his right leg - perhaps he hurt it coming out of the tree. Faber stepped sideways, forcing the corporal to put his weight on the weak leg as he swung to keep his gun on his target. He got the toe of his shoe under a stone and kicked upwards. The corporal's eyes flicked to the stone, and Faber moved.

The corporal pulled the trigger, and nothing happened. The old gun had jammed. Even if it had fired, he would have missed Faber: his eyes were on the stone, he stumbled on the weak leg, and Faber had moved.

Faber killed him with the neck stab.

Only the captain was left.

Faber looked, to see the man clambering out of the water on the far bank. He found a stone and threw it. It hit the captain's head, but the man heaved himself on to dry land and began to run.

Faber ran to the bank, dived in, swam a few strokes, and came up on the far side. The captain was a hundred yards away and running: but he was old. Faber gave chase.

It reminded him of Osnabruck, and the angry fornicator; but this time Faber was the hunter. He gained steadily on the captain, until he could hear the man's ragged, agonised breathing.

The captain slowed, then collapsed into a bush. Faber came up to him and turned him over.

The captain said: "You're a ... devil."

~~Faberxkilledxhimx~~ "You saw my face," Faber said, and killed him.

12

The Ju-52 trimotor transport plane with swastikas on the wings bumped to a halt on the rain-wet runway at Rastenburg in the East Prussian forest. A small man with big features - a large nose, a wide mouth, big ears - disembarked and walked quickly across the tarmac to a waiting Mercedes car.

As the car drove through the gloomy, damp forest, Field-Marshal Erwin Rommel took off his cap and rubbed a nervous hand along his receding hairline. In a few weeks time, he knew, another man would travel this route with a bomb in his briefcase - a bomb destined for the Fuehrer himself. Meanwhile the fight must go on, so that the new leader of Germany - who might even be Rommel himself - could negotiate with the Allies from a strong position.

At the end of the ten-mile drive the car arrived at the Wolfsschanze, the Wolves' Lair, headquarters now for Hitler and the increasingly tight, neurotic circle of generals who surrounded him.

There was a steady drizzle, and raindrops dripped from the tall conifers in the compound. At the gate to Hitler's personal quarters, Rommel put on his

cap and got out of the car. Oberfuhrer Rattenhuber, the chief of the SS bodyguard, wordlessly held out his hand to receive Rommel's pistol.

The conference was to be held in the underground bunker, a cold, damp, airless shelter lined with concrete. Rommel went down the steps and entered. There were a dozen or so there already, waiting for the noon conference: Zimmler, Goering, von Ribbentrop, Keitel. Rommel nodded greetings and sat down on a hard chair to wait.

They all stood when Hitler entered. He wore a grey tunic and black trousers, and he was becoming more and more stooped, Rommel observed. He walked straight to the far end of the bunker, where a large wall map of north-western Europe was tacked to the concrete. He looked tired and irritable. He spoke without preamble.

"There will be an Allied invasion of Europe. It will come this year. It will be launched from Britain, with English and American troops. ~~X~~ They will land in France. We will destroy them at the high-water mark. On this there is no room for discussion."

He looked around, as if daring his staff to contradict him. There was silence. Rommel shivered: the bunker was as cold as death.

"The question is: where will they land? Von Roenne - your report."

Colonel Alexis von Roenne, who had taken over, effectively, from Canaris, got to his feet. A mere captain at the outbreak of war, he had distinguished himself with a superb report on the weaknesses of the French army - a report which had been called a decisive factor in the German victory. He had become chief of the army intelligence bureau in 1942, and that bureau had absorbed the Abwehr on the fall of Canaris. Rommel had heard that he was proud and outspoken, yet able.

Roenne said: "Our information is extensive, but by no means complete. The Allies' codename for the invasion is Overlord. Troop concentrations in Britain are as follows." He picked up a pointer and crossed the room to the wall map. "First: along the south coast. Second: here in the district known

as East Anglia. Third: in Scotland. The East Anglian concentration is by far the greatest. We conclude that the invasion will be three-pronged. First: a diversionary attack on Normandy. Second: the main thrust, across the Straits of Dover, to the Calais coast. Third: a flanking invasion from Scotland across the North Sea to Norway. All intelligence sources support this prognosis." He sat down.

Hitler said: "Comments?"

Rommel, who was Commander of Army Group B, which controlled the north coast of France, said: "I can report one confirming sign: the Pas de Calais has received by far the greatest tonnage of bombs."

Goering said: "What intelligence sources support your prognosis, von Roenne?"

Roenne stood up again. "There are three," he said. "Air reconnaissance, monitoring of enemy wireless signals, and the reports of agents." He sat down.

Hitler crossed his hands protectively in front of his genitals, a nervous habit which was a sign he was about to make a speech. "I shall now tell you," he began, "how I should be thinking if I were Winston Churchill. Two choices confront me: east of the Seine, or west of the Seine. East has one advantage: it is nearer. But in modern warfare there are only two distances - within fighter range and outside fighter range. Both of these choices are within fighter range. Therefore distance is not a consideration.

"West has a great port - Cherbourg - but east has none. And most important - east is much more heavily fortified than west. The enemy has air reconnaissance too.

"So, I would choose west. And what would I do then? I would try to make the Germans think the opposite! I would send two bombers to the Pas de Calais for every one to Normandy. I would try to knock out every bridge over the Seine. I would put out misleading wireless signals, send false intelligence reports, dispose my troops in a misleading fashion. I would deceive fools like Rommel and von Roenne. I would hope to deceive the Fuehrer himself!"

Goering spoke first after a lengthy silence. "My Fuehrer, I believe you

flatter Churchill by crediting him with ingenuity equal to your own."

There was a noticeable easing of tension in the uncomfortable bunker. Goering had said exactly the right thing, managing to ~~state~~ voice his disagreement in the form of a compliment. The others followed him, each stating the case a little more strongly: the Allies would choose the shorter sea crossing for speed; the closer coast would allow the covering fighter aircraft to refuel and return in shorter time; the south-east was a better launch pad, with more estuaries and harbours; it was unlikely that all the intelligence reports would be unanimously wrong.

Hitler listened for half an hour, then held up his hand for silence. He picked up a yellowing sheaf of papers from the table and waved them. "In 1941," he said, "I issued my directive Construction of Coastal Defences, in which I forecast that the decisive landing of the Allies would come at the protruding parts of Normandy and Brittany, where the excellent harbours would make ideal beachheads. That was what my intuition told me then, and that is what it tells me now!" A fleck of foam appeared on the Fuehrer's lower lip.

Von Roenne spoke up. (He has more courage than I, Rommel thought.) "My Fuehrer, our investigations continue, quite naturally, and there is one particular line of inquiry which you should know about. I have in recent weeks sent an emissary to England to contact the agent known as Der Nadel."

Hitler's eyes gleamed. "Ah! I know the man. Carry on."

"Der Nadel's orders are to assess the strength of General Patton's army in East Anglia. If he finds that this has been exaggerated, we must surely reconsider our prognosis. If,however, he reports that the army is as strong as we presently believe, there can be little doubt that Calais is the target."

Goering looked at von Roenne. "Who is this Nadel?"

Hitler answered the question.. "The only decent agent Canaris ever recruited – because he recruited him at my behest," he said. "He has been in London since before the ~~w~~ English started the war. I see all his reports – a first-class man."

Von Rocmme said tentatively: "Then you will accept his report?"

Hitler nodded. "Der Nadel will discover the truth."

PART THREE

13

Faber was wondering whether to bury the five dead men.

It would take between thirty and sixty minutes, he estimated, depending on how well he concealed the bodies. During that time he might be caught.

He had to weigh that risk against the precious hours he might gain by delaying the discovery of the deaths. The five men would be missed very soon: there would be a search under way by around nine o'clock. Assuming they were on a regular patrol, their route would be known. The searchers' first move would be to send a runner to cover the route. If the bodies were left as they were, he would see them and raise the alarm. Otherwise, he would report back and a full-scale search would be mounted, with bloodhounds and policemen beating the bushes. It might take them all day to discover the corpses. By that time Faber could be in London. It was important for him to be out of the area before they knew they were looking for a murderer. He decided to risk the additional hour.

He swam back across the canal with the elderly captain over his shoulder. He dumped him unceremoniously behind a bush. He retrieved the two bodies from the well of the boat and piled them on top of the captain. Then he added Watson and the corporal to the pile.

He had no spade, and he needed a big grave. He found a patch of loose earth a few yards into the wood. The ground there was slightly hollowed, to give him an advantage. He got a saucepan from the boat's tiny galley and began to dig.

For a couple of feet there was just leaf-mould, and the going was easy. Then he got down to clay, and digging became extremely difficult. In half an hour he had added only another eighteen inches of depth to the hole. It would have to do.

He carried the bodies to the hole one by one and threw them in. Then he took off his muddy, bloodstained clothes and dropped them on top. He covered the grave with loose earth and a layer of foliage ripped from nearby bushes and trees.

It should be good enough to pass that first, superficial inspection.

He kicked earth over the patch of ground near the bank where the life-blood of Watson had poured out. There was blood in the boat, too, where the impaled soldier had lain. Faber found a rag and swabbed-down the deck.

Then he put on clean clothes, made sail, and moved off.

He did not fish or watch birds: this was no time for pleasant embellishments to his cover. Instead he piled-on the sail, putting as much distance as possible between himself and the grave. He had to get off the water and into some faster transport as soon as possible. He reflected, as he sailed, on the relative merits of catching a train and stealing a car. A car was easier, and faster; but the search for it might start quite soon, regardless of whether the theft was connected with the missing Home Guard patrol. Finding a railway station would take longer than finding a car, but it seemed safer: if he were careful he could escape suspicion for most of the day.

He wondered what to do about the boat. Ideally he would scuttle it, but he might be seen doing so. If he left it in a marina somewhere, or simply moored at the canalside, the police would soon connect it with the murders; and that would tell them in which direction he was moving. He decided to postpone that decision.

Unfortunately, he was not sure where he was. His map of England's waterways gave every bridge, harbour and lock; but it did not show railway lines. He calculated he was within an hour or two's walk of half a dozen villages, but a villagex did not necessarily mean a station.

In the end luck solved two problems at once: the canal went under a railway bridge.

He took his compass, the film from the camera, his wallet and his stiletto. All his other possessions would go down with the boat.

The towpath on both sides was shaded with trees, and there were no roads nearby. He furled the sails, dismantled the base of the mast, and laid the pole on the deck. Then he removed the bung-hole stopper from the keel and stepped on to the bank, holding the rope.

Gradually filling with water, the boat drifted under the bridge. Faber hauled on the rope to hold the vessel in position directly under the brick arch as it sank. The after-deck went under first, the prow followed, and finally the water of the canal closed over the roof of the cabin. There were a few bubbles, then nothing. The outline of the boat was hidden in the shadow of the bridge above the water. Faber threw the rope in.

The railway line ran north-east to south-west. Faber climbed the embankment and walked south-west, which was the direction in which London lay. It was a two-line track, probably a rural branch line. There would be few trains, but they would stop at all stations.

The sun grew stronger as he walked. The exertion made him hot, and he took off his sports jacket and slung it over his shoulder. After forty minutes he heard a distant chuff-chuff-chuff, and hid in a bush beside the line. An old steam engine went slowly by, puffing great clouds of smoke, hauling a train of coal trucks. It was heading north-west. If one came by in the opposite direction, he could jump it. Should he? It would save him a long walk. On the other hand, he would get conspicuously dirty, and he might have trouble disembarking without being seen. No, it was safer to walk.

The line ran straight as an arrow across the flat countryside. Faber passed a farmer, ploughing a field with a tractor. There was no way to avoid being seen. The farmer waved to him without stopping in his work. He was too far away to get a good sight of Faber's face.

He had walked about ten miles when he saw a station ahead. It was half a mile away, and all he could see was the rise of the platforms and a cluster of signals. He left the line and cut across the fields, keeping close to borders of trees, until he met a road.

Within a few minutes he entered the village. There was nothing to tell him its name. Now that the threat of invasion was a memory, signposts and place-names were being re-erected, but this village had not got around to it.

There was a Post Office, a Corn Store, and a pub called The Bull. A woman

with a pram gave him a friendly "Good morning!" as he passed the War Memorial. The little station basked sleepily in the spring sunshine.

Faber went in. A timetable was pasted to a notice-board, and he stood in front of it.

From behind the little ticket window a voice said: "I shouldn't take too much notice of that, if I were you. It's the biggest work of fiction since The Forsyte Saga."

Faber had known the timetable would be out-of-date, but he had needed to establish whether the trains went to London. They did. He said: "Any idea what time the next train leaves for Liverpool Street?"

The clerk laughed sarcastically. ~~"You're joking, of course."~~ "Some time today, if you're lucky."

"I'll buy a ticket anyway. Single, please." Faber took out his wallet.

"Five-and-fourpence ~~three farthings~~. They say the Italian trains run on time."

"Not any more. Anyway, I'd rather have bad trains and our politics."

The man shot him a nervous look. "You're right, of course. Do you want to wait in the Bull? You'll hear the train - or, if not, I'll send for you."

Faber did not want more people to see his face. "No, thanks - I'll only spend money." He took his ticket and went on to the platform.

The clerk followed him a few minutes later, and sat on the bench beside him in the sunshine. He said: "You in a hurry?"

Faber shook his head. "I've written today off. Tell you something: I'll never buy another Ford."

"Broke down? Ah, well." The clerk looked at his watch. "She went up on time this morning, and what goes up must come down, they say. You might be lucky." He went back into his office.

Faber was lucky. The train came twenty minutes later. It was crowded with farmers, families, businessmen and soldiers. Faber found a space on the floor close to a window. As the train lumbered away, he picked up a discarded two-day-old newspaper, borrowed a pencil, and started to do the crossword. He was

proud of his ability to do crosswords in English: it was the acid test of fluency in a foreign language. After a while the motion of the train lulled him into a shallow sleep, and he dreamed.

It was a familiar dream, the dream of his arrival in London.

He had crossed from France, carrying a Belgian passport which said he was Jan van Gelder, a representative for Phillips (which would explain his suitcase radio if the Customs opened it). His English was fluent but not colloquial. The Customs had not bothered him: he was an ally. He had caught the train to London. In those days there had been plenty of empty seats in the carriages, and you could get a meal. Faber had dined on roast beef and Yorkshire pudding. It amused him. He had talked with a history student from Cardiff about the European political situation. The dream was like the reality until the train stopped at Waterloo. Then it turned into a nightmare.

The trouble started at the ticket barrier. Like all dreams it had its own weird illogicality. The document they queried was not his forged passport but his perfectly legitimate railway ticket. The collector had said: "This is an Abwehr ticket."

"No, it is not," said Faber, speaking with a ludicrously thick German accent. What had happened to his dainty English consonants? They would not come. "I have it in Dover gekaufen." Damn, that did it.

But the ticket collector, who had turned into a London policeman complete with helmet, seemed to ignore the sudden lapse into German. He smiled politely and said: "I'd better just check your Klamotten, sir."

The station was crowded with people. Faber thought that if he could get into the crowd he might escape. He dropped the suitcase radio and fled, pushing his way through the crowd. Suddenly he realised he had left his trousers on the train, and there were swastikas on his socks. He would have to buy trousers at the very first shop, before people noticed the trouserless running man with Nazi hose - then someone in the crowd said: "I've seen your face before," and tripped him up,

and he fell with a bump and landed on the floor of railway carriage where he had gone to sleep.

He blinked, yawned, and looked around him. He had a headache. For a moment he was filled with relief that it was all a dream, then he wae amused by the ridiculousness of the symbolism - swastika socks, for God's sake!

A man in overalls beside him said: "You had a good sleep."

Faber looked up sharply. He was always afraid of talking in his sleep and giving himself away. He said: "I had unpleasant dreams." The man made no comment.

It was getting dark. He had slept for a long time. The carriage light came on suddenly, a single blue bulb, and someone drew the blinds. People's faces turned into pale, featureless ovals. The workman became talkative again. "You missed the excitement," he told Faber.

Faber frowned. "What happened?" It was impossible he should have slept through some kind of police check.

"One of them Yank trains passed us. It was going about ten miles an hour, nigger driving it, ringing its bell, with a bloody great cow-catcher on the front! Talk about the Wild West."

Faber smiled and thought back to the dream. In fact his arrival in London had been without incident. He had checked into an hotel at first, still using his Belgian cover. Within a week he had visited several country churchyards, taken the names of men of his age from the grave stones, and applied for three duplicate birth certificates. Then he took lodgings and found humble work, using forged references from a non-existent Manchester firm. He had even got on to the electoral register in Highgate. He voted Conservative.

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When rationing came in, the ration books were issued via householders to every person who had slept in the house on a particular night. Faber contrived to spend part of that night in each of three different houses, and so obtained papers for each of his personae. He burned the Belgian passport - in the unlikely event he should need a passport, he could get three British ones.

The train stopped, and from the noise outside the passengers guessed they had arrived. When Faber got out he suddenly realised how hungry and thirsty he

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was. His last meal had been sausage-meat, dry biscuits and bottled water, twenty-four hours ago. He went through the ticket barrier and found the station buffet. It was full of people, mostly soldiers, sleeping or trying to sleep at the tables. Faber asked for a cheese sandwich and a cup of tea.

"The food is reserved for servicemen," said the woman behind the counter.

"Just the tea, then."

"Got a cup?"

Faber was surprised. "No, I haven't."

"Neither have we, chum."

Faber left in disgust. He contemplated going into the Great Eastern Hotel for dinner, but that would take time. He found a pub and drank two pints of weak beer, then bought a bag of chips at a fish-and-chip shop and ate them from the newspaper wrapping, standing on the pavement. They made him feel surprisingly full.

Now he had to find a chemist's shop and break in.

He wanted to develop his film, to make sure the pictures came out. He was not going to return to Germany with a roll of spoiled, useless film. If the pictures were no good he would have to steal more film and go back. The thought was unbearable.

It would have to be a small independent shop, not a branch of a chain which would process film centrally. It must be in an area where the local people could afford cameras (or could have afforded them before the war). The part of East London in which Liverpool Street station stood was no good. He decided to head towards Bloomsbury.

The blacked-out streets were quiet. There had been no sirens so far tonight. Two Military Policemen ~~underestimating Faber's age~~ stopped him in Chancery Lane and asked for his identity card. Faber pretended to be slightly drunk, and the MP did not ask what he was doing out of doors.

He found the shop he was looking for at the north end of Southampton Row. There was a Kodak sign in the window. Surprisingly, the shop was open. He went in.

A stooped, irritable man with thinning hair and glasses stood behind the counter, wearing a white coat. He said: "We're only open for doctor's prescriptions."

"That's all right, I just want to ask whether you develop photographs."

"Yes, if you come back tomorrow - "

"Do you do them on thepremises?" Faber asked. "I need them quickly, you see."

"Yes, if you come back tomorrow - "

"Could I have the prints the same day? My brother's on leave and he wants to take some back - "

"Twenty-four hours is the best we can do. Come back tomorrow."

"Thankyou, I will," Faber lied. On his way out he noticed that the shop was due to close in ten minutes. He crossed the road and stood in the shadows, waiting.

Promptly at nine o'clock the pharmacist came out, looking the shop behind him, and walked off down the road. Faber went in the opposite direction and turned two corners.

There seemed to be no access to the back of the shop. That was something of a blow: Faber did not want to break in the front way, in case a policeman came along trying the doors - they often did. He walked along the parallel street, looking for a way through. Apparently there was none. Yet there had to be a wall of some kind at the back, for the two streets were too far apart for the buildings to be joined back-to-back.

Finally he came across a large old house with a name-plate outside marking it as a Hall of Residence for a nearby college. The front door was unlocked. Faber went in and walked quickly through to a communal kitchen. A lone girl sat at the table, drinking coffee and reading a book. Faber muttered: "College blackout check." She nodded and returned to her text. Faber went out of the back door.

He crossed a yard, bumping into a cluster of garbage cans on the way, and found a door to a lane. In seconds he was at the rear of the chemist's shop. This entrance was obviously never used. He clambered over some tyres and a

discarded mattress, and threw his shoulder at the door. The rotten wood gave easily, and Faber was inside.

He found the darkroom and shut himself in. He found the light switch, and a red lamp glowed dimly from the low ceiling. The place was quite well-equipped, with neatly labelled bottles of developing fluid, an enlarger, and even a dryer for prints.

Faber worked quickly but carefully, getting the temperature of the tanks exactly right, agitating the fluids to develop the film evenly, timing the processes by the hands of a large electric clock on the wall.

The negatives were perfect.

He let them dry, then fed them through the enlarger and made one complete set of ten-by-eight prints. He felt a sense of elation as he saw the images gradually appear in the bath of developer - damn, he had done a good job!

While the prints dried he found a set of envelopes of various sizes. Then he sat down to write, in full, the story of what he had seen in Norfolk and the conclusions he had reached. He wrote in German. It took him three-quarters of an hour.

He put the prints and the report in the smallest envelope and marked it "Admiral Wilhelm Canaris." He sealed that and placed it in a slightly larger one addressed "Sophein Terrace, Hamburg." The third envelope in the nest was to the German Embassy in Madrid, and the fourth to the Portugese Embassy in London, with the name of a diplomat Faber knew to be sympathetic to the Axis. He found stamps in the chemist's little office and, not knowing what the package weighed, stuck three shillings' worth on the outer envelope.

MI5 was probably intercepting all the Portugese Embassy's mail - they were fools if they did not - but there was a slim chance the missive would get through, and anyway Faber had nothing to lose by trying.

Faber rolled the strip of negatives into a small film can and taped the cylindrical tin to his

chest under his singlet. It would hurt like hell when he took it off, but by then he would be in Germany.

He picked the lock of the front door to get out. He carried a pharmacist's white coat as he left, in case anyone should see him; but the street was deserted. He posted the large envelope in the first mail box he passed.

Euston Station was only a few minutes' walk away. At first he was terribly conscious of the package beneath his shirt, but soon he forgot it. Euston was as crammed with people as Liverpool Street had been. There were queues at the ticket barriers.

Faber bought a ~~first-class~~ ticket to Inverness.

14

Frederick Bloggs had spent an unpleasant afternoon in the countryside.

When five worried wives had contacted their local police station to say their husbands had not come home, a rural police-constable had exercised his limited powers of deduction and concluded that a whole patrol of the Home Guard had gone missing. He was fairly sure they had simply got lost - they were all deaf, daft or senile, otherwise they would have been in the Army - but all the same he notified his Constabulary headquarters, just to cover himself. The operations-room sergeant who took the message realised at once that the missing men had been patrolling a particularly sensitive military area, and he notified his inspector, who notified Scotland Yard, who sent a Special Branch man down there and notified MI5, who sent Bloggs.

The Special Branch man was Harris, who had been on the Stockwell murder. He and Bloggs had met on the train, which was one of the Wild West locomotives lent to Britain by the Americans because of the shortage of rolling stock. Harris repeated his invitation to Sunday dinner, and Bloggs told him again that he worked most Sundays.

When they got off the train they borrowed bicycles to ride along the canal

towpath until they met up with the search party. Harris, ten years older than Bloggs and four stone heavier, had found the ride a strain.

They met a section of the search party under a railway bridge. Harris welcomed the opportunity te get off the bicycle. "What have you found," he said. "Bodies?"

"No, a boat," said a policeman. "Who are you?"

They introduced themselves. A policeman stripped to his underwear was diving down to examins the vessel. He came up with the bung in his hand.

Bloggs looksd at Harris. "Deliberately scuttled?"

"Looks like it." Harris turned to the diver. "Notice anything else?"

"She hasn't been down there for long, she's in good condition, and the mast has been taken down, not broken."

Harris said: "That's a lot of information from a minute under water."

"I'm a weekend sailor," the diver said.

Harris and Bloggs mounted their cycles and moved on.

When they met up with the main party, the bodies had been found.

"Murdered, all five," said the uniformed inspector in charge. "Captain Langham, Corporal Lee, and Privates Watson, Dayton and Forbes. Dayton's neck was broken, the rest were killed with some kind of knife. Langham's body had been in the canal. All found together in a shallow grave. Bloody murder." He was quite shaken.

Harris looked closely at the five bodiss, laid out in a line. "I've seen wounds like this befsre, Fred," he said.

Bloggs looked closely. "Jesus Christ, it's him."

Harris nodded. "Stiletto."

The inspector said: "You know who did it?" He was astonished.

"We can guess," Harris said. "We think he's killed twice before. If it's the same man, we know <u>who</u> he is but not <u>where</u> he is."

The inspector's eyes narrowed. "What with the restricted area so close, and Special Branch and MI5 arriving on the scens so quick, is there anything slse I

need to know about this case?"

Harris answered: "Just that you keep very quiet until your Chief Constable has talked to our people."

"Nuff said."

Bloggs asked: "Anything else found, Inspector?"

"We're still combing the area, in ever-widening oiroles; but nothing so far. There were some clothes in the grave." He pointed.

Bloggs touched them gingerly: black trousers, a black sweater, a short black leather jacket, RAF-style.

Harris said: "Clothes for night work."

"To fit a big man," Bloggs added.

"How tall is your man?"

"Over six foot."

The inspector said: "Did you pass the men who found the sunken boat?"

"Yes." Bloggs frowned. "Where's the nearest lock?"

"Four miles upstream."

"Hm If our man was in a boat, the lock-keeper must have seen him, mustn't he?"

"Must have," the inspector agreed.

Bloggs said: "We'd better talk to him." He returned to his cycle.

"Not another four miles," Harris complained.

Bloggs said: "Work off some of those Sunday dinners."

The four-mile ride took them most of an hour, because the towpath was made for horses, not wheels, and it was uneven, muddy, and mined with loose boulders and tree roots. Harris was sweating and cursing by the time they reached the lock.

The lock-keeper was sitting outside his little house, smoking a pipe and enjoying the mild air of afternoon. He was a middle-aged man of slow speech and slower movements. He regarded the two cyclists with faint amusement.

Bloggs spoke, because Harris was out of breath. "We're police officers," he

said.

"Is that so?" said the lock-keeper. "What's the excitement?" He looked about as excited as a cat in front of a fire.

Bloggs took the photograph of Der Nadel out of his wallet and gave it to the man. "Have you ever seen him?"

The lock-keeper put the picture on his lap while he held a fresh match to his pipe. Then he studied the picture for a while, and handed it back.

"Well?" Harris said.

"Aye." The lock-keeper nodded slowly. "He was here about this time yesterday. Came in for a cup of tea. Nice enough chap. What's he done, shown a light after blackout?"

Bloggs sat down heavily. "That clinches it," he said.

Harris thought aloud. "He moors the boat downstream from here, and goes into the restricted area after dark. When he comes back, the Home Guard has his boat staked out. He deals with them, sails a bit farther to the railway, scuttles his boat and ... hops a train?"

Blogge said to the lock-keeper: "The railway line that crosses the canal a few miles downstream - where does it go?"

"London."

Bloggs said: "Oh, shit."

Blaggs got back to the War Office building in Whitehall at midnight. Godliman and Parkin were there, waiting for him. Blogge said: "It's him, all right," and told them the story.

Parkin was excited, Godliman just looked tense. When Bloggs had finished, Godliman said: "So now he's back in London, and we're looking for a needle in a haystack again." He was playing with matches, forming a picture with them on his desk. "Do you know, every time I look at that photograph I get the feeling I've actually met the damn fellow."

"Well, think!" Bloggs said. "Where?"

Godliman shook his head in frustration. "It must have been only once, and somewhere strange. It's like a face I've seen in a lecture audience, or in the background at a cocktail party. A fleeting glimpse, a casual encounter - when I remember it probably won't do us any good."

Parkin said: "Tell Fred the bad news."

"That restricted area," Godliman said. "Within a few miles of where the bodies were found is our fleet of dummy aircraft."

Bloggs closed his eyes. "Oh, no."

"He's a smart one," Parkin observed.

Godliman said: "I wish he was on our side."

Bloggs had run out of curses strong enough. He covered his face with his hands.

The three men sat still in the little office, like a tableau. The only illumination came from a spotlight on Godliman's desk. With the cream walls, the blacked-out window, the spare furniture and the worn Civil Service carpet, they might have been anywhere in the world.

Godliman said: "I'm going to have to tell Churchill."

There was another silence. Parkin lit a cigarette with one of Godliman's matches. Bloggs looked up. "Listen, we can try to find him. We could print a million copies of his picture - give one to every policeman, ARP warden, member of the Home Guard, serviceman, railway porter; paste them up on hoardings and publish them in the papers ... "

Godliman shook his head. "Too risky. What if he's already reported back to Hamburg? When they learn we've launched the biggest manhunt in history, they'll know that his information is first-class. We'd only be lending credence to him."

"We've got to do something!"

"Surely. We will circulate his picture to police officers. We'll give his description to the press, and say he's just a straightforward murderer. We can give the details of the Highgate and Stockwell murders, without saying that security

is involved."

Parkin said: "What you're saying is, we can fight with one hand tied behind our back."

"I'm afraid se," Godliman said.

Bloggs said: "We'd know if he had already talked to Hamburg."

"Probably. For something as hot as this he may have other channels of communication."

Bloggs sighed. "Well, I'm right out of ideas."

Godliman said: "Aren't we all?"

Police-constable Derek Collins had a rare blood condition which the Army regarded as incapacitating but the police force did not. He considered it unfair that he should be barred from service, and deeply resented the scornful looks he got from soldiers on leave in the streets of London. He compensated by being a super-efficient copper. Like tonight, when he shooed the drunks ~~and derelicts~~ off the park benches in Euston Square, telling them to clear off in a loud voice and helping them with the toe of his regulation size-eleven Metropolitan Police issue boot.

Satisfied that the area was clear of dangerous criminal elements (in fact most of them simply went into the station until he was out of the way then returned to their benches) Collins walked down Euston Road and turned into Southampton Row. He was still thinking about the winos. He hated them because they chose to be ill when other people who wanted nothing more than to be one hundred per cent A1 fit and fight for their country were handicapped ~~xxxx~~ by conditions they could not help, like rare blood diseases.

He walked straight and tall, his boots hammering the pavement, his demeanour telling the world that here was a man fit to protect them at home while our boys protected them abroad. He looked hard at foreign-looking people who might be Fifth Columnists, checked the papers of/~~every~~ the occasional civilian man of military age in case he was on the trot, and ran a sharp eye over windows and doors to see that they were

properly blacked out. And he rattled the door of every shop in case it had been broken into.

When he tried the door of the chemist's, it flew open.

His first thought was that the thief might still be in there. He relished the propect: he would show them that a man with a rare blood condition could still knock a crook over the head with his truncheon.

He shone his flashlight around the little shop. Everything was in order. He checked the till. It was empty. He moved to the back of the shop.

In the tiny office, a desk drawer had been left open. There were several books of stamps on the desk. A wall safe - presumably for dangerous drugs - seemed undisturbed.

He found another little room with a dim red light. There were bottles of chemicals, strange apparatus, plastic baths of colourless liquid - of course: a photographic darkroom.

Collins checked the rear entrance, and found it broken open.

He returned to the little office and picked up the phone to report the break-in.

Bloggs put the phone down. "That was the Yard. The distribution of the photographs to police stations has started, and the murder story will be in tomorrow's newspapers."

Godliman looked at his watch. "There's not much more we can do tonight, but I don't feel like going home. I shan't sleep."

Parkin stood up. "In that case I'm going to find a kettle and make some tea." He went out.

Bloggs called after him: "See if you can find any chocolate biscuits in Colonel Terry's office."

The matches on Godliman's desk made a picture of a horse and carriage. He took away one of the horse's legs and lit his pipe with it. "Have you got a girl, Fred?" he said conversationally.

"No."

"Not since - ?"

"No."

Godliman puffed at his pipe. "There hae to be an end to breavement, Fred."

Bloggs made no reply.

Godliman said: "Look, perhaps I shouldn't talk to you like a Dutch uncle. But I know how you feel - I've been through it myself. The only difference was that I didn't have anyone to blame."

"You didn't remarry," Bloggs said, not looking at Godliman.

"No. And I don't want you to make the same mistake. When you reach middle age, living alone can be extremely depressing."

"Did I ever tell you, they called her Fearless Bloggs."

"Yes, you did."

Bloggs looked at Godliman at last. "Tell me, where in the world will I find another girl like that?"

"Does she have to be a hero?"

"After Christine - yes."

"England is full of heroes, Fred."

At that moment Parkin returned, without tea but with another man. The man addressed Godliman. "Jones, Postal Section, sir. We picked up something tonight which we thought you'd want to see right away." He handed over a large envelope, already opened.

Godliman looked at it. It was adressed to the Portugese Embassy in London. A second envelope, inside the first, was addressed to the German Embassy in Madrid. There was a third envelope for Abwehr headquarters in Hamburg, and a fourth addressed to Canaris personally. Inside that was a letter and twenty-four ten-by-eight photographs.

Jones saluted and left. Nobody noticed.

The letter was headed: "Allied invasion of Europe - cover plan," and was in German.

Godliman looked through the photographs, then cursed softly. Bloggs and Parkin looked over his shoulder.

Parkin said: "What does the letter say?"

"It might be a Ministerial memorandum on Fortitude - it's that good. He's figured out the whole thing."

For the second time that night, Bloggs could find no curses strong enough. He said: "He's seen it, he knows what it means, and he's got proof. We're finished."

"Not yet," said Godliman. He was studying the outermost envelope. "Look at the postmark."

Bloggs read: "Euston Road, eleven-thirty p.m."

Godliman stood up. "This letter is only his back-up. He's still got the negatives, and he's going somewhere with them."

Bloggs and Parkin both said: "Where?"

"Where do trains from Euston go?"

Bloggs did not know, but Parkin did. "Holyhead - Liverpool - Glasgow - "

Godliman thumped the desk. "All places from where you can catch a ferry to Ireland!"

"Liverpool to Belfast," Bloggs said. "Then a car to the border and across into Eire, and a U-boat on the Atlantic coast. He wouldn't risk Holyhead-to-Dublin because of the passport control, and he won't go as far as Glasgow if he can cut his journey down by going from Liverpool."

"We'll catch the bugger yet," Parkin said with relish.

"Let's not open the champagne too soon," Godliman said. "Fred: I want you to get to Euston Station and show the picture of Faber around, see if anyone noticed him getting on a train. I'll phone the station and warn them you're coming, and at the same time find out which trains have left since about ten-thirty."

Bloggs picked up his hat and coat and went out.

"Billy, I'd like you to go to the nearest police station to Euston and ask some questions. I'd like to know where Faber got these pictures developed."

Parkin stood up. "I'm on my way."

Godliman picked up the phone. "Yes, we're on our way."

Billy Parkin found a sleepy sergeant on duty at the desk in Tottenham Court Road police station.

He introduced himself. "Sergeant Parkin, War Office. Good morning."

"What can we do for you, Sarge? You a Yorkshireman?"

"Aye, Scunthorpe. Thyssen?"

"Castleford. By the heck - London's full on 'em. Cup of tea?"

"Thanks, I've no time. Is there an all-night chemist in the area?"

The policeman grinned lewdly. "Got an emergency, have tha?"

"Nothing like that. I'm trying to find out where a bloke might have had some pictures developed fast, this evening."

The policeman shook his head. "Piccadilly Circus is the nearest, and I don't reckon they'd have a rush service for photos. That's queer, though - there's a local chemist's on the crime sheet." He hunted around his desk, shuffling papers.

"What do you mean?"

"One of our young constables found a chemist's broken into, in Southampton Row it were. He's round there now, with the pharmacist."

"Is it far?"

"Ten minutes. Here, look." He pointed out the place on a street map behind him.

"Thanks."

"I'll ring and tell them to wait for you, shall I?"

"Thanks."

Parkin got there in five minutes, running. Pc Collins and the pharmacist were inside the shop.

Collins said: "Sergeant Parkin?"

"Yes."

"This is the owner, Mr Day. A weird business, this."

The pharmacist said irritably: "The till was empty, so there was no money here for him to steal. But he used the darkroom. All this trouble - in the middle of the night - "

Pc Collins said: "Who would be in that much of a hurry to develop some pictures? That's what I ask."

"Oh!" said Mr Day.

The other two looked at him.

"Well, it's just that a man came in shortly before nine o'clock asking about getting a film developed in a hurry."

Parkin took the picture of Faber out of his wallet. "This man?"

"Good gracious!" said the chemist. "How did you know?"

There were still plenty of people at Euston Station. Although in normal times the station closed around midnight, wartime delays were such that the last train often had not left before the earliest milk train of the morning arrived. The station concourse was a mass of kitbags and sleeping bodies.

Bloggs showed the picture to three railway policemen. None of them recognized the face. He tried ten women porters: nothing. He went to every ticket barrier. One of the guards said: "We look at tickets, not faces." He tried half a dozen passengers without result. They looked as tired as he felt. Finally he went into the ticket office and showed the picture to each of the clerks.

A very fat, bald clerk with ill-fitting false teeth recognised the face. "I play a game," he told Bloggs. "I tried to spot something about a passenger that tells me why he's catching a train. Like, he might have a black tie for a funeral, or muddy boots means he's a farmer going home, or there might be a college scarf, or a white mark on a woman's finger where she's took her wedding ring off ... know what I mean? This is a dull job - not that I'm complaining - "

"What did you notice about this chap?" Bloggs interrupted.

"Nothing. That was it, see - that might be why I remember him. I couldn't make him out at all. Almost like he was trying to be inconspicuous, know what I

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mean?"

"I know what you mean." Bloggs paused. "Now, I want you to think very carefully. Where was he going - can you remember?"

"Yes," said the fat clerk. "Inverness."

"He must have caught the eleven forty-five," Godliman said. "That train is now - " he looked at his watch " - pulling into Stafford. I checked with the railway, they

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checked with the signalmen," he added by way of explanation. "They're going to stop the train just this side of Crewe. I've got a plane standing by at Stanmore ready to fly you two to Stoke-on-Trent.

"Parkin, you'll board the train where it's stopped, outside Crewe. You'll be dressed as a ticket inspector, and you'll look at every ticket - and every face - on that train. When you've spotted Faber, just stay close to him.

"Bloggs, you'll be waiting at the ticket barrier at Crewe, just in case Faber decides to hop off there. But he won't. You'll get on the train, and be first off at Liverpool, and waiting at the ticket barrier for Parkin and Faber to come off. Half the local constabulary will be there to back you up."

"That's all very well if he doesn't recognise me," Parkin said. "What if he remembers my face from Highgate?"

Godliman opened a desk drawer, took out a pistol, and gave it to Parkin. "If he recognises you, shoot the bastard."

Parkin pocketed the weapon without comment.

Godliman said: "I want the two of you to be quite clear on the importance of all this. If we don't catch this man, the invasion of Europe may have to be postponed - possibly for a year. In that year the balance of war could turn against us again. The time may never be this right again."

Bloggs said: "Do we get told how long it is to D-Day."

Godliman thought for a moment, then said: "No. But I can tell you it's a matter of weeks."

Parkin was thinking. "It'll be June, then."

Bloggs said: "Shit."

Godliman said: "No comment."

The phone rang and Godliman picked it up. After a moment he looked up. "Your car's here."

Bloggs and Parkin got up.

Godliman said: "Wait a minute."

They stood by the door, looking at the professor. He was saying: "Yes, sir.

Certainly. I will. Goodbye, sir."

Bloggs could not think of anybody Godliman called Sir. He said: "Who was that?"

Godliman said: "The man with the big cigar."

"What did he have to say?" Parkin asked, awestruck.

Godliman said: "He wishes you both Good luck and Godspeed."

15

The carriage was pitch dark. Faber thought of the jokes people made: "Take your hand off my knee. No, not you, you." The British would make jokes out of anything. Their railways were now worse than ever, but nobody complained any more because it was in a good cause. Faber liked the dark. It was anonymous.

There had been singing, earlier on. Three sailors in the corridor had started it, and the whole carriage had joined in. They had been through Be Like The Kettle And Sing, There'll Always Be An England (followed by We'll Keep A Welcome In The Valleys and Scotland The Brave for ethnic balance), and, appropriately, Don't Get Around Much Any More.

There had been an air raid warning, and the train slowed to thirty miles an hour. They were all supposed to lie on the floor, but of course there was no room. An anonymous female voice had said: "Oh, God, I'm frightened," and a male voice, equally anonymous except that it was Cockney, had said: "You're in the safest place, girl - they can't 'it a movin' target." Then everyone laughed and nobody was scared any more. Someone opened a suitcase and passed around a packet of dried-egg sandwiches.

One of the sailors wanted to play cards.

"How can we play cards in the dark?"

"Feel the edges. All Harry's cards are marked anyway."

The train stopped unaccountably at about 4 a.m. A cultured voice - the dried-egg sandwich supplier, Faber thought - said: "My guess is we're outside Crewe."

"Knowing the railways, we could be anywhere from Bolton to Bournemouth," said the Cockney.

The two of them began to converse - an example, Faber thought, of communication under stress. In normal circumstances neither would have dreamed of speaking to the other. There was a class barrier between them three ~~kkx~~ bricks thick. (It was Faber's theory that only the middle class believed England was a classless society.) It transpired that the dried-egg sandwich man was in shipping, and the Cockney was a docker. They talked as equals about the problems of commercial shipping in wartime.

Eventually the Cockney said: "We're in for a long wait. Now the whole compartment knows all about me and my mate here, how about some more confessions? What do you do, love?"

"I'm in the Women's ~~Royal~~ Auxiliary Air Force."

"What, and you frightened of air raids?"

"It's different when you're on duty. You've got a job to do - you don't have to just sit and wait for the bombs."

"All right. Next?"

A voice from the floor said: "Engineer, going to a factory in Manchester."

"You're on the wrong train. You'll probably be the only one of us to get where he wants to go. Next?"

"I work for the railway."

"You should be ashamed of yourself. Next?"

"Housewife, I'm afraid. I'm going to Blackpool to see my mother."

"A likely story. Crafty holiday, more like. Next?"

Faber said: "Civil service clerk, bound for Inverness on government business."

"And I bet they don't even pay you overtime. What about our three friends in the corridor?"

"Sailors from Glasgow, going home on leave."

"Well, we'd never have guessed, with the uniforms and those accents."

The train jerked and moved off, and everyone cheered. Where, Faber wondered, was the caricature Englishman, with his icy reserve and his stiff upper lip? Not here.

A voice in the corridor said: "Tickets, please." Faber noted the Yorkshire accent: they were in the North now. Faber fumbled in his pockets for his ticket.

He had the corner seat, near the door, so he could see into the corridor. The inspector was shining a torch on to the tickets. Faber saw the man's silhouette in the reflected light. It looked vaguely familiar.

He settled back in his seat to wait. He remembered the nightmare: "This is an Abwehr ticket" - and smiled in the dark.

Then he frowned. There was something about the inspector's face that disturbed him. He looked into the corridor again, but the man had entered a compartment.

The train stopped briefly - the station was Crewe, according to informed opinion in Faber's compartment - and moved off again.

Faber got another look at the inspector's face, and now he remembered. The boarding house at Highgate! The boy from Yorkshire who wanted to get into the Army!

Faber watched him carefully. His torch flashed across the face of every passenger. He was not just looking at the tickets.

No, Faber told himself, don't jump to conclusions. How could they possibly have got on to him? They could not have found out which train he was on, got hold of one of the few people in the world who knew what he looked like, and got the man on the train dressed as a ticket inspector in so short a time. It was ridiculous!

Parkin, that was his name. Billy Parkin. Somehow he looked a lot older now. He was coming closer.

It must be a look-alike - perhaps an elder brother. This <u>had</u> to be coincidence.

Parkin went into the next compartment. There was no time left.

Faber decided he could not take the risk. He got up, left the compartment, and went along the corridor, picking his way over suitcases and kitbags and bodies, to the lavatory. It was vacant. He went in and locked the door.

He was only buying time - ticket inspectors did not fail to check the toilets. He sat on the seat and wondered how he could get out of this. The train had speeded up, and it was travelling too fast for him to jump off. Besides, someone would see him go, and if they really were searching for him they would stop the train.

"All tickets please."

He was getting nearer again.

Faber had an idea. Between the carriages there was a tiny space, closed off at both ends by doors because of the noise and drafts. It was like a little air-lock, enclosed by a bellows-like linkage between the cars of the train. He left the lavatory, fought his way to the end of the carriage, opened the door, and went in. He closed the door behind him.

It was freezing cold, and the noise was terrific. Faber sat on the floor and curled up, pretending to sleep. Only a dead man could sleep here, but people did strange things on trains these days. He tried not to shiver.

The door opened behind him. "Tickets please."

He ignored it. He heard the door close.

"Wake up, Sleeping Beauty." The voice was unmistakeable.

Faber pretended to stir, and then got to his feet, keeping his back to Parkin. When he turned around his stiletto was in his hand. He pushed Faber up against the door, held the point of the knife at his throat, and said: "Be still or I'll kill you."

With his left hand he took Parkin's torch, and shone it into his face. The Yorkshireman did not look as frightened as he ought to be.

Faber said: "Well, well. Billy Parkin, who wanted to join the Army, and ended up on the railways. Still, it's a uniform."

Parkin said: "You."

"You know damn well it's me, Little Billy Parkin. You were looking for me. Why?" He was doing his best to sound vicious.

"I don't know why I should be looking for you - I'm not a policeman."

Faber jerked the knife melodramatically. "Stop lying to me."

"Honest, Mr Faber. Let me go - I ppomise I won't tell anyone I've seen you."

Faber began to have doubts. Either Parkin was telling the truth, or he was overacting as much as Faber himself.

Parkin's body shifted, his right arm moving in the darkness. Faber grabbed the wrist in an iron grip. Parkin struggled for an instant, but Faber let the needle point of the stiletto sink/~~knif~~ a fraction of an inch into Parkin's throat, and the man was still. Faber found the pocket Parkin had been reaching for, and pulled out a gun.

"Ticket inspectors do not go armed," he said. "Who are you with, Parkin?"

"We all carry guns now - there's a lot of crime on trains because of the dark."

Parkin was lying courageously and persistently. Faber decided that threats were not going to loosen his tongue.

His movement was sudden, swift, and accurate. The blade of the stiletto leaped in his fist. Its point entered a measured half-inch into Parkin's left eye and came out again.

Faber's hand covered Parkin's mouth. The muffled scream of agony was drowned by the noise of the train. Parkins hands went to his ruined eye.

Faber pressed his advantage. "Save yourself the other eye, Parkin. Who are you with?"

"~~MI5~~ Military Intelligence, oh God, please don't do it again."

"Who? Menzies? Masterman?"

"Oh, God, it's Godliman, Percy Godliman."

"Godliman!" Faber knew the name, but this was no time to search his memory for details. "What have they got?"

"A picture - I picked you out from the files."

"What picture? What picture?"

"A racing team - running - with a cup - the Army - "

Faber remembered. Christ, where had they got hold of that? It was his nightmare: they had a picture. People would know his face. His face!

He moved the knife closer to Parkin's right eye. "How did you know where I was ?"

"Don't do it, please - the letter to the Portugese Embassy - asked at Euston - please, not the other eye - " He covered both eyes with his hands.

"What's the plan? Where is the trap?"

"Glasgow. They're waiting for you at Glasgow. The train will be emptied there."

Faber lowered the knife to the level of Parkin's belly. To distract him, he said: "How many men?" Then he pushed hard, inwards and upwards to the heart.

Parkin's one eye stared at him in horror, and he did not die. It was a drawback to Faber's favoured method of killing. Normally the shock of the knife was enough to stop the heart. But if the heart was strong it did not always work - after all, surgeons sometimes stuck a hypodermic needle directly into the heart to inject adrenalin. If the heart continued to pump, the motion would work a hole around the blade, from which the blood would leak. It was just as fatal, but longer.

At last Parkin's body went limp. Faber held him against the wall for a moment, thinking. There had been something - a flicker of courage, the ghost of a smile - before the man died. It meant something. Such things always did.

He let the body fall to the floor, then arranged it in a sleeping position, with the wounds hidden from view. He cleaned his stiletto on Parkin's trousers, and wiped the ocular liquid from his hands. It had been a messy business.

He put the knife away in his sleeve and opened the door to the carriage. He made his way back to his compartment in the dark.

As he sat down the Cockney said: "You took your time - was there a queue?"

Faber said: "It must have been something I ate."

"Probably a dried-egg sandwich." The Cockney laughed.

Faber was thinking about Godliman. He knew the name - he could even put a vague face to it: a middle-aged, bespectacled face, with a pipe and an absent, professorial air. That was it - he was a professor.

It was coming back. In his first couple of years in London Faber had had little to do. The war had not yet started, and most people believed it would not come. (Faber was not among them.) He had been able to to a little useful work - mostly checking and revising the Abwehr's out-of-date maps, plus general reports based on his own observations and his reading of the newspapers - but not much. To fill in time, to improve his English, and to flesh out his cover, he had gone sightseeing.

His purpose in visiting Canterbury Cathedral had been innocent, although he did buy an aerial view of the town and the cathedral which he sent back for the Luftwaffe - not that it did much good: they spent most of 1942 missing it. Faber had taken a whole day to see the building: reading the ancient initials carved in walls, distinguishing the different architectural styles , reading the guidebook line by line as he walked slowly around.

He had been in the south ambulatory of the choir, looking at the blind arcading, when he became conscious of another absorbed figure by his side; an older man. "Fascinating, isn't it?" the man said; and Faber asked him what he meant.

"The one pointed arch in an arcade of round ones. No reason for it - that section obviously hasn't been rebuilt. For some reason, somebody just altered that one. I wonder why."

Faber saw what he meant. The choir was Romanesque, the nave Gothic; yet here in the choir was a solitary Gothic arch. "Perhaps," he said, "the monks demanded to see what the pointed arches would look like, so the architect did this to show them."

The older man stared at him. "What a splendid conjecture! Of course that's the reason. Are you an historian?"

Faber laughed. "No, just a clerk and an occasional reader of history books."

"People get Ph. D.s for inspired guesses like that!"

"Are you? An historian, I mean."

"Yes, for my sins." He stuck out his hand. "Percy Godliman."

Was it possible, Faber thought as the train rattled on through Lancashire, that that unimpressive figure in a tweed suit could be the man who had discovered his identity? Spies generally claimed they were civil servants, or something equally vague; not historians - that lie could be too easily found out. Yet it was rumoured that Military Intelligence had been bolstered by a number of academics. Faber had imagined them to be young, fit, aggressive and bellicose as well as clever. Godliman was clever, but none of the rest.

Faber had seen him once again, although he had not spoken to him the second time. After the brief encounter in the cathedral Faber had seen a notice advertising a public lecture on Henry II to be given by Professor Godliman at his college. He had gone along, out of curiosity. The talk had been erudite, lively and convincing. Godliman was still a faintly comic figure, prancing about behind the lectern, getting enthusiastic about his subject; but it was clear his mind was as sharp as a knife.

So that was the man who had discovered what Der Nadel looked like. He must have changed.

Jesus Christ, an <u>amateur</u>.

Well, he would make amateur mistakes. Sending Billy Parkin had been one: Faber had recognised the boy. Godliman should have sent someone Faber did not know. Parkin had had a better chance of recognising Faber, but no chance at all of surviving the encounter. A professional would have known that.

The train shuddered to a halt, and a muffled voice outside announced that this was Liverpool. Faber cursed under his breath: he should have been spending the time working out his next move, not remembering Percival Godliman.

They were waiting for him at Glasgow, Parkin had said before he died. Very well; Faber would get off at Liverpool. He stood up.

The Cockney in the compartment said: "I thought you were going to Inverness."

Faber hated snap decisions: they left you unprepared. He hesitated, then explained: "I'm going to try to get a cup of tea on the platform."

"And the best of luck," the Cockney said.

Faber got off and headed for the ticket barrier. He wondered why they had chosen Glasgow for their ambush. Their enquiries at Euston would have told them he was going to Inverness. (It had been one of his habitual precautions: like lying whenever it was as easy as telling the truth, he always bought a ticket for another destination.)

On the other hand, if they suspected Inverness was a red herring, they would have speculated that he was going to Liverpool, for that was the nearest link point for an Irish ferry.

So why Glasgow?

Faber thought of something else. Something had flashed in Billy Parkin's eyes before he died. What was it? Not hatred, not fear, not pain - although allthose had been present. It was more like ... triumph.

Faber looked up, past the ticket collector, and understood.

Waiting on the other side, dressed in a hat and raincoat, was the blond young tail from Leicester Square.

Parkin, dying in agony and humiliation and betrayal, had fooled Faber at the last. The trap was here, at Liverpool.

The man in the raincoat did not seem to have noticed Faber in the crowd. Faber turned and stepped back on to the train. Once inside, he pulled aside the blind and looked out. The tail was searching the faces of the crowd. He had not noticed the man who got back on the train.

Faber watched while the passengers filtered through the gate until the platform was empty. The blond man spoke urgently to the ticket collector, who shook his head in negation. The man seemed to insist. After a moment he waved to someone out of sight. A police officer emerged from the shadows and spoke to

the collector. The platform guard joined the group, followed by a man in a civilian suit who was presumably a more senior railway official.

The engine driver and his fireman left the locomotive and went over to the barrier. There was more waving of arms and shaking of heads.

Finally the railwaymen shrugged, turned away, or rolled their eyes upwards, all telegraphing surrender. The blond and the police officer summoned other policemen, and they moved determinedly on to the platform.

They were going to search the train.

All the railway officials, including the engine crew, had disappeared in the opposite direction, no doubt to seek tea and sandwiches while the lunatics tried to search a jam-packed train. That gave Faber an idea.

He opened the door and jumped out of the wrong side of the train, the side opposite to the platform. Concealed from the police by the carriages, he ran along the tracks, stumbling on the sleepers and slipping on the gravel, toward the engine.

It had to be bad news, of course. From the moment he realised that Billy Parkin was not going to saunter off that train, Frederick Bloggs knew that Der Nadel had slipped through their fingers again. As the uniformed police moved on to the train in pairs, two men to search each carriage, Bloggs thought of several possible explanations of Parkin's non-appearance; and all the explanations were depressing.

He turned up his coat collar and paced the draughty platform. He wanted very badly to catch Der Nadel: not just for the sake of D-Day - although that was reason enough, God knew - but for Percy Godliman, and for the five Home Guard, and for Christine.

He looked at his watch: four o'clock. Soon it would be day. Bloggs had been up all night, and he had not eaten since breakfast yesterday, but until now he had kept going on adrenalin. The failure of the trap - he was quite sure it had failed - drained him of energy. Huger and fatigue caught up with him. He

had to make a conscious effort not to daydream about hot food and a warm bed.

"Sir!" A policeman was leaning out of a carriage and waving at him. "Sir!"

Bloggs began to walk toward him, then broke into a run. "What have you found?"

"It might be your man Parkin."

Bloggs climbed into the carriage. "What do you mean, might be?"

"You'd better have a look." The policeman opened the communicating door between the carriages and shone his torch inside.

It was Parkin; Bloggs could tell by the ticket-inspector's uniform. He was curled up on the floor. Bloggs took the policeman's torch, knelt down beside Parkin, and turned him over.

He saw Parkin's face, looked quickly away, and said: "Oh, dear God."

"I take it this is Paškin?" the policeman said.

Bloggs nodded. He got up, very slowly, without looking again at the body. "We'll interview everybody in this carriage and the next," he said. "Anyone who saw or heard anything unusual will be detained for further questioning. Not that it will do us any good: the murderer certainly jumped off the train before it got here."

Bloggs went back out on to the platform. All the searchers had completed their task and were gathered in a group. He detailed six of them to help with the interviewing.

The police-inspector said: "Your villain's hopped it, then."

"Almost certainly," Bloggs agreed. "You've looked in every toilet, and the guard's van?"

"Yes, and on top of the train and under it, and in the engine and the coal tender."

A passenger got off the train and approached Bloggs and the inspector. He was a small man with a bad chest, and he wheezed badly. He said: "Excuse me."

"Yes, sir," the inspector said.

The passenger said: "I was wondering, are you looking for somebody?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Well, if you are, I was wondering, would he be a tall chap?"

The inspector said: "Why do you ask?"

Bloggs interrupted impatiently: "Yes, a tall man. Come on, spit it out."

"Well, it's just that a tall chap got out the wrong side of the train."

"When?"

"A minute or two after the train pulled into the station. He got on, like, then he got off, on the wrong side. Jumped down on to the track. Only he had no luggage, you see, which was another odd thing, and I just thought – "

The inspector said: "Balls."

"He must have spotted the trap," Bloggs said. "But how? He doesn't know my face, and your men were out of sight."

"Something made him suspicious."

"So he crossed the line to the next platform and went out that way. Wouldn't he have been seen?"

The inspector shrugged. "Not too many people about, this late. And if he was seen he could just say he was too impatient to queue at the ticket barrier."

"Didn't you have the other ticket barriers covered?"

"I didn't think of it."

"Nor did I."

"Well, we can search the surrounding area, and later on we can check various places in the city – "

"You won't find him," Bloggs said. "By now he'll be far away."

It was more than an hour before the train started to move. Faber had cramp in his left calf and dust in his nose. He heard the footplatemen climb back into their cab, and caught snatches of conversation about a body being found on the train. There was a metallic rattle as the fireman shovelled coal, then the hiss

of steam, a clanking of pistons, a jerk and a sigh of smoke as the train moved off. Gratefully, Faber shifted his position and indulged in a smothered sneeze. Then he felt better.

He was at the back of the coal tender, buried under several inches of coal. He wondered whether he could risk emerging now. It must be getting light: would he be visible from a bridge over the line? He thought not. His skin would now be black, and in a moving train in the pale light of dawn he would just be a dark blur on a dark background. Yes, he would chance it. Slowly and carefully, he dug his way out of his grave of coal.

He breathed deeply of the cool air. The coal was shovelled out of the tender via a small hole in the front end. Later, perhaps, the fireman would have to enter the tender, when the pile of fuel got lower. Faber was safe for now.

As the light strengthened he looked himself over. He was covered from head to toe in coal dust, like a miner coming up from the pit. Somehow he had to wash and change his clothes.

He chanced a peep over the side of the tender. The train was still in the suburbs, passing factories and warehouses and rows of grimy little houses. He had to think about his next move.

His original plan had been to get off the train at Glasgow and there catch another train to Dundee and up the east coast to Aberdeen. It was still not impossible for him to disembark at Glasgow. He could not get off at the station, of course, but he might jump off either just before or just after. However, there were risks attached to that course. The train was sure to stop at intermediate stations between Liverpool and Glasgow, and at those stops Faber might be spotted. No, he had to get off the train as soon as possible and find other means of transport.

The ideal spot would be a lonely stretch of track just outside a city or village. It had to be lonely, for he must not be seen leaping from the coal tender; but it had to be fairly near houses so that he could steal clothes and

a car. And it needed to be an uphill-sloping stretch of track, so that the train would be ~~moving~~ travelling slowly enough for him to jump.

The train was moving at about forty miles an hour now. Faber lay back on the coal to wait. He could not keep a permanent watch on the country through which he was passing, for fear of being seen. He decided he would look out whenever the train slowed down. Otherwise he would lie still.

After a few minutes he caught himself dropping off to sleep, despite the discomfort of his bed. He shifted his position and reclined on his elbows, so that if he did sleep he would fall and be wakened by the impact.

The train was gathering speed. Between London and Liverpool it had seemed to be stationary more than moving; now it steamed through the country at a fine pace. To complete his discomfort, it started to rain; a cold, steady drizzle that soaked right through his clothes and seemed to turn to ice on his h skin. There was another reason for getting off the train: he could die of exposure before they reached Glasgow.

After half an hour at high speed he was contemplating killing the footplate crew and stopping the train himself. A signal box saved their lives. The train slewed suddenly as brakes were applied. It decelerated in stages: Faber guessed the track was marked with descending speed limits. He looked out. They were in the countryside again. He could see the reason for the slowdown - they were approaching a track junction, and the signals were against them.

Faber stayed in the tender while the train stood still. After five minutes it started up again. Faber scrambled up the side of the tender, perched on the edge for a moment, and jumped.

He landed on the embankment and lay, face down, in the overgrown weeds. When he got to his feet the train was out of sight. The only sign of

civilisation nearby was the signal box, a two-storey wooden structure with large windows in the control room at the top, an outside staircase, and a door at ground floor level. On the far side was a cinder track leading away.

Faber walked in a wide circle to approach the place from the back, where there were no windows. He entered the ground-floor door and found what he had been expecting: a toilet, a washbasin and a coat hanging on a peg.

He took off his soaking wet clothes, washed his hands and face, and rubbed himself vigorously all over with a grubby towel. The transparent wallet of photographic negatives was still taped securely to his chest. He put his clothes back on, but substituted the signalman's overcoat for his own sopping wet jacket.

Now all he needed was transport. The signalman must have got here somehow. Faber went outside and found a bicycle padlocked to a rail on the other side of the little building. He snapped the little lock with the blade of his stiletto. Moving in a straight line away from the blank rear wall of the signal box, he wheeled the cycle until he was out of sight of the building. Then he cut across until he reached the cinder track, climbed on the cycle, and rode away.

16

Percival Godliman had brought from his home a little camp bed. He lay on it in his office, dressed in his trousers and shirt, trying in vain to sleep. He had not suffered insomnia for almost forty years, since he took his final exams at university. He would gladly swap the anxieties of those days for the worries that made him sleepless now.

He had been a different man then, he knew; not just younger, but also a lot less ... abstracted. He had been outgoing, aggressive, ambitious: he planned to go into politics. He was not studious then - he had reason to be anxious about the exams. His obsessive devotion to history had come later. He knew to the day when he had changed. The death of his wife had ended his interest in

the real world, and he had retreated into the Middle Ages.

It had drawn him and Bloggs closer together, this common bereavement. The war had brought Godliman back to life, and he hoped there would soon be something in Bloggs' life to rescue him from an existence of bitterness and introversion.

Bloggs phoned from Liverpool soon after dawn to say that Der Nadel had slipped through the net, and Parkin had been killed.

Godliman, sitting on the edge of the camp bed to speak on the phone, closed his eyes in despair. "I should have put you on the train," he murmured.

"Thanks!" Bloggs said.

"Only because he doesn't know your face."

"I think he may," Bloggs argued. "We suspect he spotted the trap, and mine was the only face visible to him as he got off the train."

"Have you got the ferry covered?" Godliman asked.

"Yes."

"He won't use it, of course - too obvious. He's more likely to steal a boat. On the other hand, he may still try to make his rendezvous at Inverness."

"We've alerted the police up there."

"Good. But look, I don't think we can make any assumptions about where he's headed. Let's keep an open mind. It's not outside the bounds of possibility that Inverness was a red herring."

"Agreed."

Godliman stood, picked up the phone, and began to pace the carpet. "Also, don't assume it was he who got off the train on the wrong side. Work on the premise that he got off before, at or after Liverpool." Godliman's brain was in gear again, sorting permutations and possibilities. "Let me talk to the Chief Superintendent."

"He's here."

There was a pause, then a new voice said: "Chief Superintendent Anthony speaking."

Godliman said: "Do you agree with me that our man has get off this train

somewhere in your area?"

"That seems likely, yes."

"Good. Now the first thing he needs is transport - so I want you to get details of every car, boat, bicycle or donkey stolen within a hundred miles of Liverpool during the next twenty-four hours. Keep me informed, but give the information to Bloggs and work closely with him in following-up the leads."

"Yes, sir."

"Keep an eye on other crimes that might be committed by a fugitive - theft of food or clothing, unexplained assaults, identity card irregularities, and so on."

"Right."

"Now, Mr Anthony, you realise this man is more than just a mass murderer?"

"I assume so, sir, from the fact of your involvement. However I don't know the details."

"Nor shall you. Suffice it to say that this is a matter of national security so grave that the Prime Minister is in hourly contact with this office."

"I understand. Uh, Mr Bloggs would like a word, sir."

Bloggs came back on. "Have you remembered how you know his face?"

"Oh, yes - but it's of no value, as I forecast. I met him by chance at Canterbury Cathedral, and we had a conversation about the architecture. All it tells us is that he's clever."

"We knew that already."

"Only too well."

Chief Superintendent Anthony was a burly member of the middle class with a carefully softened Liverpool accent. He did not know whether to be peeved at the way MI5 ordered him about or thrilled at the chance to save England on his own manor.

Bloggs knew of the man's inner struggle - he met this sort of thing all the time when working with local police forces - and he knew how to tip the

balance in his own favour. He said: "I'm grateful for your helpfulness, Chief Super. These things don't go unnoticed in Whitehall."

"Only doing our duty," Anthony said. He was not sure whether he was supposed to call Bloggs "sir".

"Still, there's a big difference between reluctant assistance and willing help."

"Yes. Well, it'll likely be a few hours before we pick up this man's scent again - do you want to catch forty winks?"

"Yes," Bloggs said gratefully. "If you've got a chair in a corner somewhere ... "

"Stay here," Anthony said, indicating his office. "I'll be down in the operations room. I'll wake you as soon as we've got something. Make yourself comfortable."

Anthony went out, and Bloggs moved to an easy chair and sat back with his eyes closed. Immediately he saw Godliman's face, as if projected on to the backs of his eyelids like a film, saying: "There has to be an end to bereavement ... I don't want you to make the same mistake." Bloggs realised suddenly that he did not want the war to end, for that would make him face issues like the one Godliman had raised. The war made life simple, for he knew why he hated the enemy and he knew what he was supposed to do about it. Afterwards ... the thought of another woman seemed disloyal, not just to Christine but, in some obscure way, to England.

He yawned and slumped farther into his seat, his thinking becoming woolly as sleep crept up on him. If Christine had died before the war, he would have felt very differently about remarrying. He had always been fond of her and respected her, of course; but after she took that ambulance job respect had turned to awestruck admiration, and fondness turned to love. Then they had something special, something they knew other lovers did not share. Now, four years later, it would be easy for Bloggs to find another woman he could respect and be fond of, but he knew that would never be enough for him. An ordinary

marriage, an ordinary woman, would always remind him that once he had possessed the ideal.

He stirred in his chair, trying to shake off imponderables so that he could sleep. England was full of heroes, Godliman said. If Der Nadel got away it would be full of slaves. First things first ...

Someone shook him. He was in a very deep sleep, dreaming that he was in a room with Der Nadel but could not pick him out because Der Nadel had blinded him with the stiletto. When he awoke he still thought he was blind because he could not see who was shaking him, until he realised his eyes were simply closed. He opened them to see the large uniformed figure of Chief Superintendent Anthony above him.

Bleggs raised himself to a more upright position and rubbed his eyes. "Got something?" he asked.

"Lots of things," Anthony said. "Question is, which of 'em counts? Here's your breakfast." He put a cup of tea and a biscuit on the desk and went to sit on the other side of it.

Bloggs left his easy chair and pulled a hard chair up to the desk. He sipped the tea. It was weak and very sweet. "Let's get to it," he said.

Anthony handed him a sheaf of five or six slips of paper.

Bloggs said: "Don't tell me these are the only crimes in your area - "

"Of course not," Anthony said. "We're not interested in drunkenness, domestic disputes, blackout violations, traffic offences, or crimes for which arrests have already been made."

"Sorry," Bloggs said. "I'm still waking up. Give me a chance to read these."

There were three house burglaries. In two of them, valuables had been stolen - jewellery in one case, furs in another. Blogge said: "He might steal valuables just to throw us off the scent. Mark these on the map, will you? They may show some pattern." He handed the two slips back to Anthony. The third

burglary had only just been reported, and no details were available. Anthony marked the location on the map.

A Food Office in Manchester had been robbed of hundreds of ration books. Bleggs said: "He doesn't need ration books - he needs food." He set that one aside. There was a bicycle theft just outside Preston and a rape in Birkenhead. "I don't think he's a rapist, but mark it anyway," Bloggs told Anthony.

The bicycle theft and the third of the house burglaries were close together. Bloggs said: "The signal box that the bike was stolen from - is that on the main line?"

"Yes, I think so," Anthony said.

"Suppose Faber was hiding on that train and we missed him. Would the signal box be the first place at which the train stopped after it left Liverpool?"

"It might be."

Bleggs looked at the sheet of paper. "An overcoat was stolen and a wet jacket left in its place."

Anthony shrugged. "Could mean anything."

"No cars stolen?" Bloggs said sceptically.

"Nor boats, nor donkeys," Anthony replied. "We don't get many car thefts these days. Cars are easy to come by - it's petrol people steal."

"I felt sure he'd steal a car in Liverpool," Bloggs said. He thumped his knee in frustration. "Somehow a bicycle just isn't his style."

"I think we should follow it up, anyway," Anthony pressed. "It's our best lead."

"All right. But meanwhile, double-check the burglaries to see whether food or clothing was pinched - the losers might not have noticed at first. Show Faber's picture to the rape victim, too. And keep checking all crimes. Can you fix me transport to Preston?"

"I'll get you a car," Anthony said.

"How long will it take to get details of this third burglary?"

"They're probably interviewing at this minute," Anthony said. "By the time

you reach the signal box I should have the complete picture. It won't take too long."

"Don't let them drag their feet." Bloggs reached for his coat. "I'll check with you the minute I get there."

"Anthony? This is Bleggs. I'm at the signal box."

"Don't waste any time there. The third burglary was your man."

"Sure?"

"Unless there are two buggers running around threatening people with stiletto knives."

"Who?"

"Two old ladies living alone in a little cottage."

"Oh, God. Dead?"

"Not unless they died of excitement."

"Eh?"

"Get over there. You'll see what I mean."

"I'm on my way."

It was the kind of cottage which is always inhabited by two elderly ladies living alone. It was small and square and old, and around the door grew a wild rose bush fertilised by thousands of pots of used tea leaves. Rows of vegetables sprouted tidily in a little front garden with a trimmed hedge. There were pink-and-white curtains at the leaded windows and the gate creaked. The front door had been painted painstakingly by an amateur, and its knocker was made from a horse brass.

Bloggs' knock was answered by an octogenarian with a shotgun.

He said: "Good morning. I'm from the police."

"No, you're not," she said. "They've been already. Now get going before I blow your head off."

Bloggs regarded her. She was less than five feet tall, with thick white hair in a bun and a pale, wrinkled face. Her hands were matchstick-thin, but her grasp on the shotgun was firm. The pocket of her apron was full of clothes-pegs.

Bloggs looked down at her feet, and saw that she was wearing a man's working boots. He said: "The police you saw this morning were local. I'm from Scotland Yard."

"How do I know that?" she said.

Bloggs turned and called to his police driver. The constable got out of the car and came to the gate. Bloggs said to the old lady: "Is the uniform enough to convince you?"

"All right," she said, and stood aside for him to enter.

He stepped down into a low-ceilinged living-room with a tiled floor. The room was crammed with heavy, old furniture, and every surface was decorated with ornaments of china and glass. A small coal fire burned in the grate. The place smelled of lavender and cats.

A second old lady got out of a chair. She was like the first, but about twice as wide. Two cats spilled from her lap as she rose. She said: "Hello, I'm Emma Parton. My sister is Jessie. Don't take any notice of that shotgun - it's not loaded, thank God. Jessie loves drama. Will you sit down? You look so young to be a policeman. I'm surprised Scotland Yard is interested in our little burglary. Have you come from London this morning? Make the boy a cup of tea, Jessie."

Bloggs sat down. "If we're right about the identity of the burglar, he's a fugitive from justice," he said.

"I told you!" Jessie said. "We might have been done in! Slaughtered, in cold blood!"

"Don't be silly," Emma said. She turned to Bloggs. "He was such a nice man."

"Tell me what happened," Bloggs said.

"Well, I'd gone out the back," Emma began. "I was in the hen coop, hoping to find a couple of eggs for our breakfast. Jessie was in the kitchen - "

"He surprised me," Jessie interrupted. "I didn't have time to go for me gun."

"You see too many cowboy films," Emma admonished her.

"They're better than your love films - all tears and kisses - "

Bloggs took the picture of Faber from his wallet. "Is this the man?"

Jessie scrutinized it. "That's him."

"Aren't you clever?" Emma marvelled.

"If we were clever we'd have caught him by now," Bloggs said. "What did he do?"

Jessie said: "He held a knife to my throat and said: 'One false move and I'll slit your gizzard.' And he meant it."

"Oh, Jessie, you told me he said: 'I won't harm you if you do as I say.'"

"Words to that effect,Emma!"

Bloggs said: "What did he want?"

"Food, a bath, dry clothes and a car. Well, we gave him the eggs, of course. We found some clothes that belonged to Jessie's late husband Norman - "

"Would you describe them?"

"Yes. A blue donkey jacket, blue overalls, a check shirt. And he took poor Norman's car. I don't know how we'll be able to go to the pictures without it. That's our only vice, you know - the pictures."

"What sort of car?"

"A Morris. Norman bought it in 1924. It's served us well, that little car."

Jessie said: "He didn't get his hot bath, though!"

"Well," Emma said, "I had to explain to him that two ladies living alone can hardly have a man taking a bath in their kitchen ... " She blushed.

Jessie said: "You'd rather have your throat slit than see a man in his combinations, wouldn't you, you silly fool."

Bloggs said: "What did he say when you refused?"

"He laughed," Emma said. "But I think he understoed our position."

Bloggs could not help but smile. "I think you're very brave," he said.

"I don't know about that, I'm sure."

"So he left here in a 1924 Morris, wearing overalls and amblue jacket. What

time was that?"

"About half-past nine."

Bloggs absently stroked a marmalade cat. It blinked and purred. "Was there much petrol in the car?"

"Less than a gallon - but he took our coupons."

A thought struck Bloggs. "How do you ladies qualify for a petrol ration?"

"Agricultural purposes," Emma said defensively. She blushed.

Jessie snorted. "And we're isolated, and we're elderly. Of course we qualify."

"We always go to the corn stores at the same time as the pictures," Emma added. "We don't waste petrol."

Bloggs smiled and held up a hand. "All right, don't worry - rationing isn't my department anyway. How fast does the car go?"

Emma said: "We never exceed thirty miles per hour."

Bloggs looked at his watch. "Even at that speed he could be seventy-five miles away by now." He stood up. "I must phone the details to Liverpool. You don't have a telephone, do you?"

"No."

"What kind of Morris is it?"

"A Cowley. Norman used to call it a Bullnose."

"Colour?"

"Grey."

"Registration number?"

"MLN 29."

Bloggs wrote it all down.

Emma said: "Will we ever get the car back, do you think?"

"I expect so - but it may not be in very good condition. When someone is driving a stolen car he generally doesn't take good care of it." He walked to the door.

"I hope you catch him," Emma called.

Jessie saw him out. She was still clutching the shotgun. At the door she caught Bloggs sleeve and said in a stage whisper: "Tell me - what is he? Escaped convict? Murderer? Rapist?"

Bloggs looked down at her. Her small green eyes were bright with excitement. He bent his head to speak quietly in her ear. "Don't tell a soul," he murmured, "but he's a German spy."

17

Faber crossed the Sark Bridge and entered Scotland shortly after midday. He passed the Sark Toll Bar House, a low building with a signboard announcing that it was the first house in Scotland and a tablet above the door bearing some legend about marriages which he could not read. A quarter of a mile farther on he understand, when he entered the village of Gretna: he knew this was a place runaways came to get married.

The roads were still damp from the early rain, but the sun was drying them rapidly. Signposts and nameboards had been re-erected since the relaxation of invasion precautions, and Faber sped through a series of small lowland villages: Kirkpatrick, Kirtlebridge, Ecclefechan. The open countryside was pleasant, the green moors sparkling in the sunshine.

He had stopped for petrol in Carlisle. The pump attendant, a middle-aged woman in an oily apron, had not asked any awkward questions. Faber had filled the tank and the spare can fixed to the offside running-board.

He was very pleased with the little two-seater. It would still do fifty miles an hour, despite its age. The four-cylinder, 1548cc side-valve engine worked smoothly and tirelessly as he climbed and descended the Scottish hills. The leather-upholstered bench seat was comfortable. He squeezed the bulb horn to warn a straying sheep of his approach.

He went through the little market town of Lockerbie, crossed the River Annan by the picturesque Johnstone Bridge, and began the ascent to Beattock Summit. He found himself using the three-speed gearbox more and more.

He had decided not to take the most direct route to Aberdeen, via Edinburgh and the coast road. Much of Scotland's east coast, either side of the Firth of Forth, was a restricted area. Visitors were not allowed into a ten-mile-wide strip of land. Of course, the authorities could not seriously police such a long border. Nevertheless, Faber was less likely to be stopped and questioned outside the prohibited zone.

He would have to enter it eventually - later rather than sooner - and he turned his mind to the story he would tell if he were interrogated. Private motoring for pleasure had virtually ceased in the last couple of years because of the ever-stricter petrol rationing, and people who had cars for essential journeys were liable to be prosecuted for going a few yards off their necessary reasons route for personal purposes. Faber had read of a famous impressario sentenced to jail when he was caught using petrol supplied for agricultural purposes to take several actors from a theatre to the Savoy Hotel. Endless propaganda told people that a Lancaster bomber needed 2,000 gallons to get to the Ruhr. Nothing would please Faber more than to waste petrol which might otherwise be used to bomb his homeland, in normal circumstances; but to be stopped now, with the information he had taped to his chest, and arrested for a rationing violation would be an unbearable irony.

It was difficult. Most traffic was military, but he had no military papers. He could not claim to be delivering essential supplies because he had nothing in the car to deliver. He thought of the people with whom he had shared a carriage in the train: what had been their reasons for travelling? Sailors on leave, a housewife, a railway official, a docker, an engineer ... That was it. He would be an engineer, a specialist in some esoteric field like high-temperature gearbox oils, going to solve a manufacturing problem in a factory at Inverness. If he were asked which factory, he would say it was classified. (His fictitious destination had to be a long way from his real one so that he would never be questioned by someone who knew for certain there was no such factory.) He doubted whether consulting engineers ever wore overalls like the ones he had stolen from

the elderly sisters - but anything was possible in wartime.

Having figured all that out, he felt he was reasonably safe from any random spot checks. The danger of being stopped by someone who was looking specifically for Henry Faber, fugitive spy, was another problem. They had that picture -

They knew his face. His face!

- and before long they would have a description of the car in which he was travelling. He did not think they would set up roadblocks, as they had no way of guessing where he was heading; but he was sure that every policeman in the land would be on the lookout for the grey Morris Cowley Bullnose, registration number MLN 29.

If he were spotted in the open country, he would not be captured immediately, for country policemen had bicycles, not cars. But the policeman would telephone his headquarters, and cars would be after Faber within minutes. If he saw a policeman, he decided, he would have to ditch this car, steal another, and divert from his planned route. However, in the sparsely-populated Scottish lowlands there was a good chance he could get all the way to Aberdeen without passing a country policeman. The towns would be different. There, the danger of being chased by a police car was very great. He would be unlikely to escape: his car was old and relatively slow, and the police were generally good drivers. His best chance would be to get out of the vehicle and hope to lose himself in crowds or back streets. He contemplated ditching the car and stealing another each time he was forced to enter a major town. The problem there was that he would be leaving a trail a mile wide for MI5 to follow. Perhaps the best solution was a compromise: he would drive into the towns but try to use only the back streets. He looked at his watch. He would reach Glasgow around dusk, and thereafter he would benefit from the darkness.

Well, it was not satisfactory, but the only way to be totally safe was not to be a spy.

As he topped the one-thousand-feet-high Beattock Summit, it began to rain. Faber stopped the car and got out to raise the canvas roof. The air was oppressively

warm. Faber looked up. The sky had clouded over very quickly. Thunder and lightning were promised.

As he drove on he discovered some of the little car's shortcomings. Wind and rain ~~kkk~~ leaked in through several flaws in the canvas roof, and the small wiper sweeping the top half of the horizontally-divided windscreen provided only a tunnel-like view of the road ahead. As the terrain became progressively more hilly, the engine note began to sound faintly ragged. It was hardly surprising: the twenty-year-old car was being pushed hard.

The shower ended. The threatened storm had not arrived, but the sky remained dark and the atmosphere oppressive.

Faber passed through Crawford, nestling in green hills; Abington, a church and a Post Office on the west bank of the River Clyde; and Lesmahagow, on the edge of a heathery moor.

Half an hour later he reached the outskirts of Glasgow. As soon as he entered the built-up area, he turned north off the main road, hoping to circumvent the city. He followed a succession of minor reads, crossing the major arteries into the city's east side, until he reached Cumbernauld Road, where be turned east again and sped out of the city.

It had been quicker than he expected. His luck was holding.

He was on the A80 road, passing factories, mines and farms. More Scots place-names drifted in and outof his consciousness: Millerston, Stepps, Muirhead, Mollinburn, Condorrat.

His luck ran out between Cumbernauld and Stirling.

He was accelerating along a straight stretch of road, slightly downhill, with open fields on either side. As the speedometer needle touched forty-five there was a sudden, very loud noise from the engine; a heavy rattle, like the sound of a large chain pulling ever a cog. He slowed to thirty, but the noise did not get perceptibly quieter. Clearly some large and important piece of the mechanism had failed. Faber listened carefully. It was either a cracked ballbearing in the transmission, or a hole in a big end. Certainly it was nothing so simple as a

blocked carburettor or a dirty sparking-plug; nothing that could be repaired outside a workshop.

He pulled up and looked under the bonnet. There seemed to be a lot of oil everywhere, but otherwise he could see no clues. He got back behind the wheel and drove off. There was a definite loss of power, but the car would still go.

Three miles farther on, steam began to billow out of the radiator. Faber realised that the car would soon stop altogether. He looked for a place to dump it.

He found a mud track leading off the main road, presumably to a farm. A hundred yards from the main road, the track curved behind a blackberry bush. Faber parked the car close to the bush and killed the engine. The hiss of escaping steam gradually subsided. He got out and locked the door. He felt a twinge of regret for Emma and Jessie, who would find it very difficult to get their car repaired before the end of the war.

He walked back to the main road. From there, the car could not be seen. It might be a day or even two before the abandoned vehicle aroused suspicion. By then, Faber thought, I may be in Berlin.

He began to walk. Sooner or later he would hit a town where he could steal another vehicle. He was doing well enough: it was less than twenty-four hours since he had left London, and he still had a whole day to reach his rendezvous.

The sun had set long ago, and now darkness fell suddenly. Faber could hardly see. Fortunately there was a painted white line down the middle of the road – a safety innovation made necessary by the blackout – and he was just about able to follow it. Because of the nightime silence he would hear oncoming cars in plenty of time.

In fact only one car passed him. He heard its deep-throated engine in the distance, and went off the road a few yards to lie out of sight until it had gone. It was a large car, a Vauxhall Ten Faber guessed, and it was travelling at speed. He let it go by, then got up and resumed walking. Twenty minutes later he saw it again, parked by the roadside. He would have taken a detour across the field if

he had noticed the car in time, but its lights were off and its engine silent, and he almost bumped into it in the darkness.

Before he could consider what to do, a torch shone up toward him from under the car's bonnet, and a voice said: "I say, is anybody there?"

Faber moved into the beam and said: "Having trouble?"

"I'll say."

The torch was pointed down, and as Faber moved closer he could see, by the reflected light, the moustached face of a middle-aged man in a double-breasted coat. In his other hand the man held, rather uncertainly, a large spanner; seeming unsure of what to do with it.

Faber looked at the engine. "What's wrong?"

"Lose of power. One moment she was going like a top, the next she started to hobble. Only just made it up that last hill. I'm afraid I'm not much of a mechanic." He shone the torch at Faber again. "Are you?" he finished hopefully.

"No," Faber said, "but I know a disconnected lead when I see one." He took the toch from the man, reached down into the engine, and plugged the stray lead back on to the cylinder head. "Try her now."

The man got into the car and started the engine. "Perfect!" he shouted over the noise. "You're a genius! Hop in."

It crossed Faber's mind that this might be an elaborate MI5 trap, but he dismissed the thought: in the unlikely event they knew where he was, why should they tread softly? They could as easily send twenty policemen and a couple of armoured cars to pick him up.

He got in.

The driver pulled away and moved rapidly up through the gears until the car was travelling at a good speed. Faber made himself comfortable. The driver said: "By the way, I'm Richard Porter."

Faber thought quickly of the identity card in his wallet. "James Baker."

"How do you do. I must have passed you on the road back there - didn't see you."

Faber realised the man was apologising for not picking him up - everyone picked up hitch-hikers these days, ever since the petrol shortage began. "It's okay," Faber said. "I was probably off the road, behind a bush, answering a call of nature. I did hear a car go by."

"Have you come far?" Porter offered a cigar.

"It's good of you, but I don't smoke," Faber said. "Yes, I've come from London."

"Hitchhiked all the way?"

"No. My car broke down in Edinburgh. Apparently it requires a spare part which isn't in stock, so I had to leave it at the garage."

"Hard luck. Well, I'm going to Aberdeen, so I can drop you anywhere along the way."

Faber thought fast. This was a piece of good fortune. He closed his eyes and pictured the map of Scotland. "That's marvellous," he said. "I'm going to Banff, so Aberdeen would be a great help. But I was planning to take the high road, because I didn't get myself a pass - is Aberdeen a Restricted Area?"

"Only the harbour," Porter said. "Anyway, you needn't worry about that sort of thing while you're in my car - I'm a J.P. and a member of the Watch Committee. How's that?"

Faber smiled in the darkness. It was his lucky day. "Thankyou," he said. He decided to change the subject of the conversation. "It that a full-time job? Being a magistrate, I mean."

Porter put a match to his cigar and puffed smoke. "Not really. I'm semi-retired, y'know. Used to be a solicitor, until they discovered my weak heart."

"Ah." Faber tried to put some sympathy into his voice.

"Hope you don't mind the smoke?" Porter waved the fat cigar.

"Not a bit."

"What takes you to Banff?"

"I'm an engineer. There's a problem in a factory ... actually, the job is

sort of classified."

Porter held up his hand. "Don't say another word. I understand."

There was silence for a while. The car flashed through several towns. Porter obviously knew the road very well, to drive so fast in the blackout. The big car gobbled up the miles. Its smooth progress was soporific. Faber smothered a yawn.

"Damn, you must be tired," Porter said. "Silly of me. Don't be too polite to have a nap."

"Thankyou," said Faber. "I will." He closed his eyes.

The motion of the car was like the rocking of a train, and Faber had his arrival nightmare again, only this time it was slightly different. Instead of dining on the train and talking politics with a fellow-passenger, he was obliged for some unknown reason to travel in the coal tender, sitting on his suitcase radio with his back against the hard iron side of the truck. When the train arrived at Waterloo, everyone - including the disembarking passengers - was carrying a little duplicated photograph of Faber in the running team; and they were all looking at each other and comparing the faces they saw ~~s~~ with the face in the picture. At the ticket barrier the collector took his shoulder and said: "You're the man in the photo, aren't you?" Faber found himself dumb. All he could do was stare at the photograph and remember the way he had run ~~xxiii~~ to win that cup. God, how he had run: he had peaked a shade too early, started his final burst a quarter of a mile sooner than he had planned, and for the last 500 metres he wanted to die - and now perhaps he would die, because of that photograph in the ticket collector's hand ... The collector shook Faber's shoulder, saying: "Wake up! Wake up!" and suddenly Faber was back in Richard Porter's Vauxhall Ten, and it was Porter who was shaking hisshoulder and telling him to wake up.

His right hand was half way to his left sleeve, where the stiletto was sheathed, in the split-second before he remembered that as far as Porter was concerned James Baker was an innocent hitch-hiker. Then his hand dropped and he relaxed.

"You wake up like a soldier," Porter said with amusement. "This is

Aberdeen."

Faber noted that "soldier" had been pronounced "soul-juh", and recalled that Porter was a magistrate and a member of the police authority. He looked at the man in the dull light of early day: Porter had a red face and a waxed moustache, and his camel-coloured overcoat looked expensive. He was wealthy and powerful in this town, Faber guessed. If he were to disappear he would be missed almost immediately. Faber decided not to kill him.

Faber said: "Good morning."

He looked out of the window at the granite city. They were moving slowly along a main street with shops on either side. There were several early workers about, all moving purposefully in the same direction: fishermen, Faber reckoned. It seemed a cold, windy place.

Porter said: "Would you like to have a shave and a bit of breakfast before you continue your journey? You're welcome to come to my place."

"You're very kind - "

"Not at all - if it weren't for you I should still be on the A80 at Stirling, waiting for a garage to open."

" - but I won't, thankyou. I want to get on with the journey."

Porter did not insist, and Faber suspected that he was relieved not to have his offer taken up. The man said: "In that case, I'll drop you at George Street - that's the start of the A96, and it's a straight road to Banff." A moment later he stopped the car at a corner. "Here you are."

Faber opened the door. "Thanks for the lift."

"A pleasure." Porter offered a handshake. "Good luck!"

Faber got out and closed the door, and the car pulled away. He had nothing to fear from Porter, he thought; the man would go home and sleep all day, and by the time he realised he had helped a fugitive, it would be too late to do anything about it.

He watched the Vauxhall out of sight, then crossed the road and entered the promisingly-named Market Street. Shortly he found himself in the docks and,

following his nose, arrived at the fish market. He felt safely anonymous in the bustling, noisy, smelly market, where everyone was dressed in working clothes as he was. Wet fish and cheerful profanities flew through the air. Faber found it hard to understand the clipped, guttural accents. At a stall he bought hot, strong tea in a chipped half-pint mug and a large bread roll with a doorstep of white cheese.

He sat on a barrel to eat and think. This evening would be the best time to steal a boat. It was galling, to have to wait all day ~~while the U-boat was out there ready to pick him up~~; and it left him with the problem of concealing himself for the next twelve hours; but he was too close to take risks now.

He finished his breakfast and stood up. It would be a couple of hours before the rest of the city came to life. He would use the time to pick out a few likely boats and find a hiding-place.

He made a circuit of the docks and the tidal harbour. The security was perfunctory, and he spotted several places where he could slip past the police checks. He worked his way around to the sandy beach, and set off along the two-mile esplanade. At its far end, a couple of pleasure yachts were moored at the mouth of the River Don. They would have suited Faber's purpose very well, but they would have no petrol.

A thick ceiling of cloud hid the sunrise. The air became very warm and thundery again. A few determined holidaymakers emerged from seafront hotels and sat stubbornly on the beach, waiting for sunshine. Faber doubted they would get it today.

He wondered where to hide. The police would check the railway station and the bus depot, but they would not mount a full-scale search of the city. They might check a few hotels and guest-houses. It was unlikely they would approach every holidaymaker on the beach. He decided to spend the day on a deck-chair.

He bought a newspaper from a stall and hired a chair. He removed his shirt and put it back on over his overalls. He sat on his jacket.

He would see a policeman, if one came, well before he reached the spot where

Faber sat. There would be plenty of time to leave the beach and vanish into the streets.

He began to read the paper. There was a new Allied offensive in Italy, the newspaper rejoiced. Faber was sceptical. Anzie had been a shambles. The paper was badly printed and there were no photographs. The police were searching for one Henry Faber, who had murdered two people in London with a stiletto...

A woman in a bathing suit walked by, looking hard at Faber. His heart missed a beat. Then he realised she was being flirtatious. For an instant he was tempted to speak to her. It had been so long ... He shook himself mentally. Patience, patience. Tomorrow he would be home.

She was a small fishing boat, fifty or sixty feet long and broad in the beam, with an inboard motor. The aerial told of a powerful radio. Most of the deck was taken up with hatches to the small hold below. The cabin was aft, and only large enough to hold two men, standing, plus the dashboard and controls. The hull was clinker-built and newly caulked, and the paintwork looked fresh.

Two other boats in the harbour would have done as well, but Faber had stood on the quay and watched the crew of this one tie her up and refuel before they left for their homes.

He gave them a few minutes to get well away, then walked around the edge of the harbour and jumped on to the boat. She was called Marie II.

He found the wheel chained up. He sat on the floor of the little cabin, out of sight, and spend ten minutes picking the lock. Darkness was coming early because of the cloud layer which still blanketed the sky.

When he had freed the wheel he raised the small anchor, then sprang back on to the quay and untied the ropes. There seemed to be no sailors about, although one or two holidaymakers were taking the evening air.

He returned to the cabin, primed the diesel engine, and pulled the starter. The motor coughed and died. He tried again. This time it roared to life. He ~~switched on the navigation lights and~~ began to manoeuvre out of the mooring.

He got clear of the other craft at the quayside and found the main channel

out of the harbour, marked by buoys. He guessed that only boats of much deeper draught really needed to stick to the channel, but he saw no harm in being over-cautious.

Once outside the harbour, he felt a stiff breeze, and hoped it was not a sign that the weather was about to break. The sea was surprisingly rough, and the stout little boat lifted high on the waves. Faber opened the throttle wide, consulted the dashboard compass, and set a course. He found some charts in a locker below the wheel. They looked old and little-used: no doubt the boat's skipper knew the local waters too well to need charts. Faber checked the map reference he had memorised that night in Stockwell, set a more exact course, and engaged the wheel-clamp.

The cabin windows were obscured by water: Faber could not tell whether it was rain or spray. The wind was slicing off the tops of the waves now. He poked his head out of the cabin door for a moment, and got his face thoroughly wet.

He switched on the radio. It hummed for a moment, then crackled. He moved the frequency control, wandering the airwaves, and picked up a few garbled messages. The set was working perfectly. He tuned to the U-boat's frequency, then switched off - it was too soon to make contact.

The waves increased in size as he progressed into deeper waters. The boat reared up like a bucking horse with each wave, then teetered momentarily at the top before plunging sickeningly down into the next trough. Faber stared blindly out of the cabin windows. It was now completely dark, and he could see nothing at all. He felt faintly seasick.

Each time he convinced himself that the waves could not possibly get bigger, a new monster taller than all the rest lifted the vessel toward the sky. Then they started to come closer together, so that the boat was always lying with its stern pointed either up at the sky or down at the sea bed. In a particularly deep trough the little boat was suddenly illuminated, as clearly as if it were day, by a flash of lightning. Faber saw a grey-green mountain of water descend on the prow and wash over the deck and the cabin where he stood. He could not tell

whether the terrible crack which sounded a second afterwards was the thunderclap or the noise of the timbers of the boat breaking up. Frantically, he searched the little cabin for a life jacket. There was none.

The lightning came repeatedly then. Faber held the locked wheel and braced his back against the cabin wall to stay upright. There was no point in operating the controls now - the boat would go where the sea threw it.

He kept telling himself that the boat must be built to withstand such sudden summer gales. He could not convince himself. Experienced fishermen may have seen the signs of such a storm, and refrained from leaving shore, knowing their vessel could not survive suchweather.

He had no idea where he was, now. He might be almost in Aberdeen, or he might be at his rendezvous. He sat on the cabin floor and switched on the radio. The wild rocking and shuddering made it difficult to operate the set. When it warmed up he experimented with the dials, and could pick up nothing. He turned the volume up full. There was still no sound.

The aerial must have been broken off its fixing on the cabin roof.

He switched to transmission and repeated the simple message "Come in, please," several times; then left the set on receive. He had little hope of his signal getting through.

He killed the engine to conserve petrol. He was going to have to ride out the storm - if he could - then find a way to repair or replace the aerial. He might need his fuel.

The boat slid terrifyingly sideways down the next big wave, and Faber realised he needed the engine power to ensure the vessel met waves head-on. He pulled the starter, but nothing happened. He tried several times, then gave up, cursing his own foolishness for switching off.

The boat rolled so far on to its side that Faber fell and cracked his head on the wheel. He lay dazed on the cabin floor, expecting the vessel to turn turtle at any minute. Another wave crashed on the cabin, and this time the glass in the windows shattered. Suddenly Faber was under water. Certain the boat was sinking,

he struggled to his feet, and broke surface. All the windows were out, but the vessel was still floating. He kicked open the cabin door, and the water gushed out. He clutched the wheel to prevent himself being washed ~~sea~~ into the sea.

Incredibly, the storm continued to get worse. One of Faber's last coherent thoughts was that these waters probably did not see such a storm more than once in a century. Then all his concentration and will were focussed on the problem of keeping hold of the wheel. He should have tied himself to it, but now he did not dare to let go long enough to find a piece of rope. He lost all sense of up and down as the boat pitched and rolled on waves like cliffs. Gale force winds and thousands of gallons of water strained to pull him from his place. His feet slipped continually on the wet floor and walls, and the muscles of his arms burned with pain. He/~~breathed~~ sucked air when he found his head above water, but otherwise held his breath. Many times he came close to blacking out. He vaguely realised the the flat roof of the cabin had disappeared.

He got brief, nightmarish glimpses of the sea whenever the lightning flashed. He was always surprised to see where the wave was: ahead, below, rearing up beside him, or completely out of sight. He realised with a shock that he could not feel his hands, and looked down to see that they were still locked to the wheel, frozen in a grip like rigor mortis. There was a continuous roar in his ears, the wind indistinguishable from the thunder and the sea.

The power of intelligent thought slipped slowly away from him. In something that was less than a hallucination but more than a daydream, he saw the girl who had stared at him on the beach. She walked endlessly toward him over the bucking deck of the fishing boat, her swimsuit clinging to her body, always getting closer but never reaching him. He knew that, when she came within touching distance, he would take his dead hands from the wheel and reach for her, but he kept saying "Not yet, not yet," and as she walked and smiled and swayed her hips. He was tempted to leave the wheel and close the gap himself, but something at the back of his mind told him that if he moved he would never reach her, so he waited and watched and smiled back at her from time to time, and even when he closed his eyes he could

see her still.

He was slipping in and out of consciousness now. His mind would drift away, the sea and the boat disappearing first, then the girl fading, until he would jerk awake to find that, incredibly, he was still standing, still holding the wheel, still alive; then for a while he would will himself to stay conscious, but eventually exhaustion would take over again.

In one of his last clear moments he noticed that the waves were moving in one direction, carrying the beat with them. Lightning flashed again, and he saw to one side a huge dark mass, an impossibly high wave - no, it was not a wave, it was a cliff ... The realisation that he was close to land was swamped by the fear of being hurled against the cliff and smashed. Stupidly, he pulled the starter, then hastily returned his hand to the wheel; but it would no longer grip.

A new wave lifted the boat and threw it down like a discarded toy. As he fell through the air, still clutching the wheel with one hand, Faber saw a pointed rock like a stiletto sticking up out of the trough of the wave. It seemed certain to impale the boat. But the hull of the little craft scraped the edge of the rock and was carried past.

The mountainous waves were breaking now. The next one was too much for the vessel'm timbers. The boat hit the trough with a solid impact, and the sound of the hull splitting cracked the night like an explosion. Faber knew the boat was finished.

The water retreated, and Faber realised that the hull had broken because it had hit land. He stared in dumb astonishment as a new flash of lightning revealed a beach. The sea lifted the ruined boat off the sand as water crashed over the deck again, knocking Faber to the floor. But he had seen everything with daylight clarity in that moment. The beach was narrow, and the waves were breaking right up to the cliff. But there was a jetty, over to his right, and a bridge of some kind leading from the jetty to the cliff top. He knew that if he left the boat for the beach, the next wave would kill him with tons of water or break his head like an egg against the cliff. But if he could reach the jetty

in between waves, he might scramble far enough up the bridge to be out of reach of the water.

He might survive yet.

The next wave split the deck open as if the seasoned wood were ne stronger than a banana skin. The boat collapsed under Faber, and he found himself sucked backwards by the receding surf. He scrambled upright, his legs like jelly beneath him, and broke into a run, splashing though the shallows toward the jetty. Running thoee few yards was the hardest thing he had ever done. He wanted to stumble, so that he could rest in the water and die; but he stayed upright, just as he had when he won the 5,000 metres race, until he crashed into one of the pillars of the jetty. He reached up and grabbed the boards with his hands, willing them to come back to life for a few seconds; and lifted himself until his chin was over the edge; then swung his legs up and rolled over.

The wave came as he got to his knees. He threw himself forward. The wave carried him a few yards then flung him brutally against the wooden planking. He swallowed water and saw stars. When the weight lifted from his back he summoned the will to move. It would not come. He felt himself being dragged inexorably back. A sudden rage possessed him. He would not be beaten, not now! He screamed his hatred of the storm and the sea and the British and Percival Godliman, and suddenly he was on his feet and running, running, away from the sea and up the ramp, running with his eyes shut and his mouth open and madness in his heart, daring his lungs to burst and his bones to break; remembering, dimly, that he had called on this madness once before and almost died; running with no sense of a destination, but knowing he would not stop until he lost his mind.

The ramp was long and steep. A strong man might have run all the way to the top, if he were in training and rested. An Olympic athlete, if he were tired, might have got half way. The average forty-year-old man would have managed a yard or two.

Faber made it to the top.

A yard from the end of the ramp he had a slight heart attack and lost

consciousness, but his legs pumped twice more before he hit the sodden turf.

He never knew how long he lay there. When he opened his eyes the storm still raged, but day had broken, and he could see, a few yards away from him, a small cottage which looked inhabited.

He got to his knees and began the long crawl to the front door.

18

The U-505 wheeled in a tedious circle, her powerful diesels chugging slowly as she nosed through the depths like a grey, toothless shark. Lieutenant-Commander Werner Heer, her master, was on the bridge, drinking ersatz coffee and trying not to smoke any more cigarettes. It had been a long day and a long night. He disliked his assignment, for he was a fighting man and there was no fighting to be done; and he disliked the quiet Abwehr officer with sly blue eyes who was an unwelcome guest aboard the submarine.

The Intelligence man, Major Wohl, sat opposite the captain. The man never looked tired, damn him. Those blue eyes looked around, taking things in, but the expression in them never changed. His uniform never got rumpled, despite the rigours of underwater life; and he lit a new cigarette every twenty minutes, on the dot, and smoked it to a quarter-inch stub. Heer would have stopped smoking, just so that he could enforce regulations and prevent Wohl from enjoying tobacco, but Heer himself was too much of an addict.

Heer never liked Intelligence people, because he always had the feeling they were gathering intelligence on him. Nor did he like working with the Abwehr. His vessel was made for battle, not for skulking around the British coast waiting to pick up secret agents. It seemed to him to be plain madness to put a costly piece of fighting machinery at risk, not to mention its skilled crew, for the sake of one man who might even fail to appear.

He emptied his cup and made a face. "Damn coffee," he said. "It tastes vile."

Wohl's expressionless gaze rested on him for a moment then moved away. He said nothing.

Heer shifted restlessly in his seat. On a real bridge he would have paced up and down, but men on submarines learn to avoid unnecessary movement. He said: "Your man won't come in this weather, you know."

Wohl looked at his watch. "We will wait until six o'clock," he said calmly.

It was not an order, for Wohl could not give orders to Heer; but the bald statement of fact was still an insult to a superior officer. Heer said: "Damn you, I'm the master of this ship!"

"We will both follow our orders," Wohl said. "As you know, they originate from a very high authority indeed."

Heer controlled his anger. The young whippersnapper was right, of course. Heer would follow his orders. When they returned to port he would report Wohl for insubordination. Not that it would do much good: fifteen years in the Navy had taught Heer that Headquarters people were a law unto themselves.

He said: "If your man is fool enough to venture out tonight, he is certainly not seaman enough to survive."

Wohl's only reply was the same blank gaze.

Heer called out to the radio operator. "Weissman?"

"Nothing, sir."

Wohl said: "I have an unpleasant feeling that the murmurs we heard a few hours ago were from him."

"If they were, he was a long way from the rendezvous, sir," the radio operator volunteered. "To me it sounded more like lightning."

Heer added: "If it was not him, it was not him. If it was him, he is now drowned." His tone was smug.

"You don't know the man," Wohl said, and this time x there was a trace of emotion in his voice.

Heer subsided into silence. The engine note altered slightly, and he thought he could distinguish a faint rattle. If it increased on the journey home he would

have it looked at in port. He might do that anyway, just to avoid another voyage with the unspeakable Major Wohl.

A seaman looked in. "Coffee, sir?"

Heer shook his head. "If I drink any more I'll be pissing coffee."

Wohl said: "I will, please." He took out a cigarette.

That made Heer look at his watch. It was dead on six a.m. "That's it," he said. "Set a course for home," he barked.

"One moment," Wohl said. "I think we should take a look on the surface before we leave."

"Don't be a fool, Major Wohl," Heer said. He knew he was on safe ground now. "Do you realise what kind of storm is raging up there? We would not be able to open the hatch, and the periscope will show us nothing more than a few yards away."

"How can you tell what the storm is like from this depth?"

"Experience," Heer told him.

"Then at least send a signal to base, telling them that our man has not made contact. They may order us to stay here."

Heer gave an exasperated sigh. "It's not possible to make radio contact from this depth, not with base," he said.

Wohl's calm was shattered at last. "Commander Heer, I strongly recommend you surface and radio home before leaving this rendezvous. The man we are to pick up has information vital to the future of the Reich. The Fuehrer himself is waiting for him!"

Heer looked at him. "Thankyou for letting me have your opinion, Major," he said. He turned away. "Full ahead both!" he barked.

The sound of the twin diesel engines rose to a roar, and the U-boat began to pick up speed.

"Just a stranger, Jo. Eat up."

Jo looked disappointed. In his mind uncles were people who gave out candy, which he liked, and money, which he had no use for. He had met an uncle once.

David finished his breakfast and put on his mackintosh. It was a tent-shaped garment, with sleeves and a hole for his head, and it covered most of his wheelchair as well as him. He put a sou'wester on his head and tied it under his chin. He kissed Jo and said goodbye to Lucy.

A minute or two later she heard the jeep start up. She went to the window to watch David drive off into the rain. The rear wheels of the vehicle slithered about in the mud. He would have to take care.

She turned to Jo. He said: "This is a dog." He was making a picture on the tablecloth with porridge and milk.

Jo slapped his hand, saying: "What a horrid mess!" The boy's face took on a grim, sulky look, and Lucy thought how much he resembled his father. They had the same dark skin and nearly-black hair, and they both had a way of withdrawing when they were cross. But Jo laughed a lot - he had inherited something from Lucy's side of the family, thank God.

Jo mistook her contemplative stare for anger, and said: "I'm sorry."

She washed him at the kitchen sink, then cleared away the breakfast things, thinking about the stranger upstairs. Now that the immediate crisis was past, and she knew the man was not going to die, she was consumed with curiosity about him. Who was he? Where was he from? What had he been doing in the storm? Did he have a family? Why did he have workman's clothes, a clerk's hands, and a Home Counties accent? It was rather exciting.

When she had washed up she crept upstairs to peep at him. He slept facing the door, and when she looked in his eyes opened instantly. Again there was that initial, split-second flash of fear.

"It's all right," Lucy whispered. "Just making sure you're okay."

He closed his eyes ~~again~~ without speaking.

Daft Willie was summoned to tell his story again, repeating that he had first seen the car the previous evening, blushing again when he explained that he had assumed it contained lovers.

All in all, it was the most exciting night of the war.

That evening Percival Godliman, facing his fourth consecutive night in the office, went home to bath, change, and pack a suitcase.

He had a service flat in a block in Chelsea. It was small, though plenty big enough for a single man, and it was clean and tidy except for the study, which the cleaner was not allowed to enter and in consequence was littered with books and papers. The furniture was all pre-war, of course, but it was rather well-chosen, and the flat had a comfortable air. There were leather club chairs and a gramophone in the living-room, and the kitchen was full of hardly-used labour-saving devices.

While his bath was filling he smoked a cigarette - he had taken to them lately, a pipe was so much fuss - and looked at his most valuable possession, a grimly fantastic medieval scene which was probably by Hieronymous Bosch. It was a family heirloom and Godliman had never sold it, even when he needed the money, because he liked it.

He allowed himself twenty minutes in the bath, then took a long, careful shave. The feel of clean underwear and a crisply ironed shirt was the height of luxury. He put more fresh clothes in a case, then sat down to enjoy a glass of whisky before returning to the office. The military chauffeur in the commandeered Daimler outside could wait a little longer.

He was filling a pipe when the phone rang. He put the pipe down and lit a cigarette instead.

His phone was connected to the War Office switchboard. The telephonist told him that a Chief Superintendent Dalkeith was calling from Stirling.

He said: "Godliman speaking."

braced himself with his foot against the transmission tunnel on the floor, and rested his right hand lightly on his left forearm. He waited for David's next move.

"Are you interested in aircraft?" David asked.

"No." Faber's voice was flat.

"It's become a national pastime, I gather - aircraft spotting. Like bird-watching. People buy books on aircraft identification. Spend whole afternoons on their backs, looking at the sky through telescopes. I thought you might be an enthusiast."

"Why?"

"Pardon?"

"What made you think I might be an enthusiast?"

"Oh, I don't know." David stopped the jeep to light a cigarette. He dropped the match on the floor. "Perhaps it was the photographs that fell out of your jacket pocket - "

As he spoke, he tossed the lighted cigarette at Faber's face, and reached for the gun above the windscreen.

26

Sid Cripps looked out of the window and cursed under his breath. The meadow was full of American tanks - at least eighty of them. He realised there was a war on, and all that, but if only they'd asked him he would have offered them another field, where the grass was not so lush. By now the caterpillar tracks would have chewed up his best grazing.

He pulled on his boots and went out. There were some Yank soldiers in the field, and he wondered if they had noticed the bull. When he got to the stile he stopped and scratched his head. There was something very funny going on.

The tanks had <u>not</u> chewed up his grass. They had left no tracks. But the American soldiers were <u>making</u> tank tracks with a tool something like a harrow.

with a grinding crash.

Faber was thrown several yards and landed awkwardly. The breath was knocked out of him by the impact. It was several seconds before he could move.

The jeep's crazy course had taken it perilously close to the cliff once again.

Faber saw his knife lying in the grass a few yards away. He picked it up, then turned to the jeep.

Somehow, David had got himself and his wheelchair out through the ripped roof, and he was now sitting in the chair and pushing himself away. Faber had to acknowledge his courage.

All the same, he had to die.

Faber ran after him. David must have heard his footsteps, for just before Faber caught up the wheelchair stopped and spun around. Faber glimpsed the heavy spanner in David's raised hand, then crashed into him, felt an agonising blow on the back of his head, and blacked out.

When he came to, the wheelchair lay beside him, but David was nowhere to be seen. He stood up and looked around in dazed puzzlement.

"Here!"

The voice came from over the cliff. David must have been flung from the chair and slid over the edge. Faber crawled to the cliff and looked over.

David had one hand around the stem of a bush which grew just under the lip of the cliff. The other hand was jammed into a small crevice in the rock. He hung suspended, just as Faber had a few minutes earlier. His bravado had gone, and there was naked terror in his eyes.

"Pull me up, for God's sake," he shouted hoarsely.

Faber leaned closer. "How did you know about the pictures?" he said.

"Help me, please!"

"Tell me about the pictures."

"Oh, God." David made a mighty effort to concentrate. "When you went to Tom's outhouse you left your jacket drying in the kitchen. Tom went upstairs for

have comprehended. I believe they will attack under cover of darkness, by moonlight, at full tide to sail over Rommel's underwater obstacles, and away from cliffs, rocky waters, and strong currents. Normandy? Never."

Hitler shook his head in disgusted disagreement. Jodl said: "There is another small piece of information which I find significant. The Guards Armoured Division has been transferred from the north of England to Hove, on the south-east coast, to join the First United States Army Group under General Patton. We learned this from wireless surveillance - there was a baggage mix-up en route, one unit had another's silver cutlery, and the fools have been quarrelling about it over the radio. This is a crack British division, very blue-blooded, commanded by General Sir Allan Henry Shafto Adair. I feel sure they will not be far from the centre of the battle when it comes."

Hitler's hands moved nervously, and his face twitched in an agony of indecision. "Generals!" he barked at them. "Either I get conflicting advice, or no advice at all! I have to tell you everything - everything!"

With characteristic boldness, Runstedt plunged on. "My Fuehrer, you have four superb panzer divisions doing nothing here in Germany. If I am right, they will never get to Normandy in time to repel the invasion. I beg you, order them to France and put them under Rommel's command. If we are wrong, and the invasion begins at Calais, they will still be close enough to enter the battle at an early stage."

"I don't know - I don't know!" Hitler's eyes widened, and Runstedt wondered if he had pushed too hard - again.

Puttkamer spoke for the first time. "My Fuehrer, today is Sunday."

"Well?"

"Tomorrow night the U-boat may pick up the spy, Der Nadel."

"Ah, yes! Someone I can trust."

"You might do well to postpone your decision for twenty-four hours, to give him a chance to report."

Runstedt said: "There isn't time to postpone decisions. Both air attacks

and sabotage activities have increased dramatically. The invasion may come any day."

"I disagree," Krancke said. "The weather conditions will not be right until early June."

"That is not very far away!"

"Enough!" Hitler barked. "I have made up my mind. My panzers stay in Germany - for now. On Tuesday, when Der Nadel reports, I will reconsider the disposition of these forces. If his information favours Normandy - as I believe it will - I will move the panzers."

Rundstedt said softly: "And if he does not report?"

"If he does not report, I shall reconsider just the same."

Rundstedt bowed assent. "With your permission, I shall return to my command."

"Very well."

Rundstedt got to his feet, saluted, and went out. In the copper-lined elevator, falling four hundred feet to the underground garage, he felt his stomach turn over, and wondered whether the sensation was caused by the speed of descent or by the thought that the destiny of his country lay in the hands of a single, lonely spy.

her ankles, barking furiously. Tom could not be far away - he was probably in the outhouse. Lucy went upstairs and laid Jo on Tom's bed.

The wireless was in the bedroom, a complex-looking construction of wires and dials and knobs. There was something that looked like a Morse key: she touched it experimentally, and it gave a beep. A thought came to her from the depths of her memory - something from a schoolgirl thriller - the Morse code for S.O.S. She touched the key again: three short, three long, three short.

Where was Tom?

She heard a noise, and rushed to the window.

The jeep was making its way up the hill to the house.

Henry had found the booby-trap, and used the petrol to fill the tank.

Where was Tom?

She rushed out of the bedroom, intending to go and bang on the outhouse door. At the head of the stairs she paused. Bob was standing in the open doorway of the other bedroom, the empty one.

"Come here, Bob," she said. The dog stood his ground, barking. She went to him and bent to pick him up.

Then she saw Tom.

He lay on his back, on the bare floorboards of the vacant bedroom, his eyes staring sightlessly at the ceiling, his cap upside-down on the floor behind his head. His tweed jacket was open, and there was a small spot of blood on the shirt underneath. Close to his hand was a crate of whisky, and Lucy found herself thinking wildly, irrelevantly: I didn't know he drank that much.

She felt his pulse.

He was dead.

She was on her own.

She took hold of the dog by its collar and dragged it away from the body of its master. She closed the door on the corpse. "He's dead, but I need you," she said to the dog.

She returned to the front bedroom and looked out of the window.