

Where Eagles Dare - *Alistair Maclean*

Chapter One

The pilot raised his left hand and touched an overhead switch. Above the door in the middle of the plane a red light came on. The sergeant who waited there laid his hand on the door.

'One minute, gentlemen.' He pulled the door wide open and a storm of icy wind and snow filled the plane. 'When the red light turns green.....'

He left the sentence unfinished. The seven men who were waiting to jump did not need his instructions. No one else said anything; it was nearly impossible to shout over the confined roar of wind and engines. In any case, the men's thoughts showed clearly in their expressions: If it was like that inside, what the hell was it like outside?

At a signal from the sergeant, they moved up in line to the open door. The first man, Harrod, took up his position. His face felt the full force of the snowstorm that hammered the plane.

The sergeant's encouraging hand fell on Harrod's shoulder. He reached up and firmly removed the sergeant's hand.

'Don't push me, friend.' He had to shout to make himself heard. 'If I have to kill myself, let me do it in the old-fashioned way. By my own hand.'

While his eyes remained fixed on the red light, Harrod's mind flew back several hours in time and several hundred kilometres in space. He was hearing again the voices of Vice-Admiral Rolland, head of the British Secret Service, and his second-in-command, Colonel Wyatt-Turner.

The big, red-faced colonel tapped his stick against a wall-map of Germany. He was pointing to a spot just north of the Austrian border.

'Our man was brought down here at two a.m. this morning.' He tapped the map again. 'Now he is here. In the Schloss Adler. The castle of the eagle. Believe me, it's well-named. Only a bird with the power of an eagle could get in there. Our job....'

Smith said: 'How are you so sure he's there, sir?'

'We're sure. His plane crash-landed only fifteen kilometres away. The pilot got off a radio message just before the Germans got them.' He pause, smiled sourly, continued: 'Schloss Adler, Major Smith, is the combined headquarters in South Germany of the German Secret Service and the Secret Police - the Gestapo. Where else would they take him?'

'Where indeed? How was he brought down, sir?'

'Through the worst sort of bad luck, damn it! But that's unimportant. What's important is getting him out before he talks. *You* will get him out. You are all experts at surviving behind enemy lines. You all speak German. If anyone has a chance, you have.'

'There is, of course, another way, sir,' Carraciola said quietly. 'A way sure of a hundred per cent success. Send over a flight of our heaviest bombers. Do you think *anyone* in the Schloss Adler would ever talk again?'

'I don't think so.' Admiral Rolland spoke gently and for the first time. He moved from the wall-map to join the group. Admiral Rolland always spoke gently. When you hold his position of power, you don't have to talk loudly to make yourself heard. He was a short, gray-haired man, with a deeply lined face and an expression of great confidence. 'No,' he repeated, 'I don't think so. The prisoner, Lieutenant General Carnaby, is an American. If we destroy him, the Americans would probably send their Second Front against us instead of against the Germans.' He smiled gently. 'There are certain standards to keep between friends. Wouldn't you agree?'

Carraciola didn't agree or disagree. He had, it seemed, nothing to say. Neither did anyone else. Colonel Wyatt-Turner cleared his throat.

‘That’s it then, gentlemen. Ten o’clock tonight at the airfield. No more questions, I take it?’

‘Yes sir, there bloody well is, begging the Colonel’s pardon, sir.’ Sergeant George Harrod not only sounded heated, he looked it too. ‘What’s all this about? Why’s this chap so bloody important? Why the hell do we have to risk our necks.....’

‘That’ll do, Sergeant.’ Wyatt-Turner’s voice was sharp, commanding. ‘You know all you require to know....’

‘If we’re sending a man to what may be his death, Colonel, I think he has the right to know why.’ Admiral Rolland broke in gently, almost apologetically. ‘The rest know. He should too. It’s painfully simple, Sergeant. General Carnaby is the chief planner for our next attack on the Germans - the Second Front. It would be completely true to say that he knows more about the preparations for the Second Front than any man alive.’

Silence lay heavy in the room. Harrod rubbed his hand across his eyes, then shook his head slowly as if to clear it. When he spoke again all the anger had gone from his voice. His words came very slowly.

‘And if the General talks...’

‘He’ll talk,’ Roland said. The voice was soft but quite firm. ‘They all talk....’

‘And he’ll tell them all the plans for the Second Front. - When, where, how - Good God, sir, we’ll have to stop the whole thing!’

‘Exactly. We stop it. No Second Front this year. Another nine months of war, another million lives needlessly lost. You understand the urgency, sir.’

‘We’re all a bit nervous Sergeant,’ said Wyatt-Turner.

‘Well, be at the airfield at ten o’clock and we’ll check your supplies.’ He smiled without humour. ‘I’m afraid the uniforms may not fit too well. This is early closing day at the tailor’s!’

‘Well, he was right about the bloody uniform,’ said Harrod to himself as he again took up position by the plane’s open door.

At that moment the red light turned to green. Harrod put his head down, screwed shut his eyes and dropped out into the snow and the darkness. He was already spinning in mid-air as the parachute opened. Schaffer was the next man to go, smoothly, cleanly, with feet and knees together. Then it was Carraciola’s turn, followed by Smith.

Smith looked down below him and his lips tightened. In the grayness beneath he could just see Harrod swinging wildly across the sky. The parachute strings were crossed and the left-hand strings were pulled too far down. Harrod was losing air from one side of his parachute and was swinging away to his left. Smith watched the rapidly disappearing figure and hoped to God that he didn’t side-slip over the edge of the mountain. Looking upwards he saw that there was no need to worry about the other three men. Christiansen, Thomas and Torrance-Smythe were all coming down in a perfectly normal manner.

Even before the last man had jumped out of the doorway, the sergeant was running towards the back of the plane. Quickly he pulled aside the curtain and reached down for the figure hiding there. A girl, quite small, with wide, dark eyes in a delicate face. She wore a snowsuit and on top of that a parachute. She was so cold and sore that she could hardly stand. But the sergeant had his orders.

‘Come on, Miss Ellison. Not a second to lose.’

His arm around her wrist, he half-led, half carried her to the doorway. Mary Ellison half-turned as if to speak to him, then turned away and dropped out into the darkness.

For a long moment the sergeant looked down into the darkness. Then he rubbed his chin, shook his head in disbelief and closed the heavy door. The plane flew on into the snow and the sound of its engines died away in the night.

Chapter Two

Smith reached his hands up into the parachute and made a perfect landing in about a metre of snow. The wind pulled fiercely at his parachute. He quickly pulled it in, rolled it up and pressed it deeply into the snow.

With awkward, frozen hands, he pulled a torch and a whistle from his jacket. Facing east and west in turn, he blew on the whistle and flashed his torch. The first to appear was Thomas, then Schaffer, then all the others except Sergeant Harrod.

‘Pile your parachutes there and bury them deep,’ Smith ordered. ‘Anyone seen Sergeant Harrod?’ A shaking of heads. ‘Nobody? No sight of him at all?’

‘I have a rough idea where he landed, Major,’ Schaffer said. ‘We were almost on the ground before I lost sight of him.’

‘Use your torches,’ Smith said sharply. ‘Find him.’

They spread out. Three minutes passed and then came a shout from the right. Smith broke into a run.

It was Carraciola who had called. He was standing on the edge of a bare, windblown rock. His torch was shining down to where the ground fell away suddenly to a depth of several metres. In the shelter of the rock a deep pile of snow had formed. Half buried in its white depths, about two metres from the rock, Harrod lay on his back. His eyes were open and his arms thrown wide. He did not seem to notice the snow falling on his eyes.

They were all there now, looking down at the motionless man. Smith jumped down into the snow and lifted Harrod to a sitting position. Harrod’s head fell back like a broken doll’s. Smith lay him back into the snow, paused for a moment with bent head, then climbed wearily to his feet.

‘Dead?’ Carraciola asked.

‘He’s dead. His neck is broken.’ Smith’s face was without expression. ‘He must have got caught up in his parachute and made a bad landing.’

‘It happens,’ Schaffer said. ‘I’ve known it happen.’ A long pause, then: ‘Shall I take the radio, sir?’

‘Yes.’

Schaffer dropped to his knees and tried to unfasten the pack on Harrod’s shoulders.

Smith said: ‘Sorry, no, not that way. There’s a key around his shirt.’

Schaffer found the key, unlocked the pack and managed to get out the radio from under the dead man’s shoulders. He rose to his feet, the radio hanging from his hand and looked at Smith. ‘On second thoughts, what’s the point? Any fall hard enough to break his neck wouldn’t have done this radio any good.’

Wordlessly, Smith took the radio and set in on the rock. He turned the switch to ‘Call’ and a red light came on. He moved the switch to ‘Receive’ and listened for a moment to some music.

‘It made a better landing than Sergeant Harrod,’ he said, handing the radio back to Schaffer.

‘Do we bury him, Major?’ Carraciola asked.

‘No need.’ Smith shook his head and waved his torch at the falling snow. ‘He’ll be buried within the hour. Let’s move. I want to get down as far as the tree-level.’

‘So close?’ The surprise in Schaffer’s voice showed that he didn’t think much of the idea. ‘Shouldn’t we get as far down this mountain as possible tonight, Major?’

‘I agree with Schaffer,’ Carraciola said reasonably. ‘Let’s get as far as we can tonight. What do you think, Christiansen?’

‘It doesn’t matter what Christiansen thinks.’ Smith’s voice was quiet but as cold as the mountain air itself. ‘Nor you, Carraciola. This isn’t a round table discussion, it’s a military operation. Whether you like it or not, Admiral Rolland put me in charge. We camp among the nearest trees. Then hot food, hot coffee and a try for London on the radio.’

The five men looked questioningly at one another, then began to walk. There was no longer any questions about who was in charge.

‘Damn!’

The other men seated in the poorly lit tent looked at Smith in surprise.

‘The radio,’ Smith explained. ‘There’s only one list of call signs and codes. And that one list is inside Sergeant Harrod’s jacket.’

‘I’ll get it for you if you like.’ Christiansen said.

‘Thanks. But it’s my fault and I’ll get it.’

He rose and put his head through the door to take a look at the weather. ‘It may take me an hour. But if the snow is much deeper up there....’

‘It’s a bad night,’ Schaffer said. ‘I’ll come and give you a hand.’

‘Thanks. No need. But I’ll tell you what you can do.’ He went out of the tent and reappeared shortly afterwards carrying the radio. ‘I don’t want to go all the way up there for nothing. Some careless fool may fall over this and put his great boot through it. Guard it with you life, Lieutenant Schaffer.’

‘Yes, sir!’ Schaffer said smartly.

It was hard physical work going back up the mountain. By the time Smith reached the top of the steep slope he was fighting for breath. He had forgotten the effect of thin air at two and a half thousand metres.

He stopped for several minutes until his breathing returned to normal and then walked on, whistling. It was the German tune, ‘Lorelei’. A figure appeared out of the night and came running towards him, slipping about in the deep snow.

It was Mary Ellison. She stopped a metre away and put her hands on her hips.

‘Well!’ She was shaking uncontrollably with the cold. ‘You took your time about it, didn’t you?’

‘Never wasted a minute,’ Smith replied sounding hurt. ‘I had to have a hot meal and coffee first.’

‘You had to have - you monster, you selfish monster!’ She took a quick step forward and threw her arms around his neck. ‘I hate you.’

‘I know.’ He pulled off a glove and gently touched her cheek. ‘You’re frozen.’

‘You’re frozen. I almost *died* in that plane. Why didn’t you bring me a hot water bottle - or - an electrically heated suit or - or - something? I thought you loved me!’

‘I can’t help what you think.’ Smith said kindly. ‘Come on. Let’s fetch your stuff.’

They climbed upwards through the deep snow, Mary holding his arm tightly. She said curiously: ‘What excuse did you give for coming back up here? Lost your comb?’

‘There was something I had to come for, something apart from you. I pretended I had forgotten the radio codebook inside Sergeant Harrod’s jacket.’

‘He - he lost it? He dropped it? How - how could he have been so criminally careless?’ She stopped puzzled. But it’s chained.....’

‘It’s still inside Sergeant Harrod’s jacket,’ Smith said darkly. ‘He’s up here dead.’

‘Dead?’ She stopped and held tightly onto his arm. After a long pause, she repeated: ‘He’s dead! That - that nice man. A bad landing?’

‘So it seems.’

They found Mary’s pack in silence. Smith took her arm and they moved on. The snow was heavier now and even with their torches they could see no further than two metres. But Smith recognised the large rock which the wind had kept free of snow. Two minutes later he uncovered Harrod’s body. He undid the dead man’s jacket and found the codebook. Then he hung the chain round his neck and buttoned the book safely inside his own uniform.

Then came the unpleasant job of turning Harrod over on his side. The effort nearly defeated him. The

dead man was as solid as a board - frozen in the position into which he had fallen. But eventually Smith had him over, the frozen right arm pointing up into the snow-filled sky. Smith knelt, brought his torch close and carefully examined the back of the dead man's head.

'What are you looking for?' Mary asked. Her voice was a whisper.

'His neck is broken. I want to find out just *how* it was broken.' He looked up at the girl. 'You don't have to watch.'

'Don't worry.' She turned away. 'I'm not going to.'

The clothes, like the man, were frozen solid. The collar of Harrod's jacket cracked and broke in Smith's gloved hands as he pulled it down. Just below the collar, he found what he was searching for - a red mark at the base of the neck where the skin was broken. He rose, caught the dead man's ankles and pulled him about a metre down the slope.

'What now?' In spite of her horror Mary was watching again. 'What are you looking for now?'

'A rock,' Smith said briefly. There was a cold edge to the words, although Mary knew it wasn't directed at her. Still, it was an effective discouragement to any further questioning.

Smith cleared the snow for about a metre around where Harrod's head had lain. He carefully examined the ground with his hands and eyes, then rose slowly to his feet. Taking Mary's arm he began to walk away. After a few steps he stopped and went back to the dead man. He turned him over again so that the right arm was no longer pointing towards the sky.

They made their way down the mountain in silence until Smith said:

'Something struck Harrod on the back of the neck. I thought it might have been a rock. But there was no rock where he lay, only soil.'

'There was that big rock just by him.'

'You don't break your neck on a rock and then stand up and jump off it. Even if he had rolled off, he could never have finished with his head over two metres out from the rock. He was struck by some hard metal object, the handle of a gun or a knife. His neck was broken immediately afterwards. When he was unconscious. To make us think it was an accident. It must have happened on the rock - there was no disturbance in the snow round Harrod. And it must have happened when he was upright. A tap on the neck, a quick neck-turn, then he fell or was pushed off. Wonderful stuff, stone.' Smith finished bitterly. 'It leaves no footprints.'

Mary stopped and looked wide-eyed at him.

'Do you realise what you are saying?' She caught a certain look of his and went on quickly. 'I'm sorry, of course you do. John, I - I'm frightened. Even all these months with you in Italy - well, you know, nothing like this.....'

She broke off, then continued: 'Couldn't there - couldn't there be some explanation?'

'Like he hit himself on the back of the head or an invisible snowman got him?'

She looked at him steadily, her dark eyes far too large. 'Don't laugh at me, John. I *am* frightened.'

'Me too.'

'I don't believe you.'

'Well, if I'm not, it's damn well time I started to be.'

They continued their way down the mountain until Smith stopped and put Mary's bag down in the snow.

'Don't put the tent up,' he said. 'Unroll it, put your sleeping bag on one half and pull the other half of the tent over you. In half an hour you'll be covered with snow. The snow will not only keep you warm, it'll hide you from any sleepwalkers. I'll be along in the morning before we leave.'

He walked away, stopped, looked back. Mary was still standing where he had left her, looking after him. She looked so small and lonely that Smith paused, then went back to her. He unrolled her tent and sleeping bag and waited until she had climbed in. Then zipped up the bag and pulled the other half of the tent up to her chin. She smiled at him. He covered her head with a corner of the tent and left, all

without saying a word.

Finding his own tent was simple enough; a steady light burned inside it. Christiansen, Thomas and Carriciola appeared to be asleep. Torrance-Smythe was checking their store of plastic explosives. Schaffer was reading a book - in German - smoking a cigarette - also German - and obediently guarding the radio. He put the book down as Smith entered the tent.

‘OK?’

‘OK.’ Smith produced the codebook from his jacket. ‘Sorry I was so long, but I thought I would never find him. The snow is pretty heavy up there.’

‘We’ve arranged to take turns on watch,’ Schaffer said. ‘Half an hour each. It’ll be drawn in three hours.’

Smith smiled. ‘What are you watching for in these parts?’

‘Invisible snowmen.’

The smile left Smith’s face as quickly as it had come. He turned to Harrod’s codebook, and spent about ten minutes learning the call-up signals and writing out a message in code. Before he had finished Schaffer had got into his sleeping bag leaving Torrance-Smythe on watch.

Smith took the radio and said: ‘I’m going to move out a bit. Radio reception is terrible among the trees. Anyway, I don’t want to wake everybody up. I won’t be long.’

Two hundred metres from the tent Smith knelt with his back to the wind-blown snow. He had twice stopped already and twice changed direction. Now he switched to a pre-selected call-up, and turned a handle. Four times he gave the handle a sharp turn, and on the fifth he got results. Someone was indeed keeping a very close radio watch indeed.

‘This is Danny Boy.’ The signal was weak and it came and went. But Smith could just make it out. ‘Danny Boy replying to you. Over.’

Smith spoke into the mouth microphone. ‘This is Broadsword. Can I speak to Father Macree or Mother Macree? Over.’

‘Sorry. Out of reach. Over.’

‘Code,’ Smith said. ‘Over.’

‘Ready.’

Smith took his paper from his pocket and shone his torch on it. There were two lines of meaningless letters and, below that, the plain language translation: SAFE LANDING. HARROD DEAD. WEATHER FINE. PLEASE EXPECT MESSAGE 16:30 HOURS. Smith read out the code letters and finished off. ‘Have that delivered to Father Macree. Without fail.’

Torrance-Smythe looked up at Smith’s return.

‘Back already?’ Surprise in his voice. ‘You got through?’

‘Not a chance,’ Smith said disgustedly. ‘Too many bloody mountains around.’

‘Didn’t try for very long, did you?’

‘Two and a half minutes.’ It was Smith’s turn to look surprised. ‘Surely you know that’s the safety limit?’

‘You think there may be radio stations round here?’

‘Oh no, not at all,’ Smith said with heavy humour. ‘You wouldn’t expect to find a radio station in the Schloss Adler, would you now?’

‘Well now,’ Torrance-Smythe smiled tiredly. ‘I believe someone did mention it was the southern headquarters of the German Secret Service. Sorry, Major, I’m growing old. And my mind has stopped working with the cold and lack of sleep.’

Smith pulled off his boots and snowsuit and pulled the radio close to him.

‘Then it’s time you had some sleep. Go on. I’m wide-awake. I know I won’t sleep tonight.’

He was exhausted, but no power on earth would let him sleep that night. However, it was perhaps

wiser not to tell that to Torrance-Smythe.

Chapter Three

The Schloss Adler presented Smith and his men with a scene of breathtaking beauty. It was like an eagle's nest set between mountain and sky. Just where the steep slopes began to flatten out into the valley, a trick of nature had formed a shape like a volcano. Three sides of this volcano were smooth walls or rock, rising about seventy metres into the clear, cold air. On the south side, a steep cliff connected the volcano to the mountain slopes. The walls of the castle grew, without a break, from the rock itself.

Below the castle, the valley fell away to a lake of the deepest and brightest blue. A small village lay at the head of the lake. Basically it consisted of a single wide street, a railway station, two churches and groups of houses. From the southern end of the village a road curved up the far side of the valley to the cliff at the back of the castle. The road, just then, was completely blocked by snow. The only way into the castle was through the air - by means of the cable-lift. Two cables stretched from the village straight up into the castle, crossing three supporting posts on the way.

All this, Smith and his men saw from their hiding place among the trees not more than thirty-five metres from the foot of the Schloss Adler. Even as they watched, a cable car was completing its journey up to the castle. It seemed impossible that the little cable car could manage such a steep climb. But it did and it disappeared from sight under the roof of the cable station that had been built into the western wall of the castle.

Schaffer cleared his throat and broke the silence of the watching men.

'Boss,' he said, making his voice sound unconcerned, 'I'm sure it's nothing to worry about, but I'd say that was a military camp down by that little old lake.' He was pointing to a very large group of wooden buildings about a kilometre beyond the village.

'You're right. And it's no ordinary military camp. That's the training headquarters of the Alpine Corps.'

'Oh, my God! The Alpine Corps! The best trained men in the German Army. If I'd known this I'd never have come along.'

'I thought you knew,' Smith said mildly. 'Why do you think we're not dressed as German sailors or Red Cross nurses?'

Schaffer unzipped his snowsuit and examined his Alpine Corps uniform as if he was seeing it for the first time. He said carefully: 'You mean to say we're going to wander in among the German Army.' He paused, looked wide-eyed at Smith's smile of agreement, then went on: 'But - but we'll be recognised as strangers!'

'Training soldiers come and go all the time,' said Smith, unconcerned. 'What are six new faces among six hundred new faces? Anything else that worries you?'

'Yes. There's the little matter of Schloss. We've forgotten to bring our helicopter, haven't we? How do we get in?'

'A good point,' Smith agreed. 'We'll have to think about it. But I'll tell you this. If Colonel Wyatt-Taylor can enter the German High Command and, more important, get away again, this should be a piece of cake for us.'

'He did what?' Schaffer demanded.

'Didn't you know? He spent the years '40 to '43 inside Germany. He ended up in the General Headquarters in Berlin. Says he knows Hitler quite well.'

‘Well, I’ll be damned.’ Schaffer paused for a long moment and finally arrived at an explanation. ‘The fellow must be crazy.’

‘Maybe. But if he can do it, we can. We’ll find a way. Meanwhile, we wait here.’

The endless, freezing-cold hours of daylight passed slowly by and the weather grew steadily worse. By noon the sun was gone and a sharp wind had sprung up from the east. By early afternoon snow had begun to fall from the darkened sky. It looked like being a bad night, Smith thought as he checked his watch.

‘Nearly time to go.’

Thomas appeared carrying Smith’s telescope. He was very far from being his usual cheerful self. ‘Is that damned radio working yet?’ He asked Smith.

‘Not a hope. I’ve tried six times and failed six times. Why?’

‘I’ll tell you why,’ Thomas said bitterly. ‘A full army train just arrived, that’s all.’

‘Well, that’s fine,’ Smith said calmly. ‘The old hands will think we’re new boys and the new boys will think we’re old hands. Very convenient.’

Thomas looked thoughtfully at Smith.

‘Very, *very* convenient.’ He paused, then went on. ‘How about loosening up a bit, Major?’

‘What do you mean?’

‘You know damn well what he means,’ Carraciola joined in roughly. ‘It’s our lives. Why do we have to go down into that damned village? And how do you plan to get Carnaby out? If we’ve got to walk to our deaths, tell us why. You owe us that.’

‘I owe you nothing,’ Smith said flatly. ‘I’ll tell you nothing. And if you know nothing you can’t talk. You’ll be told when the time comes.’

‘You are a cold-blooded devil, Smith,’ Torrance-Smythe said.

‘It’s been said before,’ Smith said, unconcerned. ‘Away from the trees. Be ready to move when I get back.’

He hung the radio over his shoulder and set off through the woods. When he was safely out of sight he turned uphill, whistling ‘Lorelei’. He whistled softly, though: in that quiet air, sound travelled dangerously far. He stopped whistling when Mary appeared from where she had been hiding behind a fallen tree.

‘Hello, darling,’ she said brightly.

‘We’ll have less of the ‘darlings’.’ Smith said. ‘Father Macree is waiting. And keep your voice down.’

He sat on the fallen tree and turned the radio handle. Almost immediately the distant voice of Admiral Rolland answered.

‘Position please, Broadsword.’

Smith read out the code letters for his message: WOODS WEST OF CASTLE. GOING IN THIS EVENING.

There was a pause, then Rolland’s voice came again: ‘Understood. Carry on. Was Harrod killed accidentally?’

‘No. Over.’

‘By the enemy? Over.’

‘No. Over.’

‘I’ll remain in headquarters until the operation is complete,’ Rolland said. ‘Good luck. Good-bye.’

Mary waited until Smith had closed up the radio.

‘I suppose,’ she said lightly, ‘you’ll just go up to the main door of the castle and knock.’

‘More or less. Then the door - or window - opens. I smile at you, say thank you and pass inside.’

‘You what?’

‘I smile and say thank you. Even in wartime, there’s no reason why we can’t be polite....’

‘Please!’ She was angry now. ‘If you can’t talk sense....’

'You are going to open the door for *me*.' Smith explained patiently.

'Are you feeling alright?'

'The German army is very short of staff. You're just the type they're looking for. Young, intelligent, good-looking, you can cook, polish, sew on Colonel Kramer's buttons....'

'Who's Colonel Kramer?' Her voice and her face showed the confusion in her mind.

'Second in command of the German Secret Service.' He looked at his watch. 'I've been gone too long. We move off at exactly five. Down in the village there's a pub called 'The Wild Deer'. Remember it. We don't want you wandering into the wrong pub. Behind it there's a storehouse for beer. It's always kept locked but there will be a key in the door tonight. I'll be there at exactly eight o'clock. Now I must go and say, 'Sorry boys, still no luck....'

He turned to go, but she caught his arm.

'How do you know about all this? About the beer store and the key and about Colonel Kramer and....'

'Ah, Ah!' Smith shook his head and touched her lips with his finger.

'Hand-book for spies, golden rule number one.' She pulled away from his and looked down at the ground, her voice low and bitter. 'Never tell anyone anything unless you have to.' She paused and looked up. 'Not even me?'

'Above all, not you, darling.' He touched her lightly on the cheek. 'Don't be late.'

Chapter Four

Nobody took any notice of the six men who entered 'The Wild Deer'. For one thing, the bar was crowded with soldiers of the Alpine Corps, all energetically singing a romantic love song. For another, there were far prettier faces to look at. Several girls moved about the room, collecting or serving beer glasses. One of them approaching Smith's direction caught his eye.

It would have been surprising if she hadn't caught his eye. The curves of her perfect figure won a great deal of admiration from every man in the room. She approached Smith and smiled invitingly, brushing back her fair hair.

'Can I help you, sir?'

'Dark beer, please.' Smith said politely. 'Six.'

'With pleasure, sir.' Again the inviting smile, this time with a long look from deep blue eyes. As she turned and walked away, Schaffer caught Smith by the arm, a distant expression on his face.

'Now I know why I came, boss,' he said looking after her.

'Keep your mind on the job if you don't mind, Lieutenant.' Smith looked thoughtfully after the girl, rubbed his chin and said slowly: 'Barmaids know more about local affairs than any chief of police. And that one looks as if she might know more than most. Yes, I'll do that.'

'Do what?' Schaffer said suspiciously.

'Try to get next to her.'

'I saw her first,' Schaffer complained.

'You can have the next dance,' Smith promised. The lightness of his words did not hide the cool watchful expression of his eyes. 'When you get your drinks move about. See if you hear of any mention of Carnaby.' He caught sight of an empty chair by a corner table and went to it.

The girl returned with six full glasses on a tray. She pushed her way through the crowd, keeping off admirers with a practiced hand. She gave drinks to Smith's men who broke up and began to wander away into different parts of the room. The girl looked around and found Smith. She crossed to his table and put the glass on it, smiling brightly.

Before she could straighten, Smith put his arm around her waist and pulled her onto his knee. A captain across the table broke off his conversation and looked across in surprised disapproval. He

opened his mouth to speak. Smith gave him a look of discouragement and the captain decided to mind his own business. Smith put his hand on the girl's knees and smiled.

'And what might your name be, my beauty?' He sounded as if this was not his first beer of the evening.

'Heidi.' She tried to rise, but not very hard. 'Please Major. I have work to do.'

'There is no more important work to do than entertaining soldiers of the Fatherland,' Smith said loudly. He held her firmly and took a long drink from his beer. Then he continued, quietly now, the glass still in front of his face. 'Shall I sing you a song?'

'What song?' Heidi asked. 'I hear too much singing.'

'I whistle better than I sing. Listen.' He whistled, very softly, the beginning of 'Lorelei'. 'Do you like that?'

Heidi looked hard at him, then smiled gaily. 'It's very nice, Major. I'm sure you have a beautiful singing voice too.'

Smith said from behind his glass: 'The men at the bar? In ordinary clothes. *Don't* turn around.'

'Gestapo. From the castle.' She pretended to try and free herself again.

'One's a lip reader. They're watching. Your room in five minutes. Hit me good and hard.' His fingers tightened on her leg.

Heidi cried out in real pain. She swung her right hand back and brought it forward with a loud crack across Smith's cheek. The sound of the blow cut sharply through the general conversation. The voices died away, glasses stopped halfway to lips, and every eye in the room turned to the scene of the disturbance. Smith now had an audience of four hundred German soldiers which was exactly what he wanted. No man anxious to avoid notice would ever do a thing like that.

Heidi pushed herself to her feet, rubbing her sore leg. She snatched up the money which Smith had earlier put on the table and walked off with her nose in the air. Smith rose in anger and started to leave the table. He was stopped by the young captain opposite.

'Your conduct brings shame on the officers of the Alpine Corps,' he said loudly.

Smith did not reply at once. He looked hard into the captain's eyes for so long that the other had to look away. When Smith's voice came it was too quiet to be heard even at the next table.

'Say *sir*, when you talk to me, little man.' The voice was icy. 'Major Bernd Himmler. You may have heard of me?'

He paused and watched the effect on the young captain. Himmler, head of the Gestapo, was the most feared man in Germany. Smith could have been any relative of Himmler, possibly even his son.

'Report to me at eight a.m. tomorrow morning,' Smith said sharply. He swung away without waiting for an answer. The keen young Alpine Corps captain suddenly looked very tired and sank wordlessly into his chair. The general conversation began again as Smith walked to the door.

He stopped briefly by Schaffer and said: 'Well, I made a mess of that one. I'll go and try another pub. Better luck there, maybe. Back in ten minutes.'

He left Schaffer looking uncertainly after him, made an urgent negative move of his hand towards Carraciola who was approaching, and passed outside. He turned and walked quickly up a narrow passage to a small wooden building.

'Eight o'clock,' he said into the darkness. 'Come on.'

Mary appeared in the doorway. She looked questioningly at Smith, but he took her arm without a word and led her quickly to the back door of the pub. They entered a small hallway, climbed a flight of stairs and stopped at the second door on the right.

It was a small room, plainly furnished, a woman's room. Mary sat on the bed, her lips blue with cold and looked up at Smith without any admiration in her face.

'I hope you're enjoying your little game,' she said bitterly. 'Seem to know your way around, don't you?'

‘Guess-work,’ Smith explained. He picked up a suitcase from the floor, swung it onto the bed and opened it. The case contained women’s clothing. He pulled Mary to her feet and said: ‘Don’t waste time. Take off your clothes. And I mean *all* your clothes. Then get into that top outfit there. You’ll find everything you need.’

Mary looked wide-eyed at him. ‘Those clothes? Why on earth must I...’

‘Don’t argue! Now!’

‘All right,’ she said obediently. ‘You might at least turn your back.’

‘Don’t worry,’ Smith said wearily. ‘I have other things on my mind.’ He crossed to the window, stood looking out through a crack in the curtains and went on: ‘Now, hurry. You’re supposed to be coming off the bus from Steingaden that arrives in twenty minutes time. You’ll be carrying that case which contains the rest of your clothes. Your name is Maria Schenck, you’re from Dusseldorf, a cousin of the barmaid that works here. You’ve been ill and were forced to give up your factory job and go to the mountains for your health. So you’ve got this new job, through this barmaid, in the Schloss Adler. And you have papers, travel permit and letters to prove it all. They’re in that handbag in the case. Think you’ve got all that?’

‘I - I think so,’ she said uncertainly. ‘But if you’d only tell me...’

‘For God’s sake!’ Smith said impatiently. ‘Time, girl, time! Got it or not?’

‘Yes.’ She pulled a blue wool dress over her head and smoothed it down. ‘It’s a perfect fit!’ she said wonderingly. ‘You’d think this dress was made for me!’

‘It *was* made for you.’ Smith turned round to examine her. ‘We -er - broke into your flat and borrowed a dress to use as a pattern.’

‘You broke into my flat?’ she asked slowly.

‘Well, now, you wouldn’t want to look like a poor relation, would you?’

‘But - but it must have taken *weeks* to prepare these clothes - and those papers!’

‘True,’ Smith agreed. ‘Our Printing Department did a very special job on those papers.’

‘Weeks!’ Mary said in disbelief. ‘Weeks! But General Carnaby’s plane crashed only yesterday morning. You - you *knew* it was going to crash!’

‘Right first time, my darling,’ Smith said cheerfully.

‘And you risked the life of an American general - and all the plans for the Second Front....’

‘Well, now, that’s why I’m in such a hurry to get inside the Schloss Adler.’ Smith cleared his throat. ‘Not before they get his secrets out of him but before they find out that he’s *not* an American general. He knows no more about the Second Front than I do about the back of the moon.’

‘What? He’s a...’

‘His name is Jones. Cartwright Jones. American actor. He’s not even a very good actor, but he’s Carnaby’s double.’

She looked at him with something like horror in her eyes. ‘You’d risk an innocent...’

‘He’s getting plenty. Twenty-five thousand dollars for a night’s work.’

There came a soft double knock on the door. In one quick movement Smith was silently by the door with a gun in his hand. Heidi came in. Smith put his gun away, shutting the door behind her. ‘Well, cousins, here we are,’ he said happily. ‘Mary - now Maria - and Heidi. I’m off.’

‘You’re going!’ Mary said in a state of shock. ‘But - but what am I supposed to *do*?’

‘Heidi will tell you.’

Mary looked uncertainly at the other girl. ‘Heidi?’

‘Our top secret agent here since 1941.’

‘Our top...’ Mary shook her head. ‘I don’t believe it!’

‘Nobody would,’ said Smith examining Heidi with an admiring eye. ‘Nobody would.’

Smith opened the back door of ‘The Wild Deer’ with a cautious hand. Then, satisfied that no one had

seen him, he turned to his left. He took two steps, his foot caught some unseen object and he fell full length in the snow. With the speed of a cat he rolled over three times, then got to his feet, his gun in one hand, his torch in the other. But he was alone.

Alone, except for the figure over which he had fallen. It was an Alpine Corps sergeant lying facedown in the snow, lying with the still shapeless form of death.

Smith bent and rolled the figure over to find the great red mark in the snow where the body had been lying. His torch moved up to the face. The empty eyes of Torrance-Smythe looked up at him sightlessly.

Chapter Five

Schaffer hid his shocked face behind his drink. His voice was a low and violent whisper.

‘Torrance-Smythe! You’re *sure*, boss?’

‘I’m sure.’ Smith’s face was empty of expression, as if all feeling had been drained from him. ‘You say he left in a hurry three minutes after I’d gone. So he wasn’t following me. Who else left?’

‘No idea. The place is packed. And there’s another door. I *can’t* believe it. *Why*, Torrance-Smythe? He was the cleverest of all of us’

‘That’s why he’s dead. Now listen carefully. It’s time you knew what’s going on.’ Smith began to speak in a very low voice, in German, careful that his back was turned to the Gestapo officers at the far end of the bar. Two minutes later, he was still talking when Carriciola, Thomas and Christiansen came and joined them.

‘Have any of you seen Torrance-Smythe?’ Smith asked quietly. There was a shaking of heads.

Christiansen said: ‘Shall I go and look for him?’

‘I don’t think so,’ Smith said. ‘I’m afraid it’s too late to go anywhere now.’

Both doors of ‘The Wild Deer’ had suddenly burst open and half a dozen soldiers were coming quickly through either door. All had machine-guns at the ready. They spread out along the walls and waited, their eyes very calm, very watchful.

‘Well, well,’ Christiansen said quietly. ‘It was a nice war.’

The sudden and total silence was broken by sharp footsteps on the wooden floor. A full colonel of Alpine Corps came marching into the room and looked coldly around him.

‘Colonel Weissner!’ The bar-owner hurried forward. ‘What in God’s name...’

‘No fault of yours, my good man, but there are enemies of the State in your house.’

‘What? My house?’ The bar-owner’s face was gray.

‘Please!’ The colonel held up his hand for silence. ‘We are looking for four or five Alpine Corps soldiers from the military prison at Stuttgart. To escape they killed two officers and a guardroom sergeant. We know they were coming this way.’

‘Very clever,’ Smith said in Schaffer’s ear. ‘Very clever indeed.’

‘Now then,’ Weissner continued smartly. ‘If they’re here, we’ll soon have them. I want the senior officers of divisions thirteen, fourteen and fifteen.’ He waited until the majors and a captain stepped forward. ‘You know all your men by sight? I want you to...’

‘No need Colonel.’ Heidi came round from behind the bar and now stood before Weissner. ‘I know the man you’re after - the leader. That one!’ Her face full of the sense of justice and duty, Heidi pointed an accusing finger at Smith. ‘That’s the one Colonel. He asked what I knew about a man called General Canape - I think.’

‘General Carnaby!’ At a sign from Weissner the guards moved in round Smith. The colonel looked back at Heidi. ‘What did you tell him?’

‘Colonel!’ Heidi straightened her shoulders and lifted her chin. ‘I hope I am a good German.’ She

half-turned and pointed across the room. 'Captain von Brauchitsch of the Gestapo will speak for my character.'

'No need.' Weissner smiled affectionately. 'We will not forget this service to your country.' His voice changed to ice-cold as he turned to Smith. 'You and your friends, sir, will come with me.'

Mary, her face shocked and still, looked down from the window of Heidi's dark room. She watched as Smith and the four others were led out of the front door of 'The Wild Deer' and marched over the street to several waiting cars. The prisoners were pushed into two of the cars, engines started up and within a minute both cars were lost to sight round a bend in the road.

'How did it happen?' Mary asked in a whisper.

A match scratched as Heidi lit and turned up the flame of the oil lamp. 'I can't guess,' Heidi answered. 'Someone, I don't know who, must have informed Colonel Weissner. But I put the finger on them.'

Mary turned to her. 'You - you -'

'They would have been found out in another minute anyway. They were strangers. But it puts us in a stronger position. I - and you - are now above suspicion.'

'Above suspicion!' Mary looked at her in disbelief then went on, almost wildly: 'But there's no point in going ahead now!'

'Is there not?' Heidi said thoughtfully. 'Somehow, I feel more sorry for Colonel Weissner than I do for Major Smith. When our employers in London told me he was coming, they told me not to worry, to trust him, completely. And already I trust him. Don't you?'

There was no reply. Mary looked at the floor, her eyes bright with tears. Heidi touched her arm and said softly. 'You love him very much?'

Mary fought to hold back the tears.

'And does he love you?' Heidi asked.

'I don't know. I just don't know. He's been too long in this business - even if he did know, he probably wouldn't tell himself.'

Heidi looked at her for a moment, shook her head and said: 'They should never have sent you. How can you hope to...!' She broke off, shook her head again, and went on: 'It's too late now. Come on. You must take the next cable car.'

'But - but if he doesn't come? If he can't escape?' She picked up her false papers from the bed. 'They'll check with Dusseldorf first thing in the morning.'

Heidi said gently: 'I don't think he'll let *you* down, Mary.'

'No,' Mary said. 'I don't suppose he will.'

The big black car travelled along the snow-packed road by the side of the lake. They were about halfway between the village and the military camp. Another thirty seconds and they would be through the camp gates. Thirty seconds, thought Smith. No more.

'Stop this car!' Smith's voice was cold and commanding with the suggestion of a hidden threat. 'Immediately, do you hear? I must think.'

Colonel Weissner turned to look at him in shocked surprise. Smith ignored him completely. His eyebrows were lowered in concentration; his lips were thin with anger, barely under control. It was the face of a man to whom the thought of disobedience was unthinkable: most certainly not the face of a man going to his death. Weissner paused, but only for a second. He gave an order and the big car began to slow.

'You fool! You stupid fool!' Smith's voice shook with fury. 'You've almost certainly ruined everything. By God, Weissner. If you have, you'll pay for it!'

The car stopped at the roadside. Ahead the red tail lights of the first car disappeared into the snow-

filled darkness. Weissner said sharply, but with an edge of worry in his voice; 'What the devil are you talking about?'

'You knew about this American general, Carnaby?' Smith's face was within fifteen centimetres of Weissner's. 'He spoke the words through closed teeth. 'How?'

'I dined in the Schloss Adler last night. I....'

Smith looked at him in complete disbelief.

'Colonel Paul Kramer told you? He actually talked to you about him? God in heaven, and now everybody knows. Heads will roll for this.'

His fingers beat a rhythm on his knees and he shook his head, very slowly. 'This is too big, even for me.' He took his pass out of his pocket and handed it to Weissner. The colonel examined it in the light of a torch that was none too steady. 'Back to the camp at once! I must get through to Berlin immediately. My uncle will know what to do.'

'Your uncle?' Only with a great effort of will did Weissner look up from the pass he held in his hand. His voice was no steadier than the torch. 'Heinrich Himmler?'

'Who do you think?' Smith said. 'Mickey Mouse?' He turned and tapped the driver's shoulder, none too lightly. 'The camp - and make it quick!'

The car moved off. Anything that the nephew of the Chief of the Gestapo said was good enough for the driver.

Smith turned to the guard by his side. 'Take that damned thing out of my side?'

Angrily, he snatched the gun away. The guard had also heard of Himmler and said nothing. One second later he was bent double and helpless with pain as the gun-handle smashed into his stomach. In another second Colonel Weissner was pinned against the window of his car with the other end of the gun in his right ear.

Smith said: 'If your men move, you die.'

'OK.' Schaffer's calm voice from the front seat. 'I have their guns.'

'Stop the car.' Smith ordered.

The car stopped. Through the window Smith could see the lights of the camp, now less than two hundred metres away.

'Out!' He gave Weissner a push with the gun.

Weissner's face was a mask of shame and fury.

'Face down in the snow.' Smith said. 'Hands behind your heads, all of you.'

Twenty seconds later, Schaffer at the wheel, they were on their way.

'Well done, young Himmler,' approved Schaffer.

'I'll never be that lucky again,' said Smith seriously. 'Take your time passing that camp. We don't want any of the guards to get the wrong idea.'

At a steady thirty kilometres an hour they passed the gates and followed the road which ran northwards in a straight line. On the left of the road, a thirty-metre cliff dropped straight down into the waters of the lake. On the right, a thick line of trees covered a steep slope which rose up into the darkness.

At the end of the kilometre straight, the road bent sharply to the right to follow the shoreline of the lake. It was a dangerous corner and as Schaffer braked to turn a thoughtful expression crossed his face. He stopped the car and looked meaningfully at Smith.

'An excellent idea.' It was Smith's turn to approve. 'We'll make an agent out of you yet.'

Smith gathered up the guns they had taken from Weissner and his men and got out. Schaffer wound down the driver's window, took off the handbrake and jumped out as the car began to move. With his right arm through the window Schaffer walked, then ran along beside the car with his hand on the wheel. About five metres from the cliff edge he made a last correction to the wheel and jumped aside as the car gathered speed. It shot over the edge of the cliff and disappeared from sight.

Smith and Schaffer reached the edge just in time to see the car strike the surface of the lake. Smith took off his hat and sent it flying after the car. Then the two men turned and ran for the trees.

Within seconds two army cars stopped at the cliff edge.

‘They’re gone, Colonel.’ An Alpine Corps sergeant stood cautiously at the edge. ‘The lake is over a hundred metres deep here.’

Colonel Weissner’s voice carried clearly in the night air. ‘Yes. And there’s a hat floating in the water. A poor end for such brave men, Sergeant. A poor end.’

Chapter Six

An Alpine Corps car with flashing headlamps swept up the village street to the cable-car station. Another army car followed. At the same time the moon broke through the thinning clouds, flooding the valley with light. Smith and Schaffer looked at each other and wordlessly pressed more deeply into the shadows on the west side of the station. Smith counted a dozen men altogether: an officer, eight guards with guns at the ready, and Carraciola, Thomas and Christiansen. As the last of the twelve men passed inside the cable-station Smith touched Schaffer’s arm.

‘Got the bag?’ he whispered.

Schaffer tapped his right shoulder. ‘How could I forget?’ He whispered back. He was still marveling at Smith’s choice of hiding place for their precious supply of plastic explosives. Half an hour ago they had collected it - from the Left Luggage Department at the railway station.

They began to climb up onto the steeply sloping roof of the cable station. Then quickly but silently, they moved upwards and forwards to the front. They were in a terribly dangerous position, they knew: any passer-by who looked up would see them immediately. And then as the cable began to move, the moon disappeared behind clouds. They waited for the leading edge of the cable car appeared just below them. Together, they reached down and took hold of the moving cable. They allowed themselves to be pulled off the roof of the station and lowered themselves gently onto the roof of the cable car.

Mary walked softly along the passage, counting off doors as she went. Outside the fifth door she stopped, knocked and waited for an answer. There was none. She turned the handle and found the door locked. From her small handbag she produced a set of skeleton keys. When the door gave way, she slipped quietly inside, closed the door and switched on the light.

The room was directly above the roof of the castle’s cable-car station. Mary opened the window and looked down. She saw that the roof of the cable station was built into the castle wall itself. Ignoring the bitter night wind, she let her eyes travel slowly along the line of the cables. And then she saw it - the square black shape of the cable car. It was now halfway between the middle and the top supporting posts, swinging madly, frighteningly, across the sky in the strong wind. She took from her handbag a ball of string with a heavy weight tied to one end, and waited.

With deadly determination, Smith and Schaffer gripped the great steel bolt that connected the car to the moving cable. There was nothing else to hold on to. The roof was solidly coated with ice and they could find no foothold. Their bodies slipped uncontrollably in all directions with the violent swinging of the car beneath them. The pull on hands and arms and shoulders was even worse than Smith had feared: and the worst was yet to come.

The cable car was past the last support post now. Soon the moment of truth. A minute from then, Smith thought, and they could both be lying broken and lifeless on the rocks over seventy metres below. On the last stage of its climb, the cable car seemed to be rising straight up into the air. The castle walls, with the cable-station at the base were almost directly above their heads.

‘Oh, my God!’ Schaffer groaned. ‘Look at the slope of that damned roof!’

‘I’ve been looking.’ Smith eased out his knife. ‘Get your knife ready. And for God’s sake don’t lose it.’

The front of the car passed under the edge of the station roof. A moment later Smith sprang forward and upwards, throwing himself bodily on to the roof. His right arm struck downwards and the knife blade stuck firmly in the wood beneath the coating of ice. Less than a second later Schaffer had landed beside him, his knife striking the roof at exactly the same moment as his body.

The blade broke. Schaffer opened his hand, dropped the handle and snatched in despair at the ice. He dug both hands in with all the strength that was in him, and he slowed, but not enough. His toes failed to find any hold and he knew he was slipping over the edge.

Smith’s jump had knocked the breath out of him. Several seconds passed before he realised that Schaffer was not lying on the roof beside him. As he turned round, he sensed rather than saw the despair in Schaffer’s white face. With a speed and power that would have been impossible a few seconds ago, he brought his left hand flashing down. Schaffer cried out in pain as the grip of steel closed over his right wrist.

For some seconds they lay like that, the lives of both depending on the small blade of Smith’s knife. Then Schaffer felt the shaking of Smith’s left arm and began to pull himself slowly upwards. Thirty seconds later and he was level with Smith.

‘The knife won’t take much more of this,’ Smith said in hardly more than a whisper. ‘Have you got another one?’

Schaffer shook his head. Speaking was beyond him at the moment.

‘Your torch?’

In answer, Schaffer reached inside his snowsuit with his left hand and eventually managed to pull his torch free.

‘Unscrew the bottom,’ Smith said. ‘Throw it away - and the battery.’ Schaffer brought his left hand across to where his right was held by Smith and managed to remove the base of the torch and the battery. Then he dug the sharp end of the torch into the ice. Cautiously, Smith loosened his grip on Schaffer’s wrist as Schaffer tested the strength of his hold. The torch held firm.

Fifteen metres above their heads, Mary began to let down the weighted string while her hands shook violently.

By now Schaffer had recovered from his shock and taken a length of rope from the bag on his back. He had passed it on to Smith who had caught the weighted end of the string hanging just above his head. Smith fastened the rope to the string and gave it two gentle pulls. The rope began to move upwards. He waited until two more gentle return pulls told him that Mary had safely fixed the rope. Then he began to climb.

Once through the window, he hardly had time to pull the rope as a signal for Schaffer when a pair of arms wound tightly round his neck.

‘Careful now, careful,’ Smith said. He was still breathing heavily and needed all the air he could get. But he gathered enough energy to bend and kiss her. ‘Unprofessional conduct. But I won’t report it this time.’

She was still holding on to him when Lieutenant Schaffer made his appearance through the window. He fell onto the bed with the look of one who has suffered a great deal. ‘Have they no lifts in this place?’ He demanded. It took two breaths to get the words out.

‘You’re out of training,’ Smith said unsympathetically. Already he was studying the plans of the castle that Heidi had given Mary. ‘Get the rope in and pull the curtains.’

‘He has no mercy,’ Schaffer said bitterly to Mary. But he had the rope inside and the curtain closed in ten seconds. He put the rope back into his bag, quickly checking the explosives as he did so. He had just finished fastening the bag when a key scraped in the lock.

Smith gave Mary a signal to stay where she was as he moved quickly to a position behind the door. Schaffer's exhaustion had disappeared; he dropped flat to the floor behind the bed with all the speed and silence of a cat. The door opened and a young officer walked into the room. He stopped short as he saw Mary, her hand to her mouth. His face showed astonishment, almost immediately replaced by a half-smile as he stepped towards her. The young officer's eyes turned up in his head as Smith's arm came down upon him.

Smith turned back to the plans of the castle while Schaffer tied up the officer and pushed him, bent double, into the bottom of the cupboard. He then pulled the top of the bed against the cupboard door.

'Ready when you are, boss.'

'That's now. Let's go and see how far they've got on with Carnaby-Jones.'

Two floors higher up and midway along the central passage Smith stopped outside a doorway. At a signal from him, Schaffer reached for a light switch. Except for a pale glow of light at either end, the passage was now completely dark. Smith laid a gentle hand on the doorknob and quietly eased the door open. Forty centimetres, no more. Both men quickly slipped through and Smith softly closed the door again.

The huge room must have been at least twenty-five metres long by ten wide. The farther end was brightly and warmly lit by three large hanging lamps. The end of the room where Smith and Schaffer stood was nearly in darkness.

They stood, not on the floor, but on a platform about four metres above the floor. It was a large musician's platform with rows of wooden seats for the players. From the centre of the platform a flight of steps led down into the room.

Three men were seated comfortably round the great fire at the far end of the room. They appeared to be having a friendly discussion, while a young woman in a long white dress served coffee and drinks. Smith immediately recognised Colonel Paul Kramer, second-in-command of the German Secret Service. He was the man to watch, Smith knew, the man to fear. People said that Kramer never made the same mistake twice - and no one could remember when he'd made a mistake for the first time. On his left, sat a tall, aging, but still good-looking man in the uniform of a general. Opposite, was a grey-haired and very important character in the uniform of a lieutenant general of the U.S. Army. It was difficult to say which of the two uniforms had more ribbons and silver and gold.

As Smith watched, Colonel Kramer drank from his glass and said wearily: 'You make things very difficult for me, General Carnaby. Very, very difficult indeed.'

'It is you that is making difficulties, my dear Kramer,' Cartwright-Jones said easily. 'You and General Rosemeyer here..... There *is* no difficulty.' He turned to the girl and smiled. 'Could I have some more of that excellent whisky, my dear. My word, we've nothing like this at home. You people know how to look after yourselves.'

In the darkness at the back of the platform, Schaffer touched Smith with his elbow.

'What's old Carnaby-Jones doing drinking their best whisky, then?' he whispered. 'Why isn't he being roasted over the fire or having needles stuck in his brains?'

'Ssssh!' Smith's elbow carried a great deal more weight than Schaffer's had done.

Jones smiled his thanks as the girl poured him some more whisky and sighed in satisfaction as she put it to his lips. He continued: 'Or have you forgotten, General Rosemeyer, that Germany also signed the agreement on the proper treatment of prisoners?'

'I haven't forgotten,' Rosemeyer said uncomfortably. 'And if I had my way...General, my hands are tied. I have my orders from Berlin.'

'And you can tell Berlin all they have a right to know,' Jones said easily. 'I am Lieutenant General George Carnaby, United States Army.'

'And Chief of Planning for the Second Front,' Rosemeyer added sadly.

‘The Second Front?’ Jones asked with interest. ‘What’s that?’

Rosemeyer said heavily: ‘General, I’ve done all I can. You must believe me. For thirty-six hours I’ve held off Berlin. I’ve tried to persuade the High Command that the simple *fact* of your arrest will force the enemy to change all their invasion plans. But this, it seems, is not enough. For the last time, may I request....’

‘General George Carnaby,’ Jones said calmly. ‘United States Army.’

‘I expected nothing else,’ Rosemeyer admitted tiredly. ‘How could I expect anything else from a senior army officer? I’m afraid the matter is now in Colonel Kramer’s hands.’

Jones took another drink from his glass and eyed Kramer thoughtfully. ‘The Colonel doesn’t seem very happy about it either.’

‘I’m not,’ Kramer said. ‘But the matter is out of my hands, too. I also have my orders. Anne-Marie will deal with the rest of it.’

‘*This* lovely young lady?’ Jones was politely disbelieving.

‘She used to be a trained nurse,’ Kramer said shortly. ‘A bell rang and he picked up a phone by his side. ‘Yes? Ah! Have they been searched? Very good. Now.’ He looked across at Jones. ‘Well, well, well. Some interesting company coming up, General. Very interesting indeed. Parachutists. A rescue team - for you. I’m sure you’ll be delighted to meet one another.’

‘Come on,’ Smith whispered to Schaffer.

‘What? Now? Just when they’re going to get to work on him?’

‘You’re out of your social class, Lieutenant,’ Smith whispered. ‘They’re civilised. First they finish the whisky. *Then* the works.’

‘I’m only a country boy,’ said Schaffer sadly.

The two men left as quickly as they had come, first checking that the passage way was clear. Smith switched on the light. They walked boldly along the passage, down a flight of stairs, turned left and stopped outside a doorway. The sign above the door said TELEPHONE EXCHANGE.

Smith dropped to one knee, put his ear to the door and softly tried the handle. The door was locked.

‘Suspicious lot of devils,’ Schaffer said sourly. ‘Use the skeleton keys.’

‘The operator would hear us. Next door.’

The next door wasn’t locked. The door gave before Smith’s pressure on the handle. The room beyond was in total darkness and appeared to be empty.

‘Just a moment, please!’ a cold voice said behind them.

Quickly, but not too quickly, Smith and Schaffer turned round. A few metres away stood a soldier with a leveled machine gun in his hand. His eyes moved in suspicion from the two men to the bag in Smith’s hands. Smith looked angrily at the man and raised a commanding finger to his lips.

‘Fool!’ Smith’s voice was a low, furious whisper through closed teeth. ‘Silence! English spies!’

He turned away impatiently and looked through the partly open doorway. Again he held up a hand that commanded silence. After a few more seconds he stood aside for Schaffer to take a look. He saw that curiosity was replacing suspicion on the soldier’s face. Schaffer turned and said softly: ‘What in God’s name do we do?’

‘I don’t know,’ Smith said in a worried whisper. ‘Colonel Kramer told me he wanted them alive. But....’

‘What is it?’ the soldier demanded in a voice as low as their own. With the mention of Colonel Kramer the last of his suspicions had gone. ‘Who is it?’

‘Are you still here?’ Smith said with annoyance. ‘All right, go on. Have a look. But be quick!’

The soldier moved forward quietly as Schaffer politely stepped aside. Dreams of rapid military advancement now lit up his eyes. A gun pressed into each side of his head put an end to those dreams. He was pushed roughly into the room and, by the time he had picked himself up, the door was closed and the light was on. Both pistols were pointing at his head.

Smith waited until Schaffer had tied the prisoner and taped his mouth. The room was some sort of storage room for office records. It was unlikely that anyone would come along, and anyway they had to take that chance. They had to cut the telephone line between the castle and the Alpine Corps camp, at all costs.

Smith opened the window and looked to his right. The lighted window of the telephone exchange was only a few metres away. From the window a heavy lead-covered cable stretched down the castle wall into the darkness.

‘Is that the one?’ Schaffer was by his side now.

‘That’s the one. Let’s have the rope.’

Schaffer passed one end of the rope around the thick steel shelf-support. Smith knotted the other end around the top of his legs and climbed over the window-sill. Schaffer took his weight and lowered him until he was about four metres down. Then, pushing against the wall with his feet, Smith began to swing himself sideways. On the fifth swing he caught hold of the cable and quickly climbed up to the window above. He was almost sure that the lead cable in his hands was the telephone line, but he wanted to be quite certain. He had no desire to put the blade of his knife through high-powered electricity lines.

He put a cautious eye over the window-sill and saw that the telephone operator had his back to him. He lifted himself another fifteen centimetres and followed the line of the cable with his eyes. It ran along the wall to some point behind the exchange and didn’t reappear.

A dozen powerful cuts and the cable fell away beneath him. Smith released his grip on the window-sill and swung back out across the castle wall.

Chapter Seven

For the second time in fifteen minutes Smith and Schaffer slipped silently onto the musicians’ platform. This time, they did not remain at the back. They moved slowly to the top of the stairs that led down to the floor of the great room, and sat down on the front row of seats. They were still hidden from view by deep shadows.

Three others had joined the party - Carraciola, Thomas and Christiansen. These three were no longer surrounded by guards: in fact, they were sitting comfortably on one of the huge cushioned seats, with glasses of Colonel Kramer’s whisky in their hands. Even Anne-Marie now held a glass in her hand. It appeared to be an occasion for congratulations all round.

Kramer lifted his glass towards the three new arrivals, ‘Your health, gentlemen. Your very good health.’ He turned to Rosemeyer. ‘Three of the best in Europe, sir.’

‘I suppose they are necessary,’ Rosemeyer said with distaste. ‘At least they have proved their courage. Your health, gentlemen.’

‘Your health, gentlemen,’ Jones said bitterly.

He sat forward in his chair and violently threw his glass into the fire. The glass shattered and there was a quick tongue of flame as the whisky caught fire. ‘*That’s* how I drink the health of double agents.’

Schaffer leaned close to Smith and whispered: ‘I thought you said he couldn’t act?’

‘Nobody’s ever paid him twenty-five thousand dollars a night before,’ Smith said dryly.

‘For shame, General. One of our best glasses.’ Kramer shook his head sadly then smiled. ‘But an understandable loss of temper. When your brave rescuers turn out to be, well, birds of a different feather....’

‘Double agents!’ Jones’ voice was tight with disgust.

Kramer smiled again, politely, and turned to the three on his left. ‘Well, gentlemen, you’ll soon be

back in London reporting General Carnaby's move to Berlin.' He leaned back in his chair and looked back at Jones. 'I'm not looking forward to this, General, but are you ready for your - ah - medicine?'

Jones looked darkly at Carraciola, Christiansen and Thomas and said very slowly: 'You - bloody...'

'This is against all my principles, General Carnaby,' Rosemeyer said uncomfortably. 'But if we could only do without force...'

'Principles! You make me sick!' Jones stood up and made a sound of disgust in his throat. 'To hell with you all! Principles!' He took off his uniform jacket, rolled up a sleeve and sat down again.'

There was a brief and uncomfortable silence, then Kramer looked meaningfully at Anne-Marie. She put down her glass and moved off to a side door. It was obvious to everyone that Anne-Marie wasn't feeling in the least uncomfortable: the half-smile on her face showed the expectation of pleasure.

Smith and Schaffer exchanged looks and carefully, silently stood up holding their pistols level. They were halfway down the steps, just beginning to come out of the darkness, when Anne-Marie entered the room. She was carrying a small medical tray: on the tray were a glass containing some colourless liquid and a needle. She set the tray down on a small table close to Jones.

Smith and Schaffer continued to advance soundlessly across the carpet. They were in full view now, but no one cared to turn his head. Every seated person watched Anne-Marie as she carefully filled the needle and held it up to the light to examine it. Carefully, professionally, but with the slight smile still on her lips, Anne-Marie cleaned an area of Jones' arm with cotton wool. As the watchers unconsciously bent forward in their seats, she picked up Jones' wrist in one hand and the needle in the other.

'Just a waste of good scopolamine, my dear,' Smith said. 'You won't get anything out of him.'

There was a moment's frozen stillness, then everyone spun round to see the two advancing figures. Colonel Kramer was the first to recover. Slowly, his hand began to reach to a button beside his chair.

'That button, Colonel,' Smith said conversationally. His pistol moved gently from side to side.

Slowly, unwillingly, Kramer's hand retreated and from the button.

'On the other hand,' Smith said pleasantly, 'Why not? Press it, if you wish.'

Kramer looked at him in narrow-eyed and puzzled suspicion.

'You will notice, Colonel, that my gun is not pointing at you,' Smith continued by way of explanation. 'It is pointed at those three' - he swung his gun to cover Carraciola, Thomas and Christiansen - 'and at him!' Smith swung round suddenly and pushed his pistol into Schaffer's stomach. 'Drop that gun! Now!'

'Drop the gun?' Schaffer said, shocked and puzzled. 'What in the name of God...?'

Smith stepped quickly forward, lifted his gun sharply upwards and drove it into Schaffer's stomach. Schaffer groaned in pain and doubled forward. His gun fell to the carpet as he gripped his stomach with both hands.

'Sit there.' Smith pointed his gun at a chair between Rosemeyer and the seat where the three men were sitting.

Schaffer said slowly, painfully: 'You damned dirty, double crossing....'

'That chair, Schaffer.' Smith's voice was threatening. He settled himself comfortably in a chair beside Colonel Kramer. 'A simple-minded soldier,' he explained carelessly. 'I brought him along for my own amusement.'

'I see,' Kramer said. It was obvious that he did not see. He went on uncertainly: 'If we might have an explanation...'

'All in good time, my dear Kramer, all in good time. As I was saying, my dear Anne-Marie...'

'How did you know her name?' Kramer asked sharply.

Smith ignored him completely and continued: 'As I was saying, scopolamine is a waste of time. As you know, all it will do is make our friend here tell the truth. And the truth is that he is not Lieutenant General George Carnaby, but an American actor.' He looked over to Jones. 'My congratulations, Mr

Jones. An excellent performance. Pity you'll have to spend the rest of the war in a prison camp.'

Kramer and Rosemeyer were on their feet; the others leaned forward on their seats. An expression of disbelief showed in every face. They looked at Jones as if he was earth's first visitor from another planet.

'Well, well, well,' Smith said with interest. 'Surprise, surprise.' He tapped Kramer on the arm and waved his gun in the direction of Carraciola, Thomas and Christiansen. 'Isn't that odd, Kramer? They seem just as astonished as you are?'

'Is this true?' Rosemeyer demanded of Jones. 'What he says? Do you deny...?'

In a voice that was no more than a whisper, Jones said: 'How - how in God's name - who *are* you, sir?'

'A stranger in the night.' Smith waved a hand. He stretched and politely covered a tired sigh with his hand. 'And now, Anne-Marie, if I could have a glass of that excellent whisky. I did get awfully cold on the roof of that cable car.'

The girl looked at Kramer for permission, but found neither encouragement nor discouragement. She poured a glass and handed it to Smith. He drank a little, turned to Kramer and said sadly: 'To think you have been wasting such excellent whisky on enemies of the State.'

'Don't listen to him, Colonel Kramer, don't listen to him!' Carriciola shouted wildly. 'It's a trick! He's just trying....'

Smith lined up his glass on Carriciola's chest and said softly: 'Keep quiet or I'll make you quiet, you dog. You'll have your chance - and we'll see who's playing the tricks.' He lowered his gun to his knees and went on tiredly: 'Colonel Kramer, I find it hard work talking and holding a gun all the time. Have you a guard I can trust? A man who won't talk afterwards, I mean?'

He sat back in his chair, drank his whisky and ignored the hateful looks from his four old companions. Kramer looked at him for a very long moment, then thoughtfully reached for a phone. He spoke a few words and replaced the phone. The whole company sat in silence until a full minute had passed and a sharp knock came at the door. A tall, cold-faced and hard-eyed sergeant entered and crossed the room smartly. At a sign from Kramer he took up position behind the seat on which Carraciola, Thomas and Christiansen sat. He held a machine-pistol in a pair of strong and very capable looking hands.

'A very much more civilised arrangement,' Smith said approvingly. He rose, leaving his gun on the floor and crossed to the drinks table. After pouring himself another drink he went and stood by the fireplace. 'Anne-Marie,' he said in a soft voice, 'bring in three more needles of scopolamine.'

'Colonel Kramer?' Carriciola said loudly. 'This is madness! Are you going to allow...?'

'Guard!' Smith's voice was hard. 'If any of these men talk again, silence him!'

The guard pushed his machine-gun none too lightly into Carriciola's back. Carriciola sat still, his face dark with fury.

'Do you think General Rosemeyer and Colonel Kramer are fools?' Smith demanded cuttingly. 'Little children? Do you imagine that your little game will succeed? The drug will be used *after* I have proved my case and *after* I have disproved yours.' A slow smile came to his face, a smile that spoke of a new idea which pleased him very much. 'One moment, Anne-Marie,' Smith said softly. The girl stopped halfway to the side door and turned round. 'Bring three note-books, will you, my dear?'

'Three note-books? Three needles?' Colonel Kramer said evenly, his eyes watchful. 'I thought we had *four* enemies of the State here.'

'Only three enemies that matter,' Smith said in weary patience. 'The lieutenant? He doesn't even know what day of the week it is. Now then. Let's be fair and examine the case first.'

'Let me begin with a few minor points. First, why did I invite another guard in and lay down my own gun? Secondly, why didn't I kill Colonel Weissner and his men earlier this evening? Thirdly, how did I get from the roof of the cable car into the castle? Fourthly, how did *I* know that Jones was an actor

when these three did *not* know?’ Smith paused to enjoy the effect of his audience. He took advantage of the break to pour himself another generous drink.

‘Please, continue,’ Kramer said. His eyes were still watchful but he allowed a shade of interest to enter his voice.

‘Thank you. I hadn’t finished.’ Smith placed his glass on the table, walked across and stood before the three spies. ‘My first point? Well....’

Smith let a shade of tiredness show on his face. ‘My second? I didn’t kill Colonel Weissner because German does not kill German. I am Major Johann Schmidt from Heidelberg.’

‘But that is *my* home town,’ Kramer said with surprise.

‘Indeed?’ Smith said with interest. ‘Then I think we have a common friend. To continue with my third point, who helped me to get into the castle? Captain von Brauchitsch. He had his orders directly from Berlin.’ Smith looked hard at the three men seated before him. ‘As for my fourth point, perhaps you would like to explain that?’

The three men looked up at him in angry silence.

‘Perhaps they would indeed,’ Kramer said heavily. He came and stood by Smith, looking down at the three men with disturbing mildness.

‘I promised you proof, Colonel,’ Smith said. Those were just minor points. Do you know the name of our top man in England?’

‘I do.’

‘Then suppose we ask them?’

The three men looked at each other in silence. Smith produced a small red note-book from his jacket, tore out a page, then carefully replaced the book in his pocket. He wrote something on the page and handed it to Kramer.

‘Yes,’ Kramer said. ‘Major Smith, this has gone far enough.’

‘Not yet.’

‘I require no more.’

‘Please, Colonel, I would like you to make a radio call to the Chief of Military Intelligence at our headquarters in Northern Italy.’

Kramer said softly: ‘The friend you mentioned?’

‘An old student of Heidelberg University,’ Smith replied. ‘Colonel Wilhelm Wilner.’ He smiled. ‘Willi-Willi.’

‘You know that? Then it will not be necessary to call him.’

‘Admiral Canaris would like you to.’

‘And you know my chief, too?’ Kramer’s voice was even softer.

‘I have to admit that I do not,’ Smith said with cheerful honesty. ‘I just work for him.’

‘So you are one of our double agents,’ Kramer said wonderingly. ‘And I’ve never even heard of you.’

‘Maybe that’s why he is what he is,’ Rosemeyer said dryly.

‘I’ve been lucky,’ Smith said carelessly. Then with more energy: ‘Well, have I satisfied you, Colonel?’

‘Completely,’ Kramer said. ‘Beyond any doubt.’

‘So,’ Smith said. ‘Now it is our friends’ turn. As you know, the *real* Christiansen, Thomas and Carraciola....’

‘What in God’s name are you talking about?’ Christiansen shouted. He was on his feet, his face red with uncontrollable anger. ‘The real Christiansen...’ His eyes turned up as the guard’s pistol caught him behind the ear and he sank to the floor.

‘He was warned,’ Kramer said. ‘You didn’t hit him too hard, Sergeant?’

‘A two minute tap,’ the guard said confidently.

‘Good. I think you may now continue in peace, my dear Smith.’

‘As I was saying, our real agents have set up an excellent chain of spies in England. There is one very

good way for these three to prove their case.’ Smith picked up from the table the three little note-books that Anne-Marie had brought. He threw them at the three men. Then he took out his own note-book and laid it on the small table next to Kramer.

‘I would like them to write the names and addresses of our agents in England. I invite you, Colonel, to compare their lists with mine.’

‘Colonel, there’s been some terrible mistake,’ Carraciola said despairingly.

‘Write,’ Kramer commanded.

Chapter Eight

Captain von Brauchitsch of the Gestapo stopped out of the cable car and into the cable-station of the Schloss Adler. The guard did not challenge him as he passed through the heavy steel doorway. Von Brauchitsch’s face was well known by every soldier in the castle. He walked quickly along a lower passage, climbed a flight of stairs to the next floor and stopped outside the door to his own office. A soldier passed by as he was putting his key to the door.

‘Sergeant.’

‘Yes. Captain von Brauchitsch?’

‘I wish to speak to the new girl who arrived this evening. Bring her to me. Immediately.’

The sergeant marched smartly away to obey. In less than three minutes he returned. Miss Schenk, he reported, was not in her room.

Von Brauchitsch looked at his watch. He had half an hour before his appointment with Colonel Kramer and the American guest of honour.

‘Find her,’ he ordered sharply. ‘Search every room.’ He sat down at his desk as the sergeant hurried away. ‘Well, well, well,’ he said softly. ‘How very interesting.’

Carraciola, Thomas and Christiansen were still writing. Kramer, who was standing apart from Smith, looked at them with curiosity. He spoke in a low voice: ‘They seem to be finding plenty of ideas from somewhere,’ he said carefully.

‘They’re fighting for a few extra minutes,’ Smith said. ‘Extra minutes to live.’

‘All right, Smith,’ Kramer said a little impatiently. ‘What in God’s name is behind all this?’

‘Admiral Rolland, the head of the British Secret Service. His brain is behind all this.’

‘Well? Go on.’

‘Carraciola, Thomas and Christiansen were caught three weeks ago. Now, as you are aware, they worked only in North-West Europe and were not known here.’

‘We have known about their work.’

‘Yes, yes. But only that. Admiral Rolland knew that three of his men - fully-informed of course - could take the place of our three agents. And, of course, once they were accepted by you, they could operate inside the Schloss Adler with complete safety.’

‘And?’

‘Well, don’t you see?’ It was Smith’s turn to be impatient. ‘Rolland knew that General Carnaby - I mean Jones - would be brought here for questioning. He also knew that Carnaby’s equal in the German Army would be sent to question him.’ Smith smiled. ‘Even in Britain they are aware that Mohammed must go to the mountain: the Army calls upon the Gestapo, not the other way around.’

‘Go on, go on.’

‘The German Chief of Staff, General Julius Rosemeyer, would have been just as priceless to the enemy as General Carnaby would be to us.’

‘The General!’ Kramer spoke in a shocked whisper, his eyes crossing the room to Rosemeyer. ‘They

came to get him!’

‘Your precious trusted agents there,’ Smith said roughly. ‘And they nearly succeeded.’

‘God in Heaven! It’s - it’s...’ Kramer left Smith and went to sit in a chair beside Rosemeyer. For perhaps two minutes they talked together in low voices, occasionally looking at Smith. Kramer did most of the talking, while curiosity, puzzlement, astonishment and, finally, shocked realisation appeared on Rosemeyer’s face. When the two men eventually stood up and walked across to Smith, the General was a little paler than normal.

‘This is an incredible story, Major Smith, incredible. But it must be true. The only explanation that can cover all the facts.’ He attempted a smile. ‘I will always be in your debt, Major Smith.’

‘Germany will always be in your debt,’ Kramer said. ‘I am sure our Leader will reward you.’

‘You are too kind, gentlemen,’ Smith replied. ‘To do my duty is reward enough.’ He smiled wearily. ‘But if you gentlemen will excuse me - my present job is not yet completed.’

He moved away and walked slowly up and down behind the three men who were bent over their note-books. From time to time he looked over a shoulder and shook his head in disbelief.

‘Let’s finish this now!’ Rosemeyer demanded impatiently.

‘If you please, General let us play this game to the bitter end.’

‘You have your reasons?’

‘I most certainly have.’

‘In here, Captain, sir.’

Captain von Brauchitsch brushed past the young sergeant and entered the room. He paused briefly as two soldiers lifted a young officer out of the cupboard and onto the bed. It was obvious from the man’s groans that he was recovering consciousness.

Von Brauchitsch crossed the room and opened the window. He saw that nearly all the snow had been rubbed away from the sill. He leaned further out and flashed his torch downwards. The roof of the cable-station was fifteen metres directly below. The markings and footprints in the snow told their own unmistakable story.

‘Finished?’ Smith asked.

The three men did not answer but silently handed him their note-books. Smith took them across the room and laid them on the little table by Kramer’s chair.

‘The moment of truth,’ Smith said quickly. ‘One book should be enough.’

Kramer picked up the top book and began to read. Slowly he turned the pages. Smith drained his glass and wandered across the room to the whisky bottle on the table. He poured some whisky, carefully replaced the bottle, walked a few aimless steps and stood still. He was within a metre of the guard with the gun.

Kramer closed the note-book in his hands.

‘Now compare it with my original,’ Smith said.

Kramer picked up Smith’s note-book. ‘As you say, the moment of truth.’ He opened the cover. The first page was empty. So was the next. And the next....Puzzled, annoyed, Kramer lifted his eyes to look across the room to Smith.

Smith’s glass was falling to the ground as he brought the side of his hand smashing down on the guard’s neck. The guard dropped as if a bridge had fallen on him.

Kramer’s moment of complete amazement passed. The bitter taste of understanding flooded his face. His hands stretched out to the button beside his chair.

‘Oh no, not that button!’ Schaffer’s voice held all the power of the blow that had struck down the guard. He was stretched full length on the floor where he had dived to get Smith’s gun. The gun was now pointed, steady as a rock, at Kramer’s heart. For the second time that night, Kramer’s head

retreated from the button.

Smith walked across to Kramer's table and picked up the three note-books. He buttoned them safely inside the jacket and said to Schaffer: 'Between them, they shouldn't have missed anything... Well, time to be gone. Ready, Mr Jones?'

Jones looked completely confused. 'Acting?' he said. 'My God, I don't know anything about it.'

'This is all you want?' Kramer was completely under control again, calm, quiet, the total professional, 'Just those books?'

'You don't think I'm going to carry off the General on my shoulders, do you?'

'Then those men are who they say they are.'

'They've been under suspicion for weeks. It took two month's work to...'

He broke off as the door opened wide, Mary stood framed in the doorway, a gun very steady in her hand.

'You took your time, didn't you?' said Smith.

'I'm sorry, I had to hide for a while.'

'The new girl who arrived tonight!' Kramer whispered. 'The cousin of that girl from the...'

'That's right,' Smith said. 'She's the one who has been helping me to keep Willi-Willi happy. *And* she's the one who opened the door for us.'

'Boss,' Schaffer said unhappily. 'I don't want to rush you...'

'Coming now.' Smith waved his gun in the direction of Carraciola, Thomas and Christiansen. 'On your feet, you three. You're coming with us.'

'Coming with us?' Schaffer said in disbelief. 'To England?'

'To stand trial. God alone knows how many thousands of lives they've cost already. Not to mention Torrance-Smythe and Sergeant Harrod.'

He looked at Carraciola, and his eyes were very cold. 'I'll never know it, but I think you were the brains. It was you who killed Harrod...'

'Drop those guns.' Von Brauchitsch's voice was quiet and cold and commanding. No one had heard or seen the door open. He stood just inside, about a metre from Mary and he held a small pistol in his right hand. Smith spun round - but Mary was almost directly in line with von Brauchitsch. That did not stop the Gestapo officer; there was a sharp flat crack as a bullet passed through Mary's sleeve. Smith groaned in pain as he lifted his bleeding hand, while his pistol went flying. Mary tried to turn round but von Brauchitsch was too quick and too strong. He jumped forward and caught her wrist, knocking her gun to the floor. He held Mary in front of him.

Schaffer dropped his gun.

Kramer let out a long sigh. 'Well *done*, my boy, well done. My God! Another minute...'

He went over to Schaffer and searched him for hidden weapons. Then he did the same to Smith and gave him a handkerchief to stop the flow of blood. In front of Mary he paused and said: 'Anne-Marie?'

'Certainly Colonel. It will be a pleasure. I know how to deal with cheap little spies like her!' She turned to Mary and said: 'I'm afraid they don't like watching how I get results. Get in there!'

She caught Mary by the hair, pulled her to the side door and pushed her violently inside. The sound of her body crashing to the floor and a cry of pain came together. Anne-Marie closed the door behind them.

For the next ten seconds or so there could be clearly heard the sound of blows and cries.

'Anne-Marie enjoys her work,' Kramer said with distaste. There came a crash of a body against the wall, then silence. 'It's over now,' he said with a sigh. He looked at Smith and Schaffer. 'We'll fix that hand first, then - well, we have no shortage of prison cells in Schloss Adler.' He broke off, his eyes widening just a fraction. He said carefully to von Brauchitsch: 'It seems that we were wasting our sympathy on the wrong person. There's a gun pointing at the middle of your back.'

Von Brauchitsch looked over his shoulder and saw the automatic, the steady hand that held it, and Mary's dark eyes, cool and very watchful.

‘It is every parent’s duty to encourage his daughter to take up Judo,’ Schaffer said happily. He took the gun from von Brauchtsch’s hand and picked up his own gun. Then he walked across to the main door and locked it. ‘Far too many folk come in here without knocking. Mary, fix the Major’s hand as best you can. I’ll watch them.’

Mary bandaged Smith’s injured hand in the side room while Schaffer watched his six prisoners. When they came out of the room Mary was carrying a tray of bottles and needles.

‘OK?’ Schaffer asked.

‘I’ll survive. We have a more immediate problem here.’ Smith tapped his jacket. ‘These names and addresses. It might be an hour or two before we get them to England and then another hour or two before these men can be arrested. We have to silence these men for a few hours.’

‘We could silence them forever, boss,’ Schaffer said carelessly.

‘That won’t be necessary.’ He picked up a bottle from the tray with his left hand. ‘You’ll hardly feel a thing.’

Kramer looked at him. ‘A drug? I’ll be damned if I have it.’

Smith said in a voice of complete confidence: ‘You’ll be dead if you don’t.’

Chapter Nine

Smith stopped outside the door marked RADIO ROOM. He looked at the three prisoners and said: ‘Don’t even think of making a sound. I’m not overkeen on taking you back to England. Right Lieutenant, when you’re ready.’

‘Ready now.’ Carefully, silently, Schaffer eased open the door of the radio room. The operator sat smoking a cigarette listening to soft Austrian music on his big machine. Suddenly, he caught a whisper of sound from Schaffer’s feet on the bare floor. He spun round and jumped to his feet. And he thought as quickly as he moved. His right foot moved just slightly and a loud, angry bell began to ring in the passage outside. Schaffer leapt forward, his pistol swinging, and the operator fell unconscious to the floor. But Schaffer was too late. The bell rang and kept on ringing.

‘That’s all I bloody need!’ Smith said bitterly. He pushed the three prisoners into the corner. ‘Mary! Jones! If they breathe, shoot them.’

Schaffer took up a position at the door while Smith sat in front of the radio. He switched the machine to send, turned a couple of knobs, and picked up a microphone.

‘Broadsword calling Danny Boy,’ he said. ‘Can you hear me?’ Nobody heard him. Smith turned one of the knobs a fraction and tried again. And again. He spun round as a crash of machine-pistol fire came from the doorway. Schaffer was stretched full length on the floor, smoke was coming from his gun.

‘We’ve got callers, boss. They’re in the passage, but they can’t come round the corner without being sewn in half. There’s no need to hurry.’

‘Broadsword calling Danny Boy. Broadsword calling Danny Boy. How long do you think it’s going to be before someone cuts the electricity?’

‘For God’s sake, Danny Boy.’ Schaffer begged. ‘Why don’t you answer?’

‘Danny Boy calling Broadsword!’ The voice on the radio was calm and clear. ‘Danny Boy...’

‘One hour, Danny Boy.’ Smith cut in. ‘One hour. Understood? Over.’

‘Understood. You have it, Broadsword?’ The voice was unmistakably that of Admiral Rolland.

‘I have it,’ Smith said. ‘I have it all. Leaving now. Over and out.’ He didn’t bother to switch off the radio. He rose, took three steps back and fired a two-second burst from his machine pistol. No one would ever use that radio again. He joined Schaffer in the doorway. Shouted orders could be heard round the corner of the passage.

‘We’ve got to move, fast! They’re sending men round the other way. Keep us covered, Lieutenant. You three, move!’

The group moved along the passage to the side stairs that led directly down to the cable-station. Schaffer stood at the door of the radio room holding his machine-pistol in one hand. He let out a furious burst of bullets to discourage even the keenest Alpine Corps nose from showing itself round the corner. At the same time, his other hand pulled shut the heavy door and turned the key in the lock. Putting the key in his pocket he walked backwards after the others. At the top of the stairs he gave one last burst of fire at the lamps on the ceiling. The passage was suddenly in total darkness.

‘That will confuse them for a while,’ he said to Smith, catching up with the others. ‘But only for a while.’

‘Time to use the plastic explosives,’ Smith said. They had reached the next floor. ‘Take four or five and throw them into rooms along the passage there.’

‘Consider it already done,’ Schaffer said, and left.

In the first three rooms, all bedrooms, he placed explosives in a fruit bowl, under an officer’s hat and under a pillow. In the fourth room, a bathroom, he placed it behind a lavatory, and in the fifth, a store-room, high up on a shelf behind some boxes. He timed the first explosive to go off in ten minutes. By then the Alpine Corps soldiers would have broken through the steel door of their radio room and found it empty. The other explosions would follow, each a few minutes after the last.

Schaffer caught up with the others at the bottom of the stairs. All was quiet on the passage leading to the cable-station, but Smith stopped at the first door.

‘In here. We’ll wait for the fun to begin.’

Just seven minutes had passed when they heard the sound of an explosion, distant but unmistakable. Almost immediately a bell began to ring with loud urgency. Voices and running feet passed the door and died away up the stairs.

Smith opened the door. The way was clear. Every man in the Schloss Adler would now be heading for the scene of the explosion.

They ran along the passage-way, driving the prisoners in front of them into the cable-station. Schaffer closed and bolted the great steel door behind them.

‘Start the motor,’ Smith told him. ‘You three, get in.’

One by one the three men stepped down into the cable car. The last of them, Thomas seemed to slip on the step and fell sideways. As he fell, his hand shot out and caught Smith’s injured hand. The sudden sharp pain put Smith off balance. Thomas smashed the bloody bandaged hand against the side of the cable car, tore the gun out of Smith’s other hand and leapt into the car. He stood in the doorway breathing heavily.

‘If your friends move, you’re a dead man, major.’

No one on the platform stirred. Inside the cable car Carraciola reached for the starter button.

‘What are you doing?’ Thomas demanded sharply.

Carraciola looked at him impatiently. ‘If we go back into the castle we’ll probably be shot on sight. Remember, the only people who know who we really are, will be unconscious for a long time. To the rest of them we’re unknowns. And to the few who saw us arrive, we’re prisoners.’

‘So?’

‘So we go down in this car and phone Weissner. He’ll know what to do. OK?’

‘OK.’ Thomas looked almost cheerful. ‘Let’s go!’

The cable car moved off.

‘No!’ Mary’s voice rose in shock. ‘No! No! For God’s sake, no!’

Smith ignored the heart-broken voice. He was running along the platform, bending low under the windows of the cable car. As the car began to sink out of sight into the black night sky, he leapt onto the ice-coated roof and wrapped his arms round the connection bolt.

‘Stop the car, Lieutenant,’ Mary begged. ‘Bring him back!’

But Schaffer didn’t move. ‘It’s our last chance,’ he said softly.

The cable car was now fifteen to twenty metres clear of the castle and the high wind was beginning to swing it across the sky. Smith felt sick and exhausted, weakened by the pain in his hand and the loss of blood. He hoped to God that the men inside the car did not realise that he was on the roof.

The door of the cable car opened and a head and a hand appeared. Carraciola was coming after him and he was helpless. Smith threw his body round to the far side of the roof as Carraciola pointed a gun to his face.

‘Only one bullet left,’ Carraciola’s smile was almost pleasant. ‘I had to make sure, you see.’ He pulled himself slowly up and stood upright holding onto the top of the steel arm. ‘Too bad, Smith.’ He steadied the barrel of the gun. ‘It comes to us all.’

‘Look behind you,’ Smith said.

Carraciola half-smiled in weary disbelief that anyone should try that ancient trick on him. Smith looked over Carraciola’s shoulder, drew in his breath and looked away. Sudden understanding made Carraciola turn around. He cried out in terror, the last sound he ever made. The arm of the first support-post smashed into his back. One second later he was swept from the roof of the car. From the open door, the shocked faces of Thomas and Christiansen watched the broken body falling down into the dark valley below.

Slowly and painfully, Smith pulled himself forwards until he was sitting with an arm and a leg wound round the steel bolt. He knew that it was foolish to sit like that in the bright moonlight but he hadn’t got enough strength left in him to hang on by his one good arm. And if he could be seen from the castle, he didn’t think it mattered now: they had other things to worry about up at the castle. Clouds of smoke hung over the north-east tower and flames leapt at the windows. An increasing number of explosions reached his ears and he wondered what might be the cause of them: Schaffer hadn’t the time to plant all those.

The cable car was now approaching the central support-post. At the same time, the other car on the other cable was climbing steadily upwards. With luck, his own cable car might be the first to arrive at the central support post. With luck.

From the bag on his shoulder Smith took a packet of plastic explosive and pushed it into the narrow space between the roof and the connection bolt. He waited until the car was ten metres away from the central support-post and took up a standing position on the edge of the icy roof. At the last moment he let go of the steel bolt, stretched out both arms towards the arm of the support-post and jumped.

The effort drove all the breath from his body but he forced himself to swing his feet up till they rested on the lower cross-bar. He hooked his hands round the upper-bar and made his way quickly across to the other side. For the first time that night Smith was glad of the brightness of the moon. He threw himself across the roof of the other cable car and lay face down, sick with pain and exhaustion. Before he had the strength to pull himself into a sitting position, a flash of white light and a loud sharp crack came from the cable car that held Thomas and Christiansen. And then suddenly there was only an empty wire, a steel arm swinging loose and a long cry of terror falling into the night.

Chapter Ten

The eager hands of Schaffer and Mary lifted Smith off the roof of the cable car as it came to a stop inside the castle station. Schaffer set the controls to return the car down to the valley and jumped inside the car with the others as it began to move.

Schaffer looked back at the castle with wide eyes. The Schloss Adler was well and truly afloat. The

flames now reached up almost to the top of the north-east tower drowning the pale light of the moon and lighting up the whole valley. 'Wow!' he whispered, 'for stone, it burns pretty well.'

In the lower station Smith stopped only long enough to plant another explosive in the cable car and ran after the others into the shadow of the nearest house. 'The garage,' he said. 'Come on.'

The garage he led them to was the one that held the post-bus. Waiting inside was Heidi. She looked at them as if they were creatures from another world, then up at the burning castle.

'Into the bus,' Smith said.

The street was crowded with people, most of them soldiers who had come hurrying out of the pubs to watch the burning Schloss Adler. Smith pressed the starter button and the big engine caught at once. He drove out into the middle of the road with headlamps blazing. The street ahead cleared magically as the bus gathered speed. In the mountains, the Alpine post-bus has unquestioned right of way at all times. It reached the end of the village street and still not one shot had been fired.

Ahead the road stretched alongside the dark waters of the lake. Behind, the road was empty, but Smith wasn't taking any chances.

'Three minutes to the bridge, Lieutenant,' he said to Schaffer. 'Got the explosives ready?'

'I have.' Schaffer had already opened the back door and was holding two packages of plastic explosives in his hand. Five seconds after the bus stopped on the wooden bridge he was fixing one package to the right hand support. As he crossed the bridge to the left hand support he heard the deep sound of an approaching engine. Smith had already taken off the brake and the bus was moving away when Schaffer threw himself through the back doorway and was pulled inside by helping hands.

The two, flat cracks came within one second of each other. One moment there was a bridge: the next moment an empty space. And on the far side, an Alpine Corps army car braked for all it was worth.

Schaffer sat back and lit a cigarette. 'You're a lucky lot to have me around,' he said. 'How far to the airfield now?'

'About eight kilometres. Perhaps eight minutes. But this is the only road in. With the bridge gone, there's no hurry now.'

Acting on Heidi's directions, Smith swung the bus through a narrow gateway and across open farmland. The headlamps lit up the black shape of a Mosquito bomber plane as Smith brought the bus to a stop. In another half-minute, with all of them safely inside the plane, they were on their way home.

Inside the plane Smith looked up from the bleeding hand that Mary was re-bandaging and said: 'It was good of you to come in person to meet us, sir.'

'It wasn't good of me at all,' Colonel Wyatt-Turner said flatly. 'I'd have gone mad if I'd stayed another minute in London - I *had* to know. It was I who sent you all out here.' He sat without speaking for some time, then went on heavily: 'Torrance-Smythe gone, Sergeant Harrod, and now, you say, Carraciola, Christiansen and Thomas. All dead. A heavy price, Smith, a terrible price. My best men.'

'All of them, sir?' Smith asked softly.

'I'm getting old. Wyatt-Turner shook his head wearily and drew a hand across his eyes.

'Did you find out who...'

'Carraciola.'

'Carraciola! Ted Carraciola? Never! I can't believe it.'

'*And* Christiansen.' Smith's voice was still quiet, still even. '*And* Thomas.'

'*And* Christiansen? *And* Thomas? All three of them? Impossible! I can't believe it. I *won't* believe it.!'

'Then maybe you'll believe this, sir.' Smith produced one of the note-books from his jacket and handed it to Wyatt-Turner. 'You will recognise Carraciola's writing.'

Slowly, like a man in a dream, Wyatt-Turner reached out and took the note-book. For three minutes he examined the contents, then finally laid the book down with a sigh.

‘This is the most important piece of paper in Europe. The nation is deeply in your debt, Major Smith.’

‘Thank you, sir.’

‘Or it would have been. It’s a great pity the nation will never have a chance to express gratitude.’ He lifted up the pistol that lay on his knees and pointed it at Smith’s heart. ‘You will do nothing foolish, will you, Major?’

‘The fellow’s gone mad!’ Schaffer’s voice was a shocked whisper.

‘If he has,’ Smith said dryly, ‘he went mad some years ago. Ladies and gentlemen, meet the most dangerous spy in Europe, the most successful double agent of all time.’

‘You knew?’ Wyatt-Turner’s self-confidence had drained away. ‘You knew about me?’

‘We knew about you. Admiral Rolland has his suspicions about you and the others for months. But he was wrong about Torrance-Smythe. He recalled me - and Mary - from Italy: he could not longer be sure of anyone in London. When General Carnaby crashed, he suggested to you the idea of sending us to the rescue. And he made damn sure that you never once had the chance to talk to any of us in private before we left.’

‘Go on.’ Wyatt-Turner had recovered most of his self-confidence. ‘It’ll pass the time.’

‘Well, Colonel, you weren’t too happy until Rolland asked *you* to pick the leader. So you picked me. Rolland knew you would. You knew from your friend Admiral Canaris, that I was their top double agent. Or you thought you did. Rolland was the only man on either side who knew I wasn’t. For you, I was the ideal choice.’

Smith smiled an empty smile. ‘It must have been quite a shock to you this afternoon when Rolland told you what I really was.’

‘You knew all that?’ Wyatt-Turner’s new-found confidence had disappeared and his voice was rough. He lifted the gun slightly. ‘Go on, Smith.’

‘We had everything except proof. I got the proof this evening, General Kramer *knew* we were coming for General Carnaby. By the way, meet Cartwright-Jones, an American actor.’

‘What?’ Wyatt-Turner forced out the word as if a rope had been tightened round his throat.

‘General Carnaby is spending a quiet weekend at Admiral Rolland’s country house.’

Wyatt-Turner tried to speak, but the words failed to come: his mouth was working and the colour had drained from his face.

‘Nobody else had the chance to tell Kramer that we would be in ‘The Wild Deer’ this evening. I told you on the radio and you lost no time in passing the good word on.’

‘Very interesting.’ Wyatt-Turner could not hide the deep unease in his face. ‘Have you quite finished, Major Smith?’

‘Finished.’ Smith sighed. ‘You *had* to come to meet us, hadn’t you, Colonel? You knew that somebody named in that book would put the finger on you.’

Wyatt-Turner did not answer. He turned to the pilot and said: ‘Change course for Lille airport, it’s in occupied France.’

‘Don’t bother,’ Smith said.

Wyatt-Turner lined his gun on Smith. ‘Give me one good reason why I shouldn’t shoot you now.’

‘I can do that,’ Smith smiled. ‘Why do you think that Admiral Rolland went with you to the airport? He never has before.’

‘Go on.’ Wyatt-Turner’s voice was hard, sharp, but his eyes were sick with the sudden sight of defeat and death.

‘To make quite certain that you took that gun and only that gun with you. I personally removed the firing pin exactly thirty-six hours ago.’ With his left hand Smith reached awkwardly inside his jacket and brought out his pistol. Wyatt-Turner’s finger tightened and a dry and empty ‘click’ came from his gun. With a shocked expression on his face, he slowly lowered the gun to the floor and quickly turned his seat, pulled open the door and threw the note-book out into the night.

'The most important piece of paper in Europe, I believe I called it,' he said sadly.

'So you did.' Smith handed his gun to Schaffer and took out the other two note-books.

'Copies!' Wyatt-Turner's face was frozen in defeat. He said: 'Are you going to shoot me?'

'No.'

Wyatt-Turner pulled the door of the plane until it opened wide and stood in the doorway.

'Mind the step,' said Schaffer. His voice was cold and empty, his face was hard as stone.

'Well, now, time to make a call.' Smith shut the door and climbed into the seat next to the pilot. He looked round at Mary. 'The Admiral must be getting worried by this time.'

'Time to make a call,' Mary repeated mechanically. 'How can you be so calm just after...'

'Because it's no shock to me, silly. I *knew* he was going to die.'

'You knew - of course, of course,' she said, her face ash-white.

'Now then.' Smith took her hand. 'You realise what this means, don't you? The war is over for you and me. For the first time we can think of ourselves. OK?' He held her hand tightly and she smiled shakily in reply. 'OK. Now, sir, may I use your radio?'

'So that's the way he went.' On the phone Admiral Rolland sounded very old and very, very tired. 'Maybe it's the best way, Smith. And you have all the information you want?....Wonderful! I have all the police forces in the country ready to act. As soon as we get that book of addresses....There's a car waiting for you at the airport. See you all in an hour.'

'Yes, sir. There's one thing, sir, a small thing. I want to get married this morning.'

'You what?'

'I want to get married,' Smith explained slowly and patiently, 'To Miss Mary Ellison.'

'But you can't,' Rolland cried. 'This morning! Impossible! There are such things as permits, laws, the legal offices will be shut today....'

'After all I've done for you,' Smith said sounding hurt. 'Surely you can organise the necessary papers for me!'

'This isn't fair! You're playing on an old man's gratitude.' Rolland put down the phone, smiled tiredly and picked up another phone.

'Operator? Put me through to the Printing Department.'