

# Nemesis

by

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*First published by AuthorHouse 5/7/2008*

*ISBN: 978-1-4343-7024-2 (sc)*

*Printed in the United States of America  
Bloomington, Indiana*

*This book is printed on acid-free paper.*

## *Forward*

Dear reader picture yourself; as a young person, taken from a normal reasonably comfortable life style surrounded by the love of family and friends and being cast into one that is totally alien to your way of thinking. Each and every moment of your day governed by received orders. For weeks; possibly months, training is undertaken aimed at turning you into a disciplined member of the armed forces. Able to obey orders instantly and without question and with the skills learnt; defend not only your own life, but also those of your comrades.

This fictional novel based on research of WWII carries the reader on a journey of discovery. One that was carried out by men from all walks of life and though differing in upbringing; character and background; through the sharing of suffering; real deprivation and hardship, bonds of friendship difficult to find in normal everyday civilian life were forged.

Depicted are several of the many missions successfully carried out; there is also humour; romance and the tragedy

of losing comrades who had become part of their everyday lives.

Men and women of the European resistance movement who; despite the ever present risk to their lives, played an active and vital role in the provision of intelligence: local geographical knowledge and places of safety for those deployed on mainland Europe by JCS and SOE HQ London, also relate their own horrific accounts of personal trauma suffered.

## *GLOSSARY*

Nemesis	Definition
	To act in the role of a weapon used in the taking of retribution-an adversary that will not be beaten.

### Abbreviations

C in CAF	Commander in Chief Allied Forces OIC Officer in Command
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
CO	Commanding Officer OC Officer Commanding RSM
Class I	Regimental Sergeant Major
SSM Class 1I	Squadron Sergeant Major
S/Sgt	Staff Sergeant
Sgt	Sergeant
Cpl	Corporal
L/Cpl	Lance Corporal
MO	Medical Officer
QM	Quartermaster
FSMO	Field Service Marching Order
SMG	Sub Machine Gun
DSC	Distinguished Service Cross DSO Distinguished Service Order TO Training Officer

MOA	Marine Officer Attendant TIs Training Instructors
HO	Hostilities Only
DZ	Drop Zone
LZ	Landing Zone
POW	Prisoner of War
PT	Physical Training
PTS	Parachute Training School
MCE	Military Correction Establishment

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# CHAPTER ONE

*Decisions are made and approved by:  
C in C Allied Forces*

The C in C allied forces acting on confirmed intelligence received had ordered immediate action be taken by his Joint Chiefs of Staff to remove a threat against his future intentions for the relief of mainland Europe.

Plans proposed and related issues had been discussed during many long and tiring hours in a series of meetings over several days before final plans were approved by the C in C. Orders were now being prepared for issue under the operational name of 'Nemesis'

In London at 3am of that bitterly cold and frosty morning, a final meeting of English and American Joint Chiefs of Staff chaired by General Soames was drawing to a close. An important decision had been reached and agreed upon; regardless of cost in lives, an all English force of volunteers assisted by members of the resistance movement in Europe would be created for carrying out operations in mainland Europe. Their first task; the destruction of a new bacterial threat created in the science laboratories

of Germany and intended for use against Allied invasion forces. The second mission for this new force would be one of considerable danger lasting several months and require real courage and determination to see it through. General Soames rose bringing the meeting to a close: “thank you gentlemen for all your help you will be kept informed as to progress with regular updates” He strode from the room.

He entered his office and called for his clerical officer; “S/Sgt Beaumont, ask Brigadier Carlisle to join me and arrange for a car and Sgt Lewis to be ready to leave here at 0600 with orders for Lt Colonel Curry at Camp Ilsewood”

“Brigadier, operation ‘NEMISIS’ has been approved and you have been selected as the officer to ensure no hitches or delays occur. Lt Colonel Curry will be officer commanding with Captain James as his 2ic; they must be given 100% support in supply of necessary equipment and transport into and out of Europe. Work closely with these officers, read their history and you will understand why they have been chosen. Keep me regularly updated on progress and should you encounter difficulty inform me at once. Hand your present duties over to Colonel Harcross and report back here at 1400 hours when both officers are to be given full details of their intended mission. Remember security is of the essence. No detail of our intentions is to fall into the hands of the enemy”

Brigadier Carlisle read the files on the two chosen officers it made interesting reading briefly:

Lt Colonel Curry DSO DSC aged 30; following in his father’s footsteps had joined the army on leaving university with a master’s degree in science. He had been accepted for training at the military college of Sandhurst and had

never once regretted his decision. He proved a dedicated and quietly courageous officer. A serious disciplinarian should the need arise but, never harsh when a stern rebuke would suffice. A proven ability to swiftly assess difficult sometimes life threatening issues, decide on a course of action then follow it through acting always in the best interests of those under his command, had caused him to be singled out for rapid promotion. Operating deep behind enemy lines on several highly successful missions earned him well deserved recognition. Now he was to face two of his most important tasks; both would take place in Occupied Europe and test his capabilities to the absolute limit.

Captain James DSO aged 26 received a well deserved degree in Mathematics at Oxford University. Deciding civilian life was not for him, he went to Sandhurst gaining his commission with honours. He was posted as 1st lieutenant to serve under the then Major Curry. They took an instant liking to each other learning to trust one another implicitly, forming a bond of friendship as strong as that of two brothers. During a mission beset by problems from the start, he with Major Curry had secured the release of 47 British POW's, equipped them with captured weapons and then quite literally; fighting a continuous running battle lasting several days, fought their way to safety. It was this selfless act that earned them both the DSO.

## CHAPTER TWO

### *A summons is received*

It was early morning on Wednesday 6th January 1943. A freezing North Easterly wind was blowing through a camp located in the South of England. The Barracks were a transit camp consisting of poorly heated wooden huts providing temporary home to 250 officers and men who had known the bitterness of defeat at Dunkirk, the occupation of Hong Kong and many the retreat in the face of Japanese forces invading Singapore and Malaya. Most; dedicated regulars with the Royal Marines, had served together for several years and having come to rely and trust each other were desirous of continuing to do so. For a majority of them, this desire was about to be fulfilled and a chance to strike a damaging blow against the Axis forces granted.

Lt Colonel Curry with Captain James his second in command were discussing a new training program when they were interrupted by RSM Byron:

“Sir, a Sgt Lewis from JCS office is here with a letter. His orders are for him to personally hand it over to you and no one else”

Sgt Lewis entered saluted then requested identification. Much intrigued, the officer met his request: “Thank you sir, I am to wait and act on your instructions?”

“Stand easy Sgt”

He carefully opened the well sealed envelope and read through the first of several hand written pages. “RSM have Sgt Beamish take Sgt Lewis to the mess for refreshments. Lock your outer door and direct Cpl Coles I am not to be disturbed. Give me 20 minutes then report back. Sgt Lewis the mess will be contacted when I’m ready to leave” He continued reading the letter passing each page as he finished to Captain James. “Well Captain it would seem the powers that be have need of you and I”

“Yes Colonel they have said very little in the letter but, are very explicit in their instruction that it must be volunteers only, which indicates a very high degree of personal risk for all those involved and also; very disturbing this, no married personnel either, a further indication a large number of fatalities are expected”

“RSM, I can tell you nothing except an operation on the mainland of Europe has been planned. The force is to consist of volunteers and resistance fighters. Will you be joining us?”

“Yes sir”

“Army personnel will complete the main objective with members of the European Resistance movement assisting and providing defence. Your immediate task is the selection

of those who shall take part. Each man must be given the chance to volunteer making it clear no stigma shall be attached should they decline. Required are: 2 Senior NCOs, 4 Cpls and 2 L/Cpls plus 60 Ptes. The men must be of the best and unmarried. Emphasis is to be placed on their physical fitness, ability to obey orders instantly and without question and most important they must be able to work not just as a single force but also as individual teams of 2 men in complete silence. The command shall be ready to move to a new camp by 0900 hours tomorrow where everyone including officers will undergo specialist training. Kit is to be checked and handed into QM stores by 1600 today. Required clothing and weapons are to be issued before commencement of training. All personnel taking part in this mission are confined to camp. Lt Mathers will be in command during my absence today. Sgt Major Carlton will assume your duties as RSM with immediate effect. Contact the Sgts' mess and tell Sgt Lewis Captain James and I will be ready to move in 20 minutes.

RSM Byron a strict; but extremely fair disciplinarian dispatched Cpl Coles to find S/Sgt Robinson, Sgt Evans, Cpls Longstaff, Tolney, Mitchel and Talbot L/Cpls Thompson and Issacs requesting they report to his office immediately. Whilst awaiting the arrival of the chosen NCOs, he gave serious thought to who amongst the men would be best suited to meet the Colonel's needs. From acquired knowledge of the personnel accommodated in the camp, he commenced to write down the names of those worthy of consideration deleting some and adding others until he was satisfied.

Cpl Coles knocked and entered: "all the NCOs are here now sir"

“Thank you Cpl ask them to come in”

“Stand easy and pay attention. The commanding officer has set us a task and it must be completed as per his order by 1600 today. A small force is required for a mission in mainland occupied Europe. I have been given no details apart from it is going to be extremely hazardous with chances of a safe return being extremely slim. All those taking part must be volunteers and unmarried. You were my choice of Junior NCOs and to my knowledge none of you are married but; is there any one here who would prefer not taking part?”

Thank you after careful deliberation I have written down the names of 60 men; S/Sgt Robinson with Cpls Longstaff and Tolney will take half, Sgt Evans Cpls Mitchel and Talbot the remainder. They must first be given the chance to volunteer or decline should the question be asked; no stigma will be attached to those who refuse to participate. The selected men will be further broken down into teams of 2. A list of those forming the teams will be prepared and handed to me. A full kit inspection will be carried out then all kit will be packed and handed into the QM's store. All members of this force will be confined to camp and ready to move by 0900 hours tomorrow. Required clothing and weapons will be issued before commencement of training. L/Cpls Thompson and Issacs you will assist as directed. My answer to those thinking of asking questions is; don't and there is to be no idle chat or idle speculation understood? Good. Now there is much to do and it must be done properly; no half measures, lets get cracking”

“Cpl Coles; find Sgt Major Carlton say I should like to see him at once”

## CHAPTER THREE

### *Future deployment is made known*

Lt Colonel Curry with Captain James arrived at the given address to find a nondescript building with its entrance heavily protected by a solid wall of sandbags and two Military Police Cpls on guard, resplendent in eye dazzling white belt and gaiters with highly polished brasses. IDs were produced satisfied; a phone call was made and a Sgt appeared.

“Colonel Curry, Captain James please come this way”

They entered a lift expecting to travel upwards.

They in fact went down for about 50 or 60 feet to find themselves in a fortified cellar of huge proportions which fairly hummed with activity. Continuing down a lengthy corridor the sergeant stopped at a door knocked; entered, and announced our arrival.

“Thank you Sgt, come in Colonel. I am General Soames; your reason for being here and this is Brigadier Carlisle who will be looking after your interests from start to completion of the intended operation. He is under instruction to ensure a smooth passage into and out of the

operational zone for you and your command and that you lack for nothing in the way of equipment and supplies” They shook hands with a lean, hard looking officer, in his early thirties who by the medal ribbon displayed had been engaged in the withdrawal of troops from Far East Asia; the probable cause of his limping.

“Be seated gentlemen make yourselves comfortable and we’ll get down to business. It has been agreed that you both shall be stepped up in substantive rank. Over the past 18 months intelligence from our agents working alongside resistance groups have shown that a massive storage of ordinance, light skinned and armoured vehicles, fuel and oil plus an unknown type of Bacteria has been taking place in “Westerwalt” including the village of “Brietshaid.” Geologically it is an area formed by folded and metamorphosed rocks with Devonian Sediments, covered by igneous and especially basaltic rocks and tufe (porous rocks). My reason for telling you of the areas formation is that part of your training will involve learning to parachute; that is how you will arrive at your intended target. It must be stressed to members of your force that great care should be taken when landing in order broken bones may be avoided. Actual amounts stored are not known but all indications say that totals are immense and increasing monthly. It is here in “Westerwalt” the “Erdbach Höhlen” (Erdbach Caves) named after the small river “Erdbach” are to be found. It is within this cave system the Germans have created a huge storage system. As shown on your map, the Bacteria is to be found to the rear of the caves; recent intelligence and testing of a small sample smuggled out by one of our agents has confirmed it is a strain of bacteria fatal to human beings. It has also been confirmed that

it can be delivered against a target by ordinary artillery weapons. Reliable sources say that prepared shells ready for use are also stored at this location. The village has been adapted to house and hide a very large number of light, heavy and armoured transports. This, despite heavy camouflaging, has shown up on photographs taken by Arial reconnaissance. A local resistance leader well known and respected by us has offered the use of his group in support; a total of seventy men, I would suggest; defense should be their role whilst you deal with destruction of the target. However, their deployment is in your hands. They are at present poorly armed; to rectify this, it is my intention to supply them with arms, in the use of which they shall receive instruction from our agents. Two senior medical NCOs will be joining you and will also undergo training despite their being classed as non combatants. It may be that they shall be called on to defend themselves and must be given every chance of doing so with or without weapons. In this package you will find actual operation commencement date and full details of target location including a crudely drawn but accurate map of the caves interior on which is shown the area where the Bacteria is stored. Equipment and type of arms each person will carry shall be of the best. I would suggest you first study the contents of this package then contact the Brigadier to arrange a meeting to discuss any questions you may have and also final details. I wish it to be clearly understood; regardless of human cost, these caves as well as the village and their contents must be completely destroyed. Thank you Colonel, Major we shall meet again before your departure. My Sergeant will show you out, the car will be waiting”

“Sir, several questions fatalities or those wounded and unable to walk how shall we deal with them?”

“The dead shall be found a temporary resting place in a local churchyard by the resistance and details passed via their local radio station to London. The wounded will be looked after by the medical team should they be incapacitated then they will have to be carried out by stretcher”

“Enemy soldiers taken prisoner; must they be handed over to the resistance and finally; am I to understand my command shall be considered expendable”

“Regrettably I must answer yes to both questions. I reiterate; the target is and must remain your major concern. It shall; and must be, eradicated. Once you are sure your task has been completed as ordered, every effort will be made to ensure the safety and well being of your men. Are you now perfectly clear on all relevant points Colonel?”

“Perfectly sir”

Saluting the officers left their thoughts dwelling on a future that promised to prove both difficult and dangerous.

“Sgt may I have use of a phone”

“Certainly sir”

“Major, I have spoken with RSM Byron; he will be waiting in my office. I shall study the contents of this package during our return to barracks and give a briefing after I have received the RSM’s report. Nothing is to be discussed in the car. We shall stop on the way enjoy a glass of wine and the best our host can offer in the way of a meal agreed?”

“Yes definitely excellent idea”

## CHAPTER FOUR

### *A briefing is given*

“RSM may I have your report please?”

“Here is a list of teams selected their kit has been properly checked; there was no deficiencies and it has been handed into the QM store. S/Sgt Timms and Hylands medical corps has reported in. They have been booked into the Sgts Mess as visitors for the night. I spoke with transport and three vehicles will be outside the guardroom at 0845 tomorrow morning consisting of two coaches and a car. An early breakfast and Haversack rations have been laid on for all personnel including officers at 0600. Tea and sandwiches have been laid on for 2000 hours. I have nothing else to report sir”

“Excellent; the medical team arrange for them to be in my office at 0730 tomorrow morning”

RSM you're a member of my command team so take a seat and we'll make a start. Tomorrow we travel to the Brecon Beacons; on arrival RSM shall disembark the men and fall them in. A Captain Riley will introduce himself and also his staff every one; including officers, will obey his

orders implicitly. This command will undergo specialist training in unarmed combat and also use of a knife at close quarters. Several long distance speed and load carrying marches over rough terrain to prepare us for our exit from the mission objective have been planned. Total weight carried on these marches will increase every day. The first is over 7 miles the last 30. Those failing to complete the distance will repeat the run on the following day as a team. Should a person fail his second attempt he will be returned to unit and replaced? This also applies to Officers and Senior NCOs who are not expected to drop out. Fourteen days training in parachute jumping will be received at an airfield in Surrey and particular attention must be paid to the way in which landings are made. The drop area is known to be strewn about with rocks and legs could be broken. Sterling sub-machine guns will be carried also; a knife, intended purely for close quarter work. Officers and Senior NCOs will carry a pistol plus an SMG.

On completion of training everyone without exception will take seven days leave. They will report back to the address shown on their leave pass. To prevent loose talk nothing will be said of the mission. A briefing will take place prior to our departure.

This part of the plan is extremely important to the success of the mission and why emphasis is to be made on personnel being able to work as a team. It is in fact 30 military teams; each team will be assisted by 2 local resistance fighters, chosen for their knowledge of the caves and village who will act as guides and give cover whilst charges are being laid. Teams formed will work together as a unit in support of each other throughout their training. 15 pairs will deal with the caves and 15

the village. Working together in silence is a must; sound carries a long way underground and at night when all normal sounds are stilled. Personnel who are wounded and unable to march will be carried out by stretcher. Fatalities shall be dealt with by the Resistance and location of graves passed to London. The Resistance will be responsible for prisoners taken.

Teams shall be fully briefed before the drop takes place and will deploy on their appointed tasks by a hand signal from me. RSM that is all the detail I am prepared to divulge at this stage any questions?

“Rations nothing has been said on this subject? “The command will find food and water where it can; Weight carried by each person during the journey to the exit Europe rendezvous, must be at a minimum, there shall be no time for dawdling.

“Only 60 men deployed on two targets which may turn out to be extensive in size seems inadequate sir.

“Agreed; however; increasing the number of personnel involved could create problems when finding a place to hide during daylight hours, on the march to the coast. The enemy is going to pull out all the stops in their efforts to find us; if contact can be avoided, our chances of survival shall be greatly increased.

“May I leave sir there is a great deal to consider that must be got right for the mission to succeed?”

“Have you anything to add Major? “I can think of nothing else sir”

“Good night RSM and thank you for all you have achieved today”

## CHAPTER FIVE

### *Captain Lovejoy joins Nemesis*

The phone rang: “Colonel Curry; Brigadier Carlisle regarding Captain Lovejoy spoke with the senior MO who was on the medical board and he confirms he is now 100% fit physically and mentally. Due to his health problems a much deserved promotion was deferred this will take immediate affect the substantive rank of Major will be posted and backdated to October 1942. Does this ease your planning of the assault?”

“It certainly solves a major problem created by having two separate targets. Would you accept Friday afternoon of the second week in training for our meeting all plans will be finalized by then requiring only your final approval?”

“Not a problem will join you in the mess at 1300 for lunch till then good luck”

“Good news John: Captain now Major Lovejoy and his vast knowledge and undoubted expertise in the use of explosive will be joining us. This means you shall be in command of the assault on the village. Major Lovejoy the caves”

“That certainly is good news shall I phone the mess and ask him to join us?”

“Yes, please do so while I make a few notes” Captain Lovejoy on his return to the UK following a successful raid against an Italian stronghold had learnt his beloved family; a wife, two children one of 4 years the other just 14 months old, a much revered father and mother had all perished when a German Bomber caught by a British Fighter over Hampshire and severely damaged with its bomb load intact crashed into their farmhouse home. It exploded on impact leaving no trace of them amongst the remaining debris. As a result he experienced a serious breakdown in health and was suspended for an indefinite period from operational duties.

“Come in David have a seat some good news for you, your request to join ‘Nemesis’ has been approved. Your promotion backdated to October last year has also been confirmed. Your task on this mission is the total destruction of some caves in the “Erdbach Hollen” located in “Westerwald” Germany. The Axis forces have been building up a massive store of war materials and also some form of obnoxious bacteria said to be very nasty indeed. General Soames has stressed in no uncertain terms that it must be neutralized. The plan is for the command to parachute in and march out to a rendezvous on the coast details of which are to be supplied later. As a part of the command team you will attend all briefings and I’ll let you read the mission brief given by General Soames in the car tomorrow this will bring you fully up to date. How do you feel now any misgivings at all?”

“None at all in fact I’m absolutely delighted. It will be like old times eh John; you and I will give them a fireworks display to be proud of”

David knowing you and having seen the results of damage caused by your infernal gadgets I would say it’s a certainty now; how about a night cap in the mess to celebrate, you’ll be paying of course. Will you join us Colonel?

# CHAPTER SIX

## *The Medical Team*

The Colonel shook hands with his medical team giving each a close scrutiny before asking them to be seated. Your records tell me you are long standing friends both regulars, highly qualified and were based in Singapore prior to the evacuation during which you were both awarded the DSC richly deserved from what the report says. Due to unselfish action taken by you some 170 officers and men wounded during initial assaults and air raids, found themselves aboard a merchant ship that eventually arrived safely, despite several assaults by enemy aircraft, at Port of Liverpool. I am interested to know why you volunteered for Special Operations.

“S/Sgt Timms answered “Our CO interviewed us, explained a special force was being formed which required a medical team with our qualifications and would we like to be considered. Having spent most of our service as hospital staff the idea appealed and thought we’d give it a go sir”

“I am not at liberty to disclose the actual nature of our future deployment however, it must be clearly understood

that there will be harsh decisions to be made which as members of the medical profession you may find distasteful. In the assault on the intended target there will be wounded some will have to be carried out on stretchers. It will be your responsibility using your knowledge and skills to see that they are given the best possible chance of survival. Some may die or; be mortally wounded; arrangements have been made with the resistance for them to receive a Christian burial. There shall be no heroics. When the order is given to evacuate the target area it will be obeyed without argument. Do either of you have doubts over your reaction to such an order?

Both NCOs gave assurance they would obey orders received and would not question decisions made.

“You will undergo the same training as other members of the force and be issued with battle fatigues and a sidearm should the need arise; do not be afraid to use it. Your skills are necessary to the success of ensuring a safe return of as many survivors as possible from what promises to be a dangerous life threatening mission that is all report to RSM Byron for instructions”

“Sir, who will be supplying required medical supplies?”

“Good question; together give it serious thought taking into account all possibilities, seek advice from the MO at the training camp if you need to, once you’re satisfied let me have a detailed list preferably by the second week of training. Do not hesitate in letting me know if you’re unsure on any detail no matter how small anything else?”

“No sir and thank you”

*Walter Brown*

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They left leaving the CO puzzled by their gratitude but extremely grateful for having two such highly thought of medical staff as part of his command.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### *Major Lovejoy experiences some disturbing thoughts*

Major Lovejoy finished reading the operational brief and sat back in his seat, visualizing in his mind what lay ahead for this small band of men committed by the top brass; having been left with no other option, to a virtual suicide mission in order; one mans further attempt to succeed in his desire for the domination of Europe and its peoples, may be prevented. A further picture appeared before his minds eye of a battlefield on which possibly a thousand young men; some of them not yet 20 years old, were waiting for the order to move. The enemy commences an Artillery barrage making them keep their heads down and mixed in with normal ammunition are bacteria carrying shells set to detonate at 100 feet above ground level. These bacteria would disperse across the length and breadth of the battlefield resulting in a total massacre. It could only be classed as murder of a magnitude that would horrify the world. There would be no escape for anyone. Could it mean capitulation by Britain and her allies or would it increase their determination to destroy

Nazi Germany? "I've finished reading the operational brief and it scares the pants off me. I understand completely why the C in C and JCS are determined that this operation; regardless of cost, should succeed. One request; there will be a very large amount of explosive used, take into account material already in situ and picture the effect it will have on those caves and anyone in close proximity. Can our exit to a safe distance be a rapid one?"

"Count on it David there will be no hanging about. On that point each group on completion of their objective shall join with me at a grid reference approximately 5 miles from the target area. Good grief! Where the hell are we going?"

# CHAPTER EIGHT

## *Training Camp*

The small convoy had turned off the main road and was climbing steeply in low gear up an unmade road with deep ruts and numerous holes coming to a halt much shaken by their journey high in the Cambrians on a large bare windswept plateau. It was bounded by a six feet high chain link fence with access through a pair of massive timber gates. Disembarking they were confronted by views of the Brecon Beacons an area of England that is outstandingly beautiful with its vast rough open terrain; mountainous in places with forested areas, waterfalls, lakes and caves and also there are the Black Mountains a raw and rugged beauty that was truly majestic. This totally isolated and desolate piece of Welsh mountainous hillside was to be their home for the next three weeks. Some one; having a personal knowledge of Wales decided on this area for our particular type of training and he had chosen well.

A number of circular Tepee style tents had been erected plus five large marquees numbered 1 – 5.

Three capable looking men dressed identically in dark trousers, red and black striped tops, rubber soled boots and dark navy blue berets approached the tallest of the three speaking in a very soft Irish voice addressed the CO.

Colonel Curry. Captain Riley your training officer and these are my three assistants Sgts Whelan, Dove and Naylor request permission to address your command sir?

“Granted Captain”

“Listen carefully to all I say; It will not be repeated. As you face the plateau from this position you will find on the left a parking area for your transport, on the far right officer’s accommodation clearly marked with a blue square. Senior and junior NCOs are located left of centre alongside the square and their tents are marked with a white disc. Other ranks occupy those identified by a red square, each will accommodate three teams. Teams 1, 2 and 3 commencing from the left will occupy the first 4,5 and 6 the second and so on. There are five large marquees at the rear numbered one to five; No1 is your mess tent, no2 Quartermasters Store, no3, NAFFI, no4 medical centre, no5 Ablutions. To the extreme left and rear of the camp an extra large marquee equipped as a gymnasium. All sleeping accommodation has been equipped with beds and bedding. Junior NCOs are responsible for the cleanliness of ablutions and sleeping accommodation. They will be inspected on a regular basis. Medical team in addition to training with Colonel Curry’s command you will also receive instruction from the camp MO on subjects which you may; or may not have encountered yet. I suggest you pay careful attention; it could save lives.

From here your first stop is the QM Store there you shall be equipped with all that you require for your period

of training including weapons. Do not fool around with these weapons especially the knife. A hot meal will be ready at 1730. Reveille will be at 0500. Sgt Whelan, Sgt Dove you will ensure officers and men arrive at the gym properly dressed in PT Kit by 0530,

Sgt Naylor Officers and Senior NCOs are your responsibility. Should anyone require assistance from staff or my self at anytime our accommodation is at the rear of the QM's Store. The nearest public house is 15 miles away provided your training meets the required standard a visit may be arranged. The area from the perimeter fence up to 1 mile out from this camp is patrolled by guards with well trained dogs. Be warned they have their orders. Lighting in tents is provided by means of pressure lamps treat them with respect. Cause a fire and you'll be sleeping out in the open. Hot water is not provided. Colonel with apologies they have provided officers quarters with separate toilet facilities but not bathing. This means making use of marquee no5 in which an area has been partitioned off and marked officers only. This camp is here for specific training purposes and is extremely basic in its facilities. There is also no separate mess for officers and senior NCOs. Colonel I have nothing further to add at this moment? My staff will assist in getting your command bedded down for the night. I will share your table for meals answering any question you or your officers may wish to ask.

"Thank you Captain my complements on your clarity of instruction. L/Cpl Issacs and Thompson report to me, RSM March the men to QM's store. Cpl Thompson you I know for a fact received excellent training from your parents; who where well respected travellers in England and Europe, on how to live off the countryside and cook

game to perfection. Cpl Issacs your father was well known by Lord Allenby as a very successful poacher. It is my wish that working together you shall provide food and water for this command during its stay in occupied territory. Are you willing to undertake this responsibility?

The two young junior NCOs were delighted to accept this challenge and assured the CO they would do their very best.

Colonel Curry was feeling less worried about the future slowly specific important responsibilities were being allocated; his RSM had chosen well in the choosing of men for this command. His major concern now was how many could he bring back safely. The odds were not in his favour.

“Major James, Major Lovejoy let us away have ourselves kitted out and find our beds for the night”

“Well Colonel our training officer was most respectful however he made it most clear who would be in command during our stay here”

That is true John but it is my belief that on completion of this mission those who survive will not find themselves idle for long. It was brought to my attention there are 200 selected men also undergoing the same specialist training courses. On completion they are to be posted to Special Operations units where there newly acquired skills shall be practiced and put to good use. The course of this war is changing with a continued rise in successful campaigns. The assault Nemesis is about to make has a deeper significance for us than has been told.

Duck boarding had been laid to form walkways and also as flooring in the tents and marquees; a wise move this area being notorious for its rainfall; heavy and persistent

at times the rain with troops constantly on the move from one location to another would have quickly turned the plateau into a quagmire.

## CHAPTER NINE

### *A rude awakening*

At 0445 all members of Nemesis were awakened by a fearsome clattering noise. A result of a several dustbin lids being struck repeatedly with short iron bars by Training staff who; with raised voices, were urging them to get a bloody move on and report to the gym dressed in PT Kit. Several men found still deep in the land of Nod were unceremoniously dumped on to the cold damp boarding this treatment soon bringing them to their senses.

Captain Riley still speaking softly with a sharp edge to his tone ordered; at the double mark time. From this day on I do not want to see anyone standing still unless they are shaving. You will only sit down for meals, official breaks or when ordered to do so. Caught doing so and you'll find your self doubling round the square in full FSMO not once; but three times, with your weapon carried at arms length above your head. Rank will not excuse anyone. Today we'll start with a few simple exercises to loosen your muscles at 0615 you will dismiss to shave and shower.

Breakfast, 0700 - 0800, at 0830 parade on the square in combat dress. Sgt Dove.

There followed 45 minutes of physical training exercises which would appear simple to an onlooker however; to the training staff, it showed clearly the command was lacking in fitness and stamina. Stand still, deep breathing begin; fill those much abused bellows you call your lungs. At Ease; Mark time, lift those bloody knees you're like a load of damn fairies. Dismiss.

Force Nemesis doubled away hoping to ease tired limbs with a decent shower sadly this was not to be. The ablutions Marquee could only be described as primitive; along its length on one side, were twenty evenly spaced shower heads, on the other side; two long metal troughs back to back, with pairs of taps also back to back. The water was ice cold.

Jasper Connolly a pure Yorkshire man born and bred in the North Riding felt the water strike his body and in a voice expressing sheer horror with his teeth chattering like a Spanish dancers castanets exclaimed "Fffuck mme thiis wwwwaters ccccold ennnough to ffffreeze the bballs of a Bbbrass Mmonkey"

Huw Jones a miner's son from Merthyr Tydfil replied "don't you go complaining Jasper this water is as pure as newly driven snow. Comes straight off the mountains, do you good so it will"

"Yes but you welsh buggers have never developed and still live like your frigging ancestors in caves"

Dale Logan born in Newcastle with an accent to prove it; "never mind your balls Jasper, I'm losing blood like a stuck pig trying to blasted well shave, if this is how you

live in Wales Huw; you can bloody well shove it up your arse”

RSM Byron entered “come on jump to it there are others waiting to make use of this palatial shower room”

Aye and their bloody welcome to it voiced Billy Piper; a Glaswegian, with a towel round his waist and using a face cloth to stem the flow of blood from numerous nicks caused by his razor. Bet the officers have hot water? Can I unvolunteer sir?

“No you damn well can’t; go get your self dressed, your enough to put some one off his food for life, the state you’re in”

Their unhappy feelings were somewhat dispelled when served with a piping hot, well cooked breakfast, of dried Egg, tinned Bacon and sausages with thick slices of toast washed down by a pint mug of strong sweet tea. At the end of breakfast whilst the men were enjoying the luxury of a cigarette the Colonel stood. “There is no one here who is happy with our accommodation myself included however; I would ask each of you to bear with the situation in which we find ourselves. It has been done with a single purpose in mind. To ensure everyone reaches a peak of fitness that will sustain and possibly help to save our lives during the coming mission. Remember. No-one is required on this operation who feels that he is being hard done by; continues to whine and give voice to his opinions. Thank you for giving us all a laugh whilst trying to shower and shave this morning Pte Piper you’ve lost your bet officers did not have hot water provided. You have twenty minutes before parade do not be late.

# CHAPTER TEN

## *The first march*

At the double Nemesis fell in marking time. "Parade halt, stand easy. This morning our run of approximately seven miles shall commence at a moderate pace; the rate will be stepped up as we proceed. Tomorrow carrying a load of 14lbs the run will be extended to ten miles over a different route. On each of the next four days weight carried shall be upped by the same amount and distance increased by three miles. On all runs there will be variations expect the unexpected and stay alert. In your teams form two ranks. Sgt Naylor takes the rear, Sgts Whelan and Dove the flanks. Attention; Right turn, follow me.

The march began on an ascending track of rough broken ground making our passage more difficult reaching a height of around 150 feet the track bore right with a ridge to our left and a very steep down gradient on the right. It could be likened to being on a Seaside Rollercoaster ride with steep or gradual climbs followed by sharp or shallow descents. There was no slackening of pace in fact it had noticeably increased. Force Nemesis was feeling the

strain; leg muscles were beginning to ache, mouths wide open to draw in more air, training staff were giving strong encouragement to those who needed it. Feet pounding the earth onward they ran; it was downhill now and no slowing down, men stumbled, tripped, fell and were picked up by their team mates. It was a real relief when at last they stumbled through the gates coming to a stop. Captain Riley ordered mark time at the double no one told you to halt. Ptes Barnabus and Leroy report to the MO. The rest of you have 20 minutes to visit the NAFFI for refreshment; then report to the Gym with your weapons, at the double dismiss.

“Hey up Jacko what’s wrong with your team mate why’s he been told to go visit the MO

“He’s not in the best of health Mike just like Leroy, smokes to much and drinks like a fish they’ll be replaced I guess”

# CHAPTER ELEVEN

## *Weapon training*

I will first address you on the weapons you shall carry during this mission. This will be followed by lectures from each of my staff. Listen carefully taking mental note of all that is said. At the far end of this marquee you will find folding chairs. Officers, Senior and Junior NCOs seat front and centre, teams 1 – 25 on my right and 26 – 50 the left. To avoid time wasting do this automatically each time you attend a lecture. Cpls Tolney and Mitchel please hand out these hard back notebooks one to each person also a pencil.

The weapon I am holding is a Mk5 Sterling Sub Machine Gun weighing 9.4 pounds. Most effective range for accuracy is 30 yards. The magazine carries a maximum of 32x9mm rounds to avoid blockages load only 30. It comes complete with rifle sights, a wood stock and pistol grip it can also mount a bayonet. Only the Chamber and Barrel are manufactured from good quality steel the remainder; well your mothers probably helped in its production, by donating unwanted saucepans or iron railings surrounding

the front gardens. Now this little beauty; he held up a knife, just to look at it made one shudder, a double edged 7" long blade honed to perfection with a handle designed to give a sureness of grip when being used. Overall length 11.75" a weapon designed to kill. It is your close quarter weapon and practical demonstrations shall be given in its use. Then you will practice using it until a real standard of proficiency is reached. Position yourselves equally at the four tables behind me. My staff and I will first demonstrate how to disassemble then reassemble the MK5 SMG, watch, learn and remember. Should any part of this demonstration not be clear say so, it will be your turn next. By the time the training session ended the men of Nemesis were totally familiar with their weapon. This afternoon report here at 1330, a lecture will be given by Sgt Whelan. The MO will also give a short lesson in personal hygiene and your notebooks shall be needed.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### *Nature's food*

Sgt Whelan 27 years was born and bred on an extensive estate that spanned the English and Scotch Borders. Before being called to military service he had gained a degree with honours in Farming and Agricultural Management. He had been destined to become the estate manager taking over on retirement of his father who had known no other life. The outbreak of war had changed all those happily excepted plans. He gave a well delivered and interesting lecture on the do's and don'ts when depending on nature to provide food and water to sustain life. With a portfolio of pictures drawn and painted by his own hand he emphasized the dangers that existed for the unwary.

“It would be advisable for you all to make notes for future reference. A majority of plants growing in the wild do provide a valuable source of food however; there are some you do not touch. A list will be supplied at the end of this lesson. Cultivated vegetables on farms and in kitchen gardens must never be eaten when picked due to spraying with chemicals protecting them from pests.

It is recommended they are thoroughly washed first. Mushrooms unless positively identified should be left alone. Never ever drink water straight from a natural source always boil it first. Edible Game; stick to the animals you are familiar with such as rabbits, grouse, and partridge or chicken. Fish; unless species like salmon and trout are identifiable by you or your team partner leave it alone. When you have caught meat for the pot first dig a deep hole then; remove entrails other unwanted items and the skin, place in the hole and bury. Leaving animal waste uncovered; will attract flies, known carriers of disease. The flesh must be carefully washed before cooking. Cooking the best method is by boiling takes less time and any obnoxious bugs should be killed. Give the flesh approximately half an hour too partially cook then add whatever vegetables are available add some seasoning till fully cooked. This will give you a decent, tasty sustaining meal. On the question of seasoning obtain two smallish tins fill with salt and pepper seal with sticky tape and carry them with you. Do not use glass containers if they smash injury could be caused?

Never eat with your fingers; nasty bugs just love living under your fingernails and in cracks on the surface of your hands. Always wash your eating utensils before and after use. Scour your mess tins with sand, sandy soil or just plain soil then rinse thoroughly with water. Grass can be used to wipe them.

Several days shall be spent away from camp during which you will receive practical demonstrations and be shown a variety of plants that are edible.

# CHAPTER THIRTEEN

## *Personal Hygiene*

“I am Lt Osborne your medical officer my lecture is on personal hygiene and is of great importance to your well being so please pay careful attention”

“During your time spent in the field actively engaged against the enemy opportunities for bathing and changing of socks and underwear will be limited. It could be days; weeks or even months before a chance to have a good soak in a bath or stand under a shower of hot water. During this period Lice will take up residence in the seams of your clothes. There is no way to stop them it is a natural occurrence. To remove these pests take off your shirt, trousers and underpants then exert pressure of forefinger and thumb along each seam. This will hopefully kill a number of the Lice. Before putting your clothes back on; give them a damn good shake. Itching of the groin areas will be experienced old sweats refer to this as a touch of the crabs. You will naturally want to scratch don't. Breaking of the skins surface could lead to infection. It is possible to avoid this nuisance by; when the opportunity arises, using

your shirt tail and a little water to wash these areas. To clean your mouth and teeth wet the end of your forefinger then using a pinch of salt scrub your teeth. This will keep your mouth fresh and reasonably clean. A tin of foot powder is issued to use as prevention against foot rot this is a nasty fungal infection found between the toes. Dust your feet and change your socks each day. If you get the chance to wash your socks and feet do so. There is an infectious disease called Impetigo this can be caused by the use of a razor or razor blade that is dirty. When shaving and you cut yourself dirt enters the open wound and infection starts up. Your first indication that you have the disease is the appearance of small sores around the mouth area which can spread if not treated. Speak to a medical orderly as soon as you suspect there is a problem.

Personal Hygiene is a matter of common sense and in difficult circumstances using ones initiative to maintain a reasonable standard of cleanliness. Captain Riley”

Captain Riley stood from his expression it was very clear he was most displeased. “It was noted during Sgt Whelan’s and the MOs lecture that several of you did not make use of your notebooks and paid little or no attention at all. Whilst they were speaking; his eyes had settled on those who were guilty. In all sincerity let me make it quite clear the training syllabus has been very carefully thought out with one purpose in mind; raising the odds of survival in your favour. If you’re not prepared to learn you’ll be of no use to your commander and will be replaced. This afternoon’s training session on how to make best use of your knife will commence here at 1430. L/Cpls Thompson and Issacs please report to Sgt Whelan at 1330. Major Lovejoy, Major James at 1600 an explosive expert shall

arrive to discuss type of explosive best suited to your intended target. Colonel I would suggest that you and all NCOs attend as an added safeguard against failure of your mission. Lunch commences at 1200 dismiss.

The CO stood discussing with his officers the comments made by the Trg Officer "I shall have a word with the RSM over the lack of interest shown. He certainly has his eyes open does our Capt Riley mind you I did notice Pte Roby nodding off. Should either of you spot people slacking; jump on them, perhaps an extra march in full FSMO will shake their ideas up"

"Colonel could it be their not knowing about the mission have anything to do with lack of interest?"

"It could well be but orders are for tight security. What a person does not know he cannot tell"

Cpls Allen Mitchel; Jake Tolney and Roy Longstaff whose close friendship had developed over several years were also discussing the merits of their training Officer.

"I reckon this 'TO' shall prove a bit of a dark horse Allen what say you?"

"Yes Jake me too, I definitely wouldn't like to find myself on the wrong side of Captain Riley; under that quiet exterior of his lies a man who can be real mean. What do you think Roy?"

"I agree; he does not raise his voice and is a man of few words. Mind you he makes his meanings very, very clear. Wonder what this Knife training is about can't be much to learn; you gets in first or you gets killed simple as that"

Cpl Jake Tolney 25 a broad shouldered upright man from the Isle of Man was in his eighth year as a regular soldier. He had never been able to find a decent job as a civilian; though he had done well leaving school with

seven 'O' levels. Finding himself totally bored he joined the Army; service life did not prove easy during the first two years but, having suffered several periods of being 'Confined to Barracks' under punishment which were not to his liking he determined to succeed in his chosen profession. By sheer hard work he gained promotion and was now looked upon as a reliable and trustworthy soldier. He and his long term friends Cpls Talbot and Longstaff had been serving in Malaya when the Japanese attacked. With seventeen other men they had stolen a fair sized boat powered by a large square single sail from a small fishing village just below Port Dickson on the East Coast, stocked it with as much water and food that could be found then headed south down the Malacca Straits having to rely totally on a compass; remembered Geography, and aided by a tattered school atlas taken from the village school. Keeping close inshore for the first part of the journey until reaching Kukup where they left the coast and headed for a very small uninhabited Island to the East and South; of Singapore avoiding local shipping lanes. A hiding place in tall; densely growing vegetation close to the shoreline was found, making sure the boat could not be seen from the air or to seaward of their position. By mutual consent it was agreed two men should keep watch changing every two hours then they settled down to sleep; That night they continued their journey dodging from Island to Island using them as hiding places during daylight hours finally reaching the Java Sea. Crossing this great stretch of water had been a cruel journey made over two long nights filled with dread at the possibility of being discovered by enemy shipping, the first was worst of all; a pitch black night with out moon or stars. When questioned on their escape by

intelligence officer's one fact stood out very clearly it had been Cpl Talbot's strength of character, leadership and courage that had carried them to the safety of Djakarta.

"Excuse me Cpl is it like you say only I'm not sure I could deliberately stick my dagger into someone not even if it was to dark to see their faces?"

"Pte Reynolds 19 from a small village in Somerset was an only child and his mother had contrived a sheltered upbringing which left him rather naive.

I take it your feeling nervous; rather frightened by the thought of killing a fellow human being? Well don't be ashamed of your feelings my friends and me felt exactly as you do until the Japs attacked Singapore and Malaya it was there a man's views and attitude towards taking life changed; watching friends fighting desperately to stem the Japanese onslaught in a continuous running battle until with nothing left to fight with except their bare hands; they were captured and beheaded, no mercy was shown to those who fell wounded or dying unable to defend themselves they were bayoneted. There was no shame or cowardice in our running away; from a hiding place we viewed a village's entire men folk being slaughtered, their women violated by Jap soldiers before being literally hacked to pieces. Frightened children herded together like animals stood watching; innocents of a world overtaken by the forces of evil, calling out for mothers who could not answer, their bodies wracked with a deep and painful sobbing, turning to nightmarish screams of terror and pain as they were clubbed, knifed or shot. The village what was left became a funeral pyre. German forces are just the same; thousands possibly millions of innocent people are dying in camps from disease and starvation. Good; honest, decent God

fearing Germans who oppose Hitler's forces, choosing to fight back as members of a resistance group who; if caught, undergo terrible torture by the Nazis trying to make them betray their friends before being shot. They need to be stopped. That's the reason for us being here; there is a job to be done, do you're training, take all that is said on board bearing in mind should they reach England it could be your family.

"Cpl thank you that has helped me to understand a great deal"

"Jeez that was some speech you just made I did not realize your feelings were so strong Jake. Pte Reynolds is just 19 years old I hope he took mental note of all you said otherwise his future may be tragically cut short"

"Well Roy, Allen lets have some fresh air before finding out what's in store for us this afternoon. Looks like the RSM wants a word"

"Cpl Talbot you heard the training officer's comments this morning, well the CO feels he is being let down he does not want a repetition. Make his feelings known"

"Understood RSM it'll be sorted"

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### *Knife and basic first aid skills are learnt*

When Nemesis returned to the Gym they found a large number of straw filled adult sized sack dolls had been suspended from ropes with their feet touching the ground. Keeping to our teams the command split into three groups a demonstration by each of the training staff Sgts followed with the TO observing closely. They were good; damn good. Each man was taken to a doll which had a patch sewn between and just below the shoulder blades showing where your blade had to strike. They were shown how to stealthily approach their target from the rear and assault the enemy by placing the forearm tight under his chin hard against the throat. Then applying maximum throttling pressure cut off the supply of air to his lungs, at the same time thrusting the dagger at a slight upward angle into the back striking a fatal blow. It was stressed should the first strike fail a second should immediately be struck. No one was allowed to stop; they had to repeat it and keep on repeating it until the training staff were satisfied they had fully grasped the recognized method

of killing the enemy by use of the knife. Next followed a lecture and demonstrations in battlefield first aid; which included the application of splints for broken limbs, the treatment of gun shot wounds, pressure bandaging to stop blood loss and no one in Nemesis failed to take notes they had learned their lesson. A break of 15 minutes was called and gratefully a mug of hot tea was enjoyed.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

*The degree of difficulty increases  
and we say goodbye to the Brecon Beacons*

So our training continued each day beginning with physical exercises that became more difficult. The marches with the additional weight added were much harder to complete; over routes that sapped ones strength and endurance but, as each week passed Nemesis became not just individual teams of two men but a force to be reckoned with, able to rely and trust each other implicitly. Our days spent on the hillsides and in the valleys hunting for game and wild vegetables became most enjoyable. Nemesis had learnt and learnt well but they still had two hurdles to overcome the assault course and parachuting.

Colonel your command has undergone intensive physical training this past six weeks; despite a lack of more civilized accommodation they have done extremely well. There is a further six weeks of training to be completed before enjoying a well earned leave prior to taking up your intended deployment. When you meet with RSM Humphries give him my regards and treat him with the

*Walter Brown*

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same respect shown to my staff and me. Our sincere good wishes for the future.

Captain Riley on behalf of us all; thank you, the CO turned faced his men "it is now 1500 hours Nemesis shall leave here tomorrow to undergo 2 weeks intensive parachute training. This will now take place at Ringway Aerodrome Manchester Breakfast is at 0400; be packed and ready to move at 0500 junior NCOs will ensure there are no delays dismiss.

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### *Ringway Aerodrome Manchester*

Force Nemesis arrived at the training camp at 1500; they were quickly supplied with bedding and shown their accommodation. Senior NCOs and Officers had their own mess Junior NCOs and ORs were billeted in large, long wooden huts with ablutions attached and glory of glories hot water. The beds were of iron and two tiered each man having is own bedside locker. The camp warrant officer bid them welcome then instructed them the evening meal was at 1700; Breakfast 0630 and first parade 0800 he also made it clear cleanliness of accommodation during their stay was down to them. A word of warning; consumption of large quantities of NAFFI beer will not prove of value in

fact, it could be quite damaging. Now get yourselves settled in and enjoy your stay.

Billy Piper said “now there’s a thing some one actually speaking with respect for us. No rushing and tearing about at the double either; hot water too; wonder if they’ll wake us with a nice cup of tea?”

“Don’t be daft man, when people talk to us squaddies; all soft and gentle like expect trouble I says”

“Your right there Taffy no question about it; reckon this next two weeks is not going to be easy at all”

Cpl Talbot spoke “now listen up you lot I would suggest we all take note of what RSM Ralph said; this is a condensed course the learning time has been reduced by half and there is a lot to take in, you’ll need your wits about you, tonight have a pint, enjoy a decent bath then get your heads down and be nice and fresh for tomorrow mistakes are not wanted understood?”

# CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

## *Parachute training*

The instructors; personnel of the RAF Parachute Training School explained our training program, what would be involved and several dos and don'ts. One requirement which they emphasized most strongly was the need to keep our knees and feet together when jumping from any height. Wearing full normal combat kit we began by learning various jumping/landing routines. Commencing with; from a standing position, falling into forward and backward rolls the instructors kept us practicing this procedure all morning by which time everyone had gained a real agility. In the afternoon came our first real test of nerve obsolete plane fuselages with a section of the underneath removed; had been position approximately 12 feet from the ground, through these we dropped to land on coconut fibre matting which helped break our fall. Before we began our instructors again reminded us of the need to relax during the descent, allowing our bodies to fold at the knees and rolling on landing, keeping our knees and feet firmly together. With constant repetition over several days

our confidence was increased and soon our landings met with approval. Actual parachute jumps came next starting with jumps from a basket suspended beneath a balloon at about 800 feet; all of us felt scared but having been told; if you refuse just once you won't get a second chance, we were grimly determined to succeed. Hooked onto a static which opened the parachute line the jump was made through a hole in the bottom of the basket. Once the chute opened you kept a firm grip on the harness straps which enabled you to control and guide the chute during your descent. It being a natural instinct to become tense relaxing was found to be a most difficult thing to do.

There were three balloons complete with basket allocated to Nemesis allowing 12 men 4 to a basket to complete their 1st jumps. During the wait to ascend for the second and third jumps we were encouraged to continue practicing our jump/landing procedures. There was no question of feeling bored by constant repetition; with strong encouragement we did as instructed knowing it was for own future well being. The Balloon jumps were followed by ones from a Dakota plane a true work horse very reliable and very noisy. There were three planes assigned each carried 24 men plus an instructor. We sat 12 to each side and no one was ashamed of the fact they felt afraid and nervous of taking that step out through the door. Reaching a height of around 1000 feet we were ordered to; 'Hook Up' to a continuous static line and turn to face towards the opened door checking the equipment of the man in front. As the Red Light showed comes the order 'Stand By' then it changed to Green; Go, Go the Jump Master shouted; and the line shuffled rapidly forward, quickly one behind the other we exited the plane and floated gently down to

earth filled with an enormous sense of exhilaration. Two jumps were completed by Force Nemesis that day and over the next seven days they completed five more plus a large amount of physical exercises designed purely to strengthen leg, shoulder, and arm also back muscles.

Scouse Phillips; not quite 19, a real comedian from Liverpool who was liked immensely for his ready wit, and generous helpful nature remarked; “do you know I reckon there is only one thing that can beat the feeling you get from jumping and that is a bloody good women”

“Danny Bushel a Cornish man to his fingertips who had no paternal family having lost both of his parents when very young replied; that may or may not be true but I’ve found a girl in St Ives; a real cracker she is, been out with her several times who’s made it clear in her letter she cannot wait to see me again”

“Surely; not the girl in the photo Danny Boy if it is, she looks a real beauty. How did you latch onto her asked Billy Piper?”

“Met her at a dance in the church hall and it went from there. She introduced me to her Ma, a wonderful woman. I spent a whole day there doing a few jobs that needed doing, and really enjoyed myself.

Between them they cooked up a meal which; despite the rations, was everything a man could wish for.

“Here this sounds serious Danny, said Scouse if your planning to marry her I reckon there’s a few of us who’ll be expecting an invite”

“Well we’ll just have to wait and see mind you; must admit it is a nice thought I was thinking of asking her to wait for me if she agrees could even make it more

permanent by buying an engagement ring if I'm that lucky you'll be welcome"

"Right you lot fall in stand to attention and try to look like soldiers not a bunch of heathens our TO said; heads up shoulders back that's better. Stand at ease, stand easy. You've now finished your parachute training and it must be admitted that my staff and me can find no fault with you. Your behaviour whilst here as trainees has been excellent. Remember all you've been taught and good luck for the future. It is now 1100 hours and early lunch has been laid on for 1130. Your CO will issue movement orders in your billet at 1300 make sure it is presentable. Attention dismiss"

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

### *Achnacarry Scotland*

Colonel Curry entered our hut at precisely 1300 with unwelcome news; Nemesis force will depart this camp at 2000 tonight. There will be no tea instead a hot meal shall be served at 1830 haversack rations for the journey has also been provided. Unfortunately tea cannot be supplied would suggest you buy a bottle of soft drink to slake your thirst. Grab what sleep you can during the journey training will start on arrival. Bedding will be left neatly folded and all rubbish removed and placed in the bin outside. Our destination is Achnacarry a remote highland glen in Scotland. I am reliably informed training will last ten days and it is going to be even tougher than the Brecon Beacons. It may be; a few of us will not complete the course and shall have to be replaced. Do not be concerned apparently; quite recently, some 180 men including officers underwent this training and 29% failed. That gives me a clear indication of just how difficult it shall be. For myself I want not one person of this Force to fail; you were all carefully selected

as the best for the coming mission. You have my confidence. RSM our departure must not be delayed.

The journey was made without incident and the men did manage to sleep for a good percentage of the 12 hours it took. On arrival RSM Byron ordered them to fall in as they did so; a giant of a man appeared, he saluted Colonel Curry; "RSM Humphries your training officer request permission to take over sir?"

It is now 0800 after you have all enjoyed a hearty breakfast you will draw bedding and be shown your sleeping quarters. Daily dress during the course will be full kit plus weapons make sure there clean. Caps comforter will be worn at all times. One last point; slovenliness is not appreciated when moving through the camp. ORs fall in on my right smartly now, Sgt Webb march them away at the double. Juniors NCOs on my left, Sgt McMurray you have your instructions. Colonel Curry two MOAs have been assigned to you and your officers for the duration of your stay, Sgt Dolan will first show you to your quarters he will then guide the RSM and his NCOs to the Sgts accommodation.

"Thank you RSM my compliments on being so well organized"

Force Nemesis were not disappointed with the breakfast provided it was ample, the tea was strong, sweet and hot. Plus they were able to sit down and really enjoy their meal for the mess was nice and warm.

They were not left in peace for long; Attention; came the RSM's voice, fall in outside at the double move your bloody selves your like old men. Sgt Webb will now march you to the bedding store from there to your accommodation. You have 1 hour in which to shave, shower and clean your

weapons at 1000 fall in outside of your billet where I shall carry out an inspection. Junior NCOs to ensure there is no slacking. Sgt Webb, the bedding store at the double.

The men were delighted with their accommodation it was a large and spacious brick and wood building heated by two large iron stoves one at either end. Beds were of metal construction and two tiered. The ablutions were also well fitted out with shower cubicles and wash basins.

“What do you reckon Taffy? A decent place to sleep and hot water”

“Well it seems ok Billy; we’ve got a good spot near the stove, our beds are made up, but must admit I’m not so sure about this training. It seems awfully remote here; did you see the countryside, it looks real rough even worse than the Beacons and what about this assault course; we’ll have to wait and see but, with so many failures in a total of 180, that’s telling me to expect the worst”

“Do not worry old man we’ll look after you said Jasper; who at 27 was one of the oldest, when you start to sag at the knees your hand will be tightly held so you don’t fall over”

“Hark at him; always in last on the marches gasping for breath like a 70 year old” you ought to give up on them fags or we’ll bury you up here mind you; the people might object to their ground being contaminated”

“Right outside and fall in at the double now move or you’ll feel my boot up your backside”

“Cpl Talbot reported; all present and correct RSM”

“Whilst here you will carry your weapons at all times except in the mess and NAFFI. They will be carried at the trail arms position. This next two weeks is going to be found hard and extremely tiring; do not let your standards slip or

you will find yourselves deep in the proverbial. Attention; trail arms, right turn at the double quick march.

Their first day began with a tour of the assault course the obstacles were spaced out over roughly eight miles of scrub covered, rough broken ground with an abundance of small rocks. The obstacles in themselves were daunting enough; eight to 12 foot high walls to be scaled without pause, a wide gully about 5 feet deep with steeply sloping banks, single logs some far less than eight inches in diameter had to be crossed at the double. To even think of slipping and going astride caused very uncomfortable feelings in ones wedding tackle area. An open ditch; about six feet wide and between four and five foot deep, the bottom was inches deep in muddy stagnant water. This is had to be crossed using ropes suspended in a line through the center from a ridge pole. To reach the rope you jumped for it hoping your momentum would carry you across if you failed; tough, there could be no stopping. There were two culverts to crawl through one of them formed like a dog's hind leg half filled with stagnant evil smelling water. Worst of all; consider a stretch of rocky ground, sparsely covered with gravelly soil between 40 and 50 yards long by 5 to 8 yards wide, containing large chunks of jagged rock from 3 inches in height upwards. A rope net covered the whole of this obstacle; to prevent a person attempting to stand up, you had no choice but to crawl. There were two small fast flowing rivers to cross; one had been bridged by a stout narrow plank, thankfully they did not look all that deep. The last obstacle; a monstrous fearsome looking black and gray granite crag between 90 and 100 feet high had to be scaled using ropes. You left this crag on the opposite side via a boulder strewn gradual slope.

“Right you’ve all seen the course your first attempt under guidance will be in two days time. Before that instruction shall be given in how best to ascend and descend an obstacle using ropes. After your third run on the course; the crawl obstacle shall be completed under fire, using live ammunition. Weapons used for this purpose are set at a fixed height but raise your arse by 4 inches and you’ll not sit down for a month or more. The crag climb is difficult but it does become easier at each attempt. Your training will also include 3 forced marches in full kit. My staff and I will give all the encouragement possible; do not be afraid to ask for help.

“RSM my command has only been issued with two sets of fatigues from the look of that course they are going to need frequent washing are there facilities for this purpose?”

“Colonel Curry sir it is intended an additional two sets will be issued this afternoon. Each set will be worn twice; allow any mud to dry then remove with a vigorous shake before wearing for the second time. They will then be laundered. Please remember when deployed on active duty there are no laundries”

“Physical training and rope climbing this afternoon commencing 1400; dinner is at 1230 Attention, right turn at the double quick march. Pick up the pace Sgt McMurray”

In the mess Scouse Phillips said; “I wonder who the mad bastard was; that thought up that nightmare, of an assault course?”

Bill Roby answered. “We’ve got to give it a go though haven’t we? I mean the Beacons were bad but that was ok in the finish. At least were all pretty slim so crawling under

that net shouldn't be a problem. Don't think about it too much Scouse and I reckon we'll get through it ok"

"That's why we formed teams; to help one another, I certainly do not want to fail no way, isn't that right Billy?"

"To true Taffy to true"

At 1355 with arms carried at the trail and standing proud keeping their eyes to the front they waited.

Sgt McMurray standing in front facing Nemesis Force in a carrying voice he said: "There are two tables to your left and directly to your front rows of 6 foot long logs. When I say move your weapons will be placed on the tables; 3 teams will then take up a right hand position at the double alongside each of those logs. Move. At the double I said you dozy sods. You'll have to move a damn sight faster than that or find yourselves with additional training to complete. Sgt Webb the right 4 columns, Sgt Dolan the left I will take the centre. Using both hands take up the log and raise it to arms length above your heads; now lower it to your left shoulder, raise, hold it... now lower to the right shoulder. Repeat this exercise 10 times holding the log with arms at full stretch for a slow count of 5 and let me hear you counting. Begin. Logs on the ground now, one pace to your left march 10 press ups go. Right sit down legs straight out in front of you bend your backs and touch your toes 10 times. These three exercises were each repeated 4 times; with our instructors urging us on to even greater efforts the men did as ordered. The pain of muscles being worked hard; some would even say abused, was felt by everyone.

Next came the ropes a demonstration of how best to climb and descend given by Sgt Webb and verbal instruction by the TO.

Teams 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 let's see how far you can reach on your first attempt not one of us made it beyond the 11 foot mark despite several attempts.

Grab your weapons and fall in stand easy, you're all feeling strained get used to it; the exercises completed today, shall be repeated each day. At the end of three days; I shall expect, each and every one of you to reach the top of those 60 foot ropes with ease. Captain Riley taught you how to kill a man with your knife my staff will now demonstrate the easy way to break a man's neck, all it takes is stealth, speed and the correct application of your strength. Form half circles round the tables. Using dummies Nemesis Force for the next hour practiced the hold and twist required to snap an enemy's neck. Then they were dismissed until 1830 at which time until 1930 instruction was received in the use of plastic explosives and timers.

"Back at the Billet Scouse asked his friend fancy a pint of NAFFI beer Billy?"

"Not for me; first I'll clean my kit ready for the morn then a long hot shower and bed. I'm fair knackered"

"How about you then Taffy?"

"Sorry reckon I'll wait and enjoy a real pint of pure Welsh ale on leave. This training ain't no doddle and I'm thinking it'll worsen before were done. Perhaps you should do the same, attend your kit have a shower, shave and a good nights kip. Who can say what we'll have to face first thing?"

"That's true enough yes your right I'll skip the beer; like you say Taffy, best to wait till were on leave and can enjoy it"

By 2200 lights were out and everyone was in a deep sleep of exhaustion. At 0400 they were roused from their slumbers by TIs calling loudly for them to fall in outside in FSMO. Yawning and rubbing the sleep from their eyes they fell in it was still dark.

“Attention; Right Turn at the double march” They did a cross country run of roughly eight miles; might have been more, up hill and down dale, over a terrain that can only be described as rugged, carpeted with heather and huge tussocks of grass approximately 2 hours later Nemesis Force arrived back at their Billet.

With chests heaving, legs like jelly they halted. “Parade outside the Gym at 0800 dismiss”

“These people ain’t human glad you made me lay off the beer Taffy and get some kip thanks”

“That’s ok now all you have to do is give up those cancer sticks; get your lungs back in order and you’ll be fine. Come on grab your mug and eating irons and let’s go get some grub”

With an added discipline of bending from the waist keeping the legs straight and touching the ground 15 times they repeated the cycle of physical exercises taught them on the previous day. A 10 minute break was enjoyed before tackling the rope climb and for the rest of the morning they were kept practicing this very difficult task. At the end of a tiring morning the art of ascending and descending had been conquered. Everyone could reach the 60 feet mark with comparative ease.

The TO was not slow in expressing his pleasure at their achievement; “This morning you’ve excelled yourselves well done remember; a slight error of judgment can cost your dear, even your life, be confidant but not over confidant.

This afternoon unarmed combat and the art of concealment will be practiced in dense woods to the North of here. Enemy troops have been spotted entering the area. Study your notebooks and apply what the instructors have taught you. Be gentle with them. Dismiss.

Colonel Curry during lunch advised his officers and RSM Byron his need to talk with them after their evening meal.

The afternoons training was thoroughly enjoyed, troops from a nearby camp were hidden in the woods acting the part of enemy troops. There was quite a number on both sides sporting black eyes, bloodied noses and fat lips before a halt was finally called. But the exercise had well and truly driven home the teachings of the TIs never to be forgotten.

“There will be no additional training this evening you’ve been invited for a glass of ale with the lads you did your best to half kill this afternoon. The coach will leave here at 1900 don’t go overdoing it remember your still in training. Pte Bushel I suggest you wear an eye patch and Jones how you’ll enjoy your tea or a pint with those lips of yours is a real puzzle. Dismiss.

But Nemesis force did enjoy themselves friendships were forged and the beer was good, a strong local brew. At 2200 as arranged with the thought of further training in the morning they shook hands with their hosts and boarded transport back to camp. Huw Jones displayed a hidden vocal talent and entertained them with several songs from the Welsh valleys. It was a tired but very happy force that went to bed that night.

The RSM gave the Colonel the use of his office with assurances he would not be disturbed.

“On the training received so far I feel very strongly the men are doing exceptionally well due mainly to their overall attitude of wishing to succeed. The Junior NCOs led by Cpl Talbot; an outstanding leader, are providing real support and encouragement to those of the men who are finding it hard going. Gentlemen starting with Major James I should like your views”

“Colonel I concur with your feelings. One factor is becoming more and more apparent daily and that is the men are pulling together and working as a complete unit; not just individuals, most of this is down to a concentrated effort on the part of our NCOs; Senior and Junior, in a continuous provision of support and encouragement. This bodes well for our future success”

“You have both expressed my feelings exactly. All NCOs and ORs without exception have my complete confidence. Cpls Talbot and Mitchel have proved themselves time and time again; they’re unstinting in support given and fellow NCOs are following their example. Should it be possible I would like Cpl Talbot to join Sgt Evans as part of my team.

“RSM you have shown a real understanding of these men and your opinion would be valued”

“Thank you sir, I’m 100% certain there shall be no failures. The lads are a grand bunch and determined to successfully complete the course. The TO has remarked on their good behaviour, willingness to learn and achievement by them is far above that expected. He’s also convinced by attitude shown they shall succeed. I would like to see several NCOs marked down for future promotion they have excelled themselves and justified my belief in them”

“Thank you, in confidence General Soames with Brigadier Carlisle and others shall be paying a visit on Tuesday of our last week here he does not want spit and polish; but would like to see how the command is working. Spoke with RSM Humphries and he suggested a demonstration of their skills in concealment, physical exercises and the assault course. Before he leaves Cpls Talbot and Mitchel are to be awarded the DSO. Apparently; unknowingly, between them they saved the lives of two high ranking intelligence officers who had been working in Singapore and Malaya disguised as squaddies gathering all sorts of intelligence. Both had received crippling wounds and had to be carried over several miles through thick jungle narrowly escaping capture by Jap Patrols before reaching Port Dickson. They have now fully recovered. The information carried by the officers proved of immense value to our Chiefs of Staff. Both NCOs shall be promoted to substantive Sgt rank. I shall interview them tomorrow after lunch. David, Sgt Talbot will join your team. John I’m sure you’ll be pleased to have Sgt Mitchel help in destroying the village. RSM as part of the operational plan for the mission I have decided you shall have responsibility for ensuring all means of communication from the target area are disabled S/Sgt Robinson with 10 ORs and 10 Resistance fighters will assist. There are issues which must be discussed with Brigadier Carlisle once they have been settled I shall reveal the plan in full. Time will be given for you to consider all aspects. Should there be any part giving cause for concern; no matter how trivial it may seem, speak out bearing in mind once deployed there will be no time left for major changes. That’s it RSM as my guest will you join us for a nightcap”

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

### *A just award is received*

Nemesis Force completed the assault course safely including the dreaded crag which was feared no more? The value of the daily physical exercise routines was now clearly seen by all; especially those designed to strengthen the power of a persons hand and legs. Operating Wireless Procedures, Map Reading and use of a compass had also been taught. The Medical Team who were unashamed in admitting infantry training had proved difficult from beginning to end; was commended by Colonel Curry for their success in learning not only skills alien to their chosen profession but, also advanced medical ones. A report from the MO at the Beacons was full of praise for their expertise with a strong recommendation for early promotion.

It was mid-afternoon of a Tuesday in the last week of March Nemesis had just completed the demonstration of acquired skills and stood proud and confident in early spring sunshine.

General Soames a tall upright man who wore his uniform with pride; every inch a soldier, who had served

with gallantry in major campaigns throughout the world ordered the RSM to stand the Force at ease. In a clear voice pitched so all could hear him he addressed them; "having viewed Nemesis Force demonstrating their capabilities, my staff and I feel supremely confident the right Officers, NCOs and men have been chosen for their assigned mission. It gives me great pleasure to inform you because of standards reached that the officers and men of Colonel Curry's command are to be incorporated into the Royal Marine Commando. Before leaving here every man shall be issued with a Green Beret wear it with pride. Now a truly remarkable story two NCOs from this command whilst serving in Malaya; faced with a determined and vicious enemy, showed true courage and initiative in saving two badly wounded intelligence officers and 15 of their comrades. In an open boat powered by a single sail and sailing only at night; with scant knowledge of seamanship, a torn and tattered school atlas plus a compass to guide them, they made a perilous sea journey of several hundred miles to reach safety in Sumatra. Cpls Talbot and Mitchel front and centre please, smartly the two NCOs marched forward coming to a halt in front of General Soames saluting as they did so. On behalf of his Majesty King George VI in recognition of your extreme bravery I present you both with the Distinguished Service Order; also with immediate effect promotion to the substantive rank of Sgt. He shook their hands wishing them every success for the future. RSM Humphries has reported a total satisfaction with your performance and says you are now ready for deployment. He also agrees your effort should be rewarded. Colonel Curry has arranged that you should return to Camp Ilsewood tonight commencing

your leave late Wednesday afternoon or earlier if possible. An additional three days leave. Make the most of it. RSM Humphries Nemesis has much to do get them away as quickly as possible”

The RSM came smartly to attention and delivered a smart salute then turned to face his trainees. “Stand at ease, stand easy. There is one last item of your training which I wish to emphasise please listen carefully: Your ability to stay alive at night depends on how well you address the problem of remaining hidden even though you are surrounded by an enemy force. Remember always black every piece of visible skin including the piece which covers your eyes when asleep. Should anyone approach your position adopt a squat position and partially close your eyes with weapon at the ready. It is virtually impossible to see someone in the shadows adopting this pose. Remain standing with your eyes open and they’ll see them gleaming and you’ll wake up serenading the angels depending on how good you’ve been, with you lot I reckon it’ll be old nick handing out pick’s and shovel’s. When approaching a sentry do so with eyes half shut this increases the chances of not being seen and if you’ve taken on board half of what the instructors have tried to teach you then you’ll live; your enemy won’t. Always keep in mind vigilance is the best form of defence against attack. Do not accept the enemy is defeated even if they have held their hands up in surrender. Practice your new skills and keep on practicing that way you’ll live to see grandchildren. There is no doubt in the minds of my staff and me that to achieve the standards reached by all of you over these past weeks has taken total dedication and a sincere will to succeed. My staff and I are very proud and feel extremely privileged to have

known you. Wherever you're bound whatever the intended deployment we wish only the very best for you. Good luck and God speed. RSM Byron there all yours"

"Sgt Talbot I want you to ensure the accommodation is left clean and tidy blankets to be left folded on mattresses with pillows on top Sheets and pillow cases to be handed in. Sgt Mitchel 3 fatigue suits to be returned to stores all weapons to be cleaned before handing them back to the armoury. Evening meal is at 1700 depart for camp Ilsewood 1830 make sure you have something sensible to drink on the coach and I don't mean beer. Attention. Dismiss"

Sgt Talbot and Sgt Mitchel had always been fair minded; never needing to enforce their authority with harsh discipline, were overwhelmed and embarrassed by the much voiced words of congratulation, well done, you deserve it.

"Thank you everyone now let's get to it Sgt Mitchel and me are looking forward to our leave so let's not hang about. Strip your beds gather up your sheets, pillow cases, fatigues and weapons we'll hand those in first then back here and clean up no half measures mind or you'll still be here tomorrow"

"With a united chorus of 'Yes Sergeant' they set to work.

"No need to ask what you'll be doing on leave Danny. Good luck just be sure and treat her right"

"You can be sure of that Taff she's been well brought up; reckon her Ma would skin me alive should I try anything, made it clear her Joanna is to have a white wedding and all the trimmings. Made up me mind though, going to ask her, you never know lady luck could smile on me"

“Hey up Billy; Danny’s going to ask his girl to marry him do you think he’s in with a chance?”

“To bloody right he has lucky bastard wouldn’t mind finding a decent girl to settle down with after this lots over not to fussed on looks either”

“I suppose you’ll spend most of your leave in the boozier Billy?”

“No Taff giving up the booze and fags going to get me a room in the Union Jack Club and have a look round London”

“Ain’t you got no home to go to?”

“Nope never knew me Mam she died having me and Da he was killed in an accident at the Shipyard. Been on my own this past 12 years

That’s a shame that is. How about coming home with me; nothing fancy like, only Ma and me you’d be welcome. You never know might be a lovely welsh girl who’ll take a fancy to your ugly mug?

“Well that’s right nice of you, if you’re sure; the answers yes, and thanks”

Apart from Taffy airing his vocal chords at the start Nemesis command slept or dozed fitfully throughout the long journey.

On arrival at Camp Ilsewood a late breakfast was enjoyed then uniforms were retrieved from the QM store and ironed, footwear was highly polished and with their new Berets correctly set they paraded ready for inspection. Colonel Curry looked at his command with pride “Travel documents are ready to be collected at the Guardroom; enjoy your leave, stay out trouble and do not be late back. RSM

“Attention. Smartly now dismiss”

Colonel Curry along with his two officers and the RSM would not be going on leave a call had been received from Brigadier Carlisle they were to travel to London for a meeting with Brigadier Carlisle; the Resistance Group Commander and his two Lieutenants in order plans for the assault on the 'Erdback Höllen' could be finalized.

## CHAPTER TWENTY

### *A change of plan*

The Brigadier first told Colonel Curry and his officers that the number of targets had been increased to three. It's a communications center just completed on the outskirts of the village and it needs to be destroyed. He then introduced them to Hans Bierman and his lieutenants. Hans 41 years old a solid dependable man from the German Austrian Border where along with other much loved members of his family he had earned a reasonable and comfortable living working the family farm. It was a well-run establishment handed down through the centuries to the senior-surviving son. His wife also of farming stock bore him two sons; many were the hours of pure pleasure found in their company. One day he returned late from Autumn ploughing finding a scene oft repeated in those sad; evil times, his entire family had been brutally abused, than sadistically put to death. A great anguish filled his entire being as he knelt sobbing bitterly with bowed head amongst the ruins of a once happy family home. When his tears ceased he prayed for strength and guidance in ridding this benighted land

of the scourge which had chosen to infest it. Seeking out his family priest and undertaker of many years he made arrangements for them to be laid to rest in the family grave. Following the funeral he returned to the farm alone the traditional wake would not be taking place. Knowing he must deny the enemy use of the buildings and land; animals were released into the fields with plenty of food and water, His friends would see to their upkeep from now on. Crops were destroyed and all property put to the torch. Even with the help of his willing neighbours it took three days of back breaking work. On the fourth day turning his back on the life he had known and loved he joined the resistance eventually becoming Commander of 100 + dedicated fighters; men and women who like him had suffered immense grief and heartache. They were dedicated to destroying their mutual enemy asked no quarter and gave none.

Gunter Ericson a 26 years old bachelor fisherman who loved the sea and all its mysteries; a lonely man who did not make friends easily. The German Navy without recompense had taken his beloved boat a handsome well cared for craft capable of enduring the worst of storms. Leaving his bachelor home; a cottage in the coastal village of 'Den Helde', he killed a German officer and two soldiers who had tried to arrest him when attempting to take back his boat. He fled into the mountains along with lifelong friend Karl Dieter also a fisherman. A year older than his friend Gunther he woke each morning glad to be alive for he carried within him a genetic defect that one day would destroy him. He had accepted his fate and when not at sea he lived life to the full enjoying all the more whatever pleasures life chose to bestow on him. Learning of his

friend's great loss and future intentions he set about helping him achieve his object together they fought alongside their comrades proving a constant source of intense irritation to the occupying forces. They did not hate the Germans as some men do for they were not men to whom hatred came easily. All they desired was to be rid of them in order they could enjoy once again a peaceful; normal way of life.

The Colonel stood and addressed the meeting; He made it very clear he and his officers would be in command; during the assault on the three main targets and also disruption of existing communications. He also stressed any action which might jeopardize the final outcome would not be tolerated" The Colonel then laid out plans devised by himself and his officers on how best the mission could be accomplished. "Hans this operation is going to be difficult we have tried to cover all eventualities but it cannot be done without your help. I am open to suggestions; if you can see anything at all that needs to be changed, let us know?"

"Colonel apart from the additional target there is only one other change which requires your approval it's fraught with danger for everyone and its best if the Brigadier speaks first"

"Your exit from the target area Colonel; not ten miles from 'Westerwald' is a small aerodrome with a hard surface runway. It is intended two Dakota aircraft shall fly in with a strike force of heavy Bombers bound for the Ruhr industrial centre and retrieve Nemesis Force the night following your assault. Your attack is timed to commence at 2100 completion by 0100 giving you 4 hours of darkness in which to reach and hide yourselves in a place known to the resistance. The 'Time over Target' for those

Bombers is limited and your pilots will need to rejoin with the Bombers returning to England for protection. Their role is purely transport they are not equipped to fight. This means no time being wasted during retrieval. Hans and his group will also be providing lookouts who will signal an approach by the enemy. There is a major reason for gambling on your commands safe recovery which cannot be disclosed for security reasons. Are you prepared to gamble?

“Well it beats walking so yes if the RAF can guarantee being there and Hans and his group are not liable to suffer we’ll be waiting”

“Colonel once those planes start to roll my group will be gone from there they’ll not find us”

“Brigadier with this second task in mind does JCS appreciate if the proposed retrieval does not go to plan it will take at least four to six weeks to reach our rendezvous at Bergen?”

“Colonel that has already been taken into account you and your men are the preferred choice for the next mission and providing fate does not take a hand that is precisely what will happen”

“Ok so let us spend some more time going over these plans making sure we are completely familiar with the assault detail especially the timings”

A day and a half passed before everyone was satisfied and they said their goodbyes knowing the next time they met it would be under totally different circumstances.

The RSM and the three officers now officially on leave had decided on a drink at a men’s club of which the CO was a member before going their separate ways. Whilst

sitting waiting on their drinks the Colonel asked "Where are you three spending the next six days?"

"We've decided to find a nice quiet hotel rest and enjoy London if that is at all possible"

"How about coming down to Chipping Norton with me there's plenty of room. Do some riding; shooting, fishing or walking if you prefer it better than staying here in London with all the Air raids besides I'd like the company what do you say?"

"How about your folks surely they'll object to visitors at such short notice asked David?"

"Not at all; Mother will welcome you with open arms, as John can confirm she loves having guests and father he's not so hot on his feet anymore suffers terrible with rheumatics in his knee and ankle joints, stays indoors mostly and with everyone away at the war or involved on the home front he'll enjoy seeing new faces"

## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

### *Westerwald*

Nemesis Force had returned from leave and for 72 hours events had moved with an all pervading sense of urgency leaving no time to dwell on the briefing received. Before anyone could come to really appreciate the danger that lay ahead they had been hustled aboard their assigned aircraft and were bound for occupied Europe. By 0400 hours of the 4th week of May 1943 the men found themselves in a large cavern just five miles from their intended targets. The parachute drop had been made by the meagre light of a new moon in its 2nd phase; it had gone well, with no serious injury being received. Resistance men had been waiting proving themselves to be well organized many had a good knowledge of English and made the soldiers welcome. A huge surprise had been the number of women; like the men they were dressed in an assortment of patched clothing, which had obviously seen a lot of hard wear however it was clean. They worked hard these people and with the help of Nemesis the drop site was cleared within the space of 15 minutes. The more senior members of

the resistance dealt with provision of meals and keeping temporary accommodation in good order. It was this group who had prepared an excellent hot meal of stewed meat and vegetables enjoyed by everyone before settling down to sleep. It was close on mid-day before Nemesis and their new friends were roused much to the amazement of the resistance group the soldiers all washed and shaved before partaking of some more hot stew. The Colonel when asked why explained that it was to guard against infection should they become wounded. That is indeed wise something that has never been given consideration; Gunther you heard what was said; from now on the command will pay careful attention to personal cleanliness, learn from our English comrades it could save lives.

“Do you know Huw its meals like this that makes me really appreciate your Ma’s cooking its a wonder you don’t carry more weight your Aunt Megan’s the same she’s a grand lass and Marion her bairn at 3 years old is a real delight”

“True Billy; very true but, you only ate a few meals with us after meeting my Aunt Megan and her daughter Marion proper taken with them that’s a fact”

“Yes I was; hope you don’t mind? Megan did not say much about the bastard who let her down she’s not seen him since; both she and Marion are a real pleasure to be with. They were both sad when it came time for us to leave; I gave Marion a big hug and asked that she look after her Mam for me. That’s when Megan asked if I would be coming back, told her that was my intention. She kissed me proper like said she’d be waiting so I’m keeping my fingers crossed”

“Well I’m damned who’d have thought it; that’s fate that is, shall have to look out for you now get you back home in one piece”

“Thanks Huw, we’ll look out for each other. Your Ma said you and Bronwyn are getting married maybe it will turn out to be a double wedding”

“Hey up Danny you’re looking pleased with yourself asked that girl of yours did you?”

“Yes Billy; Joanne’s agreed to be my wife, definitely going to be a church wedding. Aunt Doris is making her dress and the village baker a widower who’s fond of Jo’s mum is making the cake and arranging the reception. Bought a lovely ring which took a big bite out of my savings; it was worth it though, you should have seen the look on her face. Shall have to really save hard now but, do you know what is so very special about all of this?”

“What’s that then; come on spit it out don’t keep us in suspense?”

“Well don’t laugh; it’s because I’m part of a family again, reckon I’ll be doing a lot of letter writing from now on”

“Blimey got your feet under the table proper you have. Good luck to you Danny Boy and don’t forget the invites for Huw and me”

Sgt Talbot approached with 3 resistance men “listen carefully Major Lovejoy has selected your teams to assist him at the farthest point in the caves these men will provide cover whilst you set the charges. Pte Piper. Johann is with you, Jones - Rolf, Connolly - Heinrich find a clear space check your equipment get yourselves acquainted and take them through the drill for tonight. Any problems you let me know immediately all clear?”

Soon the cave became a hive of activity as each team carefully prepared equipment and went through the procedures to be followed with their appointed lookouts. There was a great deal of laughter generated by the use of sign language when difficulty arose in describing how a certain task was to be done. There was no animosity from the resistance only a patient willingness to learn and from this grew strong friendships with a real understanding of each other.

“At 1900 the CO addressed them; we leave in 15 minutes complete your assigned tasks with speed but not in haste. Should you meet the enemy deal with them as you have been trained to do? That is all good luck and God be with us. Right Hans lets go”

## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

### *The Erdback Höhlen*

It was a gruelling march over terrain of ankle twisting; limb bruising loose rock of different shapes an inch to ankle high in size. As ordered the men suffered in silence; the inaudible curses said mentally if heard, would make the saints cover their ears in horror.

The men who had been given the vital role of removing posted sentries had left 3 hours earlier.

The medical team supported by 10 resistance fighters set up their aid post at the road junction.

As planned the largest group of 16 two man teams led by Major James and Sgt Evans with Gunter Ericson as their guide would scour the caves area and the village.

The second group under RSM Byron and Sgt Major Robinson with Karl Dieter and 20 men would destroy the new communications center.

It took over an hour of bitter fighting; battles being fought by groups of cursing men or as individuals. They could only be likened as to nocturnal animals coming face to face with a dangerous enemy who's every instinct to

survive, had been aroused. All sense of common human decency was forgotten in the knowledge; they must fight and fight again, killing all those who opposed them. In the cloying darkness mere youths became hardened men; fighting with an intense savagery brought about by an immense desire to live. The agonised cries of wounded men; friend or foe, were swiftly silenced by an injection of pain relieving morphine. Securing the village cost 5 dead and 17 with minor though painful wounds. Major James like the veteran he was swiftly organized his group and with Sgt Mitchel assisting the wounded headed for the Medical Aid Post.

On arrival at the communications center; a long low built building constructed of wood and brick, the RSM ordered a reconnaissance to be carried out by S/Sgt Robinson and Cpl Thompson to establish enemy strength. They reported finding a large contingent of enemy troops asleep in two dormitories located on each side of a corridor as you entered the building. This corridor also led direct to a working radio room containing two duty operators.

“Ok let’s make it short and sweet S/Sgt Robinson and Karl take 4 men and deal with the radio room. Cpl Thompson with 6 men takes the left hand side dormitory. Cpl Naylor the one on the right use your grenades then deal with anyone left alive. I’ll be placing charges round the building set to detonate in 30 minutes so don’t hang about unless you want to take up a permanent residence. Now get to it go”

Like dark and evil wraiths they stole into the building. Doors were kicked open and grenades thrown; screams of anguish and agonizing pain caused by shards of hot metal striking deep into yielding flesh were quickly silenced by

short bursts of machine gun fire. As silence fell the men stood bemused and uncertain. The Cpls giving them no time to think or dwell on the carnage they had caused ordered. At the double, clear the building, move it damn you... All clear RSM with no casualties they reported.

Major Lovejoy entered the caves to find they were lit by low wattage electric lamps held in protective metal and glass casings. Power was being fed from outside by a heavy armoured cable to a Junction Box located about 20 yards from the cave entrance. A telephone cable was severed by Pte Phillips. Sgt Evans as we leave that junction box shall be smashed and the cable shortened by at least 20 metres. Let's move forward steady now; don't rush, slowly they rounded a curve to find themselves faced by a Guard house using hand signals only the Major made it clear how he intended dealing with this obstacle. Sgt Evans went forward with 4 men he looked through a window to see 6 soldiers playing cards. Three two tiered Bunk Beds occupied the rear wall in which men were sleeping. In a whisper he said "Ok position yourselves by the front door and have your grenades ready; when I smash the window glass, take the door down and use them. Use your weapons on any one still breathing Go!

Almost simultaneously as the glass smashed tinkling into hundreds of pieces the door was torn from its hinges and several grenades hurtled into the guardroom; 2 possibly 3, actually landing on the table mesmerizing the card players; caught unawares they could only stare mouths agape with horror, before being literally blasted apart by the exploding fragmentation grenades. Soldiers sleeping on the bunk beds stood no chance at all shocked

into wakefulness by the explosions they died in a merciless blast of gun fire.

The Major said “come on move it now there is still a job to do lets not dilly dally he looked at his map Sgt Evans your task lays straight ahead proceed with caution but don’t dawdle best not to let the men think to much get the job done and wait for us outside. Sgt Talbot our passageway is on the left, Helmut takes the lead; proceed with caution, I’m sure there will be guards posted.

Sgt Evans did as instructed and several more of the enemy were disposed of before reaching the storage area which proved to be four immense caverns the size of a 1000 spectator football pitch stacked from floor to ceiling; a height of roughly 15 – 30 ft, with every type of ordinance imaginable from side arms to heavy calibre machine guns. There was also ammunition in row upon row of wooden cases. There was an enormous stock of Stick grenades; also artillery shells to suit different calibre field guns. Anti tank weapons and armoured piercing shells were also to be seen. The fifth twice the size of the others was a store for Petrol, Diesel and oil in large steel drums.

“Oh my giddy aunt; Sgt with respect, here is one man who does not wish to be anywhere in the vicinity of this lot when it goes up, damned if I do”

“That is my feeling exactly Pte Jones. Right two teams to each cavern get those charges placed and do it properly. Leave plenty of space between each one for maximum effect and lets be on our way Cpl Issacs find the Major and let him know what we’ve found remain with his group. Do not come back here; at the double now, but watch yourself”

Major Lovejoy received Sgt Evans report and knew he must move swiftly to warn the CO that they had to leave

the rendezvous with all possible speed this cave system along with its contents of sudden death and destruction was about to be completely wiped off the face of the earth. "Cpl you can make yourself useful there are three different types of container in here; correctly take down the wording and numbers from the boards placed in front of each stack. Do not touch any of the surfaces" He continued to affix charges without making physical contact on completion he raised himself from his kneeling position all done Cpl? Good lets go see if the others are finished"

"Sgt Talbot what's the position?"

"All done sir"

"Right lets get the hell out of here at the double there is truly no time left to waste in two hours this area will be hit by a man made earthquake of colossal magnitude"

Sgt Evans was on the way to the entrance moving cautiously when the Major caught up with them "no time for caution now the CO has to be warned; from your report it must be accepted the rendezvous area can no longer be considered safe, there will be no stops taken for rest. Helmut you'll take the lead lets go move out.

The 5 miles they had to cover to meet up with the CO may not seem a great distance but the strain imposed had drained much of their strength both physically and mentally. Major Lovejoy knew this and spoke to his NCOs leaving no doubt in their minds over what would be required of them. Showing no mercy he drove them forward with a single purpose in mind; the saving of NEMESIS. His NCOs responded by cajoling and helping those who stumbled. Men who had suffered wounds which though of a minor nature were painful and found the going hard were given support by their team mate. Arriving at the

rendezvous the Major wasted no time in making his report emphasizing the urgency and the need to immediately increase their distance from the target area by at least two miles with all possible speed.

RSM organize assistance for the wounded where needed form two columns and make ready to move in 5 minutes.

“Hans you heard the Majors report are their people you need to warn?”

“Do not be concerned my people are busy preparing a new HQ many miles from here”

## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

### *Nemesis flees from danger*

“Sgt Evans – Sgt Tolney right flank Sgt Mitchel – Cpl Longstaff the left. RSM – S/Sgt Robinson the rear. Major James leads the left column Major Lovejoy the right. Hans you and I will take center front. Listen to me all of you; the command is in a great deal of real danger. The mission has gone well with the loss of just 5 men now to save all our lives we must travel as if the very Devil and his hounds of hell were at our heels. No talking save your breath you’re going to need it. At the double move out”

On through the night with hearts pounding; breathing harshly through flared nostrils, as lungs strained to draw in much needed air, their booted feet thudding heavily onto rock strewn ground. Roosting birds took flight and nocturnal animals sensing danger fled before them. The men were virtually on their knees when a halt was called.

“Senior and Junior NCOs are to act as lookouts on both flanks. Major James – Major Lovejoy – RSM – Hans follow me. The CO strode several yards from his command before halting; be seated please, the command is now

roughly 7 miles from the target area and the men are in poor shape. Major Lovejoy are we out of danger?

“Colonel in about 20 minutes maybe less detonation of explosive charges laid will begin I urge you to have the men spread out face down and with ears tightly covered by their hands”

“Tell me what is concerning you most about your findings in the caves?”

“By my estimation based on knowledge and experience with explosive materials there is enough high explosive in three of those caves to not only blow the top off of this mountain but create an explosive blast capable of hurling huge boulders a considerable distance. Everything over a large radius including the village shall suffer severe damage or be totally destroyed. Then there is the fuel and oil store when that goes up it will create a huge fireball? To state how large an area is going to be affected would be based on pure guess work”

“Gentlemen you’ve heard what Major Lovejoy has said have the men spread out finding what cover they can covering their ears and nobody moves until I say so”

There came the sound of several explosions in rapid succession muted by distance followed by; a gigantic; stupefying clap of thunderous sound, the ground on which they lay rolling and heaving as though it were an ocean beset by a mighty storm. The darkness of night banished by a brilliant almost constant sheet of white light an awful wailing sound began; as of a thousand Banshees in torment, caused by the passage of a great wind formed and heated by the explosive blast; it funnelled its way through narrow tunnels and fissures of the Westerwald Massif creating a devilish music. Onwards It rushed and howled rising and

falling in a crescendo of deafening noise through close growing gnarled and ancient trees seeming to go on and on without end. Only pure discipline kept men terrified and stunned by the noise from rising and fleeing. They clung to mother earth with clawed hands digging deep into the earth; the breath forced from their bodies leaving them gasping.

Suddenly; an unearthly silence fell, the CO sat slowly upright trying to make his battered, reeling senses function normally once more. He cast his eye over his men slowly sitting up all wearing shocked; dazed expressions of bewilderment thankful to find they were still alive.

“Hans how far are we from the selected hiding place?”

“Less than an hour Colonel but if you are thinking of resting here I would advise against it German forces will be abroad in strength and when they see the destruction and death wrought by us tonight; extremely angry and seeking vengeance”

“On your feet snap to it RSM have the men form two columns”

“It is not possible for us to rest here our refuge for the day must be reached without delay. Keep firmly fixed in your minds those planes are due to collect us tonight and this Command must be ready and waiting. RSM set the pace as before. Right Turn March!

“Hans did you manage to arrange for one of your members to view the target area and take photographs when it is safe to do so?”

“Yes no problem a roll of film should be with you before you leave tonight”

“Excellent I may not get the chance later but let it be known amongst your command the pleasure my

officers and men have enjoyed in working with you. Such a tremendous success with minimal loss of life could not have been achieved without your help. They are; without exception first class, should the opportunity arise we'll be happy to meet and work with you again"

"Colonel it may be sooner than you know more I cannot say"

"I have heard there is further operational work planned for Nemesis but where and when is unknown" Lets us leave it for now and concentrate on reaching a safe area to rest and regain our strength"

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

### *Safety is reached and the Colonel is favoured*

The place of concealment proved itself to be well hidden from prying eyes. Hans; using a small rock, rapped hard on a huge boulder it was moved outwards from the inside to reveal an entrance onto a downward sloping tunnel leading to a very large cavern.

Seeing the CO's concern Hans spoke "do not worry Colonel there are three exits and the passageway leading to each one will take you several miles away. There is also one which takes us directly onto the Airfield. Eat and sleep, there are men keeping watch who will give ample warning of any unwelcome visitors"

"Are you and your men going to eat and rest also Hans before preparing for tonight's evacuation of Nemesis?"

As your RSM says; "Too bloody right we are"

Laughing together they made their way to an area where a huge steaming copper was giving off a mouth watering smell of meat and vegetables.

A woman of about 24 years old with an attractive figure and handsome features dressed in rough well worn

clothing served them with a warm greeting and a shy smile for the Colonel.

“I should watch it Colonel you’ve made a hit there he teased”

“What’s her name?”

“Come as we eat I will tell you her story”

“The young ladies name is Ilsa Rosina Hepstein from Elmsdorf in Northern Germany and she is 27 years old. Her family owned a farm of some 3750 acres worked by her father, his three brothers and their wives from which they made a reasonable living. They were a totally happy well respected united and loving family. One day in June 1942 German troops arrived at the farm demanding food and shelter for the night. Ilsa who had been visiting friends returned to find a nightmare of pure evil. She found first her father; nailed to the Barn door he had been used for bayonet practice. Her mother was on the kitchen floor, two older sisters were found in a bedroom all had died from injuries caused when subjected to continuous rape. Her twin brothers just 14 years old had been sexually brutalized then hung from a rafter in the barn. The three brothers were found tied to chairs in the same room as their wives and children. They also died from horrific injuries. Ilsa ran shocked and screaming to a nearby neighbours’ house making little or no sense of her incoherency the men folk went to the farm whilst the women sent for the doctor. Friends of the family dealt with burial arrangements and closed up the farm selling livestock and machinery to help with burial costs. Grown men sobbed in anguish that night and it took a year for her to show signs of a recovery occasionally she still suffers terrible nightmares. She joined us 9 months ago and is a fine cook. You may take it as a

compliment you're the first person she has honoured with a smile since that awful day. Now let's get some sleep or we'll be in no fit state for the work that has to be done in preparation for tonight"

Nemesis Force barely managed to finish their meal before curling up on the hard rock floor with Bergen's providing pillows for weary heads. They quickly fell into a deep sleep of utter exhaustion and it were late afternoon before they stirred.

The CO seeing his command was waking summoned the RSM "before the men have their food let's have them washed and their weapons cleaned. Major James – Major Lovejoy please ensure all small arms are fit for instant use and have the medical team report to me"

"S/Sgt Timms – S/Sgt Hylands my compliments on a job well done how are the wounded now?"

"Some of the knife wounds were on the deep side with no damage to internal organs requiring only to be stitched. These are fine with no onset of infection. For first timers actual close quarter combat and the act of killing came as a real shock to their system but we have talked to them and can say confidently there will be no ongoing problems. The forced march despite our intensive training did prove a severe strain for several of the men; including ourselves and a week's complete rest free from all duties is recommended"

"Excellent news it is a distinct probability your services shall be needed for a new mission or missions on which this command will be deployed. It would please me and my officers should an offer of a permanent posting to Nemesis be accepted by you both. Would you be happy to consider such a posting?"

“Having completed this mission we did not fancy going back to working on the wards so if there is a place for us with Nemesis S/Sgt Hylands and I would definitely accept the posting”

“Very good that will be my recommendation go and have your meal and prepare for the flight tonight”

Going to the kitchen he found Hans was also seeking food and Ilsa was serving; she filled his bowl with vegetables and meat handing him a slice of dark brown rye bread, with a smile she said “afternoon Colonel enjoy your meal and good fortune smile on you and your men tonight”

He was surprised her English was near perfect “thank you one day I’m sure we shall meet again in happier times”

“That would give me great pleasure”

“Sitting down beside Hans his back to the rock face he concentrated on his food enjoying every mouthful for it was truly delicious”

“Colonel everyone is in place; well hidden just waiting for the signal, our radio man; if all is well, will receive it one hour before the planes are due. This is all the time that can be allowed for your command to reach the airstrip and be in position ready to board. Here are two rolls of film taken of the target area and also confirmations of the church yard were your men have been laid to rest. Keep them safe London is waiting on their arrival. The two men who took those pictures say there is literally nothing left at all. The village except for a few isolated walls, was flattened by the blast from the explosion” You did the right thing in ensuring your command got as far away as possible no-one and nothing could have survived those colossal explosions or the fireball that followed”

“Thank you what route are we taking?”

“The direct route, it is anticipated if the planes are on time they will arrive at around 2200 you and your men will leave here at 2000 allowing ample time to be at the entrance onto the air field by 2100 remaining there until the planes are overhead. Two men will then lead you to a position ready for boarding. Once your planes leave the runway all resistance people will leave the area. There must be no delay German patrols are out in strength searching for the saboteurs. Here is a letter for the Brigadier now I must leave you”

“RSM ask the two officers, senior and junior NCOs to join me”

The CO gave his orders with emphasis on the need for speed in embarking when the planes were on the ground. “Before leaving here form into two groups senior and junior NCOs divide your selves evenly between the two planes Major James – Major Lovejoy take one group each I will travel in the first plane. Now get to it prepare and make ready to leave there must be no hold ups.

Nemesis force talking in low voices looked out onto the air strip from a shallow cave which they had reached by a succession of narrow paths keeping low and making use of all available cover..

“Well Scouse we’ll be sitting down to a nice English breakfast tomorrow followed by a good long sleep on a comfortable bed between clean sheets and I reckon every hour spent sleeping has been well earned”

“Yes Jasper I totally agree with you wonder if there will be any leave; hope so, should get at least 14 days as a reward like for what we’ve been through. Were you scared at all I was; not ashamed to admit it either, those Jerries knew

how to handle themselves. I like these resistance fighters hope to meet that man Gunter Erricson again from what was understood he'd had it pretty rough. How did you get on with your guide Billy?

"Helmut he was damn good would love to take him on a night out show him round Glasgow and Edinburgh maybe even a trip down to London reckon he'd enjoy every minute of it"

"I think our Megan would have something to say about you going on a drinking spree Billy mind you after the last few days a good few pints might not be a bad idea what say you Danny?"

"Couldn't afford it Huw my money is going to be pretty well tied up for a good few years with a house and furniture to buy. Can't wait to see Joanne again been thinking a lot about her since our last leave"

"My you've got it real bad that's for sure still: can't blame you I have given thought to my future as well if a good long leave of 3 weeks is granted might ask Bronwyn to marry me by special licence she's not keen on waiting till the wars over"

"Ok no talking now follow the guide when you reach your position remain silent and be ready to move fast"

The first plane landed taxied to our end of the runway turned; and the first group ran and swiftly climbed aboard. As soon as the last man was in; the door shut and they were off, with the second plane coming into land behind them. The whole operation of embarking Nemesis Force had been well planned and within the hour both planes were well on their way to join with the returning Bomber Group. It was a nerve wracking flight over Germany several times suffering attack from Flak Batteries and

enemy planes before reaching the coast they flew fairly low over the channel being met halfway by RAF fighters sent to escort them on the last leg of their journey. There was not one man aboard who did not heave a sigh of heartfelt relief when at last they landed many; silently said a prayer of thanks.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

### *Home in England*

As they stepped onto the Runway RSM Byron ordered. "Fall in! Form three ranks! Attention! Right turn! by the center quick march; lift those feet, heads up, chest out lets show a bit of pride, you've just done a grand job and done it well so put some swagger into your marching. That's better left wheel they marched into a hanger and halted. Right the RAF have produced some hot tea and sandwiches when I give the order proceed in an orderly manner and form a queue when you've finished take the mugs back and leave them on the table. Our transport has been delayed but should be here within the hour. Fall out.

"Where to now I wonder?"

"I'm no psychic Taff but damn me if I don't have a strong feeling there am plans afoot and were involved just hope we can have some leave first"

"Me too Billy what do you think Scouse?"

"Well I did notice the CO was doing a lot of talking with the Resistance Commander and from the expression

on their faces it was serious stuff and now he's with the Brigadier so yes; you could be right"

"You lot are putting the mockers on my plans so lay off; I'm dreaming of a long leave spending every day of it with Joanne and my new family"

"Ah Danny you're a lost a cause never to be the same again you'll be pushing a pram next if you're not careful"

"Nope not at all Huw I want a proper marriage blessed by the church and to see Joanne coming down the aisle dressed in white and if you're lucky you'll be invited I'll have to give serious consideration as to whether I shall let you kiss the Bride though"

"Would you listen to the man Scouse he thinks were not good enough to kiss his Joanne shall we turn his invite down and leave him to it?"

"Not at all if there is plenty of ale I'll be happy enough. Take no notice of these heathens Danny send us our invites and we'll be there to drink your health. Got a Best Man?"

"Well no I haven't would one of you like to volunteer?"

"That's for me done it several times shall be proud to stand with you?"

"Scouse your duly elected thank you there'll be a week's free bed and board but no swearing mind or Joanne's Mother will have your guts for garters"

"Don't you worry I'll be on my best behaviour"

"RSM have the men fall in"

"Stand easy this will not take long. First Brigadier Carlisle has requested me to pass on the sincere gratitude of the PM for an excellent job of work. RAF reconnaissance flew over the target area this morning and photographs show there is virtually nothing left. This fact was confirmed in photographs taken by the Resistance. Nemesis will travel

to Ilsewood camp where you will hand in combat dress and weapons and withdraw your uniforms. An inspection will be held at 1100 tomorrow and no excuses will be accepted for a poor turnout. Pay parade is at 1200 where you will also receive travel warrants and a leave pass for 28 days will be issued. S/Sgt Robinson make a note of each mans leave address and hand it to the orderly room Sgt on arrival. RSM ensure weapons are cleaned before handing them back to the Armoury. The coaches are waiting embark the men RSM.

“Billy I take it you’re coming home with me? “Definitely cannot wait to see Megan and young Marion again”

“Thing is I’m seriously thinking of getting a special licence so Bronwyn and me can be married will you be my best man?”

“It will be a pleasure but what’s brought about this sudden keenness to be wed?”

“Its Bronwyn she raised the question last time we were home time is passing so quickly and she’s very keen on starting a family”

“Well I’ll be damned so you’re going to try for a nipper straight away?”

“If that is what Bronwyn wants yes?”

“Reckon you’ll make a smashing dad Bronwyn is a very lucky girl, Can I put my name down to be a God Parent”

“Thanks Billy now let’s grab a bit of shut eye even though these seats are damned uncomfortable”

Billy sat deep in thought he’d only known Megan and her daughter a few days but he could not imagine life without them she had shown a real liking for him and enjoyed his company. But what would her reaction be if he

asked her to marry him. He came to a firm decision win or lose he would ask Megan to be his wife.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

### *Re-deployment is planned*

Leave was over for Nemesis force no one had gone AWOL or been in trouble with the law. For the past two days the men had spent time on drill parades, weapon training or preparing for kit and accommodation inspection. There was an all pervading air of expectancy nothing had been said; no rumours spread but everyone knew instinctively that it would not be long before they were deployed once more. Very little had been seen of the officers or RSM they had been engaged at meetings in a large room set aside for the purpose under tight security. Two armed MPs stood guard at the door and the perimeter was constantly patrolled by two more. The guardroom was also manned by Military Police no one was being allowed to enter the Barracks without proper identification.

“Here Scouse what the hell do you think going on?”

“Haven’t a clue Danny but with all this security it’s got to be something big and now all those squaddies left here before starting our training are back plus a load of new guys. They’ve all been trained in the skills learnt by us and

according to some of them they've had several hair rising experiences in places as far away as Africa"

On the morning of the third day the RSM strode into the Admin office; "Cpl Coles the persons named on this list find them; they are to report to my office and no delay, now jump to it"

"Sir Pte Jones and Piper are waiting to see you" "Do you know the reason?"

"Only that it is a personal matter"

"Right send them in"

Pte Jones and Piper stood rigidly to attention before the RSM they had just informed him of their marriages which had taken place whilst on leave. He did not look at all pleased.

"His face grim, what ever possessed you to contemplate marriage with a war on? I suppose it was a case of angry parents wanting to save their daughters honour and the family name, what's next an application to leave Nemesis he roared in a voice sharp with anger?"

"No sir; definitely not, Pte Jones replied with emphasis nothing like that at all were part of Nemesis and wish to stay if the CO will let us"

"Jones is speaking for you Piper why is that your not related are you?"

"Brothers in Law sir he's married my Aunt Megan" "In a calmer mollified tone of voice well what's done is done. My congratulations to you both I hope you'll be very happy. I will speak to the Colonel on your behalf you proved yourself to be of real value on our last mission and Major Lovejoy spoke highly of your work. His decision will be final and must be accepted. Piper ask the Admin Sgt to step in"

“Sgt Beamish this prize pair has gone and got married on leave. I require all necessary admin to be sorted and the paymaster informed of their home addresses with a request for allowance books. Piper and Jones a word of advice; you’ll not be in need of too much cash, your wives will. Sgt Beamish I’m leaving for London with the Colonel at 1300 should there be problems let me know well before then. Has Sgts Tolney, Mitchel and Evans arrived?”

“There waiting in the admin office I’ll send them in” “Sgt Talbot you and Sgt Mitchel have been selected to attend a four week advanced course on new types of explosive and their uses. Here is your travel warrants and joining instructions. Transport has been arranged leaving at 0600 tomorrow for the station. On your return you will pass on the knowledge gained to specially selected men. Good luck and enjoy the course”

“Sgt Evans; yourself, L/Cpls Stone and Naylor plus the 12 men listed here have been chosen to be trained in the use of Radio telegraphy. The course will last 6 weeks by the end of which it has been assured you will be able to transmit and receive messages accurately using Morse code and the proper procedures at 12 to 18wpm. Here is the travel warrant and joining instructions. The train leaves at 0900 tomorrow. Transport leaves the Guard Room at 0745. Ensure they are smart and well turned out at all times. Work hard and prove the CO was correct in his selection of men for a future vital role when Nemesis is next deployed. On your way out send in S/Sgt Carlton and S/Sgt Robinson”

“Harry, Joseph sit down, its 6 months now since you were injured in that road smash Harry and the CO has had a word with the MO who’s quite happy for you to assume

normal duties. You're a trained Para and completed the training course. It is also known you have kept up your fitness levels by regular visits to the Gym. How do you feel about taking an active role in Nemesis?

"I'll be real happy to accept Jim what has the CO got in mind for me?"

"He'll tell you himself come along he is waiting to see you and S/Sgt Robinson"

"S/Sgt Carlton you're absolutely certain about wishing to join Nemesis?"

"Yes sir definitely"

"S/Sgt Robinson – S/Sgt Carlton on recommendations received you are both promoted to the rank of WO2 effective from today. In approximately 3 months Nemesis will be deployed in Europe on a major task. Your acknowledged ability to work hard and qualities of leadership will be heavily called upon. I cannot tell you more at this moment and what has been said must not be divulged. RSM before you go Pte Piper and Jones did excellent work on the last mission they made a damn good team and I do not want to lose them. You cannot really blame men for getting married; just wish they had spoken with me before doing so, though from what I've heard their wives had much to do with persuading them. They'll remain with Nemesis, however to show our displeasure I'm sure you could find them some extra work not to their liking"

The RSM trying hard not to smile; "understood sir it shall be done"

"Jo – Harry congratulations your promotion is long overdue. I shall be away for four days with the CO and would like you to share responsibility for maintaining discipline. Your most important task is to ensure every one

can read a map and find his way to a given grid reference without difficulty. I would suggest holding classes first then form groups of six men and send them out on map reading exercises. Routes will have to be set request use of a vehicle from the transport section. Select a landmark that can be seen from each location which has to be identified to prove they have been there. Stand no nonsense; Set the degree of difficulty reasonably high. Anybody that tries to cheat, come down on them hard. Find the newly weds 2 or 3 choice tasks to do and at the first opportunity a few celebratory beers will be on your mess bill now go and see the QM he's expecting you"

"Do you wish to see Pte Piper and Jones all the paperwork is complete and following your advice they've signed over  $\frac{3}{4}$  of their pay as an allowance for their wives?

"Send them in, now listen the CO has said you stay with Nemesis but there is a price to pay for not having talked it over with him first. Over the next few days you'll find yourselves with some dirty jobs to do. I do not want to hear of any grouching do the work and do it willingly. Report to Sgt Major Robinson he'll be keeping an eye on you. Dismiss.

"Well Huw I reckon we've been damned lucky. He could have posted us to the Pioneer Corps to dig latrines for the rest of the war wonder what the Sgt Major will have lined up in the way of dirty jobs. Peeling spuds in the cook house would bore our socks off but we'd be well fed. Come on lets go the sooner we report the better"

"RSM message from the guardroom transport is standing by"

The CO joined by his officers and the RSM travelled to SOE HQ Baker Street, London in a small fairly comfortable coach of 12 seats. During the ride their future was raised with much speculation as to where in Europe they were to be deployed. Colonel Curry could tell them little and advised them it was useless to surmise and much better to keep a clear mind until General Soames had given his briefing.

On arrival Colonel Curry and party were quickly ushered into a large room where they found a Captain of the Royal Medical Corps?

“Brigadier Carlisle entered “good afternoon gentlemen Captain Rowlands this is Colonel Curry your commanding officer he will introduce you to his officers later but now please follow me the General is waiting”

“Colonel Curry gentlemen over next two days the Brigadier and I shall be briefing you fully on your future deployment. First; a short history lesson, agents of SOE’s ‘F’ section have been serving in France since 1941. They have been acting as instructors to the resistance in the use of firearms, explosive and radio operating. There are now several small groups who as part of their training have carried out a number of minor missions against the occupying forces of the third Reich. To further advance our intentions for an invasion of Europe; on a date yet to be finalised, it has been decided a fully equipped well supported force shall be sent into France to combine with these groups and working as teams led by your officers carry out major acts of sabotage. Your targets will be; Power supplies, road and rail transport, airfields, fuel dumps and of most importance the enemies means of communication. It is imperative action against selected

targets must be well planned bearing in mind at all times you are behind enemy lines. Torture and finally death will be your only reward should you be captured. It is planned Nemesis shall be entered onto the mainland of Europe by third week of October. Actual commencement of operations should be planned for beginning of December; earlier if possible, by which time British Military and Resistance teams should be well acquainted and able to work together without difficulty. To ensure the well being of Nemesis and also the resistance medical teams under Captain Rowlands have been assigned. A radio station equipped with the most up to date receivers and transmitters will be established at a carefully selected site specifically chosen; to enable reduction in difficulty of reception, close to Dover. It will be manned by Royal Signals personnel remaining open day and night listening specifically for messages from Nemesis. Should assistance or specific items to bring about a successful conclusion be required; do not hesitate to use your radios. There is; as part of SOE's establishment, a former hotel called the Frythe. Some exceptionally intelligent and very clever men work there whose sole aim in life is looking for ways and means of causing the German High Command to suffer a continuous headache. They will be more than happy to assist Nemesis. Gentlemen please gather round the table at the rear and I will show you your intended theatres of operation"

Two areas of a large scale map encapsulated in acetate to facilitate ease of alterations to details shown were ringed in blue. Numerous sites between the Loire and Seine rivers and also in the vicinity of the rivers Ruhr, Rhine and Weser

had been circled in red. Types of installation to be found at each site were clearly named in black.

Faces showed pure amazement as they mentally grasped and visualised the sheer magnitude of the task before them

“Sir it has not been stated for how long my command is expected to remain on deployment in Europe; I would estimate 6 to 8 months. Surely; if this be true, it must be accepted it is an extremely high risk gamble even more so than our last mission?”

“True Colonel very true however; let me reassure you, over the last 12 months ways and means of causing major disruption to the smooth running of the German war machine enabling our plans for the invasion of occupied Europe to be completed have been thoroughly discussed. The rescue of occupied Europe from Nazi domination must go ahead and soon. That is the reason why authority was sought and granted at the highest level to send in a well trained and fully equipped force with necessary support and backup in place. The mission upon which you are about to embark is ambitious and highly dangerous for all those involved. Because of you and your officers past experiences the PM and JCS are depending on you to achieve a real measure of success. By doing so; percentages for loss of life and wounded on the day of the actual invasion, shall be reduced considerably”

“Understood but an operation of this scale is going to need a static HQ. The medical team will need space to ply their skills to full advantage and a ward area for patients. A stores area will also be needed and also space for the Commander to control and coordinate assaults in progress?”

“Valid points Colonel; such a place has been provided by Hans Bierman, I’m reliably informed you’ll find it more than adequate for your needs including defence against possible attack from ground forces and also shelter against Air Attack. A second site has also been earmarked should it be required”

“Time is needed for me to first thoroughly go over these plans and then to discuss it with my officers and top u t down on paper our proposed intentions. Field Commanders and required team strengths. With your approval I would like to return back to camp today and engage myself on that task reporting back to Brigadier Carlisle in seven days?”

“Granted and I thank you for being so forthright with your questions; your strength of attitude and forward thinking, increases my hopes for the future”

“Thank you, Two requests may I retain the coach and driver for two months and RMP to act as security for the camp?”

“Brigadier; Cpl Simmons is the man to suit Colonel Curry knows how to keep his mouth shut and he’s an excellent driver. Have him pack his kit and report here with the coach in 30 minutes then phone the Military Police and ask them to continue their security duties at camp Ilseworth”

“Gentlemen in the interests of security on your return journey please do not raise the issue of future plans. Far better should you consider in silence mentally noting questions to be asked and suggestions made”

The coach sped south from the Capital bearing officers deep in contemplation of their future. From all that had been voiced one fact had become very clear; Nemesis force

was expected to show; regardless of cost in human life, a very high percentage of success. Despite being opposed by highly trained enemy troops. Mentally and physically officers and men had been prepared all of them had been tested in battle and found not wanting. But; this was different, the strain of operating at night behind enemy lines, having to constantly remain in hiding when not deployed and maintain a full alertness even though asleep against the possible chance of being discovered; no matter how well hidden, would eventually wear down even the strongest of men making them through no fault of their own, vulnerable and liable to failure.

Colonel Curry sat deep in thought his major concern; how best to prepare his command to meet future demands. Slowly but surely during their three hour journey he evolved a plan, it was going to be tough on his officers NCOs and Ors neither; would he spare himself. He went forward as they reached camp and entered the visitor's vehicle park. "Cpl Simmons please wait in the guardroom with your kit we'll find you a bed shortly. Gentlemen with immediate effect this command will stand down from normal duties. RCMP will be responsible for camp security. All personnel are confined to camp passes for town visits at week ends only and they will have to be earned. At 0830 tomorrow a meeting will be held in the conference room Sgt Majors Robinson and Carlton to be in attendance. RSM see Cpl Simmons is given a place to sleep and I'd like to see you in my office at 0730. I suggest we all get a good nights rest, it will be our last for some time"

"John do you get the impression the CO is rather concerned over this next do of ours?"

“David I would say he has every right to be concerned me; I’d be damned worried, I’m just glad it’s Hugh that’s in command and not some glory hunter seeking to make a name and gain a medal or two so he can boast to his family and friends of his non existent heroic deeds”

“Captain Rowlands let me give you a hand with your cases the mess steward will have been told of your coming and a room prepared”

“Thank you John my names Ian I’ve never really been involved in a full scale operation before always been based at rear HQ. Is the Colonel a hard man to serve under?”

“Not at all he’s truly one of the best and looks after his officers and men. You’ve nothing to worry about. I heard you were to be given an assistant when is he due to join us?”

“Yes Ashley Lawrence a fully qualified surgeon; top drawer I’ve been told, gained a degree with honours in medicine and surgery by the age of 26 worked at one at one of the top London hospitals for two years before volunteering for military service. Should prove very useful indeed”

“This is Cpl Rankin our very able mess steward Cpl show Captain Rowlands to his room see that he has everything he needs. Ian I’ll say goodnight and see you at Breakfast”

“Captain another medical officer arrived today a Lt Lawrence he has the room next to yours”

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

### *The Colonel strengthens his command teams*

“RSM were very thin on the ground for Senior and junior NCOs needed to form the command teams. Having looked at their personal records I’ve selected Sgt Evans who is long overdue for his promotion to S/Sgt and Cpls Tolney and Longstaff for promotion to Sgt. I was giving consideration to L/Cpls Lands and Naylor for the position of Cpl your views please?”

“In my opinion you have chosen well except for Lands; I have serious doubts over him lasting under sustained pressure, reports have been received that he does not measure up as a leader; this fact was also pointed out several times during training. My choice would be L/cpl Stone very dependable, keeps his nose clean and always smartly turned out and he stands no nonsense when handling a squad of men being a regular he’ll go a long way. Along with Sgt Evans; L/Cpls Naylor and Stone are attending a course in radio telegraphy due to finish in 3 weeks. Cpls Tolney and Talbot are available”

“We’ll forget Lands for the time being it might be he’ll improve with experience. I’ll see Cps Talbot and Tolney now; arrange for the other three NCOs to see me on their return. Speak with Sgt Beamish I require 12 copies of this document one for each person attending the meeting”

The RSM left considering the document it had proved to be a training program; aimed at Improving and honing already acquired skills. Much thought had gone into its composition and he wondered how the other officers would view what was going to be three months of sheer hard work.

“Sgt Beamish you and Cpl Coles have 40 minutes to type and produce 12 copies of this program. Pte Soames just the man; find Cpls Talbot and Longstaff their to report to the CO at the double”

## CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

### *A first briefing is held*

“Good morning gentlemen first let me introduce you to our medical officers; Captain Rowlands and Lt Lawrence. Each and every one in this room has faced danger and overcome the fear generated by the experience. Now; there is a difference, what we are about to face is going to prove to be the ultimate challenge for the skills we have been taught and knowledge gained over these past years of war. Let there be no doubts in any ones mind our ability to lead shall be tested every hour; of every day. The eventual safe return of men deployed under our command is down to us; as officers and Senior NCOs, to ensure the best possible survival rate by preparing for all eventualities. Careful attention must be paid to even the smallest detail. Let me make it clear how serious this matter must be taken; anyone who cannot be relied upon to read a map or use a compass 2 weeks from today will not be a member of this command. You have been given a training program covering the next thee months it shall be adhered to and I shall expect regular progress reports. It is my intention

using supplied maps and photographs to plan a list of targets deserving of our skills. This list will not be set in stone and a copy will be given to each one of you for consideration. Our next meeting will be in two days time commencing 0800 when ideas and all suggestions shall be presented and fully discussed. Actual assault plans shall be formulated and discussed at our third meeting the following day. Major James, Major Lovejoy and the two medical officers remain behind the remainder can make a start please bear in mind initially; training shall take place in the classroom, once you are satisfied all training will then be at night.

Captain Rowlands as part of your medical team there are just two S/Sgts. By end of today could you let me know your staffing requirements keeping numbers down to a safe minimum?

Major James - Major Lovejoy I suggest command teams consist of a Sgt Major, S/Sgt, Sgt, 2 Cpls and 1 L/Cpl it can be increased but only if it's absolutely necessary. On the men selected I would emphasise only the best must be chosen. 60 is the limit for each group 50 minimum. There is going to be an enormous amount of effort required from everyone; providing success percentages are met, say 80%, 7 days leave will be granted at the end of the sixth week. Sgt Evans will also be on leave that week he and the men who attended the wireless course with him have already been trained in map and compass reading at night however a refresher is advisable. From the eighth week onwards Sgt Evans and his trained wireless operators shall teach the rest of the command what they have been taught. I would suggest that you first; with your command teams, decide the members of each squadron. Be fair in your decisions I

require two groups equal in strength of capability. Major James the code name for your squadron is 'Hammer'. Major Lovejoy 'Jack'. HQ 'Anvil'. Use this room for your discussions let the MPs know they will provide security and ensure you're not disturbed. Thank you that is all for now"

"RSM 20 quality men including NCOs are needed to act as a defence force for HQ and also to provide replacements. I shall leave that in your very capable hands.

"Sgt Beamish has requested an interview sir he says it's rather urgent?"

"Make it quick Sgt Beamish"

"Sir I am a fully trained clerk I've also completed the commando infantry course and received parachute training. I have no personal ties at all, would you consider me for Nemesis as your HQs clerical officer also available as a replacement in a more active role if needed?"

"Your request is worthy of consideration if; your request is granted, you will undergo the same training as the rest of Nemesis force tell the RSM I'd like a word with him"

"RSM did you know about Sgt Beamish wishing to be considered for an active role with Nemesis?"

"Yes sir he talked it over with me and for the life of me I cannot think why he has not been given consideration for active duty. He is a regular did exceptionally well on the many courses he's attended and holds a clean record sheet. In my opinion he deserves a chance to prove himself he's very keen to go despite the high risk involved and there would be plenty of work for him"

“Yes I agree ok assign him to HQ squadron he is to begin training immediately but make it clear to him if he does not measure up he stays behind. Cpl Coles a first class infantryman according to his records but no parachute training. He received a leg wound in Africa from which he’s fully recovered he could prove a useful addition what is your view?”

“A very quiet unassuming person never questions an order and always completes his work to a high standard. Very studious just completed his ‘O’ levels in English and Maths and he’s hoping to be a teacher when he leaves the army. He could prove of value assisting Sgt Beamish with the Admin”

“He would need to do a parachute course, sound him out and if he’d like to join Nemesis make the necessary arrangements for his training”

## CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

### *Hard work and Promotions*

For three months the men who formed the rank and file of Nemesis were kept hard at work first in the classroom and then; with only one day to adjust mentally, from the onset of darkness until dawn, exercising in their newly acquired skills.

During this period Sgt Evans was promoted to S/Sgt, L/Cpls Stone and Naylor to Cpl and nine men were replaced for failing to meet the exacting standard set by the CO.

72 hour leave passes were awarded and enjoyed and no-one overstayed their weekend leave.

Despite the fairness and generosity of the commanding officer seven men including two junior NCOs all regular service men incurred the wrath of Colonel Curry by deciding they needed a break and sneaked out of camp. Military Police had to use considerable force to restrain and arrest them after serious complaints were received from a Public House landlord. No one will ever forget what followed next. All seven were paraded before the

CO on serious charges of; striking senior officers, resisting arrest, drunk and disorderly conduct and assault on female civilians. The CO remanded them for court martial. They were then marched from his office and brought to a halt on the parade ground.

“Stand the men at ease RSM” Th

e CO in a voice seething with tightly controlled anger; loathing and disgust addressed his officers and men; In all my years as a serving officer never; have I suffered such miserable excuses for regular soldiers, these men broke out of camp and whilst drunk carried out assaults on several young ladies and caused considerable damage to civilian property bringing shame on a command which has always prided itself on knowing how to conduct itself at all times in a proper manner. Let this be a warning to each and every one of you; I will not tolerate this sort of behaviour from any one. Sgt Major Berry I want these men removed from this camp and held in close arrest at Colchester MCE until their court martial takes place. Now get them out of my sight. RSM; Cpls Barrington and Lawson will replace the NCOs, select 5 ors from those who are remaining behind and make sure their kitted out with the proper gear. Nemesis is stood down until further orders are received carry on”

## CHAPTER THIRTY

### *Headquarters is placed on standby*

HQ squadron had just been told by the RSM to standby in their Billet for possible orders being issued that day.

“Have you heard when we’re going in then sir? “No private Bushel I have not but the General has arrived and an urgent meeting for all officers has been called. How about you then Pte Jones where’s your new Brother in Law trust you’re both enjoying marital bliss?”

“Piper’s gone to the NAFFI for some boot polish and yes it has to be said married life is damn good can’t wait for this war to be over so a proper start can be made. Billy and I were offered the chance for joint ownership of an uncle’s Pub; he’s considering retiring in about four years time and we’ve accepted. The transfer of ownership papers have been signed by Billy and me so all that’s got to be done now; is come out of this war in one piece”

“That’s damn good I’m pleased to hear it so don’t go doing anything daft like trying to be a bloody hero”

“No sir; not a chance, any time you fancy a holiday and a few pints you’ll be welcome. The Pubs called ‘The Miners Rest’ just off the high street in the village of ‘Meld’ North Wales”

“Thank you I’ll keep it in mind Cpl Thompson you and Cpl Issacs carry out an equipment check of HQ Squadron a proper one mind miss nothing”

“Gentlemen this command has completed its training program and enjoyed a long leave. It had originally been planned that your entry into Europe would commence from 31st October however, our long range weather experts have advised weather is not going to be at all favourable over France and Germany. Severe gale force winds and driven rain off the Atlantic are expected. Colonel you’re now totally prepared?”

“Apart from a few minor details Nemesis is ready to go”

“Good: according to the experts from the 20th Oct to the 23rd the weather should be fine and clear. On the night of 20th/21st HQ takes off at 1900 from Ringway followed by Major James and Major Lovejoy on the night of 21st/22nd. Saturation Bombing Raids on the Ruhr Valley, Cuxhaven and Bremerhaven have been scheduled to coincide with each drop. Radio Equipment, explosive material, medical stores and specialist weapons have been received safely by our Resistance friends. Additional stores also weapons requested by Hans Bierman will be dropped with HQ group. Captain Rowlands keep an eye on your medical stores they are in demand on mainland Europe. I trust those ‘Dark Grey Denim’ and ‘White winter suits’ your command is going to be wearing are now all complete?”

“All identification flashes have been attached by the camp tailor along with any alteration that was required. Everyone including Officers has been issued with three Denim and One winter suit also dark glasses against snow glare. It is appreciated the wearing of denim fatigues is not highly thought of but I’m convinced they are more suited to our type of deployment and the anticipated heavy wear. The white suit complete with hood will provide excellent camouflage should there be falls of snow and the fleece lining; protection against the cold. You have my gratitude for the woollen mittens and heavy duty raincoats much better than the standard ground sheet. There is one last item; a very important one that causes me concern mail. Will there be no contact at all for the men with families and friends at home?

“Colonel I read your proposal and argument and couldn’t agree more it may be that at some future date someone will design a proper all weather combat uniform. On the question of mail families may write to the address given in your orders it will be sent out as part of needed supply drops. Letters home could prove tricky arrangements will have to be made for a pick up. When possible; timings and dates shall be made known. Those NCOs and five Ors who caused a problem have been dealt with and apologies have been sent to the ladies and the Publican involved has been compensated for damaged caused. Believe me when I say those men will rue the day they disobeyed orders and broke out of this camp. Now I must get back to London good luck to you all and every success with your missions”

Ian double check you have everything you need let me know immediately of any discrepancies. John, David I

am going to be rather busy but; should anything arise tell me, nothing must go wrong now. Remember take your time when planning each mission better to spend an extra day in reconnaissance to get it right than end up in the proverbial. I will have my radio on standby listening for your call to say you have arrived safely. See you in the mess later.

“RSM three items; 1st make sure all personnel have notified their families of the postal address for sending mail; if they haven’t done so, order them to do it today. 2nd NOK address; check with the orderly room; see that all details have been recorded. 3rd I will speak to HQ squadron after lunch have them report to the conference room at 1400”

On the 21st October 1943 a Dakota from RAF transport Command departed Ringway Airport in the company of Lancaster Bombers from Lincoln destination Europe with HQ Group Nemesis on board.

# CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

## *HQ Squadron reaches their new Base*

HQ Squadron parachuted into occupied Germany on a night that was rather overcast with a 3/4 moon casting little light making it difficult for them to be seen from the ground. Hans Bierman was waiting and greeted them warmly. "Colonel do not worry about your stores they are being attended to gather your men together and follow me"

In silence the men laden with a heavy Bergen and spare ammunition hastened after the Colonel and the resistance leader. Some three miles from the DZ they came to an escarpment part of an elongated Massif here they halted whilst Hans explained; The next part of our journey takes us to a cave system only recently discovered it is deep within; about 274m upwards from the base, very close to the top a plateau about 12.5km long by 6km wide there are several exit tunnels none of them are hard to traverse providing care is taken and all have been clearly marked for those who know where to look. It has been a long night for all of us so first we rest then tomorrow

establish your headquarters. Do not be concerned about being discovered; only our most trusted people are aware of this location and guards have been posted is that not right Emile?

“Very true Hans I’m off duty in 1 hour tell Olga to have some nice hot coffee waiting” no matter how hard one peered into the darkness the speaker could not be seen”

“So let us proceed”

The passage through which Nemesis journeyed filled them with awe and in some: fear caused by the intense darkness broken only by the pitiful light of a storm lantern especially, when they had to cross over an arched stone bridge a mere two feet in width covering a wide chasm, it took over an hour to cover the distance but on reaching the cave system they were filled with pure amazement at its sheer size. The rock itself was of granite it was later learned this massif had possibly been formed by volcanic action forcing it from deep below the earths crust during the ice age. It was assumed the caverns and passageways had been filled with ice and as land temperature rose this had melted creating fast flowing underground rivers and lakes which during the passage of many years wore the walls smooth. As to why the rivers had since dried up was yet to be discovered.

“Right Colonel; in that cave over there is the kitchen area, the ones on the right are your sleeping areas, one for the men and separate smaller caves for the officers and NCOs. The floor is hard but I’m sure you’ll find ways of making yourselves comfortable. Over here are caves of a fair size suitable for storage and office space. This opening leads to a small lake fed by a spring through a crevice high in the wall. The water is very cold and we believe that it

comes by pressure from deep in the earth to whence it returns by seepage; or possibly, an unseen exit. At night Lighting is provided by oil lamps and candles; during the day light filters in through cracks and fissures providing ample light for our needs. The accommodation is not of the best but perfect as an operating base. Your stores and radio equipment have been stored in a lower area and shall arrive here before lunch”

“Hans you have done well; thank you, what time have you arranged for the mid-day meal?

“To give everyone a chance to rest 1300; by late afternoon I would say you will have a working HQ. London has been informed of your safe arrival. Now if you will excuse me Colonel I must attend to several matters before taking rest myself”

“RSM sort the men’s and NCOs accommodation out then get them bedded down. Reveille will be at 1130 everyone will see to their weapons and be washed and shaved before parade at 1215 this is down to rock bottom basic living but I will not tolerate slackness in standards. There is an enormous amount of work to be done after lunch but with the help of our friends it should not take long.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

### *Nemesis HQ is established*

The parade over the officers and men sat down to their first meal in a place that was to be their home for several months. The food was substantial consisting of well seasoned meat and vegetables and enjoyed by everyone. With hunger satisfied they sat back and relaxed knowing it would not be long before they were hard at it.

The CO allowed them just 30 minutes then made known his requirements.

Captain Rowlands; your stores are clearly marked; choose a suitable cave or caves giving yourself plenty of room to establish areas in which to operate and carry out medical examinations. You'll also need a ward for bed cases. Let me know of any difficulties"

"Sgt Beamish sort out 3 separate places 1 for yourself and Admin with a separate small cave close by for my sleeping accommodation and office. The blankets delivered on the drop; issue two per man; make sure each member of Nemesis receives them"

“S/Sgt Evans your responsibility is the Radio; Hans has found an ideal spot for you and your team, it has a narrow aperture going up through the roof to an area of trees and scrub just right for your aerial cables. Choose a suitable tree and set your aerial so the top 2 or 3 inches only rises above the crown. Make sure it is secure. Helmut and his friend Siegfried will form part of your team both are trained operators with bags of experience; speaks damn good English and have offered to help with the installation”

“Hans you say there are 37 men of your group located close by would you mind if they joined us sharing accommodation and meals it would make for a better working partnership?”

“Colonel it would be a pleasure; my men many of whom will be recognised from the last mission at Westerwald, have asked if they could join your men and there is enough room. Language should not be a problem as many speak fairly good English a message will be sent and they will join us tomorrow”

“RSM a place is required to keep our stores L/Cpl Tanworth has an orderly mind put him in charge of stores and set him to work with three others this place must be ship shape by end of today”

“Hans; tell me how much ceiling do we have above us?”

“About 16 – 20m maybe a little more but no less” “That is excellent if our hiding place is discovered nothing to fear from a bombing raid. Could you show me this plateau I want to assess our defence situation?”

“This is fantastic; what a beautiful place with quite a large wooded area where the men can enjoy fresh air and

exercise their limbs. Provided they stay under cover there is no chance of them being seen even from the air? Thank you once again Hans you've done us proud. Now there are four LMGs and they must be used to our best advantage where do you suggest?"

"Using these loose rocks I would make four emplacements several metres apart under cover of those trees to the East and West of the entrance as a defence against parachute forces. On all sides the walls are sheer and impossible to climb. The entrance through the crevice is sealed and will not be opened until someone leaves. There are other exits and they will be made known to you and your men"

"I believe your positioning of the guns is wise and they must be kept manned to avoid being surprised. As a combined force your men and mine shall share that chore. Lookout duties must also be shared. Let us see what the good ladies have prepared in the way of food it is many hours since my last meal"

Billy Piper approached the RSM "can I have a word sir"

"Take a seat what's your problem then?"

"Pte Jones and me were wondering if the CO was still annoyed over us getting married only if there is a chance of being really involved we don't want to be left out?"

"Don't you concern yourself over that Pte Piper once those squadrons start operations in earnest those Jerries will be hunting for them; there'll be casualties, then you'll get your chance"

"RSM a working party is needed to build four fortified machine gun posts. Shallow pits only are possible due to depth of soil so the ramparts will have to be built from

loose boulders. There is plenty of it lying about and I'd like to see at least two completed today. Also needed are at least 12 positions constructed in the same manner for those acting in defence. They are to be manned from first to last light by resistance and men from Nemesis. Here's a rough drawing of what is needed. My instinct tells me that it's best to be prepared

"I agree sir, don't want to be caught napping. I shall find some hard working lads and set them to work right away"

"Pte Jones and Piper the CO has an urgent job that needs doing and doing right away. It's got to be done properly and no cutting of corners or slacking on the job; hear the sound of an aircraft take cover. The graft will be hard and I'm giving you two the responsibility to see it gets done. You'll have ten men to help with the work come with me"

"Hans you and I will have to sit down and talk about defence, lookouts and manning the gun positions are you free now?"

"Yes let us get it sorted I have a list of my men what are you proposing a soldier paired up with a resistance man?"

"Most definitely share and share alike as a combined force that is the way it must be"

Two hours passed before the commanders were finally satisfied with the listings drawn up deciding to advise the combined force of their decisions after the evening meal.

"S/Sgt Evans Radios tested and working?"

"Sir there are two working and one was found badly damaged and will need replacing. This is the duty operator list"

“Well done London will be expecting a call at 1900 let me know when contact is made”

“Sgt Beamish four copies of these lists please” “Colonel Sir a mug of tea as you like it very strong.

Hans how you drink tea without milk or sugar I fail to understand it tastes so bitter”

“Ilsa I’m very glad to see you again?”

“Thank you Colonel I am pleased you are with us” “That lady has spoken with no one since last time she saw you many have tried with no success I wish you luck my friend”

Pte Jones having discussed how best to get the work done with Billy Piper took charge; “Ok now listen up Jackson, Pengally, Adams, Jones and Langham search for loose stone of a reasonable shape and size bring and stack them in 6 piles 4 feet apart. The rest of you with Billy and me will start digging the pits; making each one about 4 feet long by 2 foot wide going as deep as possible, staying under cover of the trees. Trying not to break any branches off if you do rub dirt over the break”

“Hold on Huw where’s your stripes you can’t tell us what to do?”

“You have a choice start working or we’ll go somewhere quiet and sort the problem you seem to have. What’s it to be langham?”

“Don’t be silly Jim they’ve been put in charge come on lets make a start or we’ll be here all night”

The RSM who was standing just inside the entrance smiled happy in the knowledge defence positions would be prepared. Pte Langham did suffer from an attitude problem but if he tried to go it with Pte Jones he would wish that he’d kept his mouth shut.

On the third day a message was received that both squadrons had arrived without mishap. The Colonel sat back relieved now a Sitrep would be received each day on their progress. Forming part of the operational plan it had been agreed that; to achieve a satisfactory operational cohesion between soldiers and resistance members, for the first few weeks only minor acts of sabotage would be carried out. When; and only when, the two commanders were happy with the working relationship would major strikes be initiated.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

### *The Squadrons Prove their Worth*

Major James in several well planned operations created a massive disruption of road and rail transport systems. He had also in one very dark and stormy night caused severe damage at two sub stations denying electrical power to an industrial site. Regrettably two of his men had died and several suffered minor wounds. This had angered German High Command and 5000rm was offered for information leading to the arrest of the perpetrators and their leader. After several days of a continuous game of hide and seek with enemy patrols they had finally found a reasonably safe hiding place where proper rest could be taken and the wounded recover. A fortnight elapsed and after a long discussion with his command team it had been agreed; an assault on the Duisberg harbour installation containing within its confines a large fuel and oil store holding; according to received local intelligence, several million litres of refined oil, high – octane aviation fuel and diesel oil, was not beyond their capabilities. With extreme caution the port was observed over several days and nights

with careful notes made of enemy movement to and from the port and also the Guards patrol routes. From further information it had been learned three small oil and petrol tankers were expected in the early hours of 9th December each would leave port immediately they had been emptied. Based on this information, observations and notes made a plan of attack was discussed and agreed upon. "Sgt Major Robinson briefing in 15 minutes"

"Pay attention on the night of 18th/19th November the Duisburg harbour storage depot will receive our undivided attention. You have 2 days in which to ensure all your equipment especially explosive charges and timers are in good order. Team members will not change. Demolition teams will only enter the target area when informed enemy guards and guardroom have been dealt with. On completion of your assigned task make your way to Günter's line of defence 30 meters to the East of the boundary fence. Cpl Stone you will be in charge of the advance party and guided by Ernst will proceed to our next hiding place. Now set to work there must be no foul ups"

At 2200 hours Major James and his men with blackened faces had carefully removed a large section of chain link fencing and lay for several minutes observing with disbelief a target holding in store a valuable commodity wide open to attack. Only two guards were visible enjoying a cigarette in the lee of a building wall. Be prepared; do not get caught out by the apparent lack of sentries, they could be hidden from sight for a reason. Move out.

Silently men disappeared into the darkness bent on a murderous but necessary task. 40 minutes later they returned; target area including guardroom in which charges have been laid is secured sir and you were right

about the guards' reported Sgt Longstaff; L/Cpl Ingram, Pte Simpson, Jameson and Harrison have the proof, they received severe stab wounds. Five others have suffered minor knife wounds and bruising to their faces. S/Sgt Timms is attending to them"

"Well done; Cpl Lawson: remember proceed with cautious haste, make sure all charges are securely placed in the best possible position to be most effective, carry on.

Swiftly and silently; like phantoms from a science fiction movie, the well rehearsed teams spread out across the storage area. Going to designated; previously observed sites, each team began sowing the deadly seeds of destructive power with timers set to detonate in two hours. Resistance men working alongside their English comrades proved they had listened well; not one faltered or fumbled in their work. Finished they made their way to Günter's defence position.

With a heartfelt sigh of relief the CO welcomed them back "Sgt Major bring up the rear. Let's go! With Gunter and 4 of his men in the lead they headed south towards a heavily wooded area wherein lay safety. For 40 minutes they marched at the double and men already wearied by their nights work were beginning to tire before a halt was called allowing them time to draw in much needed oxygen to ease labouring lungs. Faint explosions were heard as they recovered and looking back towards the target area they saw the clouds were deeply coloured with shades of blue, yellow, green and orange painted by a raging inferno in the fuel storage depot with flames a hundred feet or more in height showing starkly against a backdrop of black clouds created by the burning oil. No time for self congratulation onward sped the perpetrators eager to be safe from prying

eyes before daylight. The knowledge enemy forces would be deployed in seeking them out; their commanders filled with growing anger over this latest; devastating act of sabotage and enormous loss of vital fuel supplies, lent speed to their progress keeping tiredness at bay.

Leaders of the squadron halted signalling for silence movement had been heard to their front taking up defensive positions they waited; softly; came the order to proceed, they had caught up with the advance party quickly heavy loads were divided into more manageable quantities then; shoulders bowed they continued their journey. With only brief halts they struggled on two hours passed when again they were stopped this time it was a screech of a Barn Owl; the guides sinking softly to a crouched position signalled for silence, no one moved or made a sound, the owls long loud screech was repeated followed by two short ones safety had been reached.

The force was led through a thicket being careful: as instructed, not to break any of the branches. Lifting feet high then replacing them with care on the mat of forest debris in order signs of their passage would not be visible to the naked eye. Coming at last to a very dense stand of brushwood no casual passer-by could possibly imagine a concealed entrance laid within its confines. A cleverly contrived and camouflaged trapdoor was lifted and down in single file went the squadron to find themselves in a vast natural underground cavern.

Gunter explained pure chance had led to its discovery by a woodsman out hunting small game digging down into a rabbit's bolthole the ground collapsed revealing the tunnel leading to the cavern. Realizing its potential as a hide out from the Germans he concealed the opening covered his

tracks and made his finding known. Much work has been done to make it habitable lookouts are permanently posted and there is another way out. So please relax its safe here come, hot food has been prepared then you must all rest.

“Your attention before anyone touches a morsel of food they will make sure they at least have a damn good wash. Medic I would like an early report on the wounded. Sgt Major before the men bed down tonight all weapons will be cleaned those found with a dirty weapon will be on latrine duty for a week”

A low dissatisfied grumbling was heard.

“Sgt Major, Gunter should any of the men think I am asking too much following a hard nights operational work remind them about the effects of gangrene caused by bacteria entering a wound. I will not tolerate a lack of personal hygiene or attention to weapons. Carry on”

Major Lovejoy was also becoming a thorn in the enemy’s side working on intelligence supplied by a local resistance group of 43 seasoned fighters led by Heimlich Müller; a middle aged well educated man speaking impeccable English, who informed them of a convoy being driven by; civilians in fear for their lives, loaded with ordnance and small arms that would be arriving at a perfect ambush location shortly. He also offered his assistance providing his command could have the trucks and contents for their own purposes and that the drivers would not be harmed.

The OC before accepting the offer asked Karl what he knew of Heimlich.

“Have no fears David he is a man to be trusted like all of us he and his family have suffered and are doing all they can to be rid of the hated Germans”

“Heimlich it must be understood by you and your men that whilst deployed in and during the proposed assault; I shall be recognised as overall commander”

Receiving his assurance the three leaders sat down to evolve a plan of action as a result; a truly well planned ambush took place on the German/French border. The ambush site was selected and well hidden positions prepared. A lookout was posted on a small hillock giving a clear view of the road and on sighting the convoy; taking great care not to be seen, he ran with the news to where the OC was waiting. Quickly and quietly at his command they took up their allotted ambush positions. The convoy consisted of 27 vehicles. Protection being provided by a Scout Car armed with a manned heavy machine gun in the lead, In centre position was a thin skinned troop carrier and in the rear an armoured half track each contained 20 well armed soldiers. The huge Mercedes freight vehicles were heavily loaded; made obvious by the slow speed at which they were travelling. Heimlich at his insistence claimed the honour of taking out the lead and centre vehicles and this he did in grand style. As the scout car reached a position of about 20m from those in ambush it was blown off the road by an anti tank missile and at the same moment several grenades were hurled into the rear of the personnel carrier. Those that survived the red hot fragmenting steel died in a hail of machine gun fire. The OC and his men employed the same tactics at the rear end of the convoy. The drivers who turned out to be men of not less than 60 years offered no resistance at all and when questioned it was found they had been given two choices; act as drivers or be shot. When offered some food and told to make their way home some broke down in tears having

believed they would be killed. Hands were shaken and they departed northwards returning to their wives and family. The Convoy yielded a real treasure trove of useful weapons with ample ammunition, medicines and clothing. Major Lovejoy kept several heavy calibre machine guns and grenade launchers. The vehicles were then driven off by men from the Heimlich group. The enemy dead were laid out on the side of the road in the shade of some trees and covered with tarpaulins nothing more could be done for them.

Shaking the Majors hand Heimlich observed the signs of sadness on his face “Do not be concerned over what has happened here today yes; it cost me the lives of four valuable men; but thousands more will die before France and Germany are freed from tyranny. Good luck and thank you for your help”

“Goodbye Heimlich perhaps one day we shall meet again under much happier circumstances. Karl back to the hide out and let’s not be too long in getting there”

## CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

### *Hans Bierman has his wish granted*

Hans Bierman following a lengthy discussion and much pleading with the CO for a more active role had been assigned a sabotage group with the RSM as his 2i/c. He spent several weeks annoying the Nazis destroying rail links and telephone lines between the Ruhr industrial zones, the Netherlands and France keeping repair gangs constantly busy all day and through the night. Observing one particular factory it was noted 8 empty freight wagons; after the engine had taken on coal and water, were shunted over to a siding alongside the factory building itself. RSM those goods trains arrive here and are stationary for almost an hour what do you think our chances would be of fixing large amounts of explosive on say a 2 hour time fuse to those wagons?

“I can see what you have in mind the explosive blast could possibly destroy the train and whatever materials it’s loaded with and also severely damage the factory and its contents. It’s a damn good idea and entirely possible.

Can it be found out when and at what time the next train is due?

“Helmut you know this area are you willing to risk going into town and without bringing suspicion on yourself find out when the next train is due and at what time?”

“Wait a moment were forgetting about the workers; even with just one wagon loaded with ammunition; when the explosive detonates, setting off a chain reaction it’ll kill most of them leaving many badly injured. Can a warning be got to them?”

“I have thought of that; on the night of the planned assault a message will be passed giving warning of the danger but, suspicion must not fall on the local people or they will pay with their lives”

“Off you go Helmut report back to base with your findings?”

“Helmut duly reported back later that day, A goods train comes on Monday/Tuesday, Wednesday/Thursday and Saturday/Sunday night always early in the morning around 1 o clock leaving before 5 filled with torpedoes, sea mines, high explosive shells and small arms ammunition”

“Well done Helmut first go and get something hot to eat then sleep”

“RSM Thursday morning will see the completion of our last strike there is already an increase in enemy patrols and when that train blows the area will be crawling with them. It has been arranged for the workers to be warned by a man who was part of a local group but was injured when a mission went wrong. He works in the factory doing light work and has my implicit trust. It is accepted they must continue to work as normal giving themselves just 10 – 15

minutes to get clear. It is the best that can be done are you in agreement RSM?

“It’s a hard decision Hans but it’s a worthy target so let’s make ready”

On Wednesday evening the group who lay concealed close by the factory watched the train arrive. As soon as the engine commenced to move 16 men keeping low to the ground quickly covered the short distance to the target. Splitting into teams of two they went to there assigned wagon and with all speed attached the explosive charges setting the timer as ordered for detonation to begin in two hours. Again keeping low to avoid being seen the men rejoined the group silently they crawled to the fence and made their exit and only when a considered safe distance separated them from the target area did they rise to their feet and take off like bats out of hell not stopping until roughly 7km had been covered.

“RSM from here we take an easterly route for 12km then north until reaching that forest about 3km from the village of ‘Imelda’ lets get moving an hour from now and this place will be very unhealthy”

It took them four nights of continually having to make wide detours adding considerable distance to their journey; in order patrols of enemy troops could be avoided, being short of ammunition a direct confrontation would have proved fatal, to reach the safety of headquarters.

The CO was pleased to see them safely back but was definitely not happy over their exhausted state and requested the MO carry out an immediate medical inspection.

Colonel Curry was happier when Captain Rowlands reported that despite the high level of exhaustion; the men after being fed and rested for 2 days would be fit for duty.

“RSM see these men receive a hot meal and then no further duties for 48 hours. That also applies to yourself and Hans when you both return to duty I shall expect a full written report of your activities”

“Well Hugh that’s a turn up for the books the Colonel speaking like that to Hans; I thought he did well bringing us all back, never put a foot wrong in my book and that last target was a beauty in and out like a buck rabbit. Pity our ammo was so low could have taken a few of those heathens who were chasing us on the way home”

“Now then Billy; think on, those Jerries are just like us, soldiers under orders. Expect most of them have got wives and kids just like we’ll have one day. Hope this bloody war is over soon can’t wait to see Bronwyn again missing her like mad I am. Wonder how those women of ours are doing?”

“What I shall miss most is seeing Marion open her parcels at Christmas more than anything I’d like to watch her face when she sees the doll I bought her. Bronwyn is holding a gift for Megan; it’s a pendant I bought in the antique shop down the high street, I’ve written several letters saying how much I love and miss them both what do you reckon the chances are of the CO arranging a collection?”

“Well I would say there is a distinct possibility it could happen so if there is anything more you’d like to say to Megan do it now. I shall finish mine off too.”

What are you two gassing about now; you’re like a couple of old biddies down the fish market, our food is

ready so let's eat and then do as the CO says get some sleep"

"Was just wondering about a possible mail pick up RSM any chance?"

"Have your letters ready if there is going to be one it will be soon"

## CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

### *A Special Delivery is received*

It was early evening of a Wednesday in the first week of December 1943 that a top priority signal from JCS was received. A despatch was to be dropped that night at around 2100 from a plane flying very low over the plateau. The approach would be from North to South and the pilot would only deliver the package on receipt of a recognised signal. An immediate acknowledgement was to be sent.

“S/Sgt Evans I require you to be on duty tonight a plane will approach from the North at around 2100 the pilot; before making the delivery; he needs to see a signal of three positive dashes. First fetch the package he drops to me then standby to send a message to London. Put Cpl Issacs in charge of the Radio and get some sleep it could be a long night”

The Colonel repaired to his sleeping quarters sitting down his back against the rocks face he stretched out his legs and closed his eyes and without even trying drifted off to sleep. He awoke and feeling guilty looked at his watch to find he had been sleep for over four hours. Quickly

sluicing his hands and face he sought the RSM "Anything to report?"

"Nothing yet Cpl Thompson has been instructed to relieve S/Sgt Evans who took up position at 2030 in fifteen minutes. I've also arranged for those on lookout to be relieved hourly it's bloody freezing out there. Food is being kept hot for you in the kitchen can I suggest you go and get it now there may not be time later?"

Going to the kitchen he helped himself from the large cooking pot which never seemed to be empty. Becoming aware of someone watching him he turned to find Ilsa watching him from her sleeping place not far from the stove. He smiled good evening I'm not disturbing your rest am I?

"Not at all; for a long time I have been unable to enjoy a deep sleep, a slight sound awakes me. Please sit down Ill fetch some bread and coffee for us both. Did you enjoy your sleep you looked so peaceful no-one wanted to disturb you when the food was first made ready?"

"Yes feel much better for it most refreshing it will be a long time before I rest between clean sheets once more"

"Will you stay in the army when the war is over?" "No I don't think so in fact; I'm sure I won't, there is much to do on my father's estate and I wish to settle down and consider raising a family. How about you; will you stay in Germany or, would you like to build a home elsewhere?"

"That will depend on several things Hugh most important will be the man who wishes me to share his life; where he decides to live, shall be my home. My coffee it is to your liking?"

“Yes thank you; tell me Ilsa is there anyone whom you regard as special in your life?”

“Ilsa her face showing nothing of her inner feelings answered; not until most recently, I am hoping he feels the same”

He gave thought to her answer; realization dawned and he felt incredibly happy.

“Would you like the idea of going to England on a permanent basis?”

“Sir the plane is about to make the drop”

“Thank you Cpl well done. Sorry Ilsa remember my last question let me know next time we meet to discuss our futures”

“You look happier than I’ve seen for a long time Ilsa?”

“Hedwig I feel certain he is going to ask me to marry him and I will say yes; of that there is no doubt” “Good luck

Ilsa I feel you have made a right choice me; I’m too old now to hope of finding another man to share my life”

“How about Hans he is your age and he always wants to chat with you?”

“Now him I would not mind he is kind and thoughtful works hard and he has a farm yes; I would not say no to him time will tell”

Rapidly the CO made his way onto the plateau pondering again over what news could be of such importance it merited risking the life of a pilot and his machine. The plane could now be clearly heard as it approached at low level proceeding over the massif at just above the tree tops. The pilot made his delivery and was gone.

Cpl Thompson handed over an oblong package obviously weighted to ensure no drift would occur,

“Thank you Cpl off to the kitchen with you and have something hot to eat or drink before you go off duty”

The CO made his way to his quarters and gave his attention to the package contents. First came a folded white envelope on which a coded message was written when decoded it read: Acknowledge immediately your receipt of this intelligence by sending codeword ‘AnvilStrike’ and the agreed security recognition. Referring to his code book he wrote a coded message then made his way to the radio room S/Sgt Evans send this immediately op immediate prefix ZZ. Returning to his quarters he opened the envelope in which was several hand written pages. The subject matter turned out to be specific orders issued on his signature by a very senior personage and witnessed by COS. Swiftly he set to work first he gave a signal to the radio room for Sunray minor 1 and 2 ‘Fresh Tea Has Brewed’ ‘StandOff” this being the agreed message that both squadrons were to suspend all operations and return to HQ without delay.

“Every thing OK sir”

“Yes thank you RSM just received new orders for Nemesis both squadrons are being stood down and returning here”

“There are two excellent piece of news the first item pleases me immensely you’re promotion to Captain’s rank has been approved. On returning to England you shall attend OTC then either; as requested by me, return to Nemesis or be posted elsewhere. The second a mail drop and pick up has been arranged for Wednesday/Thursday night of next week weather permitting. Both squadrons are returning here possibly Saturday late or early Sunday can you make sure all mail is ready to go Tuesday morning”

“You knew about my promotion?”

“General Soames did question me as to your suitability. I believe it is well deserved and not before time”

“Thank you for your confidence in my ability what will my role be now?”

“In compliance with these orders you’ll be commanding an operational group in the field. I’ve no doubts at all over your leadership capabilities but are you happy about taking on such a responsible role?”

“Very just a little overwhelmed that’s all” “The question now is your command team?”

“Would there be a possibility; though there HO, Pte Jones and Piper to L/Cpl. They make a brilliant explosives team. S/Sgt Evans I’d be happy to have him on my team gets a job done without fuss or asking too many questions? Hans would make an excellent 2ic he’s really showed his worth well thought of by the men to. That’s my choice for a command team?”

“You’re sure about Jones and Piper?”

“Definitely; they totally reliable under all conditions”

“Right let me give it some consideration; away and get your self properly dressed James, welcome to the officers mess”

“The CO returned once again to his new orders taking on board the awful realization that an even greater effort was to be asked of his command. There could only be one outcome; many of his command were going to be severely wounded; left crippled for life or, pay the ultimate price and there was no way in which to avoid this terrible fact”

“Sir a message has been received from both squadrons. ‘The winds of passage shall not dawdle 48’ I did check my decoding twice?”

“You have decoded it correctly well done it means the rest of Nemesis command are expected to arrive here by Sunday. Before you go S/Sgt Evans it has been suggested to me that you would be interested in a far more active role is this true?”

“Yes sir it is; radio work is interesting but, a little on the slow side for me”

“Would Cpl Issacs be happy accepting responsibility for communications?”

“I would say so; he is a fine operator, his log book is kept neat and tidy and he does not give cause for complaint”

“That’s helped me a great deal; thank you”

“Good morning Hugh; have you have been working all night?”

“Good morning Hans; yes it has been a long night with much to consider. The RSM has been promoted to Captain he will be commanding an operational group and has asked that you be his 2ic does that present any difficulties for you?”

“Not at all; The Captain is a good and honest man, I shall be very happy to serve under him”

“Great another worry solved let’s go and see if there is any breakfast ready”

“Captain Byron was already seated and they joined him.

“Congratulations on your promotion James and thank you for selecting me as your 2ic I’ll look forward to our working together”

“James, Hans the squadrons are returning here they should arrive by Sunday. It will be a bit of a tight squeeze might have to make use of the lower cave. I want to give them a decent rest and spend sufficient time going through these new orders with the commanders. The MO can also give them a medical so that come January they’ll be ready to commence operations again. Hans will you have a look at that small cave to see if like in the existing sleeping quarters a fire could be lit?”

“Certainly, it does have a few holes in the rock face I’m sure one will make a good chimney. Have you given any thought to Christmas?”

“Yes but I’m afraid its not going to be a very merry one strong drink; even if it was available, would be out of the question”

“Would you object to a mug of wine on Christmas day itself?”

“I’ve no objections; but no more than that, clear heads must be kept by everyone. But tell me Hans from where can wine be obtained? Were miles from the nearest habitation and if my sums are right at least 58 bottles would be needed to fill each mans mug?”

“Leave it with me Hugh let’s try to give the lads a treat a sup of wine but no spirits”

“James I’m going to agree to your suggested team members with one addition; Sgt Beamish. I wish to see them and also Cpl Issacs in my office at 0900 before then I need a breath of fresh air”

“Returning from his rounds of the Plateau Cpl Coles informed Cpl Issacs and Ptes Piper and Jones had reported as ordered”

“I’ll see Cpl Issacs first.

"Cpl Issacs are you happy with your position in the radio section?"

"Yes sir; I find the work is never boring and would like to receive advanced training?"

"That can be arranged now S/Sgt Evans is joining Captain Byron's group and I want you to take his place as Senior NCO in charge of communications. From today you're promoted to the rank of Lance Sgt prove yourself worthy and it will become substantive dismiss."

"Ptes Piper and Jones; Captain Byron has recommended that you be appointed to the rank of L/Cpl and he wants you both as part of his command team in charge of his explosives team. Are you willing; keeping in mind you're both married to accept this role. Pte Jones?"

"Yes sir and thank you" "Pte Piper?"

"Yes sir thanks very much"

"Keep your mind on the job in hand and don't take foolhardy risks. Report to Capt Byron for duty properly dressed dismiss"

"James those orders that have been received from London they seem to be causing the Colonel a great deal of concern have you any idea of General Soames intentions?"

"None at all but; I reckon the risks we've taken so far will be as nothing, compared with that which is yet to come"

"Thanks once again for having me as your 2i/c now I'm going to have a word with a few people and produce that wine"

"On Saturday evening whilst enjoying his supper the CO noticed Hans and a number of resistance men were

absent, James any idea where Hans and his men have gone?

“Not a clue but I do know he’s been gone since early this afternoon”

By the morning the missing men had returned and in the store room were left several small barrels and a number of sacks.

The Commander was on his morning rounds when he discovered them. “Cpl Tanworth what are in these barrels and sacks?”

“They were brought in by the resistance leader and some of his men about 0200 this morning. I believe it to be wine and fruit sir”

“Well I’m damned the man actually did find some. Cpl these items are now your responsibility put them out of sight and not a word to anyone”

“Sgt Beamish has one of the lower caves been prepared as additional sleeping quarters?”

“Yes sir complete with a fireplace; stock of wood and a few chairs blankets will be issued when they arrive”

“Sgt Issacs has there been any messages from the squadrons?”

“No sir, but there has been a lot of interference from another net; definitely German, a resistance operator is keeping a listening watch for anything that may involve this HQ”

“Excellent; keep up the good work”

Next he visited the hospital and Captain Rowlands who with Mr Ash his assistant over the past months had done tremendous work attending to the sick and wounded. It was not just members of Nemesis being treated; there were men, women and children of local villages and also

resistance groups receiving medical treatment. Morning Ian, Morning Ashley how's business?

"Quiet at the moment tomorrow will be rather different medical reports from the squadrons indicate several men need treatment as a follow on to that given by their medics"

"Well anything you need in the way of stores or equipment let Cpl Tanworth have a list and they will be included in the next supply drop. Remember to have mail ready for collection by Monday morning and I would like both of you to attend the Officers briefing on Tuesday at 0900 I have a strong feeling your work load will increase early in the New Year"

The Colonel stood at the entrance onto the plateau and breathed deeply of the invigorating cold fresh air it was a beautiful winter's morning it made him; despite his concern for the future well-being of his command, glad to be alive. He visited each look out post and gun position greeting the men with a smile and cheery good morning noting the extra layers of clothing; needed against the biting North Easterly wind which quickly chilled a man to the marrow of his bones. He was truly glad duty times had been amended to 1 hour on and 4 hours off. He could not afford men to be stricken with heavy colds or worse pneumonia. Finishing his rounds he strode back into headquarters.

"Hans will you join me for a cup of coffee in say 10 minutes; there is a matter on which I need your help?"

"Ilsa I am positive my feelings for you will never change and would be most honoured should you agree to be my wife?"

“She took his hands with a smile of pure happiness on her face Hugh; it will make me very, very happy to come and live in England as your wife. I have friends here who shall be missed but no family at all”

“Hans you can be first to congratulate us; Ilsa has just agreed to be my wife”

“It was expected good luck to you both. Ilsa be happy you’ve found yourself a good man and when it’s possible again remember to come back and visit”

“Hugh and I will not forget; now go and sit down I will fetch your coffee. Still smiling happy and content knowing her world was coming right with a bright and happy future to look forward to she made her way to the coffee pot with two large mugs”

“You look like the cat who’s sampled all the cream; did he ask you to marry him just now?”

“Yes Hedwig he did and I’m so; so happy”

“Well don’t keep him waiting for his coffee he might change his mind”

“Hans in the orders received several targets have been specified which must be taken out. To provide medical aid to the Squadrons this HQ has to move into a location approximately 30 – 40 miles from the port of Oulof on the French coast and located in a central position to the airfields of: Aulieon, Treliagn, and Balisae. There is also a specific rail goods yard complete with viaduct and a very large fuel dump. All are said to be well guarded by experienced troops needing careful planning before any assault can be made. Do you know of such a place?”

“I will need to look at the map on your office wall to confirm it but yes; I do know of a place a damn good

one well suited to your needs the present occupants won't object they've been there hundreds of years"

"How do you mean?"

"It's the catacombs beneath the ruins of an ancient Abbey. There is a spacious underground area that will take all of Nemesis with ease. Along the walls are tombs containing remains of an ancient church order"

"Just so long as they don't choose to take objection to us it will be fine. If you've finished your coffee let's go to my office and have a look at the map. Once we've established the location I would appreciate your guidance on the best possible route to take bearing in mind the loads to be carried"

The location chosen for establishing headquarters was seen to be some 43 miles from the coast; with the furthest target roughly 30 miles away providing; nothing had changed since last seen by Hans, it should prove ideal.

"Hans what are the chances of looking this place over in the 1st week of the New Year just to be absolutely certain? I do not want any one else made aware of our intentions?"

"Gunter and Karl would be best they know that area and are extremely reliable. Leave it with me I'll make arrangements for them to leave on the 5th of January and all things being equal they'll be back by the 10th with a full report"

"By the way Hans; thank you for the wine and fruit, believe me all the help you have given is truly appreciated. One day perhaps you could visit with Ilsa and me and enjoy a long holiday you'll be more than welcome?"

"I shall hold you to that my friend there are many places I would like to visit in England and have enough time to really enjoy the many beautiful towns and cities."

Now if you'll excuse me there are matters which must be attended to"

"Sir that radio station it would seem that movement of enemy troops and armoured vehicles by rail are to be increased in the New Year"

"Are you sure of this Sgt Issacs"

"Yes sir"

"Thank you and well done maintain a close listening watch"

Colonel Curry sat deep in consideration of the intelligence just received; it certainly explained the interest in the shunting/goods yard and viaduct, it provided a major rail link between Germany and France. A mission would have to be planned for January. He was roused from his thoughts by the eldest member of the resistance who despite his advanced years had made himself an asset well respected and liked by everyone;

"Excuse please. May I speak with you?"

"Certainly Herr Klaus how can I help you?"

In broken English a tragic story was unfolded; almost a copy of many the Colonel had already heard.

My grandson on his wedding day along with his bride to be; their parents, parents in law and their many friends had all died in a hail of machine gun fire. I was a few minutes late and this saved my life. The church was set on fire there was nothing anyone could do 70 people died that day for no reason at all. Herr Klaus opened a beautiful blue felt covered box these wedding rings were given to me for safekeeping I was to hand them over before the ceremony started. The other an engagement ring was handed down by my mother to my wife she gave up and committed suicide when our last born; a daughter, who brought us

nothing but happiness and great joy, the mother of my grandson was sexually savaged and killed by drunken soldiers, it is very old. You have shown much kindness to the people of my country and in their favour had to make awful; life involving decisions, that no man should ever be called upon to make. Now you have chosen Ilsa to be your wife. It would give real pleasure should you accept and use these rings for your betrothal and wedding?

"Herr Klaus that is really kind; how can I, they mean so much to you?"

"Please as a gift from someone who looks on you as more than just a friend?"

"Thank you: I'm sure that Ilsa like me will consider it an honour to wear them"

"Gods blessing be on you both"

The CO fiercely clenched his hands and uttered "Damn this bloody war and all its insanity"

"Are you alright Hugh thought you would be much happier than you look?"

"Hello James you've heard the news then?"

"Very happy for you don't forget I'm your best man or I'll not speak to you again. Now what's troubling you?"

"Herr Klaus has just related the story of his family and presented me with these rings requesting I make use of them. But he has lost so much and it makes me feel really angry that a blasted painter and decorator; endowed with just one attribute; a persuasive power of speech, could be capable of causing so much suffering to so many innocent people. There that's made me feel a lot better; let's go and have some coffee, help me to relax"

"Have you decided how you're going to proceed in the New Year?"

“More or less; still one or two very minor issues to resolve, by end of Monday once I’ve spoken to the squadron commanders all should be clear”

“Hello Ian, Ashley please take a seat and have some coffee”

“Thank you I’ve been checking through medical stores held and find there are a number of items required; nothing urgent, a supply on the next drop would be fine, Could you stress in your message to JCS the need for some stronger disinfectant. The last lot was of a very mild content and of no use to me in ensuring operating table and working surfaces are kept clean”

“Write down exactly what type of cleansing materials you require add the list of medical stores needed and it will be sent with the mail on Wednesday. Items most heavily used I would suggest a doubling of the totals asked for”

“Are you anticipating a high percentage of casualties then Hugh?”

“I can see no way of avoiding it; a large number of cases with severe wounding, in my opinion, will be a certainty”

“Three or four nurses would make a big difference no chance of those I suppose?”

“I think not Ashley; nice thought though”

“Sir a group of men estimate 20 + have been seen heading this way carrying wounded. Hans with S/Sgt Evans and 10 men have gone to investigate”

“Thank you L/Cpl Piper, Ian; better have your people prepare to receive casualties. Hedwig its probable these men will be in need of hot food and drink can you prepare something?”

“Not a problem Colonel is ready in 1 hour ok?”

“A resistance man entered breathing heavily message from ‘Hans’ sir he is bringing in Heimlich Müller a resistance leader with multiple grenade wounds to both legs and seven others with bayonet and bullet wounds”

“Sit down Ulrich how long before he reaches here? “Less than an hour the leader he is in very bad way” “James let the MO know what to expect”

Some forty minutes later Hans returned and they were indeed in a bad way.

“Hans get the wounded straight to the MO he’s waiting to receive them. Ulrich explain to these men hot food and drink will be ready shortly once they have been fed take them to the chamber below and get them bedded down. Speak with Cpl Tanworth he will issue blankets. There is plenty of wood so get a good fire going the poor buggers look half frozen”

“Colonel; the resistance leader Heimlich wishes to speak with you”

“Colonel Curry reading the expression on Hans face strode into the medical area. How is he Ian?”

“His chances are very poor indeed both his legs below the knee are shattered beyond repair they will have to be amputated there is also shrapnel wounds to his stomach were waiting to proceed but he insisted on speaking to you first”

In a voice barely heard and wracked with pain the resistance commander spoke “Colonel; Gustav Metz is my trusted lieutenant and lifelong friend I have told him and my men to accept your leadership. They are good men and will fight well for you. Tell Major Lovejoy I will have to delay my visit to Engl.....

“I think he’s passed out Ian”

“Ok leave him to us how he stayed conscious for so long is a miracle. Ashley with your knowledge of amputation will you take this case with Sgt Blake and Cpl Janus assisting. Rosina you and Ursula continue cleansing wounds ready for me to examine and treat?”

“I wish to speak to Gustav Metz?”

A tall well built man his face ruddy from a life spent outdoors strode forward: “I am Gustav Metz Herr Colonel how is my friend?”

“It will not be possible to save his legs but everything that can be done to save his life will be done; be sure of that. If you’re willing to accept me as your commander it must be clearly understood you and your men will follow without question the orders given by me or my officers and that includes the NCOs.

“That is the wish of Heimlich and on behalf of all the men thank you”

The Colonel felt the hardness of pure steel within this man as he shook his proffered hand.

In the morning when you and your men are rested I would like to learn how this terrible event happened. This is Captain Byron he will be your commanding officer. James it was a concern of mine that there would not be enough men to carry out the demands of JCS now; it is a worry no longer, meet Gustav Metz he and his men will form your command. Enjoy your food and have a good night’s rest.

“Hugh would you like me to fetch you some coffee it is fresh made?”

“Thank you Ilsa I’ll be in my quarters”

“Ilsa you probably know the sad story of Herr Klaus’s family today he told me and gave me these. In accepting

them I gave my word that it would be an honour for us to wear them was it right for me to do so?

“He would have been terribly hurt if you had not accepted his gift they meant so much to him. I shall be very proud to wear his mothers ring please my love place it on my finger so that all may know of my happiness and good fortune. Try to rest now you look so tired”

With thoughts of all that had to be done on the morrow after saying good night to Ilsa and a prayer that all would go well for the resistance leader the colonel wearily closed his eyes and slept.

It was the MO who roused him several hours later with news that an operation of over five hours duration had gone well. Heimlich was alive but under heavy sedation his men had also been treated and were now resting.

“Has he a good chance of recovery despite the trauma of losing both his legs?

“Should he live it will be down to Ashley; supported by his team he did a damned fine job of work. With consideration for similar situations arising; is it possible, that some extra medical staff could be brought in?

“A signal will be sent this morning it may be possible but I do have my doubts. This HQ will be moving in three weeks it will be tough on Heimlich undertaking a long journey. I’m going to have a word with Gustav and see if at all possible there is someone who could take him in and provide him with the care he needs. A medical pack could be left in support of his continuing treatment”

“I’m going to snatch a few hours sleep Hugh; Ashley and his team exhausted by their nights work are already deep in the land of Nod. Call me; not them, should medical help be needed. I’ll say a prayer that someone can be found

to look after our patient he's a very brave man from all I've heard of him"

After the MO left the Colonel rose washed and shaved then wrote and decoded a message addressed to Brigadier Carlisle. Knowing transmission time had to be kept short he made it brief; almost cryptic, stating his need of extra medical staff. Making it an operational immediate he gave it to the duty radio operator then went for his breakfast. Captain Byron, Hans and Gustav were there before him and greeted him with a cheery good morning.

"Good news about Heimlich Colonel the Doctors did a good job now he has a chance.

"Yes Gustav that is true; he does have a chance but, only if there is somewhere he can be taken. He needs nursing and that we cannot provide plus; there is the relocation of this HQ, the journey would most certainly end his life and that must be avoided. Only you or Hans can provide the answer and it must be a place of safety.

"Leave it with us Colonel there are several places known to us but first they must be checked out. With your permission Gustav and I will leave this morning?"

"Excellent be back in four days. James I need to see you and S/Sgt Evans after breakfast"

"He sat quietly enjoying the luxury of a strong mug of tea before commencing his daily round of the Headquarters area. He was roused from his reverie by Sgt Issacs a message from Major Lovejoy sir. It was a Sitrep with disturbing news: Shall join with you shortly. Three dead; five stretcher cases and eleven walking wounded have MO standing by. Damn and blast that's all I need. He rose and made his way to the MOs sleeping quarters. Sorry to disturb you Ian he showed him the signal. Once you have

assessed the medical condition of these wounded men let me have your report. Looks like you're going to have a busy day if you need help let me know. How is Heimlich?

"He's still under sedation due to his high level of pain but that should ease over the next two to three days"

"What about our other patients?"

"No problems there; keeping our eyes peeled for possible signs of infection, but they should be fit for light duties after a weeks complete bed rest"

"That is not good news; I need those men but not, at the expense of others keep me posted on their progress" This was a serious set back to future intentions; for certain, it meant a complete rethink of all his plans.

"James; Gustav's men must receive training in the use of explosives and our way of working as teams of two when deployed on an operation. Time is short be patient but work them hard get to it"

## CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

### *The Colonel is displeased*

Major Lovejoy arrived with his men and the Colonel was deeply shaken and also angered by seeing men under his command in such a dishevelled state. Physically; as could be expected after two months continuous operational duty, they were lean; hollow eyed and gaunt. He asked no questions; pay attention get your weapons and equipment cleaned inspection will be in one hour”

“Sir I protest these men are exhausted and need rest”

“Major from the state of their weapons and equipment they could also be dead very quickly if this HQ was to be attacked. I repeat inspection is in one hour. Cpl Coles show Major Lovejoy and his men where the bathing and sleeping accommodation is to be found”

Sgt Beamish find six men at the double and have the wounded moved into the sick bay.

“Captain Rowlands even to my untrained eye these men look to be in a very poor condition. What is your view please?”

“Appearances can be deceiving once their clothing has been removed and the bodies cleaned it may prove the injuries received are not all that serious. Let us hope so anyway or your proposed move to the coast could be delayed. I’ll give you a verbal report on each case in, say two hours”

“Thank you use Sgt Beamish and his men for as long as you need them”

“Hans, Gustav you have returned earlier than expected have you found a place for Heimlich?”

“Yes and its not to far away I estimate bearing in mind the slow pace of travel needed it would take no more than four hours. He will receive the best of attention by two elderly sisters both retired nurses and their brother a retired qualified pharmacist. All three give what help they can to injured and sick local people many of whom are engaged in resistance work”

“Excellent he shall make the journey as soon as he is well enough”

“Colonel could you possibly find room for 17 resistance men they are without proper leadership. There are also 5 women who have offered to work for you?”

“Do they understand English and where are they now?”

“Several speak perfect English the others have no difficulty in making themselves understood. Their in the kitchen”

“Come I shall speak to them there is need for extra men and these may prove the answer”

Making his way to the kitchen his silent prayer was that these men would mean his plans could remain unchanged.

The men and women stood as he approached them. He liked what he saw none were older than 30 and looked in the best of health. I am Colonel Curry you are welcome here please sit down. Ladies the work you would be asked to do here is mainly cooking and washing. Would you be happy in this work?

“Sir my name is Ulrika Selhurst I am registered nurse for four years is there injured men who need my help?”

“Yes there is I shall introduce you to our medical officer in a moment”

“Hans take the remaining women and introduce them to Hedwig”

“Should you men choose to stay here training will be given over the next few weeks in the use of explosives, weapons and the way this command operates. All I ask is that you pay attention and obey my officers and NCOs without question. Gustav ensure these men are fed and have a space to sleep. Hans; sleeping accommodation it is quite crowded can additional space be gained by making use of any of those smaller caves beneath us?”

“Should not be a problem Colonel”

“Good get them settled in” He turned to leave then turned back and spoke directly to one of the men; if my memory serves me right your name is Rolf Schmidt and you were a student at Oxford?

“That is correct but forgive me I do not remember you”

“A few years have passed since then but do you recall a certain day on the river when several rather merry young men during rag week ended up in the water?”

“You were there?”

“Indeed I was and; at the party afterwards, who was the young man who added a half bottle of Vodka to the punch eh? They were happier times then Rolf did you gain your degree in Forensic Sciences?”

“Yes sir I achieved top grades and hopefully one day shall be able to practice my skills”

“I’m sure you shall”

“Come Ulrika I shall take you to the sick bay” “Ulrika; this is Captain Rowlands Medical Officer and Lt Lawrence his assistant. Ian this is Ulrika Selhurst; a registered nurse of four years, she is kindly offering her help in nursing the wounded”

“Miracles do happen then Hugh she is most definitely welcome. Ashley; a medical gown for Ulrika and show her where everything is to be found”

“How’s the examination of the wounded progressing? “The stretcher cases all require surgery with three of them it is quite serious because of internal injuries. Ian shall be carrying out those operations starting in about an hour’s time. I shall be sorting out the knife wounds of which some are rather nasty due to infection from dirty blades penetrating deeply” All in all a busy night lies ahead. Major

James is arriving soon lets hope he does not bring more men requiring urgent attention. Sgt Beamish is a good man; never questioned an order given and he was a great help in getting the men undressed and into bed” “Ian

I’m going to grab myself a cup of tea if you need anything at all that’s where I’ll for the next half hour”

## CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

### *HQ LONDON*

“General another message from Nemesis; it’s an urgent request for additional medical personnel, needed for nursing a total of 17 wounded all of whom are in varying stages of recovery. Another three names have been added to the fatalities list standing now at five military and seven resistance men”

“Casualty figures set against actual achievement are lower than expected Brigadier. Heimlich Muller and his group joined forces with Major Lovejoy and did a splendid job of work destroying an ordnance convoy on its way to France losing only 5 men. Hans Bierman with RSM Byron as his 2ic played havoc with the rail links to Holland and France followed by a brilliant raid on a munitions factory without loss of men. Major James he really set that oil and fuel storage in Duisberg harbour on fire with a vengeance. Bomber crews engaged in a raid on the Mannesman Steelworks at Dusseldorf reported seeing the flames and explosions. The installation has still not been brought back into use nor have the power stations

located in the same area also totally destroyed. His group unfortunately did suffer several fatalities mainly resistance men. The PM has made known his delight at the success so far of 'Operation Nemesis' and also made it very clear; he requires that Colonel Curry be given all the help possible, to attain maximum results against the scheduled specific missions commencing January. Is the special stores and mail run being made ready?

"Yes sir all mail to go has been packed ready for loading along with those items suggested by you. RSM Humphries has been briefed and should arrive tomorrow morning. A Dakota has been assigned it will be flown by a pilot who has made several flights of this nature for SOE. The plane will be loaded and take off from Biggin Hill on Wednesday flying in and out under cover of massed bombers deployed on an air strike against Dortmund and the Ruhr"

"Excellent let's hope the clear weather holds" the General picked up his phone "Brigadier Chalmers – General Soames three of your best men are needed; must be well qualified with front line medical experience and of strong character for an ongoing operation, can't say more than that for security reasons. A senior and two junior NCOs preferably single and they need to be available by end of today?"

"Where have they to report to and what kit should they bring with them?"

"Brigadier Carlisle shall be at your office by 1000 this morning with all the details"

"Whilst you're with the Colonel see if you can acquire some extra blankets, Denim suits, medical gowns and gloves in fact anything that might be of help to Colonel"

*Walter Brown*

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Curry and his command. Problems should not arise if they do phone me immediately”

## CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

*SUNDAY 19 December 1943*  
*A message from London*

“Message from London sir”

“Cpl Coles find Sgt Beamish also Hans ask them to report immediately”

“Sgt Beamish – Hans the mail run is proceeding as planned; a large number of items are arriving and I would suggest selecting 30 men with broad shoulders and 2 junior NCOs for the task. Your recognition signal is ATG. What time do you plan on leaving tomorrow night?”

“Final mail collection is set for 1200 and departure for the field will be at 2000. Complete two thirds of the journey by Tuesday morning hide up till night - fall then onto the airstrip and wait for the plane”

“So; taking into account heavy loads are being carried you’ll arrive back here early morning or late evening on Saturday?”

“Barring unavoidable delays yes sir”

“Try to make it early morning its Christmas day a good time for the men to receive mail from home. Have a good trip and stay out of trouble”

Colonel Curry went to the sick bay first port of call on his daily rounds. “Good morning Ian – Ashley there is good news for you they are sending an additional three medics to form part of your team plus your much needed sterilizing items. Who the men are or what stores they are sending could not be mentioned in the signal extra men have been requested to act as bearers, so it must be a sizeable amount. Sgt Beamish and Hans go to meet the plane tomorrow night and are expected to return here during sometime on Saturday. How is the wounded progressing?”

“Very well indeed the infected knife wounds have started to heal with no sign of secondary infection and with bed rest of say 14 days they’ll all be fit for duty again. Heimlich still suffers considerable pain but is definitely improving you can plan to move him to his new home in ten days time”

“Your new nurse Ulrika she is settling in?”

“Very much so; knows her job and gets on with it, definitely a hit with the men but she stands no nonsense from them and they respect her for it. Rosina and Ursula are also delighted to have someone else of the same profession sharing the workload and are fast becoming firm friends making a very strong; intelligent and hard working nursing team”

“That is good; excellent in fact, and with the arrival of the additional medics; one of whom will be needed for Major James and Captain Byron’s group, you’ll be well placed to deal with any emergency that arises. Major James

arrived last night how did you find the condition of his men?

“Apart from some superficial wounds there were no problems at all”

“I’ll be out on the plateau if you need me; meeting tomorrow at 0900, I would like both of you to attend”

“Cpl Tanworth what’s the situation as regards blankets and batteries”

“Seven blankets still in stock; 20 batteries in reserve and 8 boxes of spare valves sir”

“Have you checked the squadron radios?”

“All radio equipment including spare valves has been thoroughly cleaned and tested and are in good working order sir”

“Good man you’re doing an excellent job managing the stores keep it up”

“Cpl Coles I shall be on the plateau for the next hour should anyone need me”

“Hugh may I join you for a breath of fresh air? “That would give me great pleasure Ilsa; I would love to hear of your hopes for our future life together” Whilst visiting the lookout posts he noted with pride the degree of respect now being paid to Ilsa who was firmly established as the; ‘Colonels Lady’. It was also noted by him that though it was still bitterly cold the men were all alert and maintaining a sharp and constant lookout. There was no doubt in his mind *Nemesis* as a fighting force was one to be reckoned with.

“Ilsa did talk and the commander listened enjoying the sound of her voice after a short pause she turned to him and asked: am I expecting too much in what is still a very uncertain future?”

“Not at all Ilsa it would seem your dreams and desires are very much the same as mine. I too would like a nice comfortable home with children and together; once this war has finished, that is what we shall strive for. Now let’s go and get warmed up with a good strong cup of tea”

“So you’re definitely not staying in the Army? “No I’ve had enough; now I’ve found the right woman to love and share my life with, I just want to settle down and live a quiet life with no responsibilities other than providing for my home and family”

“That gives me great peace of mind and makes me feel secure and very happy. I could not stand the thought of you being away from home for long periods of time fearful of receiving the worst possible news”

In the kitchen they were greeted by the three commanding officers enjoying tea.

“Good morning everyone, thought you would all still be resting?”

“Hugh I will fetch you some tea”

“Thank you; a signal has been received the mail run is going ahead as planned so make sure the men have their letters handed over to Sgt Beamish by 1200 tomorrow. The MO is being given additional staff and from the message it seems quite a large quantity of stores is also being sent”

“James how are Heimlich’s men reacting to the training”

“Very well indeed; our lads have taken on the responsibility under the guidance of S/Sgt Evans and the junior NCOs. Very keen to learn they are and they’ve formed into teams of two making their own choice of partner. From the laughter and ribald remarks made you’d

think they'd known each other for years. Here's the list of teams forming my squadron"

"You're totally happy then; that is good, pay particular attention to movement by stealth, now; what about you David the MO tells me your men will be fit and well by end of January are there any changes you'd like to make?"

"I've no complaints nor do I wish to change any of the teams"

"John is your squadron performing well?"

"If possible would like to replace Ptes Mathews and Greenwood their highly nervous when handling explosives and in a fire-fight against seasoned troops they started to fall apart"

"There are two young men itching to leave HQ they are Ptes Sully and Woodbank shall I have a word with them or leave it to you?"

"Leave it with me I shall have them meet their partners and then carry out some exercises working them together as a team. I'll let you know if there's a problem"

"Excellent meeting tomorrow at 0900 Senior NCOs and resistance leaders will also attend"

The commander rose and went to his quarters he was deeply concerned over Major Lovejoy on two counts first; the condition of his men and their equipment on his return from operational duty second, reaction to the question he'd asked about his men. They had suffered wounding and he should have raised a query on fitness. "Cpl Coles ask the MO to come and see me"

"Ian in strict confidence you gave Major Lovejoy along with his men a physical examination on their return. Was there anything untoward that you noticed in his manner?"

“Are you asking for an opinion on his fitness to command?”

“Yes; I’m not sure why, he gives me the impression of being tightly wound up and like a clock spring; one more turn of the key will result in a breakdown and it’s causing me concern”

“Well nothing showed when examining him; no nervous twitching or ticks nor stammering or hesitancy in his speech so, based on my findings yes he is fit to command however a word of caution; my knowledge of psychology is limited, I could be missing signs that would be visible and easily read by a specialist specialising in the workings of the human brain”

“Thank you for your reassurance Ian”

“Glad I could help now I’ll get back to Heimlich were redressing his wounds to make him comfortable for the night”

Despite his misgivings there was nothing he could do; the officer would have to continue as a commanding officer, he had no one else.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

### *Future intentions are made known*

“Good morning gentlemen shan’t keep you long. This command will redeploy in the 2nd week of February. Operationally it will face stern challenges against targets that are strongly defended by well trained and seasoned troops. It is not my intention to make each specifically named target known to everyone involved instead each squadron shall be briefed separately. Briefings will commence tomorrow at 1000 hours starting with Major James and Captain Byron. Major Lovejoy shall be on Wednesday. Officers Senior NCOs and Resistance men will be fully briefed given maps and all available intelligence on and about their targets. It is imperative full reconnaissance and observation of each target is carried out before an assault is made. Information regarding assigned tasks must not become common knowledge this is to prevent an Officer; Senior NCO or, other rank that falls into enemy hands from divulging their fellow squadron’s location and intentions. You must make this fact very clear to your men. From today I shall expect to see each squadron hard

at work preparing for their next offensive. Explosive and timers will be drawn 2 days before departure. Captain Rowlands I will not interfere or give instruction on the workings of your medical team however; the worst possible scenario must be catered for. There is much to prepare and make ready so let's get to it"

"Well John it must be said that briefing did not inspire me with a confidence of living to enjoy a future yet to come. As Zic have you been shown these new orders?"

"No David I have not but; I can understand his reasoning our numbers for carrying out the coming operations which, are obviously going to play a vital role in the success of future plans for the invasion of Europe made by JCS, is limited; he does not want men squandered by taking an unwarranted risk of information becoming widely known through careless talk or by a person or persons who are captured"

"You believe these intended targets are going to present us with a high degree of difficulty and be of extreme danger for us all?"

"Yes James I do; but if careful attention is paid to all that Hugh tells us, that danger will be considerably reduced. Surely after all the years we've been working with him you can see he is only trying to ensure each and every man has the greatest possible chance of survival. It's up to us to see that happens so I suggest a start is made right now. Sgt Major Robinson, Sgt major Carter, S/Sgt Evans, and Sgt Longstaff form four teams; commencing at last light today, each team shall act the part of alert well trained enemy troops guarding a valuable site against possible attack. Teams shall take it in turn trying to surprise them. The art of stealth and working in complete silence must be

practised and continue to be practiced until it becomes second nature. Hans I will bring you up to date on your return. David my men shall use the Eastern quarter of the forested area on the plateau for their exercises”

“No problem John I’ll keep well clear using the Northern end. How about after a weeks training our skills are practiced against each other?”

“Excellent idea it will certainly help to highlight areas of weakness which can then be worked on thank you”

“James let us fill our mugs then; find a quiet spot, there are matters I must discuss with you”

Over the next three days time passed swiftly for the commander of Nemesis Initial briefing of his command teams had gone well including several lengthy discussions on important issues raised following a study of maps and deployment briefs. This pleased him immensely for it showed his commanders were taking their responsibilities and assignments seriously which boded well for the future?

Major Lovejoy had been advised in a confidential and private meeting of the COs fears over his fitness to continue as a commanding officer deployed on difficult and dangerous missions responsible not only for his own life but also his men. He made it clear that should he wish to continue with Nemesis in a lesser role responsible for the protection and defence of HQ it would not be held against him.

“Hugh I’m truly sorry for having given you cause for concern but I shall be fine. My reason for not being on the ball was my seeing several children killed in a most brutal and sadistic manner whilst carrying out an attack on that

power station in Mannheim. It roused memories of my own family”

“David why did you not come and talk to me good grief man you know from past experience that I’ll always make time to listen when a man under my command is troubled? Go and get your command team and I’ll brief you on your future deployment bring some tea as well my throats drier than the desert”

“Thanks Hugh for everything be back asp”

## CHAPTER FORTY

### *A mission of Mercy is agreed*

Now he was sitting quietly in his office extremely pleased Major Lovejoy was no longer a cause for concern and going over details for the planned movement of headquarters to a new location. He was roused from his thoughts by harsh demanding voices. Striding from his office into the main cave area to find Gustav confronted by three poorly dressed strangers visibly in a high state of distress.

Their voices stilled as he approached them; “what is the problem Gustav?”

“Colonel a serious problem for us the Germans know your command is hiding somewhere in this locality. These men are from the village of ‘Wetz’ not many miles from here last night an estimated 30 strong well armed force of SS troops entered the village and rounded up the entire population. The officer then made it very clear; should information on the precise location of this hideout not be given to them within three days they intend to kill and burn the homes of everyone in the village. Purely as

an example to emphasise their intention 5 villagers have already died at their hands two were boys a mere 12 and 14 years old”

“Tell me how these men avoided capture or did the Germans ask them to bring us their message?”

These men were returning home from working in the fields saw what was happening and hid close enough to the captured villagers to overhear all that was said. At no time were they in the hands of the enemy”

“On leaving their hiding place they could have been spotted, were they followed?”

“Colonel; Men are backtracking and searching the area any followers will be found and dealt with”

“It is certain these people will be executed were I not to surrender?”

“There can be no doubt at all it would not be the first village and its people to suffer this fate and it will not be the last. Should you decide not to help then I and men of the resistance will depart immediately. It cannot be allowed to happen”

“Cpl Coles find the officers and senior NCOs have them report at once”

“Gustav please do not be offended I must ask are these men to be trusted bearing in mind the seriousness of the situation for their family and friends”

“Yes Colonel these villagers are honest God fearing people who would not knowingly betray anyone?”

“Explain to these men it is my intention to effect a rescue of their village and its people but they must remain here until the operation has been completed”

“The clearly shown signs of pure gratitude on their upraised faces convinced the Colonel he had made the

right decision. Gustav how long will it take to reach the village?

“Two hours maybe less but not more”

“Are you familiar with the area surrounding ‘Wetz’?”

“No but several men of the Heimlich group know it well”

“Select 4 of them make sure they are armed. They are to carry out a full reconnaissance of the village and surrounding area making note of buildings being used by the enemy officer in charge, sentry and machine gun posts and any other detail which may prove of value. Have one of these men draw up a map of the village showing its main landmarks especially the church where the hostages are being held and the route to be taken to the village. On completion of their task they will conceal themselves in a position roughly 3 miles from the village there they will await arrival of the rescue force. Make it clear to them they must remain unseen and there must be no heroics. Have them ready and on the way in 30 minutes. You are to remain here report when the detail have left and bring the map with you.

Gustav left at the double silently uttering a silent prayer of thanks for the Colonel's response to a plea for help.

The Colonel addressed his officers and senior NCOs; “these people are from the village of ‘Wetz’ because of our presence here the residents and their homes have no future, they have been told unless information of this HQ's actual location is supplied everyone young and old will be shot and their village totally destroyed by fire. I am faced with two choices; move leaving the villagers and their homes to a certain fate or; help them and prevent a total unwarranted slaughter taking place. My feeling due to assistance given

making our task here possible they should receive our help. Do you all agree?

There was no dissent.

“Thank you, for this operation due to future commitments only one officer and two senior NCOs can be spared. I suggest putting your names into a hat and let me select three.

“Colonel may the decision be ours?”

“Not a problem when the result is known those taking part will choose 40 volunteers made up of resistance men, 4 junior NCOs and ORs. Choose you’re best men for the job it is likely to be dirty and murderous it’s definitely not a task for the squeamish. No time must be wasted it must be quick and incisive. 4 resistance men have been sent to reconnoitre the village and surrounding area. They will await the arrival of the rescue force at an agreed meeting point roughly 3 miles from the village they will supply full intelligence on the situation within the village and also surrounding area. I have a map here drawn by a man from the village the officer leading the rescue attempt will collect it from me. Prepare and make ready travel light but take plenty of ammunition and grenades also a portable radio. Departure time is 1900 I shall expect you to report your success by midnight and return here no later than 0200. S/Sgt Hylands will provide medical aid and Rolf Schmidt will act as guide.

“Hugh your supper is waiting”

“On my way Ilsa”

The Colonel enjoyed his meal and was describing various aspects of English life to Ilsa when he was interrupted by Major Lovejoy.

“I require the map of ‘Wetz’ and would you like to speak to the men before they leave?”

“Thank you David I will. He cast his eye over the rescue force with their blackened face and hands missing nothing his officer had indeed chosen well. Your mission tonight is to rescue a village from members of Hitler’s elite force the SS who have been responsible for many acts of a sadistic and brutal nature against innocent people. Remember; regardless of any strong feelings you may have; you are trained soldiers, not savages. There’ll be a hot meal waiting for you all on your return. Good luck and God speed. Carry on Major.

## CHAPTER FORTY ONE

### *A night to forget*

With Rolf guiding them and setting a medium pace to preserve energy it took less than two hours to reach the rendezvous point finding the reconnaissance team waiting. They had done their job well and it took very little time to decide upon the most effective plan of attack. Swiftly he gave his orders Helmut with Karl guide Sgt Major Robinson and his men to the North end of the village take out the two sentries and the machine gun post leaving two teams of men as lookouts. Proceed through the village 4 teams to each side and as you progress find and take out the enemy. I will do the same from the Southern end and meet up with you halfway. Rolf with the four men of the recon team secure the safety of the villagers holding them in the church until the all clear is given. Once the mission has been accomplished all traces of SS troops having been in this village must be removed. This hopefully will cause confusion amongst senior German staff officers. Rolf you have a plan for disposing of enemy dead and their transport?

“Yes Major there is a very old mine exploration shaft known to be several hundred feet deep they shall be buried there. The young men of the village and members of this force with your permission shall carry the bodies using makeshift stretchers. The troop’s vehicles are to be driven into the waters of the worked out quarry. They will need deep sea divers to find them”

“Excellent everybody is clear on what they have to do the Password is ‘Luckyme’ answer ‘Luckyyou’ right lets get cracking and no bloody heroics or I’ll have your guts for garters.

Silently the Sgt Majors group like shadows of the night stole forth reaching a point from where the sentry and machine gun post could be observed.

Cpl Naylor with Ulrich takes the sentry Connolly and Hislop you deal with that MG.

A startled sentry saw a shadow rise from the ground then a band of steel encircled his throat choking off his startled challenge of ‘We gos d..... (Who gos there) He struggled in vain; the vice like grip of Ulrich never slackened, whilst the Cpl used his blade to finish him, he felt the body go limp as life drained away and let the dead man fall.

At the MG post manned with two strapping enemy soldiers who where obviously no strangers to the art of close quarter combat a fierce struggle had ensued one uttered an expletive ‘Mich bumsen das su sind’ (Fuck me who are you) then; Mein Gott englishkommando the last words he spoke as his throat was slashed wide open and he joined his comrade face down with his life blood draining fast forming a pool beneath his body.

“Well done lads. I’ll take the right hand side Cpl Naylor the left and keep it quiet.

The men of ‘Nemesis’ well practised in the art of movement by stealth found many of the enemy asleep; wakened by hard and callused hands across their mouths they demanded, ‘Wer du sind’ (who are you) they died still not knowing who had dealt them a final thrust of a razor sharp knife.

It seemed only minutes before they reached the agreed point halfway down the narrow cobbled street at the ‘Bierhaus’ (Beer House or Pub) in fact over an hour had passed.

“Ok rest easy now but keep alert if you must talk keep it low”

Major Lovejoy with S/Sgt Evans and Gustav; once the sentry and MG post had been disposed of, made their way swiftly and silently to the house taken over by the German officer as his headquarters finding; as they burst unceremoniously through the door, the Kapitan (Captain) wide awake enjoying the company of his Feldwebel (Sergeant). Seine verdammten englischen Schweinhund (It’s those damned English pig dogs) he roared as he reached for his weapon a Luger pistol lying on the table close to his hand. He died with a single shot to the head. His Sgt received a; savage stunning blow, to the forehead, from the butt of S/Sgts Evans weapon delivered with expertise and great force. His neck was then broken by a sharp twist of the head. No one else reported Gustav returning from his search of the house.

Leaving the house they heard loud curses in German and English coming from next door they entered to find a right royal battle of boot and fist taking place. S/Sgt Evans

drove his boot with considerable force between a pair of legs in an upward arc; making contact as intended, with the testicles of an enemy soldier; a giant of a man who was pounding Pte Bushel's head against the wall. He ceased his efforts to demolish the wall with an agonizing howl and as he turned to face his new attacker; had his skull cracked wide open by a crushing blow from Pte Logan's weapon butt. Sinking to his knees he asked 'Mein liebevoller Gott warum? (My loving God why me) The Major first deflected a dagger aimed at his S/Sgts back receiving a long gash on his upper arm then shot their assailant square in the face. He turned to find Gustav defending himself against an enemy of huge proportions and as ugly as sin. He dove into the man bringing his full weight to bear driving him to the floor and mortally wounding him with a pistol shot as he did so, he got to his feet realising he had received a second knife wound to his arm.

Franz, Johann and Erich also bleeding from several knife cuts to the body had dealt with three more a fourth who was trying to make good his escape via the window was mortally wounded when a knife thrown by Pte Sully embedded itself in his back.

"You all right Bushel? "Got any aspirin S/Sgt?"

"Ok take a five minute breather wash any knife wounds and apply bandages where necessary. When you've finished clearing the rest of these houses; those that need to, find S/Sgt Hylands. Well done all of you your doing a grand job"

"I reckon Gustav and I owe you a debt of gratitude for what you did in there Major it took real guts. I suggest the

medic be found and have those wounds of yours cleansed and dressed; definitely needs stitching”

Resistance men made good this opportunity to avenge themselves against the Waffen SS troops the most hated and feared of all Hitler’s soldiers. The feelings of the squaddies seeing them at work were; thank God they’re on our side.

“Herr Major; Karl Junge of the Heimlich group, there is a problem two enemy soldiers possibly three have been taken somewhere by several of the young men, a search for them is being made now”

As he finished making his report blood curdling screams of someone suffering the extremes of pure agony and terror broke upon their ears.

“What in Gods name is going on?”

“They hurried down a side street going in the direction of the screaming and were brought to a halt outside a wood store by several resistance men headed by Helmut, Karl and Gunter “Please Major don’t go in there; we beg of you, leave it with us”

“Gunter I need to know what is happening out with it.

“Earlier on today two young 16 year old twin girls and three of their friends were subjected to many hours of brutal sexual abuse and their mothers shot whilst trying to defend them. The girls all died hours later from internal injuries; suffering intense agony, Brothers and boy friends of the girls saw the soldiers taking them away from the church. Entering a house in which they were sleeping during the raid they recognised them and have taken their revenge using woodsmen’s axes. Do not worry all signs of what as happened here shall be removed”

The Major looked steadily at the men for several long moments; "I shall have to note this incident and when reporting to the Colonel shall explain it happened due to a temporary loss of control brought on by immense anger and grief. Believe me he will understand and nothing more shall be said. Rolf informs me it has been decided the residents will join with relatives or friends until all possible threat to their safety has passed as soon as they have tidied the village. This leaves a dozen young men who wish to join our group and return to HQ with us correct?"

"Yes Major"

You have one hour in which to complete your tasks. Report when ready to move"

"Cpl Stone message to HQ mission accomplished no fatalities nine walking wounded"

"He strode back to the main street and sat upon a wall outside the village pub and taking his notebook from his pocket made brief entries describing events that had happened during the raid. These would help him when writing his full report.

"Sir may I speak with you please"

"A woman stood before him "certainly please come sit down"

"No please you come with me?"

"One moment; Rolf this women wishes me to go somewhere with her and I may need you to translate.

She led him to the church where the villagers stood with small cases and bundles containing possibly clothing or precious items they would be taking with them at their feet.

A frail elderly man a minister of the church struggled to his feet "Herr Major this village and its people wish to

say thank you for saving our lives and ask you to accept these gifts. Stacked to one side on a medium sized cart were several large cheeses, hams, bottles of wine, loaves of bread encased in flour sacks and many, many other items. Sir you have so little and will need this food for yourselves how can I take it from you?

“As you see there are two large wagons heavily laden with all that is needed by the village people. The bread is less than a day old the Germans demanded we make it for them. Now they do not need it; God have mercy on them, it may be some time before a return is possible if you do not accept it much disappointment will be felt and the food shall be wasted. The donkey and cart will be taken by our friend Rolf to a local farm”

Taking the mans gnarled and work worn hand in his “Please give my thanks to everyone in your village have a safe journey and let us all continue to pray for happier times soon thank you”

The minister replied; “Das segnen der frohen weihnachten unt der Götter ist auf der aller”

“He’s giving us all Gods blessing and wishing everyone a merry Christmas.

“Please wish them the same from us all and a happy new year”

“Der Herr Major Und seine männer danken dir, dir frohe weinachten Und ein glückliches neues jahre ganz wünschend”

Rolf it seems you now have a four legged friend be gentle with him; S/Sgt the men are to be on parade outside the pub ready to move out in 15 minutes” he strode away not wishing them to see how deeply; emotionally moved he was. Damn Hitler and his bloody war”

S/Sgt Hylands are the men fit to march?

“Yes sir, all the wounded have been treated 3 only will need further examination by the MO”

“Pay attention; each and every one of you has worked and worked well this night several of you exceptionally so and this fact shall be entered in my report to the Colonel. Thank you, Pte Mathews and Bushel also Franz and Johann will travel and assist Rolf with the cart. Right its Christmas day tomorrow and mail is expected so let’s move out”

## CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

### *Christmas Day 1943*

The mail and stores had arrived just before midnight on Friday much earlier than expected. Colonel Curry and his men were surprised and delighted at the unexpected arrival of RSM Humphreys the man whose training and advice had helped protect their lives and they greeted him with a real and honest respect and made it known he was most welcome.

The MO and Lt Lawrence could not believe their good fortune at being given 4 additional highly trained staff each with several years of field hospital experience.

L/Cpl Tanworth had taken into his custody the huge amount of stores that had arrived and he had set to work assisted by two Ors checking that all the items listed had been received. It was 0400 hours before he was happy that the listings were all correct and all items were in good order. Medical stores had been stacked separately ready for handing over to the MO and the paperwork all prepared. He turned to Pte Simmons and Lacey; "you've been an

enormous help, first chance when were back in Blighty I'll buy you a pint"

"Thanks Cpl shall look forward to it, now for some kip goodnight"

Aidan Tanworth 21 from Stockport in Lancashire whose early life had been spent in a Dr Barnardos children's home. He was a regular soldier by choice and of good intelligence and since basic training in early 1939 had served with Colonel Curry. He'd never been able to hold beer, hard drink or wine and this had been his downfall landing him in hot water on more than one occasion for being drunk and disorderly. It was a fight with two sailors putting him in hospital for over three weeks which made him give up drinking. Ever since true to his word he had not touched a drop of liquor working hard to improve himself and gain the respect of his senior officers. It was now 18 months since being appointed L/Cpl his next step up would be substantive Cpl. His ambition; to reach the rank of S/Sgt or higher if possible, to make certain of a reasonable pension before his 22 years with the colours was completed.

Billy Piper and Hugh Jones had just finished reading the last of their many letters and both appeared to be in a state of shock.

"What's up with you two then don't tell me they've both run off with a Yank?"

"No Danny Hugh and I are becoming fathers next year"

"Now that is a shame I feel sorry for the poor mites fancy having either of your for a Da?"

Danny Bushel instantly regretted his words for Huw sat on him and Billy thrust a huge clenched fist under his nose “what was that you said?”

“The RSM entered the sleeping accommodation “what’s this then Cpl Piper NCOs threatening a Pte this will never do?”

Coming swiftly to attention “Nothing like that sir just a bit of fun”

“Pte Bushel is that true”

“Yes RSM they told me about becoming a Dad next year and I was taking the Mickey”

“I thought you had taken enough punishment during the mission that bruise to the side of your face is a beauty. Carry on Cpl Piper but go easy on him he’s still a little damp behind the ears. I shall expect an invite to wetting the babies head at the first opportunity. He walked away a smile on his face more than happy with his lot.

“Sorry Billy, Huw didn’t mean it honest”

“Don’t be daft Danny Huw and I wouldn’t harm you; remember were invited to your wedding, do you reckon a few choice stories could be told to his unfortunate bride Huw?”

“Most definitely how about when that fraulien was giving him the come on with those big soft brown eyes of hers at that bakery in Hamelin If he’d been on his own who knows what might have happened”

“Aw come on; you wouldn’t” “You’ll have to wait and see won’t you?”

Colonel Curry addressed his officers, RSM, Senior NCOs and the resistance leaders. For those not engaged on essential duties today and also tomorrow will be one of relaxation. This does not mean Vigilance shall be relaxed;

sentries on the Plateaux and lookouts in the surrounding area must be maintained. Officers and resistance leaders will serve the men and the ladies; who have been hard at work since early this morning preparing, what promises to be a right royal feast, their Christmas dinner and also a mug of wine before sitting down themselves? As you know Major Lovejoy at his insistence took command of a mission to rescue the village people of 'Wetz' from the Waffen SS. He gave a full report of the action taken but it was not entirely honest. I have learnt from others of the active part which he played in several incidents during the operation by laying his own life on the line to ensure the safety of his men. I shall make strong representation that his bravery must be recognised. I have also given careful consideration to recommendations made by him and have also proposed Helmut, Rolf, Karl, Gunter, Sgt Major Robinson and S/Sgt Evans be commended for leadership and courage shown during the operation. A strong request that several Ors and resistance men also receive awards has been included. During the mission there was one episode which did not afford me pleasure at all however, due to the circumstance leading up to the final outcome nothing more shall be said and it will not be taken further. Rolf will you make that known to the young men involved and let them know of my deep regret for their tragic loss. Pass the word round everyone is to save some of their wine for a toast to his majesty the king. Hans, Hedwig asked me to pass on a message not sure what it means though; please make my Christmas the best ever. That is all gentlemen. RSM I would like to see you in my office please.

“Well done David if there was a Pub available I'd buy you a very large scotch”

“My congratulations as well there has been some talk amongst the men and from what I’ve heard you deserve it”

“Thank you John you to James; I hope the lads were not saying to much, they all deserve rewards for they acted like true soldiers every one of them including the resistance men. When were back home there will be a party at my expense and we’ll all get gloriously merry”

David you have my gratitude also for the manner in which you dealt with the young men of the village. May I come to your party?

“Of course Hans all those of the resistance who can make it will be welcome. By the way what’s with you and our chief cook?”

“Don’t laugh but she wants to marry me and I’m beginning to think it might not be a bad idea”

“I believe it’s a brilliant idea just think an excellent cook and plenty of warmth on a cold winter’s night what more could a man ask for”

“Thank you David I shall keep that in mind” “Cpl Coles find Cpl Tanworth have him wait in your office till I send for him”

“RSM possibly you will recall young Tanworth and his efforts to succeed during training?”

“Indeed sir excellent soldier senior NCO material in my opinion”

“He is in with Cpl Coles at the moment it is my intention to give him a promotion I feel he richly deserves wheel him in please”

“L/Cpl Tanworth it has been reported to me that on your own initiative you worked through the night checking those stores which arrived where as listed; prepared all the

paperwork and, also separated and checked the medical stores ready for handover to the MO this morning is this true?

“I was given the help of two men sir their help made it possible.

“Continuously over this past 3 years your willingness to work hard and accept responsibility has been noted and commented on. In that period you have striven hard to improve your education and achieved ‘O’ levels in English and Mathematics. During our training in Wales, Scotland and at Ringway Airport standards attained by you were exceptionally high. Based on this record of achievement and also recommendations received it gives me great pleasure to promote you to the rank of substantive Cpl congratulations and keep up the good work” RSM march him out then come and join me on my daily tour of HQ and you can tell me how you’ve ended up here as a member of Nemesis”

Cpl Tanworth returned to his stores delighted with his good fortune “hello young Aidan what’s making you so happy then?

“Well Tim just had a Christmas present from the CO he’s promoted me to full Cpl what do you think of that then?

“He met Timothy Collins a shy and retiring person on his first day at the children’s home, they had become firm friends and joined the army together. Whereas Aidan had signed up for 22 years Tim had agreed to only 5 years and would be leaving at the end of hostilities. During training Aidan had been protective of Tim who was gentle in his ways and had no liking for real violence but; he possessed real courage and determination, which came to the fore

when he was pushed to far as many a person; to their regret, had found out.

“Congratulations Aidan do you fancy a game of chess?”

“Definitely first lets see if a mug of tea can be scrounged from the kitchen”

As they made their way towards the first of the guard posts the RSM told how Colonel Keddy; commander of the training camp, had been requested by Brigadier Carlisle to enquire if he would be interested in volunteering to join Nemesis filling a vacancy as RSM. That's when I learned of Captain Byron's well deserved promotion. He did offer me two days in which to decide but I declined saying I would accept the posting. For over three years I'd been involved with specialist training and had become bored of following the same routine day in day out; I needed a change. Having met the officers NCOs and men again there is no regret and any doubts there may have been about my decision have gone completely”

“You've no family ties then?”

“None sir still looking for a woman who'd have me; I'd even accept a ready made family, if the right one came along”

“You're a young man still at 34 plenty of time yet. Now it's almost time to go and serve dinner lets go and prepare ourselves it will take some time to serve them all”

Several huge coppers had been liberated from deserted homes and scoured with earth and water until spotlessly clean into three of these had gone; for the main course, a game stew of wild fowl, meat, mixed vegetables and herbs. For desert the kitchen staff realising the quantity of eating apples they had been given would never be enough to go

round; had stewed them, adding some wild berries and suitable herbs. The smell emanating from the coppers permeated the whole cave area even penetrating into the sleeping quarters it was a truly magnificent; delicious, mouth watering aroma.

Just after 1300 the word went round that dinner was about to be served and no-one wasted anytime in taking hold of their mess tins, mugs and eating utensils and heading for the kitchen.

Everyone received an ample portion including a mug of wine and a chunk of bread brought back from "Wetz" which even though it had lost its freshness was still thoroughly enjoyed. Voting it the best meal ever; the Colonel proposed a vote of thanks to the kitchen staff and those men of the resistance who had taken time and trouble to gather in the ingredients and in time honoured fashion three rousing cheers rang through the caverns.

Huw Jones with a fine tenor voice started singing a favourite carol and soon everyone had joined in. Several chess sets were brought out and a match commenced amongst those with knowledge of the game. Games of cribbage, draughts and cards were being played with officers and senior NCOs joining in. Some just sat or lay quietly on their makeshift beds their thoughts many miles away.

"Hans and Hedwig the chief cook had disappeared shortly after lunch and did not re-appear until well into the afternoon. When they did appear both looked extremely happy passing on the good news that when it became possible to return home they would be married"

The Colonel also took time from his many duties to spend a few hours with his wife to be. Though it was cold

a walk was enjoyed and plans were discussed for their future together before darkness; and a distinctly, icy wind blowing from the NE drove them into the relative warmth of the caves.

It had been a good day for Nemesis force spent in the valued companionship of friends; thoroughly enjoyed by all it was a Christmas that would never be forgotten.

Even in the midst of War life must be lived or there can be no future.

*29th of December 1943*  
*New Orders are received*

The sound of a plane flying extremely low at speed across the Massif brought the Colonel wide awake and onto his feet. In minutes he was booted and dressed shrugging on his greatcoat as he strode rapidly towards the exit onto the Plateaux. A sentry well muffled against an icy wind met him halfway:

“Pte Saxby No3 guard post a fighter plane; I’m sure it was a Hurricane, just delivered this package. No signal from the plane was received and the pilot cleared off at high speed in a NW direction”

“A good clear report Pte Saxby; well done, now back to your post”

Arriving back in his quarters he first studied the package then removed the outer waterproof wrapping; revealing a sealed and weighted metal box. He broke the seal and found the contents to be a foolscap envelope containing seven pages typed both sides bearing encoded subject matter. At the top of the first page in large red

letters was stamped the word URGENT damn; this means no hanging about, shall have to wake Major James otherwise it will take me all day to decode this lot. He looked at his watch; Bloody hell, it's only 0200 John will not be best pleased at being woken but it cannot be helped" "When the devil drives needs must'

It took over three hours of concentrated effort on the part of the officers before the decoding was completed.

"Were going to be busy Hugh these operations look real dicey and will need more than one group to tackle the viaduct and marshalling yards to be certain of success"

"That is true John and I've already decided I would like you and James to take on the mission leaving David to deal with the road convoys' assembly point. What say you?"

"Cannot see a problem; but it will need time spent in careful reconnaissance and observation of the targets. James could deal with the viaduct and I'll take on the marshalling yards. Would it be possible to have L/Cpls Piper and Jones assigned to James their absolutely red hot at laying and setting of these new plastic explosive charges. David could make good use of the new lads from the village he'll need some extra help I'm thinking. The Germans are bound to have the tank carrying vehicles strongly guarded. The men are ready and shall be glad to get going again they've grown weary of continual training"

"Before deployment takes place this HQ must move to its new location otherwise medical help will not be readily available and I'm damned it I want men lost through lack of medical support. What I'm going to propose is the forming of a recon team from the resistance men. They; whilst HQ is on the move shall carry out a full reconnaissance and observation of your assigned targets. A good place for

them to hide will have to be found where they can wait until the Groups arrive”

“That’s good thinking on your part Hugh it means time shall be saved and the actual assault will go ahead much sooner”

“Now before doing anything else I intend to enjoy breakfast; I’ve worked up quite an appetite and my throat is as dry as the Sahara, will you join me?”

At breakfast the Colonel sat quietly eating his breakfast deep in thought, concentrating on how best to proceed.

“John on future deployment there is much to discuss Major Lovejoy Captain Byron, the MO, RSM and resistance leaders should be involved right from the start. There are bound to be problem areas needing to be discussed and resolved. It could; with all that is involved, take 2 or 3 days before final plans are completed. I accept there will still be issues that come to light whilst preparing but it will save time do you agree?”

“Definitely shall I call them all together at say 0900 with an instruction issued for us not to be disturbed unless the matter requires our urgent attention?”

“Yes that will give me time to make my daily round and do some serious thinking. Thank you for all your hard work and help this morning I’ll see you at the meeting”

Whilst the officers and resistance leaders deliberated over and made plans for their future engagements; senior and junior NCOs had been set to work checking each mans equipment if an item was found to be defective it was immediately scrapped nothing was left to chance.

In his store Cpl Tanworth could be found cleaning and testing all radios and making certain each one was supplied with a spare battery and also valves.

Huw remarked to Billy on the tense atmosphere and air of expectancy that prevailed and asked if he had noticed it?

That I have Huw this is going to be bigger than anything we've been involved in so far. What are your feelings Danny?

I agree with you the CO received special orders last night; so the grapevine says, he and the other officers including senior members of the resistance have not been seen since 9 o'clock this morning. Whatever's going down its

serious and involves us all. Do you reckon it will be soon Huw?

"Yes I would say so; why else all this preparation. I'd say in about a week time so make the most of these home comforts whilst you may"

Medical staff were also busy packing items into manageable sized packs making ready to move. Ulrika now dressed in a Denim suit and Boots asked Rosina; you have marched long way before?

"No this is my first time marching with men but; I walked long distance like yourself to reach here, why you ask?"

"Because I am nervous and yes; frightened to, If there is fighting we could be killed and I not want to die yet. I want this horrible war finished; then I can find a good man, have nice home and children?"

"Do not be ashamed of how you feel every one is frightened; me to, the men are as well, some more than others. Anyway your only 25 you've plenty of time to find a husband and have lots of little ones. What about our

handsome Doctor or his assistant? I like the Doctor a nice gentle man but he think only of his work such a pity”

“Rosina you shock me; he is a professional man he must be careful and be seen to do the right thing and that does not include flirting with his nurses. Now shall we have some tea to wash away all the dust from this packing?”

“Good idea I will go: maybe I hear some more news, you have rest till I return”

# CHAPTER FORTY-THREE

## *New Years Eve 1943*

Nemesis force was paraded under cover of the trees on the plateau well wrapped to ward off the cold wind which seemed to be prevalent at this time of year.

“RSM have the men stand easy”

“I will not keep you long I called you all together to say thank you for all the hard preparative work that has been carried out whilst the officers and I have been discussing our future deployment and intentions. Much will be asked of everyone over the next six months it will; without doubt, be the hardest of all times. Overtiredness will become our enemy; everyone must be that extra bit vigilant to see us safely through this dangerous period. It has become very clear to me and your commanders that in Nemesis there exists a true feeling of comradeship. Each and every one of you without exception has made me extremely proud of being your commanding officer. For all of us let this coming year of 1944 be a truly happy one. Dismiss the men and have L/Cpl Piper and Jones report to me.

L/Cpl Piper and Jones, Major James specially requested; because of your apparent expertise in the use of this new plastic explosive, that you be assigned to Captain Byron for the forthcoming mission. You both have a great responsibility resting on your shoulders; that viaduct at 'Mulsheim' must be brought down. Take your time when seeking out its weakest points and make sure the explosive is securely seated and secured against the structure. Do the job, do it well then get out understood?

"Yes sir and thank you"

"Blimey Huw this convinces me were in at the deep end this time nice of the old man to speak privately to us though; makes one feel sort of special"

"It's been said once before Billy; look out for me and I'll look out for you, agreed"

"Agreed now lets go and get some grub I'm feeling peckish"

## CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR

*Tuesday 4th January 1943  
Exodus and a New HQ is established*

The exodus of Nemesis from the security of the Massif began at 2000 hours. Members of the advance party warmly wrapped against a night temperature of minus 3 emitting puffs of misted breath as they breathed and bearing cumbersome loads strapped to their backs.

“Sgt Major and Hans take the lead; Senior NCOs the rear, Junior NCOs on the flanks lets get this journey under way move out” All through the night maintaining a steady pace good progress was made. Rest periods were taken during the march but everyone was thankful when the nights march was over. Guided by Hans they were led to a place of safety deep within a wooded area well hidden from prying eyes. Lookouts were posted whilst hot food and drink was prepared then: fully dressed, they shared a communal bed for warmth, the women; despite the rigours of the march and biting cold, never uttered a word of complaint. Out of respect and admiration the

men gave them centre position in the bed this being the warmest area.

It took 12 nights to cover an estimated 287 miles averaging 24 miles a night before reaching their final destination. Shortly after 0300 on the last night Hans signalled a halt and requested the Colonel to wait whilst he went forward to make certain it was safe to proceed. He returned within the hour our friends are waiting to welcome us follow me. He led them forward between ancient monuments to the dead of long past generations until reaching a very impressive private tomb of considerable elegance in design. They entered through an extremely stout door made of oak in single file and down an ornate flight of steps into an extensive vault. They were followed by an elderly man who had secured the door after the last person entered.

“Please come with me” and going to the far wall he exerted pressure and a portion about the size of a normal house door opened on a central pivot leading into the catacombs of Jumièges Abbey. A second man also of advanced years greeted them “welcome to your new home Colonel the door by which you entered is now secured and it must remain secured at all times”

“May I know your names please?”

“I am Gustav and the man who opened the door is my brother Karl”

“Gustav first let me organise my men they are very tired from the journey”

“Pay attention I appreciate everyone is absolutely dog tired but no one eats or beds down with out removing their clothes and having a good wash down and shave first. Sgt

Major, Hans get them cracking make a start by sorting out sleeping accommodation and the kitchen area”

“Karl please show the soldiers where the water supply is”

“Thank you, you and your brother speak English very well indeed it is a great help to us”

“Karl and I are teachers we trained at Cambridge now our help is given to SOE and also to servicemen escaping from prison camps. Many airmen who parachute into Germany and France also pass this way. General Soames will know already you have arrived safely”

“I must ask; how safe is this place, are lookouts needed and do you live here?”

“No; Karl and I live not far from here but cannot leave until 7 o'clock there is a very strict curfew in place and anyone found on the streets at night without proper authority is liable to torture before being executed by firing squad. Above you are the ruins of the Abbey large masses of stone 2 or 3 feet deep covered with overgrown vegetation. There are several entrances and exits to the catacombs only known to a select few they shall be shown to you later. A close watch is kept and should a dangerous situation start to develop you will receive plenty of advance warning. So rest easy Colonel you and your men will be safe here”

“Hedwig are you and your staff managing ok” “Yes thank you Colonel; all men and women given some hot water, they washed and changed clothes. Old clothes very smelly will be washed later. In 30 minutes hot soup with meat will be ready”

“Herr Professor you have meal too?”

“Thank you Hedwig I shall enjoy it”

“Let me show you round your new quarters whilst waiting for the meal”

The main area the CO estimated must be well over 100 feet long by at least 30 feet wide with a vaulted roof supported by evenly spaced arches and columns of hand hewn stone. Created by the columns were passageways with entrances to a further 12 vaults providing ample space in which to sleep, work or use for storage. Reaching the end of the main vaulted area a further pleasant surprise awaited the CO of Nemesis. Here he found a vault of some 90 to 100 square feet with entrances to three smaller vaults ideal for the MO and his staff. What did worry him was a very large hole in the rear wall. The wall above was prevented from falling by stout planks of wood 4 or 5 inches thick laid across the trunks of trees. He turned to his guide “Why the excavation here it looks very recent and what is beneath the iron cover?”

“Five feet out from the wall at a depth of around eight feet is a fast flowing underground stream. It has been established it follows a shallow gradient from the SE? Where it originates from or where it goes no one has found out. It provides the town and the local area with quality water after going through a purifying system. You see that piping leading away from the cover that goes to a hand pump in the kitchen area. An engineer with help from friends installed it for your use. Your supply of water comes straight from the stream and when I showed the soldiers where the kitchen was I asked them to make sure all drinking water is boiled. That same engineer is returning here today with a large wood burning stove; he intends to make use of the shaft leading down to the river

and the rivers passageway as a chimney. This will provide some warmth for you and your men.

“I do not know how to thank you and your people; this building is a tribute to construction workers of several hundred years ago. It is well suited to our purposes and I will make sure no damage is caused whilst Nemesis is in residence. The Abbey itself must have been of immense size and of magnificent architectural design. A great pity it is no longer standing”

“It was founded in 634 and was a model for all the monasteries of the province and was renowned as a centre of religion and learning. The French Revolution finally ended its existence as a monastery leaving only impressive ruins. I have a book detailing the history of the Abbey it is long, varied and extremely interesting. I will fetch it with me next time I visit. Now Hedwig is indicating our meal is ready and I am sure; you must be as tired as your men, needing to rest before commencing the real work necessary to make this an operational headquarters”

“Well it was a long; arduous and very cold journey, truth is I’m extremely glad it’s over”

They sat at one of the tables which had seen better days and so had the chairs but it was a damn sight better than sitting on a cold stone floor.

“With the pieces of furniture that have been provided and the heater being installed my command shall be able to enjoy a modicum of comfort but where has it all come from?”

“Nearly all of it from war damaged houses and shops. The mattresses are stained by water but dry and there are more should you need them in fact; a whole cellar full. A small factory producing beds collapsed onto their

underground storage area and a way in was found it has proved of great value to us in the town. Now if you'll excuse us Karl and I must make our way home. One of us will call every 2 or 3 days if we can help in any way let us know"

"You and your friends shall be welcome at all times" "Sgt Major is the men all bedded down and the radio tuned in ready to receive with an operator on listening watch?"

"Yes sir, I'm remaining on duty and shall be relieved by S/Sgt Evans at 0800. Radio operators will be relieved every two hours. Hedwig as asked that she be called at 1130 to prepare the main meal and I've arranged with him for you to be wakened at 1200"

"When S/Sgt Evans comes on duty tell him to expect an engineer from the village who is going to install a wood burning stove. Let the men and women not required for duty sleep until 1300 they did extremely well during the journey and more hard work shall be expected of them over the next two days. That largish vault at the far end of the main area with three smaller ones leading off it; is to be the MOs quarters and sick bay and shall be made ready first. Gustav has told me more mattresses can be obtained if required so if were short let him know when he calls in next. A warning notice is needed; in large print placed where everybody can see it saying; do not drink water without boiling it first, Cpl Coles can make one as soon as he wakes. My quarters are the first vault on your left as you enter this main area"

The Colonel went to his quarters carrying with him a bowl of hot water first he stripped and carefully washed himself all over then shaved. Clad in wrinkled but clean clothing he lay on a mattress beneath thick woollen

blankets supplied by the people of Jumièges yes: they were soiled and smelt of damp, but the mattress was soft the blankets provided warmth and besides; beggars cannot be choosers, the CO was sound asleep seconds after lying down.

He was wakened feeling much refreshed enjoyed a well prepared meal then for the remainder of that day; well into the evening and all the next day he worked alongside his men, guiding and encouraging them in turning their new home into a working headquarters. In the dark of the evening on both days a team of protected men spent several hours building a huge stockpile of split logs for the wood burning stove. Fortunately it was designed to consume its fuel at a slow rate and it took quite a time to warm up but a difference was soon noticed as it began to radiate heat removing the edge from an invasive penetrating cold.

“Message from the MO sir”

The message was expected but when they finally appeared covered in frost from head to toe the sight of men shivering; unable to stop their teeth from chattering, was shocking to behold. Acting swiftly the CO roused the sleeping men and swiftly every one of those newly arrived was stripped of their damp frost covered clothes including stockings and boots. First they rubbed them down with towels to start the circulation moving properly then wrapped in several blankets and fed with hot soup to help drive the cold from the very marrow of their bones they sat huddled close to the stove soaking up its welcome warmth.

“Take your time Ian but tell me what the hell happened?”

“Started out last evening at around 1900 wasn’t too bad at first then; helped by a freezing dense fog and strong wind, the temperature dropped rapidly. Had to keep going; there was nowhere to go, everyone could have perished if we’d stopped out in the open with no protection from the bitter cold. Karl and Gunter were bloody marvellous how they found there way here in pitch black darkness is a miracle. RSM Humphries and the NCOs proved their worth working like navvies to keep the group moving. Believe me it was a close call”

“You made the right decision very well done. Your quarters are ready, we’ll help get you and the men bedded down. Sleep is what you need now a full report can wait”

Colonel Curry was now deeply concerned for the safety of Major James who still had a third of the distance to travel and also Major Lovejoy well on the way to meeting up with his recon team. There was nothing that could be done except wait until contact was made relieving his mind of worry for their well being.

“Sgt Issacs instruct all operators to maintain an alert listening watch for news from Majors James and Lovejoy letting me know immediately there is contact”

He revisited the sick bay to make sure all was in order and heard nothing but a gentle snoring and deep breathing of men enjoying a blissful warmth letting Morpheus take over with a deep healing sleep.

Returning to the kitchen he found Hedwig and Ilsa preparing breakfast. “Thank you both for making that hot soup the men needed it badly. Any chance of some tea I’m parched?”

“Sit down Hugh I’ll fetch you a mug”

Ilsa brought his tea “Do not blame your self Hugh. Like your officers and men you have to obey orders worrying to much will make you ill and that will not be good for any one. Everyone here and out on the missions needs you to be strong for them. They rely on your strength of mind to see them safely through hard times” She squeezed his hand letting him know the strength of her feelings for him.

“You’re full of surprises Ilsa I did not realise the love of my life was also a woman of wisdom. Thank you; you’re quite right in what you say, I must have faith in my Officers and NCOs they’re of the finest quality and I’m damned proud of them. Bless you for being so understanding. Now how about some breakfast for a man who truly loves you?”

“At once master” and with a curtsy went for his breakfast her inner happiness making her face radiant.

## CHAPTER FORTY-FIVE

*Thursday 17th February 1944*  
*Major Lovejoy undertakes the first New Year mission*  
*And an unexpected prize target is discovered*

Sgt Major Carter and Karl Dieter lay on the damp earth screened by dense vegetation were observing the assembly of a convoy prior to moving out of the extremely well defended road transport depot. Huge powerful Mercedes diesel units with two trailers attached were forming up on the road below. One trailer carried a large calibre mobile artillery weapon the second carried ammunition for the gun “Karl I make it eight guns in total, three half tracked troop carriers and one scout car and there can be no doubt with drivers not moving from their cabs this convoy is about to start its journey. Back to the ambush point at the double and let the Major know what we’ve seen. I reckon he’ll have to change his plans otherwise we’ll all be shaken hands with St Peter or the Devil when that ammo goes up”

The position for the ambush had been chosen well, it lay about five miles southwest and separated from the depot by a triple arched; ancient weather beaten stone built bridge that had recently been reinforced with steel girders that scarred its natural beauty.

Major Lovejoy on being told that the convoy was also carrying a large amount of ready to use ammunition for the guns being transported at first said nothing. The danger they faced had now magnified a hundred fold. "Pay attention everyone; if the ammunition being carried on this convoy is hit by one of the grenade launchers no one will survive the force of the resulting explosion. All our initial efforts must be concentrated on taking out enemy troops on the troop carriers and also the scout car. Sgt Major with 12 men place Charges with timers set for one hour amongst the ammo and guns as soon as the enemy has been silenced. Karl and Andreas; the pleasure of dealing with the scout car is yours. Sgt Longstaff with Helmut and 4 men once the convoy is clear of the road bridge set your timers for 1 hour and get back here at the double. When we vacate this area it will be at rapid pace and no stopping till we are at least 2 miles away. Now take up your positions and good luck"

Almost two hours went by before headlights of the convoy were seen everybody tensed; the scout car received a direct hit from a grenade launcher in its engine compartment coming to an abrupt halt it was immediately assailed by Karl and his men the occupants stood no chance against such a determined assault. Achtung; Achtung came the warning shout followed by a stream of invective: "fluch auf deisen sprengten Kan Dort verrotten in der holle (a curse on these blasted resistance devils may their souls rot

in hell) the enemy troops though they reacted swiftly were not fast enough to avoid the many hand grenades; primed and ready to throw, that landed in their midst. Most of them died instantly the remainder lay mortally wounded by red hot shards of flying fragmented steel posing no further threat to their attackers. Within 20 minutes all action ceased only the groans of wounded men breaking the silence.

“All charges laid with timers set for detonation in one hour reported the Sgt Major Closely followed by Sgt Longstaff’s report; “When we reached the bridge an enemy road block had been installed on the depot side with 5 alert men on duty. Waiting till the convoy was well clear of the bridge an attack was then made to remove the enemy they were hardened front line troops and this was clearly indicated by the way they fought back managing to kill two resistance men; Jacques and Siegfried, throwing their bodies into the river. It is very fast flowing and they were swept away. All charges were properly secured and timers fixed to detonate in 1 hour”

“The Germans must have installed it to ensure the bridge was kept clear for the convoy most regrettable Sgt but it cannot be helped. Jacques and Siegfried were good men; loyal and honest, deserving a decent burial Helmut you know this river; do you think you can find them?

“With your permission would like to try?”

“Ok take two men with you for protection whilst your looking I shall expect your return before the end of four days let me have their personal details when you return be lucky. Lets move out a fast pace if you please Sgt Major, Karl lead us to safety”

For over two miles the pace never slackened before a halt was called in a small copse of mainly sycamore and low growing bushes.

“Listen up detonation shall begin in about 20 minutes; as there is a rise and fall between here and the targets offering us protection from the blast, no affects should be felt as a precaution; keep well down, hugging the dirt like it was your girlfriend and muffle your ears. Sgt Major; charges were placed in the Barrels of those guns behind the Breech Block?

“Definitely they’ll only be fit for scrap metal shortly”

“Karl there is a man made embankment running SE to SW I’m sure I spotted a train just now and no railway line is marked on the map do you have any knowledge of a new line being built?

“A small branch line laid in early 1940s serving several factories; an engine takes wagons there to be loaded, returning them to a small marshalling yard about 7 miles from here and 4 maybe 5 miles from our hiding place. I’ve no idea what is manufactured but the factories are well guarded with German officers overseeing production”

“Is there someone known and trusted by the locals who could obtain that information?

“Yes I believe so why?

“Depends on what the line is being used for it may prove worthy of our attention. Attention! Heads down and don’t look up”

A distinct low reverberating rumble was heard; that’s the bridge, there followed several stupendous eruptions of thunderous sound deafening in their immensity. Each gigantic clap of thunder was accompanied by a blinding sheet of white light that tore away the darkness turning

night into day. Several mind stunning minutes passed before a great silence fell not a sound could be heard not the chirruping of birds or even a murmur of insects busy at their daily tasks.

“Sgt Major, prepare to move in five minutes. Karl organise a recon of that line for tonight find out all you can”

Keeping an alert eye for possible danger he also used his Binoculars on the Rail Line about a mile distant to his left flank. In the two hours remaining till first light by the waning moonlight he observed three more engines pulling; an estimated 10 to 12 high sided wagons, leaving the industrial area. A very busy line indeed what was its purpose he would soon find out.

Reaching the safe area where they would remain for 5 days the OC issued orders; Sgt Major weapons to be stripped and cleaned and two sentry posts established 2 men to each position. L/cpl Peters and Pte Logan prepare a hot drink and food. Cpl Stone issue each man with 4 grenades from the cache and replenish their ammo. Sgt Longstaff ensures each man washes and shaves before eating and rouses the group at 1900. Karl I will leave you to decide when you leave take two men with you and gain as much intelligence as you can on that rail freight line and also the goods yard”

“Sgt Major is the OC considering an attack on that rail way yard tomorrow night only I’m fair knackered after this last weeks doings?”

“Do not worry Pte Connolly a raid has to be planned first so rest easy and recover your strength I feel it’s going to be needed”

“What’s up Jasper not getting nervous are you?”

“No; not nervous Scouse but, the Major seems to have changed since that incident with the children at Mannheim. He was in such a blind; fearsome rage, never seen him like that before, backed up by Cpl Stone and young Logan those five Jerry soldiers never stood a chance. Since then his attitude has really hardened towards these Germans. I know the ones caught in those half tracks were done for but a shot of morphine would have eased their dying”

“Jasper I agree he has altered but not using our supply of Morphine makes sense. The decision was not easy for him to make but his first consideration must be of the men in this group. Now lets finish cleaning these weapons have a nice shave; a damn good wash, some grub then find a soft spot so we can get some sleep. It’s my feeling were going to be extremely busy”

## CHAPTER FORTY-SIX

*February 20th 1944  
Karl Dieter makes his report  
and further mayhem is planned*

“Karl returned before 0400 and immediately turned in at 0900 he was making his report to Major Lovejoy”

“My thanks to you and your companions from all that you say this marshalling yard is of real importance. Two trains, of mixed ordinance from those factories and also carrying troops are to be formed ready to depart on night of 22/23rd; one leaving at 0200 the other at 0300 for the West coast of France actual final destination is unknown. Defence is light made up of rear echelon soldiers most are elderly and should not prove to big a problem. “Karl the person who supplied this information he is reliable?”

“Yes Major and he has promised to tell us of any changes that are made”

“Sgt Major there shall be a briefing for all NCOs and senior resistance men at 1400 by which time a report will

have been made to HQ and a reply received. Have the radio operator report at once”

Colonel Curry had just ended his daily tour of headquarters when the signal arrived swiftly he decoded the message. “Cpl; reply, excellent news good luck” He considered the contents of the report once more; should the Major’s intended assault on the marshalling yard prove successful, several high ranking officials of the Third Reich were going to be very upset indeed in fact; they would be tearing their hair out especially after the loss of the road convoy. Demands would be made for the perpetrators to be found immediately; meaning Major Lovejoy’s group leaving that particular area with a sense of real urgency, to avoid being captured.

“Karl a safe area for this group to hide close by the target is needed is there such a place?”

“Two miles to the East is a dense wooded area part of a large private estate. It used to be managed before the war; a real beauty spot where visitors could walk and have picnics, but is now badly overgrown. There are three cottages which did house the men who worked the Saw Mill but sadly four years of standing empty has paid there toll. They could suit our purpose”

“Sgt Major, prepare the group to leave by 1900 tonight. It will be our last target in this area; it is my intention to deploy Westwards towards France, attacking convoys and rail installations as we proceed, reaching HQ sometime in early May. Karl on leaving the target our next safe area must be well away from towns or villages in order an airdrop of fresh supplies can be received. Hopefully Helmut and the men with him will have returned by tonight if not;

someone will have to remain here to let them know our destination”

“No need for that Major a message will be left for them they’ll find it”

“Lets get cracking then nothing is to be left behind and all rubbish is to be buried”

Karl’s proposed safe area proved an ideal location especially the Saw Mill when it was found to have office and storage space above the machine shop with its roof, windows and walls intact.

“Sgt Longstaff your in command until I return have these windows blacked out before any candles are lit; post sentries downstairs, an alert watch must be kept of all approaches to this location. Sgt Major, Karl, Pts Logan and Connolly and Resistance men Linden and Anton forms the recon party Karl; show us the way, let us make observation of what this target has to offer”

Keeping well into the shadows they followed the railway embankment as far as they were able then ascended onto the rail road bed itself.

“One moment Karl you did not mention this yard was surrounded on three sides by occupied houses?”

“Major, there is no cause for concern only a few of those cottages are occupied by villagers. The Germans are using them to house troops guarding the sidings?”

“Karl you remain here on guard with the men use the hoot of an Owl if danger threatens and keep out of sight. Sgt Major let’s take a closer look at the layout of this place make a mental note of all you see I will do the same for comparison later when a map can be drawn to assist in preparing a plan of attack”

They returned 90 minutes later and with a whispered let's move they stole silently away making their way to the safe area at a steady pace for it was pitch black and starting to rain.

"Sgt Major as soon as we arrive back the men are to change their wet clothes including your own then they can bed down. Report back to me I wish to compare notes whilst there still fresh in our minds and draw up a map of the rail yard"

"Karl; can you give some thought to a way in which the remaining residents of those houses can be warned; with out endangering our intended assault. I do not want any of them placed in danger or; suffer injury through our actions"

"Understood Major it may mean a visit to the village if that's ok with you?"

"You have my trust; do whatever you feel is necessary, now go get your head down"

"Sgt Major is the men alright?"

"Yes and Helmut has returned with the two men bearing the signs of having been involved in a fight"

"I'll see them as soon as they are awake. I have drawn a rough sketch of all I saw tonight and would like you to add details of all you can remember whilst I give some more thought to the actual assault of this target it's not going to be an easy one and that's an absolute certainty"

"Here you are sir, It's going to be a fair do this one shan't have to hang about. When; whatever's in those wagons start to blow, it could turn out as the greatest Guy Fawkes show ever witnessed. The Jerries ain't going to be pleased with us for upsetting their freight program and I

reckon they'll be after us like hounds of hell thirsting for blood"

"That's if we were allowed to make our escape take a closer look at the layout of this yard. The way in from the NE is like an entrance to a huge trap. We're going to be boxed in on three sides with nowhere to hide; An alert officer of the 3rd Reich will make sure all possible exits are blocked; then there is the possibility of additional enemy troops being present, waiting to embark bound for front line duty. I can see no solution, nor a way forward Sgt Major we'll continue later today with Karl and Helmut in attendance. But a plan will be drawn up by me purely as proposal which I shall put to them you never know there knowledge of this area may prove of real value in making the right decisions.

## CHAPTER FORTY-SEVEN

*21st February 1944*

*An assault on Hildesheim Goods Yard is planned*

At 1300 looking tired and grim; Major Lovejoy addressed his senior and junior NCOs also his Resistance leaders and senior resistance members.

I will feed you no bullshit or try to flannel you over the forthcoming operation. It is going to be a right bastard were short on men to do the job and it's going to take real courage and determination on everyone's part for it to be a success. The raid will take place two nights from now commencing at 2000 and it must be carried out in silence there will be troops in transit on the trains. Before explosive can be placed in the most advantageous positions for maximum effect the enemy must first be eliminated. You each have a map of the target area it is roughly drawn but; I'm no bloody artist, so speak up if your not clear over any item shown. This; after much deliberation, is my proposed plan of attack: Cpl Holland you will set up a Medical Aid Post 50 yards from our point of entry Pts Slatterly, Jones, Angel and Mitchel will assist you and also

act in defence of your position. Sgt Major with Karl as 2i/c your task is of prime importance; it's the clearance of enemy troops occupying those cottages. It may be that soldiers awaiting their transport are also in occupation. To make certain none are left to hinder our assault assign three teams per cottage. Sgt Longstaff with Helmut enemy sentries patrolling within the confines of the yard is your job and of equal importance; this also includes the ground frames at points A and B on the map. Cpl Stone, Andreas, Rolf and I will deal with the Signal Box. To avoid confusion in the placing of explosives; Sgt Major, you will deal with train "C" and Sgt Longstaff Train 'D'. No-one wounded or killed gets left behind move the wounded and dead to the Medical Post. Karl the family vault for members of this estate have you checked it out?

"Major; its only about 300 yards from the Saw Mill located in a stand of trees and the door is open"

"That is where if the unthinkable should happen our friends will be taken bearing full identity details. Get your teams together and decide how best to complete your assigned task and remember; as I said this is a proposal, should anyone have an idea or would like to make a suggestion believing it will make our mission easier to complete; tell me I'm willing to listen and if everyone is agreeable you'll have my approval. Final briefing is at 1100 tomorrow"

"Cpl Stone select two good teams make sure their weapons and equipment is in good order. The Signal Box is on two levels and of a timber construction. On the upper floor will be found an instrument shelf and lever frame which operates points and signals; they must be

completely destroyed, should the Signal Box catch fire I would consider it a job well done understood?

“Perfectly sir”

“Are there problems Karl?”

“Permission to go down into the village have a nosy around see if its possible to alert anyone still in there home and try making arrangements for them to move out without arousing suspicion”

“Your concern does you credit of course you may go just keep out of trouble”

“Will return when it’s dark about 2100 and thank you”

“Karl returned much earlier than expected he was not alone he was accompanied by a tall lean upright man with hair the colour of freshly fallen snow.

Major this is “Erhard Jacobi” a very close friend of Hiemlich Müller and entirely trustworthy he speaks excellent English and I recommend you listen to what he has to say. “Erhard” you may speak freely you’re amongst friends.

The Major offered his hand and found it clasped firmly “Pleased to meet you ‘Erhard’ how can I be of service?”

“From the very little Karl has said it is my understanding Herr Major that you have a great interest in the workings of the Railway yard?”

“That is true if possible I and my men intend to destroy it”

“Karl could you find some coffee and ask the Sgt Major to join us”

“My position is that of Senior Rail Traffic Controller responsible to Colonel Reinhard who oversees all the movement in and out of the Railway yard. This morning

I was called to his office and informed to make provision for the arrival of two freight trains each pulled by a Main Line Diesel engine one from Mannheim the second from the Ruhr. They are to form a single train pulled by the two diesel engines working in tandem. Here is a copy of the manifest for the train”

The Major cast a careful eye over document and as he did so felt his hair standing on end Erhard have you come here with this information in the hope my intended assault of your yard shall be cancelled?

“No Herr Major that is not why I came here my reason for being here is to offer my help. For the past eighteen months a band of men commanded by myself has carried out small acts of sabotage against the Germans causing them some irritation but no real lasting damage. This action of yours will result in a major loss to them of vital materials and also seasoned troops. It is at the request of my men that I came here tonight offering our services. Do not disappoint them; place us under your command and give us the chance to really hit back at our mutual enemy”

“Well Sgt Major you’ve looked at the manifest and heard what our visitor had to say. I would like your opinion please?”

“Major were a mite short on manpower it’s a big job that’s facing us I say take him on trust his men could make a difference to the success or failure of the mission”

“Erhard how many men have you got; and do they have decent firearms and knives?”

“There are 15 men in my group none younger than 25 and their weapons are in good condition and they know how to use them”

“Will you continue as Senior Controller in the yard until after the mission and could your men report by 0800 tomorrow morning they will need some training?”

“If it suits they can be here in two hours to receive your orders. I will return to the yard as ordered at 2100 tonight and continue as normal. On the day of the attack there is a personal matter needing my attention it will not take many minutes then I shall join you. After the mission my men and I having no family ties will become members of your command for as long as you need us”

“One last matter of concern to me it was my intention to carry out this raid against your yard avoiding causing injury to villagers living close by the target area. With this additional train and items being carried that is not going to be possible is there anything that can be done for them?”

Herr Major; do not fear for their safety, arrangements are being made for those nearest to the yard to leave their homes. Not all of them will leave; they will be sharing deep cellars at a reasonably safe distance from your target. There are a number who will not be advised; for they have collaborated with the occupying forces, causing family; relatives and friends to end up in a concentration camp or mercifully; dead”

“Erhard I will see you at the Signal Box with some of my men on the evening of the 22nd” Karl will you see Erhard’s men safely in and bedded down. Sgt Major tomorrow with Sgt Longstaff’s assistance inspect the weapons of Erhard’s men make certain they are in good order then give them a full days crash course in the use of our explosive material and timers. Impress upon them the importance of working in silence; knives only to be used when dealing with the enemy. They have to be good it is my intention for them to

*Walter Brown*

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set the explosives on this third train. I and Cpl Stone will set the Nemesis men to work preparing and making ready their equipment for the assault”

## CHAPTER FORTY-EIGHT

*23/24th February 1944  
Hildesheim Goods Yard is destroyed*

It was 1945 hours and Nemesis Force was about 200 yards from their intended target.

“Pay attention; you all know what is required of you, now go to it. Cpl Stone lets go and upset Colonel Reinhard”

Three groups of men stole silently forward on a cold clear night under a sky studded with bright twinkling stars. Bent on mass destruction and the killing of a much hated occupying force,

Sgt Major Carter halted his group a few yards short of the first cottage. Right quickly now 3 teams to each cottage watch for my signal then go in hard and fast give them no chance to get organised.

A pyjama clad figure hurtled from an upper floor window the force of his exit removing most of the window frame. His body arched with acute pain as it straddled the wooden fence before thudding to earth as it splintered and broke under his weight. Using his skill the Sgt Major with

little effort snapped his neck like a carrot; Shouted curses in English and German issued forth from the cottages and were quickly silenced. Time passed slowly it seemed to the Sgt Major as he waited anxiously for his men to finish their gruesome task.

A Jerry; whose face bore numerous scars evidence of past battles believing he'd got Pat O'Connell trapped in a corner; quickly found out, just how wrong he was when the Irishman's huge hands grabbed and twisted his ears then; in a beautifully co-ordinated move he forced the Jerries head down to strike with great force his upcoming knee. The German reared backwards; his nose a fearful mess of blood and smashed cartilage almost tearing the ears from his head so firm was Pat's grip. Blinded by tears; his howls of anguish were brought to an abrupt end, by an expertly applied knife. A second German; seizing the moment, went for Pat as he struggled to retrieve the knife firmly lodged in his enemies rib cage a bad mistake; team mate Mike Logan with a fearful blow from the butt of his weapon, cracked his skull wide open.

"Thanks Mike"

Formed up outside the cottages the Sgt Major cast his eye over them: "Kennedy lets have a look at your eye mm very nasty stand to one side, Lewis your leg looks like a gutted fish join Kennedy, you to Thomas that arm needs attention, Burlson who took a swipe at you?"

"That bloke who left by the window believing he could fly. Thanks for finishing him off"

"My pleasure, now where the hell is Lomax? "I'm here Sgt Major feeling a little woozy after butting a jerry bastard whose head felt like a lump of concrete"

“There was me thinking you were a right hard man how wrong can a fellow be; well we’ve another job to do, so on your bloody feet”

“You four make your way to Cpl Holland’s Aid post get yourselves sorted out and stay there. The rest of you follow me there is a train needing our attention” Then were out of here unless someone cries for help”

“Major Lovejoy entered the Signal Box to find Erhard on his own where are Colonel Reinhard and your staff?”

“The duty signalmen are now engaged in ensuring villagers have left the area and the Colonel is down below in a store cellar”

“That’s true sir we’ve just found him gagged and bound. Someone has made mincemeat of him using a saw or other tool on various parts of his body he was certainly made to suffer extreme pain before dying. A call for help would not have been possible”

“Snowy is there paraffin kept in the store?”

“Yes Herr Major; shall I assist Cpl Stone?”

“Cpl; I want the inside of this building including the store saturated with paraffin. Set explosive on the lever frame and machinery downstairs and with detonation a fire should also start, leaving no evidence of what has happened here. Snowy will show you where the oil is kept and be sharp about it there is still much to do. I’ll be outside maintaining a careful watch for unwanted visitors”

“Sgt Longstaff had not found his task easy many of the enemy patrolling the yard were experienced battle hardened soldiers and they fought back viciously despite being outnumbered 2 – 1. There were four fatalities and six wounded leaving him short handed. It could have been worse if the Sgt, Pte Mathews and Roby had not arrived

on the scene when several men from Nemesis encountered a large group of intoxicated; armed Germans trying to find their transport, it was a bitter struggle filled with a terrible anger and desperation to survive that followed; the bite of cold steel was felt by many, sore and bleeding they carried on until the enemy had been silenced for all time. It was extremely sad that such brave men; even though they were the enemy, had to die. He called his men together and speaking in a quiet insistent voice; "Ptes Stanley, Roberts, Yates, Armstrong, Taylor, Tobias and Holden you're not in a fit state to continue report to Cpl Holden. We've had a bit of a rough do there's no denying that but; were still alive and were not done yet, so heads up and straighten those backs; were short on numbers but that does not mean our next job will be rushed. Avoid making too much noise and make sure the explosive is properly secured and timers set correctly. Ok let's go get the job done"

"Sgt before a start is made did you know these trains also contained troops?"

"Pte Howard; your only concern, like me and everyone else is that orders given are obeyed. You're not paid to think; now move yourself, before I put my boot up your backside"

"Peter what a stupid question to ask; think before you speak man or, you'll end up in real trouble"

"Sorry Mack just forgot next time I go to open my big gob thump me hard"

Sgt Major Carter's group finished priming train 'D' with explosive and returned to the aid post. "Karl we've got four dead and 11 walking wounded. They will slow the Major down when he and Sgt Longstaff are finished with little time left before the fireworks start. Let's move them

to the family vault. Cpl Holland when the OC returns give him this message: removing dead to agreed temporary resting place. I will remain in close proximity pending your arrival. Sgt Longstaff is to wait here for the Major he may need assistance. L/Cpl Peters; time to earn your next stripe organise stretcher parties and help for the wounded we move out in five minutes. Karl take us by the quickest route at a good pace but not too fast the men; like us, are fair knackered. I'll take two men and protect our rear"

Major Lovejoy's group of newly trained recruits had performed extremely well. The third train had been primed with explosive in record time proving they had listened to their instructors and taken on board all that had been taught them. Encounters with solitary or groups of German soldiers had been dealt with in a disciplined and forthright manner; wounds were received and bandages applied, but not a voice of complaint was heard. Stopping only to collect Cpl Holland and his medical equipment he wasted no time in reaching the monument where he gave his orders.

There is approximately 1 hour and 10 minutes before detonation commences. In that time; to be reasonably safe, this command must distance itself from the target area by at least 3 miles. Sgt Longstaff, Cpl Stone select eight men and take charge of the wounded put them on stretchers if needs be and be quick about it report when ready to move. Karl, Helmut and Snowy there is a need to find protection against possible damage from the blast created by the explosion. I'm depending on your knowledge of this area in leading my command to safety. Listen up there will be no stopping until a safe distance has been reached. Sgt Major protects our rear move out.

In muted voices the Major and his NCOs urged the men onward; with minds and bodies screaming for rest, calling on their last reserves like automatons; minds numbed by sheer fatigue stumbling and staggering, they placed one foot in front of the other. Their only thought was safety, safe from being caught up in the horror soon to be enacted. Major Lovejoy also gave consideration to the four men left behind in a family's tomb. A family of whom they had no knowledge also caught up in the toils of war who might never return. One day God willing their bodies would be recovered and given a proper Christian burial with loved ones in attendance. He also gave thought to the enemy who had given their lives in defence of the marshalling yards soon to be joined by their comrades whose lives would cease in a holocaust of explosion and flame. Every bone in their body shattered by the blast; burnt beyond recognition or literally segmented by super heated shards of steel and iron. He looked at his watch they had been on the move now for nearly an hour. Karl how much farther?

"Just over that ridge Major maybe 3 - 400 yards" It seemed to take an age reaching that ridge but finally they staggered over the top and down into a deserted farmstead.

"Everybody to the far side of the buildings; stay well clear of the walls, down on the ground and cover your ears"

Within minutes of them taking up position hugging the ground like they would their own mother the charges laid began detonating first; a mere whisper of sound then a more discernable rumble followed by a rapid succession of gigantic; mind bending, deafening, roaring claps of

thunderous noise. So great was the force released the ground trembled and shook mightily beneath their bodies. A huge multi – coloured wall of flame in excess of 100m wide reaching upwards mile upon mile turning the night sky against a backdrop of thick; greasy, black oily smoke into a range of colours and shades an artist could try all his life to produce and never ever succeed. The tumultuous sound ceased leaving behind a great and eerie stillness, a quiet in which nothing could be heard nothing at all.

The group held their position their minds numbed and bodies trembling.

Major Lovejoy coming slowly to his senses sat viewing his command laying stretched upon the earth unmoving. Swallowing several times to clear the deafness from his ears he called;

“Karl in our present condition how long before reaching our next hiding place?”

“With tired men and our wounded I would estimate three hours”

“Attention; listen to me, each and every one of us is tired and feel the need to rest. Wrong; this command moves in 30 minutes the pace will be slow and frequent rests will be taken. It is not by choice this decision is made; it is to ensure our chances of survival are increased. Enemy patrols in strength will be scouring this area looking for us and I for one do not wish to be captured; especially as they’ll not be thinking kindly of us, over damage caused and the way in which their comrades have died. Sgt Longstaff and Cpl Stone take care of the wounded assisted by six men. Sgt Major have the men on their feet and ready to move in 20 minutes. Karl and Snowy will act as guides.

## CHAPTER FORTY-NINE

*24<sup>th</sup> February 1944*  
*A disturbing report is received*

Major Lovejoy was awakened from a fitful sleep by Snowy feeling like nothing on earth his mouth furred and foul tasting. His body ached from head to toe resulting from a long night's hard physical activity where every sinew and muscle in his body had been stretched to the limit of their endurance and beyond. "Are we in danger?"

"No Herr Major there is a report from Siegländ Hütte a man who worked for me in the Signal Box; the news must be bad he appears to be very upset"

"Let me hear what you have to say Siegländ" "Sir your raid was successful; the yard and all it contained no longer exists, every building has been turned to rubble including many of the cottages forming its boundary. The signal box, ground signals and frames all gone. The track was torn from its bed and now lays twisted and distorted, fit only for scrap metal. It will take many weeks perhaps months me; I would say over a year, to relay that yard and install all its equipment. Heavy

vehicles are being sought as a top priority to transport finished products from the factories. They are still trying to establish how many actually died its difficult because so many were blown apart by the blast but the final total will be very high and it is the same for those who were injured”

“Were any civilians killed or injured?”

“None; young and old are now being made to work in the yard on the gruesome task of collecting together the bodies and fragments of bodies ready for burial. They were our enemies that cannot be denied but it is extremely sad; a hard truth for us to accept so many young men had to die, suffer a life time of disfigurements or crippling injury to secure peace. But; it must be so, in the belief that soon now the killing and maiming will end”

“Thank you Sieglund please God let it be soon. Are you returning to the village?”

“I have no wish to return; SS officer specialists and troops are on the way to take charge of an investigation into how this was allowed to happen and also, organise the search for you and your men”

“You are welcome please say nothing about what you have told me to the men. I do not want them to hear this news from anyone else. Snowy find the Sgt Major, Sgt Longstaff and Karl ask them to report to me”

“I have just received a report from the target area and the news is not good. Sgt Major you and Sgt Longstaff will carry out an inspection of each mans weapon they must be clean and ready for use. Then they are to be given a substantial hot meal and drink. I will speak to the men directly after the meal. Sentries are to be doubled. Karl this command cannot stay here; it can no longer be

considered as safe, a new place of safety must be found. A contingent of specialist SS Officers and troops are on the way to search for us. It is my intention to move in 2 hours you have till then to come up with a new hiding place.

As the men made ready to move Ptes Peter Saunders and Ian Macklin were making there views very plain.

“Typical; just getting me self settled down right cosy with a pint of ale, a nice bit of crumpet, tits the size of melons and legs like Betty Grable then just as its getting interesting they wake me up. No bloody feelings this lot; none at all”

“Yes Peter for once I must agree with you it’s a damn shame so it is. Shall be glad to see dear old Blighty again and I swear if anyone dare suggest a hike across the dales I’ll do for them. Sgt have I time to wash me feet and change my socks?”

“If you’d spent less time moaning and more tending your needs Macklin, there’d be no need to ask. You’ve less than 5 minutes so make it snappy if you’re late for the OC’s address you’ll be digging latrines tonight. Saunders; wipe that smile from your face or you’ll be helping him”

“Blimey did we say something wrong? Everybody seems right cranky this afternoon and the old man looks real worried what’s going on?”

“It’s since that fella from the railway turned up reckon he brought bad news with him. Could be the Jerries are out in force trying to find the rotten bastards who destroyed their railway yard.

“Sit yourselves on the ground this will not take long; a fellow worker of Snowy took the time at great risk to himself to bring a report on the result of last nights mission. It was by all accounts a grand success the yard and

all its equipment including the three trains were totally destroyed. Due to our efforts the enemy are sending in a specialist's investigation team plus troops commanded by the SS. It means Nemesis must move further from the target area. The few hours sleep taken this morning is not enough to make us fit for a long march at speed. The pace will be slower than normal but I must ask everyone; despite their tiredness, to remain constantly alert if movement is seen make it known immediately. Sgt Major; we move in 15 minutes, Karl only you and the other resistance leaders possess knowledge of a possible hiding place at least 20 - 30 miles from here where the men can rest in reasonable safety for several days; what can you give me?

There are several possibilities it will mean great care must be taken on the approach to each area until a suitable one is found.

"Fair enough; let us hope a place can be found quickly, our work is not yet completed and the men must be given time to recover especially, the wounded"

## CHAPTER FIFTY

*9th March 1944*  
*The Viaduct and Rail Goods Yard of Multsheim*

Major James and Captain Byron were lying hidden on the back slope of a broad ridge of high ground concealed amongst tall grasses and bushes with a wintry sun warming their backs. Eastwards was the town of Metz and Southwards Nancy to the South West Sorrburg each linked by rail? In this triangle of rail track was a fair sized and very busy marshalling yard plus a road and rail viaduct across the river Moselle that carried a direct rail link to Paris. These were there intended targets. Over the last four days of intense observation; with precise notes being made of activities within the yard and also on the Viaduct itself, it had become apparent road and rail traffic had increased considerably. Visiting trains were shunted onto a siding whilst the engines topped up on coal and water. A small fuel and oil dump with a large vehicle park had been established on cleared ground alongside the road about 500 yards from the viaduct with a separate entrance and exit. At this site Lorries received required maintenance

topped up their fuel tanks and replaced emptied spare fuel cans.

“James this is going to be a tougher nut to crack than expected. With all of this added traffic it would appear the Germans are on high alert and building up their defences on the French coast in expectation of an invasion. I’ve given serious consideration to end of mission were not returning to our present base; instead, we’ll be putting a safe distance between us and the target area before first light. I must speak to Gunter on disposal of fatalities. S/Sgt Hylands and his medical team will be given assistance should there be any stretcher cases. Walking wounded, again help shall be provided if needed. What’s your opinion?”

“I would agree with your thinking and I’ve a gut feeling just one mistake and this mission could turn into a nightmare with us as its leading actors”

“Let’s hope your wrong now back to base, have some lunch finalize plans then call the teams’ leaders in for a briefing.

“Make yourselves comfortable and pay careful attention asking no questions till I’ve finished. You’ve all studied our intended targets and appreciate what is being asked of us. Unlike previous missions this will be no picnic it is going to be tough; to stay alive will require being always on the alert for the unexpected, make sure your teams understand when meeting the enemy they must strike the first and final blow. There’ll not be time for a second chance. Here are your assigned tasks:

Sgt Major Robinson assisted by Cpl Naylor deals with the Guard Room also sentries in the yard.

S/Sgt Evans and Cpl Thompson takes out the Guard Room and sentries on the Viaduct then; makes sure Cpls

Piper and Jones are not disturbed. That viaduct is the key to a total long term disruption of rail and road services to and from Germany.

Sgt Beamish and Hans silence staff in the Signal Box then prime it and the ground frame with explosive.

Captain Byron and I shall commence priming engines and train wagons with explosive commencing on the west side of the yard. Sgt Beamish; Hans on completion of your task start with those on the East side hopefully we'll meet up in the middle of the yard.

Cpls Piper and Jones you know what your team has got to do; you've plenty of explosive use it to good effect.

Sgt Talbot assisted by Gunter two important tasks for you; first the vehicle park, Lorries to and from Germany if they arrive here late at night drivers refuel and have a few hours sleep, before departing. All vehicles you find in the park also the actual fuel dump must be primed with explosive. Deal with any drivers found asleep in their cabs. Satisfied the fuel dump and park have been dealt with take up position at the Aid Post acting in defence of medical staff and also to protect us from being surprised by unwanted visitors. Gunter on completion of the mission you're removing any fatalities to a place where they'll receive a decent burial and catching up with us two days later. You have my gratitude for this service"

S/Sgt Hylands set up a medical post on the down side of the ridge deal with wounded as they arrive and be prepared to move when I give the order"

Watches will be synchronised before entering target area at 1930 tomorrow night. Actual mission begins at 2005 giving you 35 minutes to reach your assigned target. Make sure your teams equipment is in good order and get a

good night's sleep. Tomorrow nothing must be left behind when we leave here all rubbish to be buried. This will be our third mission since leaving HQ it is my intention on reaching our next safe area to rest for at least 7 days rebuilding our strength and replenishing supplies keep that in mind and good luck"

"Well Billy this is by far the biggest target we've tackled and must admit I'm a mite scared over the responsibility of making sure that viaduct collapses just like they want it too. What if the charges are not strong enough to take out those main support beams; what do we do then, we'll not get a second chance?

"No Huw there'll be no going back to try again that is why were attaching double the normal amount of explosive on those six main supports and also on the four beams set at an acute angle to the river bank. Trust me that viaduct will go down like a pack of cards. Let's get the teams together and we'll go through it all again then relax and have some excellent stew. Oh and don't think you're the only one that's scared by what's been planned I am to and so is everybody else. When this lot goes up it'll be heard back in Blighty"

## CHAPTER 51

*10th March 1944  
Actual assault on Multsheim goods yard  
and Vehicle Park*

At precisely 2005 the assault on Multsheim Viaduct and Marshalling yard began. Patrolling German sentries totally unaware of the threat to their lives which had infiltrated the target area were taken completely by surprise. The attackers were also surprised by the lack of a defensive response to their attack. It was as if these soldiers of the Reich had no heart or willingness to fight back. Cpl Naylor discovered the answer when he looked more closely at the man who had just fallen to the thrust of his knife. He found to his horror it was a person of advanced age some one 50 to 60 years old. With sickened heart he continued his task; he had to. A few of the enemy guards did make an effort to call out and defend themselves but with a hardened; calloused hand, blackened with camouflage cream clasped firmly over their mouths and knives from long practice striking swiftly home with a killing blow they

stood little chance. Sadly one blade did not strike true and the German soldier though mortally wounded made a fatal thrust with his bayonet. Pte Timothy Collins; a man who in reality detested violence, friend of Cpl Tanworth fell beside his adversary united in death.

Sgt Major Robinson deployed his teams so that all windows of the Guard Room were covered and secured the door making it impossible for the occupants to escape. At his signal; a muted whistle, Grenades smashed their way through the windows. Soldiers at rest behind those wooden walls wakened by the sounds of breaking glass voiced their annoyance with loud curses which changed into shrieks of horrified anguish; pain and terror as the grenades exploded; fragment steel tearing into their unprotected bodies, men lapsed into unconsciousness' as an escape from unbearable pain or suffered an abrupt and merciful end to life. In a well rehearsed move men of Nemesis stepped up close to the broken windows and opened fire sweeping the room with a hail of gunfire. "Cease firing, Cease firing" Silence fell not even a whimper was heard "well done lads next stop the Aid Post sharply now"

Reaching the aid post they learnt of Pte Collins death and Cpl Naylor reported his discovery.

"Cpl Naylor I know how you must feel; it is sickening that mere youths and older men are being made to fight but it must not stop you from doing your job. I'll let the OC know but in the meantime keep this knowledge to your self. Let Major James decide on what must be done"

Sgt Talbot arrived with five wounded 3 of them on stretchers and S/Sgt Hylands swiftly set to work cleansing and stitching together damaged tissue on two of the injured

the other three he did what he could to relieve their pain but they needed surgery.

Next S/Sgt Evans with more bad news a man had lost his footing when grappling with an enemy guard and gone over the edge of the viaduct. He died of a broken Neck. 2 more had died in a fire fight and 3 were wounded 1 seriously.

Major James and Captain Byron were the last to arrive bearing the body of Pte Joseph shot by a German officer plus 2 men with bayonet wounds.

“S/Sgt Hylands you have 15 minutes to complete your work”

“Gunter we’ve 6 dead take 24 men and I’ll see you in two days. Well Sgt Major it would seem to have gone better than expected. When we move out keep the pace moderate. March for one hour then at the first most suitable place giving us all reasonable safety a halt will be called.

“There are four stretcher cases urgently needing the MOs attention sir”

“Organise stretcher bearers and be ready to move, Sgt Major get the men on their feet; men rose sluggishly to stand shoulders sagging with weariness. All right so you’re tired; I am too, now straighten those backs, Very shortly detonation will begin and I’ve no wish for us to be caught up in the resulting explosion. Move out.

Just over 3 miles had been covered when a sizeable fold in the ground was reached. Pay attention; do not get comfortable, immediately following the main explosion we’ll be on the move again. Providing all our timers were set correctly I would say there is no more than 10 minutes

before the fireworks start; everybody, spread out and keep your ears tightly covered.

Men did as they were bid but took advantage of their position to relax easing tired limbs aching muscles' and it seemed no time had passed at all when to their rear the night sky was rent asunder in deafening; awe inspiring blasts of sound as explosion followed explosion in rapid succession. All went quiet and men raised their heads "Keep your ears covered there might be more to come" A dense canopy of clouds; spawned from the combustible materials set on fire by the detonation of explosives, covered the horizon from East to West and a giant wall of expanding wall of flame painted a royal tableau of colour in shades of; Blues, Greens, Purples, orange and gold increasing in size and grandeur with every passing second as more and more fuel of rolling stock and buildings fed the flames. It seemed to the watchers as though they had set the world on fire, men crossed themselves uttering prayers of gratitude for those who had made them put a safe distance between them and that raging inferno. Then came a gigantic clearly defined single thunderclap; a brilliant white flash of light turning night into day followed by a rushing wind and the very air seemed to be issuing forth from a giants' furnace making it extremely difficult to draw breath.

"What the hell was that voiced the Sgt Major? "Erhardte there are four men who need to reach HQ for urgent treatment by the MO I can only spare 20 men and they must return as soon as possible. Cpl Singleton will travel with you to provide medical treatment.

"Sgt Major; select 20 men to go with Erhardte and Cpl Singleton as stretcher bearers then make ready to move report when ready?"

“Major James said a silent prayer for the two resistance men who had volunteered to stay behind then report back with details of damage caused. He was also extremely puzzled over what might have caused that last massive explosion surely one of those trains or Lorries had not been carrying such a huge amount of explosive materiel”

With Hans as their guide they moved out Major James was giving serious thought to the journey that lay ahead. With progress slowed by the walking wounded he estimated it would take at least two nights to reach safety. Their first stop was about two hours away and they had to reach it before dawn broke. Providing they were not disturbed a good days rest should improve their situation. “James I’ve decided an early start tonight going at a moderate pace may be a favourable what do you think?”

“That’s good thinking John the men will get a good rest today and if we do the same the following night arriving at our next hiding place early will give us more time to check it out before moving in”

“That last explosion is really puzzling me it was of great strength perhaps some new type of explosive in transit and destroyed purely by chance which will be a good thing. I’m hoping that Johann and Gunter will supply the answer when they return”

“Yes John let’s hope they return safely; these good lads the type that’s hard to replace, for we’re bound to have stirred up a hornets nest and the Germans will be certain to have numerous patrols out. We’ll be meeting up with Major Lovejoy soon combining forces to take out that airport our final mission. I shall be glad now when this lot is over, happy to find a quiet corner somewhere to finish off my term. 2 years to go and that’s me done”

“You surprise me James thought you’d extend your service now you’ve been promoted?”

“Might have done; but not now, seen too much that’s fair turned my stomach. For the first time in my life I’m giving thought to how lonely my future could be without dependents. No one to look after me when I’m old and shaky on my

legs; there has got to be a woman out there who’ll take me on, provide me with a son or daughter or both if I’m lucky”

“You’re serious about this, well I wish you luck James no doubt there are many who are thinking exactly like you. Sgt Major head for that spinney on your right post lookouts and take a break for 10 minutes”

The short break was not nearly enough but it had to suffice on they went keeping a good pace knowing that soon they would be able to enjoy the sleep so badly needed now.

“Major the farm is just beyond the rise it needs to be reconnoitred before going in”

“Sgt Major Robinson with 6 men check out the farm the other side of that hill make sure it’s safe for us to continue”

Pte Joel came at the double with a message saying it was safe to enter the farm.

The farm had obviously been empty for a considerable period of time badly overgrown with only a few scrawny chickens running wild in evidence that it was once occupied. The Barn a well built timber structure despite neglect was found to be weatherproof and totally dry it also contained a large number of straw bales providing ample; though

musty bedding material, on which tired bodies could rest in comfort.

“Sgt Major Senior NCOs to act as guard commanders, I require 4 lookout posts established and manned straight away working shifts of 2 hours on and 4 off. S/Sgt Hylands find a place for you and your team and take care of the wounded”

“Cpl Stone you’re in charge of preparing hot food and drink. Pte Jackson as duty operator contact HQ and standby to send a Sitrep and signal”

“Whilst waiting for the food weapons are to be cleaned and personal hygiene carried out anyone whose weapons are found dirty or has not washed and shaved will find him self on guard duty”

“James lets find a spot for ourselves a signal has to be sent to HQ requesting a supply drop and also a situation report. Once I have written it will you check to make sure nothing has been missed out then have the radio op send it?”

The two officers having enjoyed a wash down and shave were relaxing enjoying the hot strong tea heavily sweetened with condensed milk and relishing the hot food and from the taste; it was doubtful if the chickens still lived, when Johannn and his friend Gunter made their appearance. They shook hands the Major expressing his delight and relief at his friends’ safe return. “Go get your self some hot food and drink then we’ll hear your report”

Johannn began his report with a question; “Major no offence intended but were you or the Captain told of the underground fuel storage tanks that had been installed between the vehicle and marshalling yard area or; that a

troop train of five carriages had been added to one of the freight trains?

“No, not at all how could we; the only information gained was from local people; headquarters and our own observations”

“Those underground tanks were of steel or iron and full to capacity with fuel. It was these that caused the massive explosion which took place; a major fire the like of which I have never seen before, or do I wish to see again was started. It was fortunate those living in dwellings alongside the railway installation that had been told it would be wise to seek safety far from the yard did so. Every building bordering the rail yards and those on the opposite side of the street were totally destroyed by the power generated in the blast. There is nothing left but piles of bricks and ashes. Of the railway yard and vehicle park nothing; and I mean nothing, can ever be recovered. Rail stock, Signal Boxes and station buildings are all gone as if they never existed. The heat was so great railway lines became buckled and twisted beyond recognition. Bodies of those present in the yard and on the trains have been incinerated; the question of identification will be extremely difficult as all records were destroyed in the fire. It has been estimated between 3 and 400 died as a direct result of that final devastating explosion and it could be more I doubt a final total will ever be known. Mercifully death would have been instantaneous. The viaduct now lies in the river a total wreck the men responsible for destroying it did an excellent job. Your command excelled itself; a job well done, for the extensive damage and death caused, no shame should be felt. The townsfolk are very sad at the loss of their homes but say in time they can be rebuilt and

ask that you do not hold yourselves responsible. Having suffered a great deal; they are grateful to be rid of a people that have brought so much grief into their lives”

“Johann I too was puzzled over the cause of that major explosion but now it is clear why it happened; there should have been safety valves on those tanks to allow fumes and gasses to escape, they must have failed or were not fitted. With a build up of heat from fires in the vehicle park and railway yard the gasses and fumes expanded with no way of escaping and that’s what caused them to explode”

“And when they exploded John burning fuel from the tanks was spread over a very large area creating a huge inferno from which nothing was safe. You better let the Colonel know of this he’ll have to tell JCS”

“But those figures seem very high are you saying the troops had already joined the train?”

“Yes Major that is the information I was given” Major James sat stunned by this news and was silent for several minutes. “Thanks for this report Johann now you and Gunter get some rest you must feel very tired”

“John don’t go blaming yourself you carried out an order and must go on doing so remember; everyone here is dependent on you’re bringing us safely through the next few months”

“Thank you James it’s a shock being responsible for the death of so many. Let’s visit the men they’ll have to be told tomorrow after they’ve rested; make a tour of the guard posts then grab some sleep whilst I prepare a message for Colonel Curry”

“Pte Saunders in about 20 minutes there will be a Top Priority signal for HQ”

## CHAPTER FIFTY-TWO

*14 March 1944*

*Field Commanders reports*

Colonel Curry sat in his quarters a man deeply troubled by reports received from his Field Commanders.

Major James had signalled his CO with a coded Sitrep advising him of the men who had been killed and the wounded now on their way to HQ. He gave full details of damage caused and estimated fatalities suffered by the German forces during the assault on Multsheim Marshalling yards. He also told him of discovering enemy soldiers still in their teenage years or; of advanced years and far too old for military service.

Major Lovejoy had reported being in a fierce fire fight following further attacks on road convoys during which he had lost six men. Nine men were also wounded and on their way to HQ for treatment by the MO. His most disturbing information was the fact his men had found themselves; not only in action against seasoned soldiers but also youths as young as 14 years.

The Colonel sought advice from JCS expressing his deep concern over the situation now being faced. Their answer left no doubts over the course of action to be taken and it was quoted in full:

FOR ATTENTION OF ALL COMMANDERS.  
Persons wearing the uniform of the German Armed Forces and deployed in an active military role cannot and must not prove a deterrent against attaining your missions objective”

“RSM it is clear to me how desperately keen you are to take part in the intended assault on Le Roche airfield. When the stretcher bearers expected here on the 16<sup>th</sup> have rested you’ll take charge of them also Cpl Singleton a medic who’s travelling back with the wounded; plus 10 HQ personnel including 2 additional medical staff for the return trip, Erhardt a trusted resistance man will be your guide. Due to recent events it’s my strong feeling morale needs boosting that will be your task. Read these signals it will make everything clear”

“Bloody hell; no wonder their moral is down, any decent soldier would feel pretty low on finding they’ve been killing teenagers and old men. When do you wish us to leave sir?

“On the night of 18/19<sup>th</sup> give Major James and Lovejoy my regards and tell them an air drop will take place on the 25<sup>th</sup> March also; this is most important, the assault against Le Roche airfield must take place no later than April the 30<sup>th</sup> on completion of the mission they are to return to HQ. I’m leaving you to select 10 men and you’ll find you’re not short on volunteers I will speak to the MO about the medical staff who’ll also carry supplies requested by S/Sgt Hyland”

“With your permission I’ll start by selecting the men and make preparation to leave and thank you for this opportunity sir”

## CHAPTER FIFTY-THREE

*March 22<sup>nd</sup> 1944*  
*A Chance Encounter*

The RSM had departed HQ with no regrets and his group had covered over 75% of their journey without incident when their luck ran out. Well hidden in a dense thicket behind a dry stone wall that ran alongside a road and unable to move for fear of attracting the attention of enemy troops. The German Soldiers were grouped around the second vehicle in a convoy of six high sided; uncovered, fully loaded heavy goods Lorries; from the growing pool of oil on the road it was obviously suffering a serious failure.

“Ok listen closely and don’t ask questions; that road has to be crossed and crossed now if we are to reach Major James before first light. Very quietly I want you spaced out and up close and personal with this wall. Dawson, Soames, Hislop and Kingston on my order place your grenades amongst those Jerries standing in front of that second truck. Davies, Connolly, Jackson Summers, Nichols and Bates when I give the order to stop firing

you hurl a grenade into each of those trucks and don't miss or I'll have your guts for garters. The rest of you on my command open fire; not one of those soldiers must escape. Medics don't get nosy or you might have your head blown off just keep hugging the dirt. Erhardt if things go wrong for me you take command. Everybody ready; Ok Let's do it, Grenades; Now! A very surprised group of enemy soldiers given no time to dodge were instantly killed or felled; mortally wounded, by expertly pitched grenades. Open Fire! Those of the enemy wounded but still standing or trying to seek cover were mown down in a hail of well directed bullets. Cease firing! Hit those Lorries go; Grenades were hurled, each one finding a home in the back of a vehicle. Get down keep up tight to the wall and cover your ears; the men were grateful they did so; for the birds and other sounds of nature were suddenly silenced by a series of deafening explosions; vehicle parts and lumps of unidentifiable metal raining down all around them. It was the thickness and strength of the ancient stone wall that saved them from the powerful; heated blast created by the detonations, several minutes passed and all became still and quiet.

"Steady; don't move until I give the order, the RSM raised his head slowly above the stone wall and viewed a scene of utter devastation where six Lorries had stood; only the scorched and soot blackened smoking skeletons remained, fuel drums ruptured by the explosion their contents still burning fiercely lay scattered over a large area. He made a mental note; can only have been explosive ordnance and fuel in those Lorries to have caused that amount of destruction. On your feet let's get he hell out of here; at the double now, move your bloody selves"

Over the wall they scrambled and across the road plunging into a stand of trees not pausing even to draw breath or admire their handiwork; on they went at a cracking pace. The medics found it hard going and were thankful for the help given. Several miles passed before a halt was called the men sank to their knees winded and gasping for breath.

Erhardte how much further I'm knackered and so are the men?

"Maybe 6 miles no more than that"

"Listen up; whilst your resting 6 men shall keep watch, the rest of you clean your weapons and don't hang about you've got 5 minutes 10 including time for those on guard to do theirs"

"Sgt Mullins the RSM never even checked to see if any of those soldiers with the convoy were still alive aren't we supposed to treat and give wounded men relief from their pain no matter whose side their on?"

"Cpl Singleton there is nought but truth in what you say but; sometimes harsh and cruel decisions have to be made by those in command and we must accept and abide by them"

"Sgt excuse me for interrupting; Cpl Singleton though I respect your feelings let me make something quite clear; this will not be your last experience of going against all that you believe in, my decision not to linger at the convoy was because these men; including your self, are worth more as a fighting unit than a dozen or so damned stupid and careless Jerries; who hadn't even posted a lookout. They had to be taken out and it would have been a serious risk to our lives in stopping to show mercy to any that may have been alive. Your conscience can rest easy over that question; they were

all dead, no-one; caught in that explosive blast would have survived, understood?

“Yes sir and thank you for explaining your reasons to me”

## CHAPTER FIFTY-FOUR

*March 23<sup>rd</sup> 1944*  
*Ambitious decisions are made*

“Well James we’ve now got the RSM who can act as our 2i/c with 10 replacements for those lost or at HQ receiving treatment for their wounds plus additional medical staff to help look after our medical needs. With an air-drop bringing much needed stores on the 25<sup>th</sup> I would say were going to be in good shape for the assault on the Canal fuel depot”

“I’ve been giving thought to the convoy destroyed by the RSM could the fuel on those Lorries have come from there if so; from where did the ordnance originate?”

“Good question was thinking about that my self. Is it possible materials are being shipped by Barge because of difficulties being experienced through damage caused by Major Lovejoy and our selves? If so it might be worth looking at destroying the Canal Boat Elevator used for raising the barges from the lower to upper Canal level a height of around 28 feet. Dependant on observations Let’s aim for destroying both targets on the same night; with

the assaults starting as early as possible, leaving us several hours to be well clear and out of sight by daybreak. What do you think?

“Its ambitious John but definitely worthwhile; they do make good use of the Canal system as a means of transporting materials, so it would mean further disruption of supplies to their coastal defences. Yes why not; let’s give Adolf, instead of just another headache a really bad case of migraine”

“Will you deal with the Canal Elevator and I’ll take the fuel depot?”

“Suits me fine”

“You and I will carry out night time reconnaissance of both targets on 24/25<sup>th</sup> and 25/26<sup>th</sup>. Day time observations and intelligence gathering shall be carried out by Resistance teams. RSM will deal with the air-drop. Attacks will commence simultaneously at 2200 on the night of 28/29<sup>th</sup> this will give us plenty of time to reach the rendezvous with Major Lovejoy on 12<sup>th</sup> April. Your 2i/c to be the RSM mine will be Sgt Major Robinson agreed?”

“No problems there John I do have two items for consideration: No1. Cpl Jones and Piper I suggest they and their team be used for priming the Canal Boat Elevator and Lock Gate. No2. Cpl Piper has a good eye for noting detail; I’d like them both to join us on the first nights recon so they can view their task and assess amount of explosive needed and where it should be placed for best results”

“That makes good sense those two certainly did us proud over the Multsheim Viaduct; a first class result, should they achieve the same on this operation I’ll recommend promotion and an award for their efforts”

*Walter Brown*

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“I’ll keep that quiet until this mission has been completed meantime I’ll brief them and have them prepare for tomorrow night.

“Thank you James will you also pass the word to senior and junior NCOs ask them to be prompt for the briefing at 1000 on 27th and to begin preparation for the mission?”

## CHAPTER FIFTY-FOUR

*March 28/29<sup>th</sup> 1944*  
*Destruction Continues at a price*

Major James and his men lay hidden in a dense stand of trees which; by their immense girth of trunk, topped by gnarled and twisted branches of huge diameter, showed they had stood in this spot undisturbed witnessing the passage of time over many decades.

“Ready Sgt Major?”

“Ready sir”

“Sgt Talbot is your teams ready?”

“Yes sir”

“Go!”

Under an overcast sky of low lying; threatening black rain clouds, with partially closed eyes and blackened faces the senior NCOs and their teams; like nocturnal; predators went forth in total silence bent on causing death and destruction. Reaching a point just 25 yards from the estimated 6 foot long x 5 foot wide bridge built of stout 4 inch thick x 7 or 8 inches wide timber boards supported on 10 inch square timbers set in concrete and

capable of bearing heavy loads the Sgt Major and his men sank to the ground whilst Sgt Talbot continued with two teams his target; an illuminated sentry box, containing 2 enemy guards after several yards the Sgt tapped L/cpl Mason's shoulder and the Cpl took off at an angle headed towards the rear of the hut armed with a pair of heavy duty insulated cable cutters. Following instructions he easily found the rounded wooden post carrying power supply and telephone cables to which he applied the cutters. Powerful arc lamps shedding their light over the fuel dump area and lights within the communications and accommodation hut were extinguished leaving behind only the darkness of the night. German sentries patrolling the fuel dump and dockside area were felled mortally wounded their piteous cries unheard or; were mercifully killed outright by the

Explosive blast from detonating grenades; Bullets arced through the air finding a home in soft and yielding flesh or penetrated drums of oil, diesel and petrol causing their contents to exit in great gouts forming large puddles that spread rapidly across the rough uneven ground. Prepared tree branches about 2 feet long with ends bound in rags were soaked in spilled fuel and oil; then lit and cast amongst the ruptured drums; acrid black oily smoke billowed up towards the night sky and though it never touched your mouth, still left a foul taste that was hard to remove, flames of red, yellow and deep orange with shades of green and blue in a macabre dance soared skywards, the scene could be likened to that of Dante's inferno as more drums were blown wide open fuelling the flames. Shouted curses and horrifying screams of anguish and terror erupted from the accommodation block as the Sgt Major and his men used their fragmentation grenades to

good effect followed by automatic weapons blasting the life out of those who managed briefly to escape hurling themselves through windows only to find; there was no escape, the grim reaper was waiting to add to his rich harvest”

“Cease firing; Cease firing, Sgt Major; head count please?”

“9 with minor wounds stretchers have been made ready for 3 dead they were caught in the blast of a stick grenade sir”

“Were done with this place; everyone at the double across the bridge before it goes up in flames”

Captain Byron was waiting for them at the Aid post his mission had been completed with great success sadly 6 resistance and 4 men from Nemesis had been lost.

“What went wrong James?”

“The charges had all been laid no problems at all it was on the way here we ran into trouble a German Patrol of a Scout car and Lorry carrying about 20 enemy troops caught us out in the open with no place to go. The scout car opened fire and the men hit the ground rolling; firing back and unleashing several grenades at the lorry. Pte McIntosh though wounded saved us from complete disaster he managed to reach; kill the commander and toss a grenade into the open top of the scout car, stopping the heavy machine gun fire which caused his wound and killed our men. It was a very brave act on his part. He needs the attention of the MO as does the other 8 walking wounded. None of the enemy survived”

“It was unfortunate that patrol turned up when it did. S/Sgt Hylands a report on the wounded?”

“Pte McIntosh will have to be treated as a stretcher case the bullet struck his shoulder blade causing bone damage. S/Sgt Timms and I working as a team removed several fragments of bone plus the bullet. A very nasty wound it will take several months to heal completely. He’s hurting the most and will suffer badly on the journey back to HQ. On the remainder though deep penetration wounds were suffered no vital organs were damaged. Three weeks complete rest followed by a weeks light duties will see them fit for duty again”

“The Major made his way to where Pte McIntosh lay looking noticeably pale and despite the morphine he had received his face showed he was in considerable pain. His left shoulder was heavily swathed in bandages and his arm supported by a sling was secured across his upper chest. He touched the young mans cheek “rest easy you did well and were all very proud of you”

S/Sgt Hylands and Cpl Singleton will return to HQ with the wounded. S/Sgt Evans I’m putting you in command Rolf and Johann you’ll act as guides. L/Cpl Peters with 10 men shall act as stretcher bearers; defence and escort for the wounded move out when ready and good luck. Hans, Carl a temporary resting place for the dead is needed it must be close by is there such a place?

Hans and Carl conferred for several minutes before Hans answered; there are the ruins of a priory some 4 or 5 miles to the SW, there are family vaults and tombs one of them may be suitable it’s all we can offer?

“It will have to do; RSM make ready to move in 5 minutes”

“Cpl Thompson at our first halt contact HQ ask them to standby for a Sitrep”

## CHAPTER FIFTY-FIVE

*30<sup>th</sup> March 1944*  
*A cause for concern*

Colonel Curry sat contemplating the Situation reports and other signals he had just received from his commanders in the field; his face mirrored the deep concern he was feeling as they did not make for pleasant reading. Nineteen men had died during the execution of the last two missions. An even greater worry was that 17 walking wounded and four major stretcher cases were on their way to HQ a total of 21 men unfit for active duty. With an intended assault on the heavily defended Le Roche airfield on which a large force of fighter planes and Stuka Bombers were based; located just 10 miles inland from the French coast, with England less than 25 miles away it was vital that it be destroyed before the invasion began and also; to protect the troop ships each one carrying hundreds of men and their equipment. It would be catastrophic if those planes were allowed to deploy and attack the convoy.

“Cpl Coles; find the MO and Lt Ashley ask them to report immediately”

“Ian I have just received these reports and signals they concern your department please read them”

“It would seem your running short on men to do the work Hugh are you going to ask me if there are any that have been receiving treatment now fit for duty?”

“Yes I am; we’ve had 37 wounded men returned to HQ during the past three months, 25 are needed as replacements departing here on 7<sup>th</sup> April, are they available?”

“Ashley the surgical cases we discussed are you happy to release them?”

“With three more days’ bed rest and some exercise they’ll be fine”

“Hugh you’ve got your 25 men their muscles will be a little stiff can you arrange for them to receive some physical training?”

“No problem; now give me your opinion of the way in which medical staff dealt with the difficulties they faced in treating the seriously wounded?”

“It must be said they’ve done excellent work, Cpl Holland the way he responded has undoubtedly saved the lives of three men and for S/Sgt Hylands and Timms to have operated on Pte McIntosh without proper anaesthetics is a remarkable achievement. All three NCOs were extremely brave in taking decisions involving very high risks not only for their patients but they also laid their own careers on the line. Brought before a medical council for carrying out surgical procedures without licence it would have meant being struck of the nursing register. My final report will stress only that they showed real initiative and by true dedication and application of their knowledge and skills were successful in saving lives. Under normal conditions in a well staffed hospital this

sort of situation would never arise. Cpl Singleton has let himself down badly by questioning the RSM's motives and also raising objections to decisions made by senior officers. He has definitely not measured up to expectations. Very disappointing indeed"

"Cpl Singleton is returning with the wounded and he'll be remaining here perhaps you and Ashley can make him realise that this is a theatre of war and when men are in sore need of medical help; he's the one they depend on to make the decisions that could save a mans arm, leg or his life. Should he not be able to accept this fact or be able to modify his attitude then his place is not with those deployed on Active service"

"We'll certainly do our best. It would be a shame to lose a man whose record shows he was highly thought of during training and received several strong recommendations for promotion from his tutors. Ill let you have my full report after I've examined the patients"

## CHAPTER FIFTY-SIX

*April 10th 1944*

*A safe haven to rest and recover is found*

They had arrived at this location in the 'Collines du Perch' at midnight in a totally exhausted state both physically and mentally. Gratefully the officers and men had sunk to their knees thankful to have finally reached a place of relative safety where they could rest from a persistent enemy who had been pursuing and engaging them in running battles over the past three days. Several had suffered varying degrees of painful wounding. So tired food was not even a consideration all they wanted was sleep. Guards were posted; the injured men made comfortable then, ignoring the hard and stony ground they slept. Roused in the late morning by the RSM to find they were in a truly wild and desolate place yet naturally beautiful. Native flowers and scrub providing vivid splashes of colour against a backdrop of time weathered granite and Limestone. Their haven a small plateau set high in the hills some thirty miles from the nearest habitation was well hidden from view by tall standing monoliths and boulders

that had lain here undisturbed for millions of years Most welcome; was the deep rock basin filled by a cataract of cold clear refreshing water bouncing and tumbling its way down a wide rock filled fissure over rocks and boulders worn smooth by the passage of time. At the eastern end of the plateau a narrow channel led from the basin to a lengthy broad rock shelf over which the water cascaded in a white, green and bluish torrent for about 200 feet forming a river that flowed swiftly towards the SE.

Quietly orders were given weapons were cleansed and then whilst food was being prepared everyone enjoyed the sheer luxury of immersing their naked sweat and dust encrusted bodies in the cold clear waters of the basin. After enjoying the hot food Major James addressed them:

“Pay attention for the next six days we shall remain here taking a well earned rest and ensuring equipment is prepared for our final mission. To ensure no one grows accustomed to a lazy life style Sgts Talbot and Longstaff will organise 1 hour of physical training at the start of each day. I suggest a series of freestyle swimming races round the perimeter of the pool may be a good way of toning up relaxed muscles. Remember to keep the noise down. An air supply will be made in two days time RSM Humphries assisted by Sgt Major Carter will be responsible for seeing it is safely received. S/Sgt Timms let me have an update on the condition of the wounded by 1400 today.

Sgt Major Robinson; Cpls Stone and Naylor your responsibility is making sure were not surprised by unwelcome visitors two men to be on watch at all times. There will be a briefing for all Officers, Senior NCOs and Resistance Leaders at 1500 today. To avoid a chance discovery of our presence everyone must remain concealed;

no-one must venture onto the hillsides during daylight hours. Make full use of this rest period for there is a difficult task to face but it will be our last mission and the most important”

“At the briefing Major James first made it very clear the immensity of the task to which they had been assigned then made his requirements known; It is a 2 hour march from here to the target area commencing on the night of 14/15 for three successive nights one officer, senior nco and a member of the resistance will make his way to the target area start time 2130 and carry out a full reconnaissance making careful note of all relevant detail specifically; locations of accommodation and communication blocks, fuel and oil storage facilities, guard room, watch towers, number of sentries and their patrol routes and position of power supply cables. In my estimation 4 hours on site should prove ample. RSM you and I will make the first recon with Hans as our guide followed by Major Lovejoy, Sgt Major Robinson and Gustave. Captain Byron, Sgt Major Carter and Erhardt will make the final observations. On returning here before getting your heads down reports will be written up and handed to me. Commencing at 0900 on the 19<sup>th</sup> based on our observations a plan of assault will be discussed and finalised. Hans have you spoken with the six resistance men selected to visit and spend two days in the town of Visieux to gather intelligence on traffic to and from the airfield?

“Yes sir, the ones chosen are not young but; they are able, understand their mission fully and will not let you down”

“Thank you Sgt Talbot and Sgt Longstaff your responsibility is to ensure the men’s weapons and equipment

is in good working order now if there are no questions lets  
enjoy a few days rest hopefully with out interruption”

## CHAPTER FIFTY-SEVEN

*13th April 1944*  
*News from Home*

RSM Humphries assisted by Sgt Major Carter and 15 men wasting no time gathered in the 6 containers which formed the supply drop several of them being very heavy and awkward to carry. With the stores came a totally unexpected delivery; a large bag full of letters and a few parcels from home.

“Call the lads together RSM and hand out the mail it’s just what they need Christmas was the last time they heard from home”

The men were delighted sharing parts of letters bringing happy news with those who had not been fortunate enough to receive any. Billy Piper and Huw Jones were doing a jig of sheer happiness and Huw when he burst into song was quickly hushed by the RSM; what the hells got into you all this jigging about and bursting into song come on out with it?

“Sorry RSM but you see our wives gave birth to daughters at the end of March and their both doing fine”

“Well done both of you congratulations remember its champagne all round to wet the babies head”

“RSM between us we’ll buy enough to float a battleship ain’t that right Billy?”

“Aye it’ll be a grand do that’s for sure but I can’t quite get my head round it me! a father of not one girl but two! Bloody hell lets get this war over quick I want to go home”

“Danny you appear to be in a state of shock nothings happened to that fiancé of yours?”

“You’ll never guess not in a million years what’s happened never; blimey, I just cannot believe my luck”

“Don’t keep us in suspense you underdone Cornish pasty spit it out”

“Ok; in this village were I live two well educated and reasonably well off spinsters employed me part time as their odd job man lovely people and very highly respected; they’ve passed over and left me their entire estate. It means Joanne and me have a home of our own; it’s a fully furnished well maintained 18<sup>th</sup> century 3 bedroom cottage with a welsh slate roof and a huge garden of at least an acre in size how’s about that then?”

“You jammy basket Joanne is real pleased about this good fortune of yours then?”

“Man she’s thrilled to bits wants us to get married as soon as I get home. Got her heart set on starting a family she just loves being around children. Do you reckon they’ll give us a nice long leave RSM if we do a good job on this last mission?”

“Pte Bushel I’m right pleased for you and wish you every success and I can say unless there is a real emergency

on arriving back in Blighty once all the paperwork is sorted leave will be about six weeks”

“Sadness and tears was brought to the faces of many who heard news of much loved family members falling victim to an air-raid. Or were missing presumed dead whilst on active service”

## CHAPTER FIFTY-EIGHT

*19th April 1944*

*Major James addresses his command teams*

I have called you all together to discuss the assault of Le Roche airfield. Each and every one of you from your observation of the target is aware that the airfield is much larger than expected and there can be no doubts in anyone's mind that the odds are stacked against us. The airfield is less than 40 miles from English coastal ports where allied forces men, ships, ordnance and other materials of war are being brought together in preparation for the intended invasion of Europe. Our job is to destroy the ability of this airfield to carry out raids against those ports. Our problem is there are just 167 men to do the job but do it we shall regardless of cost in life. Your areas of responsibility are as follows:

Major Lovejoy Accommodation block and emergency  
Generator room.

Captain Byron Guard room and Armoury

RSM Fuel store

Sgt Major Robinson Ammunition store

Sgt Major Carter Defence

Hans Watch towers

Rolf Patrolling sentries

Myself Communications and Control center

S/Sgt Evans Power supply and Telephone cables They are carrying high voltage so make sure insulated gloves are worn.

You have two days in which to prepare a plan of attack on your assigned target and I shall speak with you all individually to discuss those plans.

S/Sgt Hylands your medical post will be located about 80 yards from Sgt Major Carters defence position.

“The Abbott at the local priory has agreed to accept and look after the dead. Wounded unable to walk will be taken out on stretchers. Gentlemen there is much to consider lets get to it”

“Sgt Talbot; find Cpls Piper and Jones and report back to me”

“Hans a word before you leave the dozen sniper rifles that arrived with the air drop; has your selected team given them a thorough cleansing to get rid of the protective grease and have they familiarised themselves with the weapon?”

“The rifles are in tip top condition and the men are delighted you’ve entrusted this task to them those watch tower guards will be queuing outside the pearly gates or visiting with old Nick before they know what’s hit them.

“Good those heavy calibre machine guns must not be given the chance to open fire; it would prove disastrous for Nemesis and when your certain they are no longer a threat, give a hand where needed on the airfield itself”

“Cpl Piper and Cpl Jones the CO; as a reward for you’re recent successes, has promoted you both to the rank of full Cpl backdated two months. Adjustment to allowances received by your wives has been made. I believe it to be well deserved; you’ve both worked extremely hard to develop your skills in the use of explosive and now I want you to make good use of them. These timers (he handed over four small strong cardboard boxes) arrived on that last airdrop. They are preset for 1 hour and are to be used with explosive in the destruction of aircraft based at the airfield. It means; you and your 11 teams will have to work at the double, when placing your charges they must be placed so as to cause maximum damage. There must be no mistake the majority of those aircraft must be destroyed damaged beyond repair. Sgt Talbot shall be in command with 6 men who will act in your defence making sure there are no distractions allowing you to concentrate on the job in hand. That is your mission during this raid. Sgt Talbot 50 minutes after the first charge is laid you will order the teams to withdraw to a safe distance and take cover. Do not take any unnecessary chances. Those planes could be fully armed and loaded with bombs in preparation for early morning take off. Do you have any questions?”

“Only one sir will you accept an invitation to the christening at which we shall be celebrating the birth of our daughters?”

“I’ll be delighted let me know when the date has been fixed”

“Well Huw in at the sharp end again and no mistake. The extra cash will come in handy now we’ve another mouth to feed but I’m missing Megan and Marion something

cruel the day I'm on the way home can't come quick enough for me"

"You're not on your own there Billy never thought it would be so hard for me being away from Bronwyn once I'm out of this mans army and home I'm never going to leave my family on their own again never. Come on lets go and get the teams sorted can't wait to see their faces when we tell them about these preset timers. Just 1 hour blimey we'll all have to really get a move on"

"True; we will, I'm thinking the best position for the explosive to be placed would be on the surface of the planes fuselage close up hard against the wheel housing. It would be hard to see in the dark being a darkish grey in colour. The strongest member of the team could hoist his mate up to the chosen spot on his shoulders. We'll have a couple of hours practicing using these monoliths. These pebbles can be used as a lump of explosive mark 20 of them and have a race to see which team can do it in the fastest time won't be so boring then. Next; prepare a load of explosive ready to receive the timers and we'll be all set. Sound good to you?

"Sounds just right to me should give us a few laughs lets get to it"

## CHAPTER FIFTY NINE

*27<sup>th</sup> April 1944*  
*A Final Briefing*

Major James looked at his seated men with a genuine feeling of real pride each and every one of them was deserved of a true and heartfelt recognition for the loyal service they had given. His thoughts were also tinged with sadness and regret; how many of these brave and selfless men would suffer crippling wounds or remain unscathed from what undoubtedly would prove the most hazardous and exacting mission undertaken by them. It had to be accepted as fact only their adherence to a rigid discipline; the acceptance of orders without question, ensuring even the smallest detail received a teams undivided attention, had brought them safely through these past seven months. The animal like existence endured; enforced on them by circumstances over which they had no control; the need to kill and keep on killing, stifling all thoughts of compassion or; the granting of mercy to a ruthless enemy, had scarred them mentally and physically for the rest of their lives. Not even the clinical expertise of noted psychiatric specialists

could ever eradicate the haunting memories that lay deep within their subconscious. Like his men he too was tired in spirit and weary to the bone. He hoped and prayed nothing more would be asked of him or his men that this was truly the last mission they would carry out. Casting his depressing thoughts aside and smiling he began his address; "The assault on Le Roche airfield will commence at 2200 tomorrow night. Two days earlier than planned taking advantage of predicted weather conditions. According to the forecast it will be fine and clear with a cloudless sky, moon rise is around 0200 making it an ideal night for the attack. You have practiced the plans made by your commanders and now each team knows exactly what they have to do. The password during the mission is; 'Grand' answered by 'Finale' departure time is 1800 giving us three hours to reach the target area at a pace that will conserve our energy. A halt will be called before taking up your start positions make good use of this break by relieving yourselves. There is nothing more uncomfortable than pissing your pants or worse being caught out by the enemy whilst squatting or holding onto your manhood. With the assault being made simultaneously from several different points it is hoped panic shall be felt by the enemy and from panic comes confusion. Take advantage of the disorder caused by your appearance and take out the enemy. On this operation; more so than all the others we have carried out, there is definitely no room for compassion. Strike fast and true; hesitate giving the Germans a second chance and they'll kill you. I have nothing more to say except God speed and good luck.

# CHAPTER SIXTY

*28/29<sup>th</sup> April 1944*  
*The assault of Le Roche airfield*

At 2140 all teams were in their start positions a square section of the boundary fence large enough to allow the passage of a man plus his equipment had been removed. Now the men with hearts pounding like the blacksmiths hammer on his anvil waited with bated breath for the signal to move. At precisely 2200 the team commanders raised hands dropped and the men without haste swiftly made their entry onto the airfield. Crouching low they approached their given targets as they did so there came upon the warm night air the repeated crack of high powered rifles as Hans and his team of resistance fighters removed the threat of those keeping guard in the enemies watch towers.

S/Sgt Evans with his teams had slowly and with great care released the cast iron front covers of the power and telephone cable junction boxes exposing the terminated cables. At 2200 on the dot both sets of cables were cut and the airfield was plunged into a darkness that was relieved

by a clear starlit sky and those who realising a very serious threat to their safety was taking place tried to make a call for assistance found the phones were useless. Primed explosive charges were placed in each box and also at the base of the 8" Diameter post.

Captain Byron had given much thought to his assigned targets; Guardroom, Armoury and the machine gun posts. Wisely he split his group into three and as the lights went out; in a well orchestrated movement, three teams of men descended on enemy soldiers guarding the Barrier and machine gunners left temporarily blinded by the sudden loss of light. The MGPs were the first to fall victim to an attack ferocious in its intensity by the teams of Cpl Luke Thompson & Rikarde, Pte Dale & Henrique, Pte Roby, & Limans, Pte Mathews and Peter Sully. Caught unprepared for such a direct and surprise assault the six enemy machine gunners were quickly overwhelmed.

"Breathless from his exertions Dale remarked; that were bloody quick, Peter you were like a damn terrier I thought you were going to rip that poor bastards head off?

"You speak for yourself Dale; the way you bashed that Jerries head with your butt end was awful, what would your Mam have said if she knew her precious son was acting like a hooligan and what about Rikard; he stuck one with his knife then before you could say; 'Jack Robison', he cut the other ones throat worse than Sweeney Todd he is?

L/Cpl Mason appeared from out of the darkness his expression a trifle grim looking.

"You all right Eric?

"I am; there were 3 guarding that armoury Luke and one was inside, as we entered Saunders copped one in

his upper right arm it's a bit of a mess I sent him off to the aid post. That place is bigger than it looks and on two levels. The underground area must be the size of 3 football pitches and is stacked full of bombs some of them are enormous weighing several hundred pounds or more. There's going to be one hell of a bang when our explosive sets that lot off"

"Let's hope were long gone before then let's go join Captain Byron"

They entered the guardroom as the last enemy was silenced to find the place a total shambles of broken furniture and glass. "Armoury secured and primed with explosive 1 man wounded reported Cpl Thompson"

"Well done take a head count of my lot"

"There were two dead and five walking wounded"

"Right lets get the wounded over to the Medical Post"

Sgt Major Carter in defence had formed a half circle and instructed his men to maintain a sharp watch to their front and outwards on each flank. They had been in position for about 20 minutes when a small force of German troops; possibly a troop that had been out patrolling the area round the airfield, alerted by the activity and noise taking place attacked them on both flanks it was purely their alertness that saved them from total disaster. Locked in close combat they fought savagely for survival with small arm; fist, boot and knife for no more than 12 minutes but in that short space of time 7 men died including Sgt Major Carter. There were also 4 seriously wounded. Cpl Davies with great presence of mind immediately took command; "Pte Burrows, Hislop, Johnson and Atkins form stretcher

parties and get the wounded and dead to S/Sgt Hyland at the medical post the rest of you move those Jerry bodies back over there by those bushes then reform the defence line check your weapons and ammo were not done yet so keep your eyes peeled and if you must talk keep it low.

Ptes Tampsett and Lacy; Major James is dealing with the communication block find him; he needs to know what's happened here. That was hot work while it lasted Terry and If they've reported finding us here there could be more on the way. Thanks for covering my back that bastard was fast on his feet and would have had me for sure. Sad about the Sgt Major he was a good un remember the way he kept us together when racing for the boat out of Port Sweatenham; how that Captain didn't ground his boat on a sandbank or, get hit by those Jap guns on the point I'm damned if I know?

"You're not wrong Arthur it's a damned shame he was one of the best; a good man to have around when things got rough so was Ptes Beard and Ericson. Shall miss them in the NAAFI Robby Beard had a voice like Al Jolson; not as good mind, and Jo Erikson his mate could certainly get a good tune out of that old accordion of his; always did wonder why they never asked for a posting to that lot who go round entertaining the troops?"

Cpl Arthur Davies and L/Cpl Terrance Jamison both 25 years old had been together since first meeting at basic training camp and a close friendship forged in the heat of battle had been formed. Like many more of the Nemesis Command they had been involved in the Malayan campaign escaping capture by the skin of their teeth.

Cpl Jake Stone with his team mate Geordie Burlinson and 4 men were crouched a yard or so from a large nine paned wood frame window giving access to the radio communications room located at the eastern end of the two storey control tower building.

“Make ready 1 – 2 – 3 GO! And as one man they rose to their feet and directed a short burst of fire ranging from left to right and then right to left destroying the window completely a number of grenades were then hurled through the gaping hole at different angles. They sought shelter from the blast to come by flattening them selves against the buildings wall and as the smoke cleared Jake peered round the side of the shattered window frame and found he was looking at a scene of utter devastation and death.

“On your feet; no time to stand around, quickly now, through the window and destroy that radio equipment”

Major James and his men fought their way up a flight of stairs leading directly to the Control Tower it was a bitter and costly fight against well trained troops, alerted by the sounds of gunfire and exploding grenades the enemy urged on by a senior officer showed a grim determination to stop the Major from gaining access to the Towers main control room. Crouching low keeping close into the walls on either side Nemesis teams kept on the move firing short well aimed bursts whenever a target showed. Grenades were thrown by both sides most of the German ones falling or being booted to the bottom of the stairs causing no damage to the invaders. Blood was flowing freely from friend and foe mingling to form growing puddles showing dark against the grey of concrete steps. Lifeless bodies lay broken and twisted at curious unnatural angles as they

made their way steadily upwards. The Jerries retreated in the face of this relentless threat and attempted to close the twin doors but were blasted off their feet dead before their shattered bodies hit the floor. Grenades were hurled to the sides of the control tower and also down its centre exploding in the confines of the room with thunderous detonations and the sounds of shattering glass. The air was filled with the screams of anguish caused by fragmented shards of heated grenade steel casing having found a home driving deep into soft and yielding flesh. There came a form of silence broken only by the sound of mortally wounded men; crying out for relief from pain that wracked their bodies, and would not cease until death took its place.

“Sgt Talbot report”

“There are 4 dead, 2 stretcher cases and 7 walking wounded sir”

“Cpl Naylor organise stretchers and with the dead and wounded make your way to the Medical post”

“Sir; Message from Cpl Davies.....”

“Sgt Talbot prime several charges and place them in and around the Radar, Radios and all other equipment. Make your way to the defence position when you’ve finished Sgt Major Carters been killed and this command could find itself in real trouble if Cpl Davies is overrun”

Major Lovejoy failed to move fast enough and was stopped short of his target by an alerted enemy force of about 30 men all were in varying stages of undress having been roused from their beds. Armed only with their MP40 machine gun and little ammunition they were in poor shape for a fight.

“Hit the deck and take them down roared the Major”

So began a fierce fire fight Nemesis men had the advantage of being armed with grenades and they made good use of them forcing the enemy to retreat seeking cover in and around the accommodation block. Pte Connolly reacted like a threatened snake when a Jerry soldier trod on his hand. He grabbed his ankle pulling him down hard and with the speed of a striking King Cobra struck a mortal blow with his knife driving it deep between the Germans shoulder blades. The man arched his back in shock and pain then lay still. The enemy fought savagely but slowly and surely they were either killed or wounded to an extent were they would not pose a problem.

Sgt Longstaff looked to his rear as the fighting ceased searching for a sight of Major Lovejoy he spotted his officer standing quite motionless except for his head which kept moving from side to side as if searching for something. Had he been wounded or concussed from a blow to the head?

“Cpl Jones take charge and prime the Generator room with explosive than report back to me at the double, move it times running out”

“Pte Laskey; see that the wounded reach the medics and remain there”

Reaching the Major he was shocked to find his hair was matted with blood that was still oozing from a terrible; deep, wide gaping wound that stretched from the forehead to his crown exposing the skull bone He got the officer seated on the ground and gently covered the wound with a bandage.

“Sgt; Generator room contained a pair of generators both plus the ancillary equipment have been primed with explosive and timers set to detonate in 2 hours. Is the Major ok?”

“No Cpl he is not; it looks real bad, needs help and fast prepare a stretcher get the men together next stop S/Sgt Hyland”

Rolf; his long time friends, brothers Karl and Heinz Dieter who were just 24 years old and looked much, much older only time itself would vanquish the hatred felt by them for the hated SS plus 28 fellow resistance fighters deployed in teams of three ranged across the air field and for the loss of 4 men and 9 with minor wounds they eliminated an estimated 20 German guards.

RSM Humphries arriving at the Oil and Fuel storage area was dismayed to find it had grown considerably since he had first observed it. Drums were now stacked in lines about fifty yards long; three deep and four high with an alley way between wide enough to allow the passage of a small crane. The high octane fuel store was separated from the oil section by a high; wide earth bank several feet thick. Bloody hell this was going to prove awkward he gave thought to the matter then: Cpl Andrews take three teams to the fuel section and begin laying explosive charges. I'll begin at this end priming the oil store. You'll have to use your loaf for there's been a build up in the number of drums I suggest to get a good spread of charges we'll do the first column then miss the next three placing three charges in each row that should do the job making for a real nice blaze reporting back to this position when

you've done. You've got 50 minutes so don't hang about get going and puncture a few drums as you go"

Sgt Major Robinson found the ammunition store to be a secured building of corrugated iron sheeting and concrete construction with only four windows fitted with stout iron bars to prevent ease of access. A short burst from Cpl Andrew's small arm dealt with the mortise lock he gave the door a hefty kick and the door commenced to swing open on well oiled hinges it had reach about the half-way point when he was hit by a burst of MG fire from within the store. Pte Woodbank; he's done for the Cpl and I've been hit twice, take that bastard out then prime the building with explosive. If there is anything that will burn making a nice bonfire of the place then set it alight. Pte Phillips give me a hand here I'm bleeding like a stuck pig"

Carefully the Pte cut open the Sgt Majors shirt and trouser leg to apply bandages and stop the bleeding.

"Sir I don't know what weapon he used but it must have been of a large calibre you've a ruddy great hole in your right side and one just above the Knee. Don't think any vital organs have been damaged though hope not anyway. This means no more marching for you; when the lads have finished we'll make a couple of stretchers head for the aid post and get you patched up proper like"

"Shocks beginning to wear off now and I'm feeling the pain; but pay no heed to my groaning. Hear those explosions that'll be Cpls Piper and Jones with their special time fuses it means we've been on the airfield over an hour and are now late for meeting up with Major James so bloody move it; get us out of here at the double, that's an order, disobey me and you'll be in real trouble"

Cpls Piper and Jones plus their teams were at that moment viewing the results of their handy work. It was proving to be a truly glorious; vivid Technicolor display, all it needed was a full orchestra playing 'Handel's' Firework music and the scene would have been complete.

"I reckon those fighter planes were fuelled and fully armed ready to go Billy and those Bombers were definitely loaded with bombs I'm glad not to be on that runway with them blowing up; you'd have a hard job finding the pieces to bury that's if there were any"

"Eh you're right there Huw I reckon it'll be best foot forward and at a cracking place when everybody's reported in"

## CHAPTER SIXTY-ONE

*29th April 1944  
Le Roche Priory*

Major James and his command wearied by their nights work with shoulders drooping under the weight of stretchers breathed heartfelt sighs of relief when the Priory walls hove in site. Entrance was made through a weathered Oaken Gate of impressive size built to withstand the ravages of time. An ancient iron Bell Pull protruded from the wall and the Major gave it a hefty tug; bolts were heard being withdrawn and it swung open soundlessly on well oiled hinges disclosing several of the Priory's occupants headed by an upright man of advanced years whose facial skin was wizened and faded like ancient parchment. His eyes were penetrating and of a deep warm Brown he introduced himself; I am Father Matisse you are welcome. They entered and found themselves in a spacious court yard bounded by the Priory's high walls and extensive single storied buildings that had not changed at all since the laying down of its foundations in the fourteenth century. The Cobblestones underfoot had been worn and polished

by the passage of many feet. It was like entering into a different world; one of tranquillity, silence and peace.

Major we are prepared for your arrival; in a soft and gentle voice speaking perfect English he took charge Fr Anton please take the medical people and the wounded through to the West wing. Fr Avian guide the men bearing the dead to the Eastern crypt were Fr Augustan is waiting. Do not be concerned Major; your dead will be treated with respect and made ready for their temporary resting place also the injured shall be well cared for”

“Thank you Father you are most kind and generous in these dangerous and difficult times before eating could it be possible for my men and me to bathe?

“Of course forgive me you must be feeling in real need of a good wash our facilities are very basic no hot water and our soap is made here in the Priory”

He led the way to a fair sized room containing several stone built troughs and small wooden buckets with a length of rope attached used to draw water from the ‘Well’ situated a short distance from and to one side of the entrance door. Gentlemen it is basic but being soldiers I’m sure you’ll manage. Our dining room is down the passageway to your left; when you’ve finished please make your way there, you’ll find hot food and drink waiting”

“Right come on don’t be shy; make the most of it, get stripped off and enjoy a good wash down in nice fresh cold water”

“RSM with respect this water is a damn sight colder than at the training camp; look at me goose bumps there like miniature Atlas Mountains”

“Pte Connolly; as a youngster of tender years you surprise me’ only old men like me make that sort of remark

here let me try it. "He upended a bucket of water over his head and gasping for breath; "Bloody hell he's right! My apologies Connolly this waters from the blasted Artic and this soap smells like it's made from ancient animal fat"

Despite the very basic means of bathing provided by the Priory the men of Nemesis did appreciate being able to remove several days of dust and grime feeling much better for it when they sat down to enjoy an excellent meal.

The meal over the men sat back stomachs full tensions easing to enjoy a smoke.

"I've no ideas at all about what that grub consisted of but it certainly tickled my taste buds Huw now all I want to do is get me head down"

"Yeah me too Billy I'm absolutely knackered and of no use to anybody until I've had some kip. Not looking forward to the next few nights though I reckon its going to be a right so and so and really tough on the wounded; poor sods"

"Major if you've all finished I'll show you where you and your men shall be sleeping?"

"Give me 10 minutes Father: RSM this command will rest until 1600, at 1800 small arms shall be presented for inspection by that time every man will be clean shaven. With 9 stretcher cases and 23 walking wounded our march back to HQ is going to be tough on us all. Officers and NCOs will take their turn as stretcher bearers with rests being taken at frequent intervals. The return journey to HQ starts at 2100. S/Sgt Hylands none of the wounded; no matter how serious their condition, will be left behind lastly; thank you all for a job well done. Were ready now Father Matisse"

## CHAPTER SIXTY-TWO

*29/30th April 1944  
Friends are laid to rest and a Journey  
Fraught with danger begins*

The service performed by Father Matisse for those men of Nemesis who had given their lives during the assault on Le Roche airfield was beautiful in its simplicity. The dead; both Military and Resistance had been washed and clothed in white linen then laid to rest on a tier of shelves that formed part of the crypt wall besides each body was a hand painted plaque. For Military personnel it showed Name Rank and Number and those for men of the resistance it stated; Freedom Fighter, the man's home village or town and his age. There was not a single person in that crypt; that was not visibly moved on seeing the enormous amount of respect which their fallen comrades had been shown, by members of the Priory. Their depth of feeling was further increased when hearing the tribute paid to their absent friends by Father Matisse and the

prayers that were spoken not just for the dead but also the living.

The men were quiet when leaving the crypt sad at once again having to leave behind men whom they had come to know well and trust.

RSM Humphries had the men assembled in the courtyard. Bearers were standing by laden stretchers. Major James turned to Father Matisse “my command is ready to leave before going I should like you to know; every man, without exception is deeply grateful to you and your fellow Priory members for giving us sanctuary and also for the kindness and generosity shown. He then; as a mark of respect, called the men to attention and saluted the good Father.

“Major when you leave here travel first to the South for at least 3 hours then directly West. It has been heard to the North and East lies danger large numbers of German troops are searching for you and your men”

“Thank you Father my command is in your debt. Hans; Rolf, Gustav and Johann the route is south protect us from a frontal surprise attack. Sgts Talbot and Longstaff with four men cover the right and left flanks. S/Sgt Evans you will bring up the rear with six men keeping an eye on stragglers and watching our backs. Major James takes the left column Captain Byron the right I will be front and centre. RSM a moderate pace if you please let’s get moving”

## CHAPTER SIXTY-THREE

*1<sup>st</sup> /2<sup>nd</sup> May 1944*  
*A Nightmare start*

The spot they had chosen to rest up for the day was a sparse grove of trees which offered little in the way of concealment for 100 + men. On arrival they had managed to heat some food and make a strong brew of tea heavily sweetened with condensed milk. It was now late afternoon and the men were preparing for the nights March whilst the officers and RSM were being updated by S/Sgt Hylands on the condition of wounded especially the more serious cases. It was a very disturbing and worrying report Major Lovejoy had now lapsed into a deepening coma; Sgt Major Robinson was having a hard fight against the onset of infection and two others with severe bone damage needed urgent surgery to prevent loss of limbs.

“Please Herr Major, Message from Johann; enemy force of 40 – 50 men are approaching slowly from the NE on a direct line for this position, they are spread out in line led by two officers making a thorough search for something or someone”

“That’s us they are looking for; thank you Seglan ask Johann to keep watch and report any change immediately”

“Well gentlemen it seems that before we can continue our journey there is an obstacle that must be removed. RSM call the men together tell them to keep low and avoid making any noise it will travel far on a still quiet evening like this one”

“Pay careful attention there is not much time to prepare ourselves for a fight and that is what this command is about to face against a large troop of Germans heading straight for this stand of trees. I’ve no doubts about who they are seeking; it’s us. Yes we outnumber them and do have the element of surprise providing we do not give our position away. RSM form a line of defence running from SE to SW 3 feet between each position of two men. S/Sgt Talbot – Sgt Beamish you will control the Right Flank; S/ Sgt Evans – Rolf the left flank, Hans your sharpshooters place 6 on each flank as a first priority take out the radio men destroy their radios if you can. Sgt Stone with 15 men protect the wounded and our rear, I will give one short sharp whistle when you hear it open fire and make it count don’t waste your ammo. Stay crouched; move quietly to your positions choosing a nice broad tree trunk for cover, settle down and keep quiet. When the attack begins; hold to your position let them come to you, I want no one playing the hero. Carry on RSM report when all is ready. James with the men still not fully recovered from the assault on the airfield and last nights march this next hour or so could prove costly; if anything happens to me I’m relying on you to get the wounded and survivors safely

back to HQ, good luck and remember there is no room for pity. Now let's take up our positions and give them hell"

"Well Huw what do you reckon our chances are?"

"Wouldn't like to say Billy but I do know; its going to have be a damn good man to take me out, my heart is set on seeing my Bronwyn and the baby so there'll be no heroics from me either and don't you going doing nothing daft Brother in Law. Be like me, keep your head down and your eyes peeled, any Bastard wearing a bucket for a helmet shoot him first then apologise afterwards ok?"

Major James watched the approach of those now standing between his command and safety. The Germans did not know they were proceeding into an ambush of their own making; having failed to provide a reconnaissance team out in front observing the route ahead of the search area. Now; a grim price would have to be paid for an officer's careless stupidity. He raised a whistle to his mouth and as the enemy reached the outer edge of his position just 15 yards to his front he blew one sharp piercing note; an intrusive sound in the silence of the early evening hours that set birds and small animals fleeing in fright. His men; who had stayed motionless also observing the Germans progress, at the whistles sound hurled forth a barrage of primed grenades followed by short bursts from their prepared weapons. Hans and his sharp shooters out on the Flanks caused panic as with deadly accuracy they whittled down the enemy. Nemesis Command obeying orders stayed put behind the trunks of stout trees through their leaves whistled a hail of bullets causing many of the smaller branches to break free falling on the men below the heavier boughs becoming pock marked as the bullets struck home. Ignoring the debris falling on and around them the men

kept up their steady fire as the enemy foolishly charged their position driven on by their Senior NCOs.

The fire fight lasted only for a short period of time 15 minutes at most and was brought to an end by the appearance of a white flag signifying the enemies wish to surrender.

“Every one; do not move, stay down. Hans ask them to stand up with hands in the air”

Nine German soldiers stood with hands raised high above their heads. An NCO strode forward his attitude was not one of defeat but of defiance; his every stride showed his arrogance and when he spoke his voice was filled with pure contempt for the man he faced. He did not ask for help; he demanded it.

“Hans translated; this is Sgt Mietal he wants our medical staff to treat his wounded men. Watch him Major he’s pure Nazi and hates our guts”

“Thank you Hans; Sgt Tolney if this man makes one move shoot him Sgts Mitchel and Beamish take 10 men disable the enemy’s weapons by removing the breech blocks bring them with you for disposal later. Captain Byron, RSM, S/Sgt Hylands this command moves in 15 minutes walking wounded and stretcher cases will form centre column”

“All weapons disabled sir”

“Thank you Cpl Stone; Hans tell this jumped up arrogant bastard that there is no help or medical supplies to spare for him and his men and we are leaving immediately.

“RSM the route is South and up the pace; first break in two hours, there is a need for us to make haste move out”

*Walter Brown*

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“One hour later a halt was called you’ve 10 minutes to catch your breath. “Captain Byron, RSM from this position change course to the West but gradually avoiding those hills on our left flank and maintain the same pace.

Cpl Garret; send this signal to HQ Op Immediate”

## CHAPTER SIXTY-FOUR

*2nd May 1944*  
*The Medical Officers Verdict*

Colonel Curry his hair now flecked with grey; his forehead carrying deeply etched lines, created by constant worrying concern over the fatalities suffered by his command also; of those men who had received serious wounding and but for the skills of his MO and team would not have survived. He faced his two medical officers well gentlemen you have read the latest report from Major James now give me your honest opinion could either one of you make a difference by going to meet him?

“Hugh there is nothing that Ian or I can do until they arrive here. The medics with the group have had a wealth of experience in some very tough campaigns and their capabilities have been proven many times. My faith in them is absolute. When they do reach here Lt Ashley; Sgt Major Tregowann, Sgt Mullins and Rosina will form the operating team dealing with cases needing immediate surgery. Cpl Singleton and Ursula shall prepare the walking wounded making sure they are bathed and put to

bed ready for examination by me. I will not hide the fact from you that Major Lovejoy's condition is very serious indeed. S/Sgt Hylands report of him having now slipped into a coma and his description of the wound makes me doubt he will ever recover. Sgt Major Robinson stands a slim chance of a full recovery as does those with bone damage providing there are no further delays in reaching here. According to the signal they are expected to reach here in the early hours of Thursday morning; my teams and I shall be on standby from midnight so cease you're fretting or you'll end up occupying a bed in the hospital"

"Thank you for your reassurance and advice now lets go and enjoy a mug of tea I'm parched"

## CHAPTER SIXTY-FIVE

*2nd May 1944*  
*A harsh decision is made*

Throughout the night of 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> Major James had with the help of Captain Byron the RSM and his Junior NCOS urged and encouraged his men; now agonisingly tired with aching muscles and flagging spirits, to keep moving knowing that every mile gained took them further away from danger; closer to safety where the seriously wounded in danger of losing their lives would receive the expert medical help so desperately needed. They arrived at their day time refuge just before 0430 a set of farm buildings that had been partially destroyed by fire. It was not ideal but to the men physically drained and close to the point of collapse it seemed like heaven.

“Captain Byron, RSM there must be water somewhere round here have Sgt Mitchel and Beamish check the buildings or possibly; out here in the middle of nowhere, there might be a Well make sure all water is boiled first but hot food and drink is a must before settling down for the day. Guards are to be posted immediately protecting

our front; rear and flanks; Two men in each position. I will cover the first 3 hours from 0500 as officer on watch; James the following 3, RSM you take the last. When your watch finishes RSM rouse the command organise food and drink; the men shall attend their weapons and also have a wash and shave. Have Cpl Garret stand by to send a Sitrep. I'll be with the medical team if you need me"

"S/Sgt Hylands; let me have your report on the wounded please?"

"Major Lovejoy's condition is worsening I doubt very much his chances of survival. Sgt Major Robinson has a high fever due to advanced infection of his wounds. Thankfully there is no sign of gangrene yet. Those with severe bone damage are suffering high temperature with increased pain levels. There are three additional stretcher cases the men concerned collapsed earlier today with raised temperatures an indication of viral or wound infection. Several of the walking wounded is also giving cause for concern. My team and I have done all that can be done but the situation is becoming critical they must have specialist medical help soon"

"How long before the critical point is reached? "Within the next 24 hours maybe sooner"

"Thank you for being honest continue doing all that is possible to keep them alive"

"Captain Byron, RSM the condition of the wounded is reaching a critical stage they must be got back to the MO and his team as soon as possible. Rouse the command at 1200 I know it'll be a terrible risk but; were going to make a run for it. I'll address the men whilst there eating this afternoon"

“Cpl Garret; send this Sitrep to ‘Sunray One’ then bed down”

“S/Sgt Hyland it has been decided to take a gamble and march during daylight leaving at 1300; prepare the wounded and strap them securely to their stretchers, it may be a rough journey so make them as comfortable as you can.

## CHAPTER SIXTY-SIX

*2nd May 1944*

*Fresh arrangements are made by the MO*

Colonel Curry holding a current Sitrep from his 2i/ c with forehead creased in a deep frown strode into the sick bay. "Ian I've just received this situation update from John the condition of his seriously wounded has worsened starting at 1300 he is going to take a massive gamble by marching during daylight hours. By my estimation he is about 25 miles away with three additional stretcher cases he'll be hard pushed to make 4 miles an hour and allowing for rest periods it means they'll reach here around 2200"

Hugh; if John is intending to force march his men 25 miles, possibly more over rough terrain bearing stretchers, they'll be at the point of total collapse when they arrive and it won't be just the wounded needing medical attention. For him to have made this decision the situation has got to be very serious indeed. Have you accepted and acknowledged his intentions?

"Understanding his concern for the well being not only of a fellow officer but also NCOs and men who have shown

him real respect and great loyalty Yes; I fully support and admire him for having the courage to make and stand by such a hard and terrible decision”

“He has my respect as well let’s hope and pray he and his men make it. My staff have already prepared to deal with the wounded now arrangements must be made to accommodate men who will be in a very low physical state; close to one of total collapse, unable to even wash or undress themselves, to assist can you let me have 6 men that should be enough?

“Take as many as you need but do you honestly believe their condition will be as bad as you say?

“Hugh those officers and men have been living in a virtual hell for this past five months enduring high levels of both mental and physical stress with danger as their constant companion. Without even examining them I can tell you they are physically and mentally worn out; visually when they arrive it will not present a pretty picture in fact; it’s going to be bloody awful so prepare yourself. I’ll update Ian and the rest of the team let them know what to expect. See you at lunch”

“Thank you for being so candid Ian”

## CHAPTER SIXTY-SEVEN

*2230 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1944*  
*A terrible circumstance unfolds*

The CO and his medical officers waited in the doorway of the vault leading to the Crypt. Cpl Tanworth had been despatched with all available men to assist Major James when sighted a short distance from HQ his command were seen to be progressing with difficulty and obviously in great distress.

Though the officers were prepared to expect the worst they were visibly shaken and deeply affected by the sight of staggering; stumbling, shuffling shadows of men who had been literally driven to the very limits of their endurance and then; way beyond the expected limits of any human being no matter how well trained they were. The whites of men's eyes deep sunk within their sockets showed up starkly; against an encircling background of shrunken dirt encrusted faces. The seriously wounded lying as still as death on their blood and sweat stained stretchers only the sounds of laboured breathing against a background of heavy wheezing and long drawn out muted moans

showed that life still existed within their tortured bodies. The stench of sweat and infected wounds was foul and nauseating causing those who tended them to turn away retching.

“In it is not just our skills and patience that are needed this night some divine intervention would not go amiss”

“Captain Rowlands sir”

The MO turned not recognising the person confronting him “Speak man what is it?”

“Barely able to speak he gasped “S/Sgt Hylands sir, my case notes...” then he collapsed in a heap upon the floor his hand outstretched still clutching his papers.

The MO In a voice clearly showing the depth of his feelings “Pte Leith find a stretcher and bearers then take S/Sgt Hylands to Cpl Singleton tell him this NCO is to receive immediate attention I want him ready for my examination in 10 minutes”

“The MOs assistant Lt Ashley had expressed his wish for divine help what he now witnessed was nothing short of a miracle in the making; borne out of respect and admiration for those in sore need. Hardened soldiers who had been wounded and nursed back to health were now acting in the role of nurses. With surprising gentleness they removed the soiled clothing and bandages from ravaged bodies before handing them over to a team of volunteer women from San Jumiens who handled them like newborn babies. With reddened; work roughened hands, they tenderly washed them the sadness of their work depicted by tear filled eyes. The men when clean in every respect; were laid on a bed and covered with cotton sheeting to hide their nakedness and protect open wounds while they waited either for the attention of Captain Rowlands or Lt

Ashley. To an onlooker it would have appeared chaotic; this however was not the case, slowly but surely each case was meticulously examined by the Medical Officers and instructions passed to the medical staff of treatment needed. One man a Pte Lang a tough somewhat bitter man who had few friends and was known for his constant grouching and complaining attitude stood out from the rest; without being asked he removed and disposed of the soiled and bloodied battle fatigues, the filthy sweat stained clothing and bandages. He also worked tirelessly to keep the reception, and operating areas remarkably clean. On the completion of each operation he scrubbed and disinfected the operating table ready for the next patient. The MO made to thank him for his diligence then noted the moisture filled eyes and said nothing instead he laid his hand upon the Pte's shoulder squeezing gently to let him know he understood.

All through the remainder of that terrible never to be forgotten night and well into the following day the MO and his surgeon Mr Ashley and their teams worked in a constant race against time to save the lives of those who only craved freedom from long endured pain. Several amputations were successfully carried out. Sadly; for 5 of those requiring major surgical procedures it was too late, the additional stress of being operated upon proved too much. Many were in a critical state and would require constant observation and nursing for several days. Men who had gamely without complaining acted as a stretcher bearer even though suffering the pain of ruptured and bleeding blisters now lay with their hands and feet heavily bandaged. With the last patient attended to a relative quiet settled over the now extended sick bay. Captain Rowlands

with shoulders sagging from exhaustion looked at his watch it was 1130, "Pte McIntosh you offered even though you're still suffering from the effects of a wound received during the assault on the Canal Lock gates to act as my recorder as did Pte Reed who acted for Mr Ashley. It is important an accurate record is kept of all medical procedures carried out. I thank you both; you did a first rate job. There is food waiting in the kitchen after you've eaten get your heads down and report back to me at 1700"

"Sisters Ursula and Rosina arrange a roster for the nurses I require three to be on duty at all times"

"Colonel Curry sir, good morning all our patients are sleeping soundly. Sgt Major Tregowann and Sgt Mullins they'll be on duty with three nurses and will call me should an emergency arise. I shall prepare a full report this evening and let you have it first thing tomorrow morning"

"Ian I know your in urgent need of rest but tell me before you go to your bed how is Major Lovejoy?"

"I'm sorry Hugh he suffered a terrible blow to the head delivered with considerable force. It caused multiple fractures and internal bleeding there was nothing that can be done to save him. He has been sedated so I doubt very much if he feels any pain he's just quietly slipping away"

"Thank you it's such a tragic loss of a very brave officer. One has to believe there is an afterlife and when he finally passes over it will be to find the family he loved so dearly and lost; victims of this bloody useless war, are there waiting to welcome him" He walked away his shoulders bowed as if under a great weight making his way to the kitchen "Ilsa may I have a good strong cup of tea please?"

“Lawrence that man deserves a medal for the way in which he’s carried the responsibility for this command. I’m damned sure I couldn’t carry such a burden”

“I agree now lets get to bed before we fall asleep standing up”

“Is it really bad Hugh?”

“The MO has just told me the Major will not recover plus we’ve lost another 5 men making a total loss of 64 then there are those who are still critically ill it’ll be touch and go for them”

“Drink your tea, I know and understand how you feel and why; the Major was a close friend who had served with you for several years he and the men who have gone were a part of your command. You’ll not forget them but you must not let others see how deeply affected you are by the events of these past seven months. Be strong for them”

“Your right of course, soon now we’ll be in England; a nice long leave with time enough to get married. Yes. There is a lot to look forward to so lets crack on leave me women I’ve work to do”

## CHAPTER SIXTY-EIGHT

*6th May 1944*  
*A report is made*

Colonel Curry following his MOs advice had given his officers and RSM 72 hours complete rest to recover some of their strength before asking them for a report on the events which had led to the death of 33 men and 29 being wounded; several critically.

“Major James; please take your time and speak slowly to avoid Cpl Coles making mistakes”

The Major began with the assault of Le Roche Airfield and his reasons for the decision to take a gamble and March during daylight hours. The bravery and dogged determination shown by his Officers and NCOs who; without complaint, had acted as stretcher bearers over many tortuous miles. How; despite being desperately tired they had fought off several determined assaults carried out by German troops being ferried in the direction of the French coast. He described in a voice charged with emotion and pure pride the courageous action of S/Sgt Evans, Cpl Thompson and eight men who by using available cover

had out flanked around 20 well armed German troops who were seen by Hans and Johann lying in wait ready to ambush them. They reached the advantage of a high ridge overlooking the enemy's position then using grenades and small arms fire destroyed the enemy's mortar and machine gun position killing a large number of German soldiers in the process. Those of the enemy who were still alive took to their vehicles and fled. It was during this encounter that S/Sgt Evans Cpl Thompson and 4 men suffered multiple wounding. He also spoke with real emphasis on the courage and dedication shown by S/Sgt Hylands and his medical team who did not hesitate even when under heavy fire to seek out and treat those needing their care and attention.

The Colonel shocked and stunned by all that he had heard sat in silence for several minutes gathering his thoughts together.

"Captain Byron is there anything you wish to add" "Yes Colonel there is. Major James has; and rightly so, given well deserved praise for the way in which the men of this command responded in difficult and dangerous situations. There is one man that is deserving of the highest recognition; himself. Without his leadership none of us would have made it back here to HQ"

"RSM"

"What Captain Byron has stated is absolutely true sir"

"Thank you both. Major James I can find no fault with your planning of the assault on the Airfield which proved a more extensive target than expected. For the sake of a fellow officer and your severely wounded men you had to make a terrible and difficult decision knowing

and accepting the danger in which you were placing your command. For the record I would have done the same.

“Cpl you have until 1800 hours to produce a record of the report made by Major James. The record will also contain the opinion stated by Captain Byron and confirmed by the RSM”

When Cpl Coles has completed the record of your report I shall need all three of you to sign it. Tomorrow at 0700 join me for breakfast and I'll brief you on developments and my intentions until relieved”

## CHAPTER SIXTY-NINE

*May 7<sup>th</sup> 1944*  
*A threat of boredom*

“Good morning gentlemen must say you’re looking a damn sight healthier let’s enjoy breakfast whilst I talk. There is approximately 30 days before our relief arrives. The men are recovering well but they cannot just sit around all day doing nothing. They need physical and mental exercise not just to maintain their fitness but also to prevent boredom. When making a request for crutches and walking sticks I also asked for several boxed games and sets of playing cards also a few books. Brigadier Carlisle obliged with a very good selection. There’s even Housy Housy. RSM see what you can organise in the way of competitions. Must not be too noisy keep it quiet. Major James - Captain Byron below us is a river there are ropes and it is not a difficult task to abseil down. A ladder is being built should be ready in a few days time... I’ve been down and found there is a fairly wide bank able to accommodate at least 20 men. The river is about 5 foot deep; the water is cold with a current running at around 1 to 3 knots. I thoroughly enjoyed a

swim and found it very refreshing. Those men who are now reasonably fit would I am sure jump at the chance of a good soak and the swimming will provide them with some exercise. Tell me your views if you wish to make a suggestion do so I'm open to ideas anything which will keep the men happy for the next few weeks"

"Before organising board games can I sample this river Colonel?"

"Of course I'd like all of you to take a dip.

"What happens if we're caught by surprise it could happen even with the lookouts keeping a careful watch?"

"Yes I agree that is something else to consider. The MO tells me we have a possible total of 59 men who could put up a fight if the need arises. My intention is to select 32 and have them on a permanent standby duty they could work an 8 hours on and 8 hours off roster. Senior NCOs would act as guard commander. The whole group with practice could take up defensive positions in a matter of minutes are you agreed Major James?"

"Under the circumstances and in our present situation I believe you've covered everything Colonel now if you'll excuse us I'm going to try out the river then organise a swimming party coming James?"

"Try and stop me I'm beginning to smell like a polecat"

"RSM before you start organising do you fancy testing the water then all three of us work together on the Colonels ideas?"

"Thank you Major James I would very much enjoy a swim and your combined help would be appreciated"

## CHAPTER SEVENTY

*12 May 1944*  
*A visit to the Sick Bay*

Colonel Curry made his evening tour of the sick bay with the MO, Lt Ashley and Sgt Major Tregowann in attendance. He did not disturb patients who were sleeping but spoke quietly with each of his men who lay quietly resting some; still in the throes of high fever brought on by infection. Sgt Major Robinson lay heavily bandaged from his waist to below his left knee unable to move to give the hole in his side and upper right leg a chance to heal. A nurse whom the Colonel had met only briefly was assisting him drink from a tin mug. "May I speak to your patient nurse?"

"Certainly sir and it is Sister Sorenson"

"Well Sgt Major your definitely looking better this evening; this morning you were in a very deep induced sleep because of severe pain has it eased?"

"Down to just a dull ache though it hurts when I try and scratch an itch, Sister Sorenson is doing everything for me and it's rather embarrassing at times. She's an Angel

and no mistake. Captain Rowlands says it will be another fifteen days before I can start taking short walks and even then I'll have to be careful. How's Major James. Captain Byron and RSM Humphries it was them that kept us going and got us all back safe"

"I'm sorry Colonel but he must have his medication now and rest"

"There recovering well Sgt Major now let me see you back on your feet before so long. Thank you Sister. If this NCO gives you any trouble let me know"

"I will sir but he's no bother at all just like all men hard on the outside and soft as butter on the inside"

The Colonel moved away his face wreathed in a huge smile. "Ian what are his chances of a full recovery that was a very nasty wound in his side and the leg was in a right mess. I'm surprised you managed to save it"

"That was due to Ashley's painstaking work and patience he spent over three hours on the Sgt Major and did a magnificent job. He may or may not suffer a slight limp one thing is certain; he'll not see active service again"

"Cpls Thompson and Issacs you said you were going to remove their bandages today. How are their hands and feet?"

"Recovering well shall have to keep a light dressing on for another three possibly four days so their still confined to bed and that applies to nearly all of those who acted as stretcher bearers. It took real guts to carry on with hands and feet in that condition"

"S/Sgt Evans what's his condition now?"

"The infection of his left shoulder, arm and hand caused by a piece of shrapnel has now diminished and he's doing very well a week of light duties should see him right"

as rain. He's a lucky man if S/Sgt Timms had not removed that lump of metal his arm could have been lost"

"I do not see any of the medical team where are they?"

"Having a swim they've recovered well but I am not returning them to duty for another five days" I intend recommending every one receives recognition of their achievements will you also give your approval?"

"Absolutely when they return ask them all to come and see me. I must thank them personally for having acted in a totally unselfish manner with no thought for their own well being. A truly remarkable feat of initiative, endurance and real courage Along with your recommendation I shall submit a full report of their achievements with a strong request for them to be promoted in rank"

## CHAPTER SEVENTY-ONE

*17<sup>th</sup> May 1944*

*Hans Bierman requests a meeting*

Ten days had passed and moral was high. Men were recovering their health and fitness with the help of physical training each day. The organised games competitions had proved a great success; helping those with taught stretched nerves to relax. Being freed from continuous tension had brought smiles back to faces that had grown used to showing only a look of constant alertness. An air of anticipation was growing as each day passed drawing ever closer to when they would leave foreign soil and once again be united with family and friends. The resistance fighters were also given too much consideration of how best to re-build their lives. Decisions had been reached and Hans Bierman arranged with Colonel Curry for a meeting to be held in order he may be advised of their intentions. It took place after lunch on the 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1944.

“Hans this meeting is about the future of you and your men once our stay here is finished. Cpl Coles will take notes and provide a record. My officers and I shall

listen and there'll be no interruptions until you're finished please carry on"

"Colonel it has been decided that on the day the allied forces reach here men and women of the resistance shall begin making their way home. There are questions which need to be answered. During the journey its possible the group could be attacked by German troops fleeing from the Allied forces or trying to reach the front line. To defend ourselves can you allow us to keep our weapons with plenty of ammo also some medical supplies? 27 of our young men wish to join and make a life for themselves in the British Army is this possible? 11 needing further medical treatment do not wish to return to Germany once they are fit and well is it certain that they shall be accepted and treated well?"

"Gentlemen you have asked for very little when taking into account the bravery and endurance shown whilst under my command and of course you must be able to defend yourselves. The weapons are yours until peace is restored when you must undertake to hand them over to an officer of the Allied forces. A letter of authority for this purpose will be provided. On the question concerning the wounded they shall be looked after in a military hospital until fully recovered. During their recovery period help shall be given with applications for permanent residence in England to be granted. Those who wish to join the armed services will I am sure be made most welcome but they will have to undergo a medical examination and be subject to military training also English and military law. I would like that made clear to them"

"Gladly Colonel and thank you for your understanding and generosity"

Now then Hans if that is all perhaps you could persuade Hedwig to produce some tea”

## CHAPTER SEVENTY-TWO

*May 21<sup>st</sup> 1944*  
*A prime target*

Colonel Curry and his officers also the RSM and Hans acting on a report made by Rolf were now observing a substantial convoy of mixed vehicles plus; a large contingent of enemy troops. It had come to a halt approximately 3 miles North of HQ.

“What ever their up to it looks as though the officers in charge of that convoy are damned annoyed. They are striding up and down punching the air to emphasise whatever it is there saying and those poor bastards standing rigidly to attention; who I assume are the drivers, are receiving the brunt of their anger. Surely they’ve not allowed themselves to run low on fuel? Keep an eye on them whilst I write a message for London”

The Colonel wrote swiftly ‘Angels required for heavy work three miles north’

“RSM have the duty operator encode this message it is to be sent as ‘Operation Immediate’ any change John?”

“They’ve deployed their tanks into defensive positions and three half track vehicles are towing the thin skinned troop carrying vehicles off the road”

“Well let’s hope they remain there long enough for the Brylcream Boys to have a chance of reaching here”

“You’re calling on the RAF to carry out an air strike then Hugh I can appreciate why you’re doing so but it’s a hell of a risk”

“I agree with John if that strike fails to deliver a killing blow against that convoy and those troops; we’ll be in serious trouble. They cannot fail to work out that someone close by has alerted the RAF of their position”

“Yes that is true but there has to be over a hundred or more troops in that convoy plus tanks and mobile guns. There has to be an attempt made to stop them from reaching the French coast. That is our purpose here regardless of the risk. This command will be placed on full alert as soon as those planes arrive. John Keep those Jerries under close observation I’ll relieve you in two hours. James; Sgt Tolney is Guard Commander make him aware of the situation”

## CHAPTER SEVENTY-THREE

*May 21<sup>st</sup> 1943*  
*A perfect Strike*

“Message from Dover sir”

The message read; Angels diverted ETA 40 minutes. RSM; air strike against that convoy commences in about 30 minutes. Sgt Tolney; Stand To in 15 minutes. Captain Byron, RSM; all able men can view the air strike but they must form a line of defence carrying weapons and 100 rounds of ammunition plus grenades and stay concealed. I’ll be with Major James join us when you’ve got the spectators organised”

Three flights of RAF fighter bombers flying at around 10,000 feet passed overhead on a route to the East of the target going North towards Germany “Not our expected visitors then John”

“Your wrong Hugh; look to our rear”

There was no need to look as a roaring crescendo of powerful engines smote their ears. Four typhoons in line abreast armed with rockets were the first to strike and they were bang on target scoring direct hits on the

tanks and transport. Two further flights armed with bombs made three passes commencing on the furthest left then wheeling round in perfect formation to come back through the centre reversing course once more to cover the right hand side of the target. The bombing finished the planes completed their task with three separate strafing runs. There was very little left of the convoy most of the vehicles were still burning and the mobile guns which must have been carrying ready to use ammunition had blown themselves apart causing further carnage amongst the German troops. Although they studied the site of the convoy with great care no sign of life could be seen.

“RSM the shows over move the men back into the crypt. Hans warn the lookouts to be extra vigilant when that convoy first came to a halt help would have been sent for”

“Signal sir”

“Nice one more of the same please” chuckling softly he passed it to Major James.

“Were not done yet then Hugh there is still work for us to do”

“No reply Cpl. Hans pass the word to all lookouts. Worthwhile targets will be reported to me or Major James immediately”

## CHAPTER SEVENTY-FOUR

### *The work of Nemesis Continues*

Over the next 14 days the route of convoys bound for the French coastal area and considered worthy of an air strike was passed to Brigadier Carlisle via Dover Radio Station. RAF Bomber command with nothing to fear from the Luftwaffe was happy to oblige. In the Colonels record book it was noted eleven convoys were attacked with great success. All signals calling for an air strike were encoded and of few words to avoid the chance of detection by German RDF operators who were highly skilled in plotting and locating enemy radio positions. Radio Frequencies and coding used was changed at irregular intervals on receipt of a single code word from London again to prevent discovery by the Germans.

## CHAPTER SEVENTY-FIVE

### *Sister Olga Sorenson*

The Colonel was a much happier man as more of his men were released from the sick bay. He was especially glad to see Sgt Major Robinson up and about though he was still restricted to light exercises only and these were carried out under the watchful eye of Sister Sorenson. Having known the Sgt Major for several years he was amazed at the change in the man and how quickly he responded to her demand that it was time for him to rest. The MO when asked told him they appeared to have become quite attached. It was whilst enjoying a cup of tea with Ilsa that he heard Sister Olga Sorenson's story.

Olga was 27 years old an only child. Her mother a Forensic Scientist had died 14 months after Olga's birth from ovarian cancer. Her father an eminent medical practitioner specialising in heart disease with the help of his mother raised Olga. He was a strict but fair man and she grew to; not only love him deeply as a father, but also respect him for his great skill as a doctor. At an early age she decided that nursing was to be her chosen

profession and asked him for his help and advice this he gave in abundance. Olga had no difficulty in passing her nursing exams gaining honours at each stage of her career specialising first in Midwifery and finally as an Operating theatre technician. In late 1941 her father and grandmother were arrested by the SS when it was found his ancestors were of Jewish origin. Olga was never to see her father or grandmother again. Her father was taken to a camp for men built next door to the infamous women's Nazi German concentration camp at Ravensbrück located in swampland 50 miles north of Berlin a short distance from the village of Ravensbrück. The camp also served as a training base for some 3,500 female Nazi Para Military Corps. The camp was the setting for acts of sheer cruelty and sadism carried out against children of all ages which knew no limits. They were also used in medical experiments and young girls of 8 years and upwards had their reproductive systems exposed to direct exposure of x-rays making them sterile or caused them to experience a horrific death of constant pain. In the summer of 1942 medical experiments were commenced on a large number of Polish inmates used as guinea pigs for the testing of the efficiency of drugs plus the processes of bone, muscle and nerve regeneration. They also conducted trials in the transplanting of bones from one person to another. Her father was horrified at the barbarity of such work and refused. Pressure was brought to bear in the form of starvation diets and being forced to watch women being subjected to bestial abuse and torture. His continued refusal to assist or carry out these medical procedures saw him tried as a traitor of the Third Reich found guilty and shot. All this was made known to Olga by Herman Klaus a male prison hospital worker from the

village who witnessed first hand the crippling end results of these experiments. Unable to stand seeing nightmarish scenes day after day he fled the camp to join the resistance accepting that should he be caught his own life would be ended. Olga Having heard that her grandmother had died in

Belsen Bergen concentration camp from Typhus she decided to accept his invitation to join the resistance.

“Ilsa I wish someone could tell me for what reason the SS acted in such an evil manner against; not only those of their own faith but also tried to rid their fatherland of every person known or found to be of Jewish origin. Were they mad or taken possession of by the Devil himself and made to do his work?”

“Hugh it is my belief that evil is a part of every man and woman’s make up and it lies dormant until a catalyst such as Hitler gives it life overriding all common decency resulting in tragedy and a deep sadness for many”

“Ilsa you never cease to amaze me with your understanding and wisdom. What you have just said makes sense. It never entered my head that such powerful feelings could lay dormant in a person just waiting to be brought to life”

## CHAPTER SEVENTY-SIX

*3<sup>rd</sup> June 1944*  
*Final orders are received*

“Signal from GHQ London sir”

“Stand down. Angel One is half way there” “Sgt Mitchel; I understand by this message that a plane is about to deliver a package. Warn the lookouts it is to be brought to me immediately I and the other officers will be in the dining room”

“RSM there is a delivery by plane expected shortly. I would like you and the officers also Hans, Karl and Dieter to join me in the dining room”

“Have orders been received Hugh?”

“Only one; and that gentleman, is for Nemesis to Stand down. A package being delivered by the RAF is expected shortly almost certain to be new orders and I would like you all here on hand when they arrive”

“Thirty minutes later a hurricane approached in a shallow dive levelling out with his wings almost brushing the tops of the trees and dropped the package at Karl

Dieters feet. Then sped away; climbing all the while and heading west bound for the white cliffs of Dover.

“The Colonel retrieved the hand written pages from within the weighted parcel and scanned them swiftly. “Well that’s us done were to cease all actions against the Jerry. Invasion commences in three days time and the date for arrival of our relief is dependant on how swiftly they break out from the beaches. Hans It is my opinion that once the assault against occupied Europe begins there will be a fair amount of desertion by enemy troops fleeing desperately before the advancing tide of allied forces. Realising this would increase the danger for you and your men during your intended journey home. I shall raise no objections to your leaving earlier than planned. Discuss it amongst yourselves and let me know. John it is my wish that the men be informed of this news are you in agreement?”

“Definitely Hugh lets give them the glad tidings at once what say you James?”

“Without a shadow of doubt they deserve to be told”

“RSM have the men report to the sick bay this will give them all something to smile about”

The MO was delighted when told and asked about transport arrangements for those wounded who would not be able to travel in a three ton troop vehicle.

Stating four ambulances would be needed.

“I will send a signal to London in the meantime Hans may wish to leave earlier than expected see that his needs are met”

“Three men on lookout duty otherwise all present and correct sir”

“The Colonel cast his eye over the expectant faces of his command “Stand easy a signal has been received with fresh

orders” He saw quite clearly that a majority of his men now wore worried and concerned expressions. Relax our job is done; from today this command is officially stood down, no more action by us is to be taken against German forces. Allied forces will be landing on the beaches of Normandy on the morning of 6<sup>th</sup> of June their purpose the liberation of occupied Europe. You will find that the waiting until our relief shows will not be easy but we must be patient and remain in hiding and as quiet as the proverbial church mouse, RSM take over”

As the men left the sick bay a babble of raised exited voices broke out soon quieted by the RSM’s softly spoken warning; but heard by all,. “Have you forgotten what your CO said; keep the noise down, remember there are still a few days to go”

“I’ll not believe it till I’m stepping ashore on English soil Huw, man; just think of it; I could be holding my new daughter in my arms with Marion sitting on my lap talking away 10 to the dozen or; sitting down at table with Megan to enjoy one her meals” He covered his face to hide the tears of joy that came unbidden.

“Billy there was I thinking you hadn’t a soft spot in your entire body now you’ve gone all sentimental on me”

“Come of it your as bad as me look at us; what would the lads from the Miners Rest think booing and carrying on like a pair of sippy women. Hello Danny want to play the winner in a game of draughts?

“Yes ok not that I’ll be much good; my mind is all of muddle with thoughts of Joanne and me. My life is about to change, could be married and moving into our new home next month; even giving thought to starting a family which is Joanne’s big dream. Then there’s the vegetable plot

and flower borders to sort out plus decorating oh my word; so much to think about, my heads fairly spinning. Hey up Scouse you still up for being my best man?

“I’ve not forgotten shall have to get my suit out of Hock and then dry cleaned for the occasion. Just make sure there’s good strong Ale on tap and some decent lodgings I intend spending a week or two and enjoy the local sites of interest”

“Well there’s plenty to see just don’t go leaving your calling cards you randy sod” It’s a village of decent friendly folk and it’s wanting to stay that way”

Roger Burlinson ‘Geordie to his friends’ was sitting quietly mentally seeing pictures of his mum, dad, two brothers and his sister who would have been 16 in two months time if she’d been still alive. They’d all been sitting down so he’d read in the letter listening to news on radio when the landmines hit. The explosion and blast had wiped out half the street there were no survivors. Now there was just 80 year old Aunty Floe who’d lost her marbles and wouldn’t know who he was. She was being looked after in the psychiatric hospital and would remain there until she passed away. Where could he go; what would he do, he had never smoked and enjoyed only the occasional pint of ale preferring a good movie, a book or spending a day on the beach fishing. His thoughts were interrupted by his team mate Dale Logan who lived in Newcastle not far from his home town of Hexham.

“Now then Geordie lad you’ve a face as long as a fiddle what’s bothering you?”

“Considering what to do on leave and where to spend it Dale not worth going home really there’s nothing and no one left”

“Well we can’t have that then. Listen like you I don’t care for spending time in a pub but I do love sea fishing. Da and I own a large ocean going well built boat some 80 foot long and broad in the beam powered by twin diesels engines; a real beauty, takes all weathers in her stride. Fancy joining me and my Da as a crew member you’ll have to work your passage and take a part share of money made on fish caught as wages”

“Ah that would suit me very well but as you know I’m homeless where would I find lodgings? Hotels are too damned expensive on a soldiers pay”

“With us you daft bugger Ma would make you right welcome told her all about you in that letter home at Christmas. Is it agreed then?”

“Dave I’ll accept and gladly on one condition; I give your mother a large slice of my leave pay and me ration book that’s if we get issued with one”

“That’s settled then now; let’s give Huw, Billy and Danny a thrashing at draughts”

## CHAPTER SEVENTY-SEVEN

*D day 6<sup>th</sup> June 1944*

Colonel Curry, his officers and the RSM were viewing the horizon repeatedly being torn asunder by vivid multicoloured flashes of light. Faintly they could hear the sounds of naval heavy guns pounding the coastal defences. Allied Air Forces were also in action further inland bombing and strafing the enemies defence positions.

“Hugh, I can’t help but feel sorry for those on the receiving end of that barrage it must be a living hell”

“Yes they also have my sympathy John; many of them must already have received critical or serious wounding. It would be a miracle if they hadn’t. My thoughts are for the allied forces preparing to land on beaches which; despite the softening up by allied and naval forces, shall be heavily defended many of those soldiers will never leave the beaches alive and its for them I intend to hold a service and have a prayer said for their safekeeping. James speak to Sgts Tolney and Mitchel I want two men at each Guard Post extra vigilance is needed and all movement by enemy forces towards this HQ reported immediately. RSM

*Walter Brown*

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church parade before breakfast with every man shaved  
and properly dressed”

## CHAPTER SEVENTY-EIGHT

*14<sup>th</sup> June 1944*  
*The long wait is over*

For eight long days time seemed to stand still despite the efforts by RSM Humphries and Senior NCOs too ensure men were not allowed to dwell on thoughts of going home, From the CO down everyone was affected by restlessness; unable to concentrate on a given task or the game in play. For those with a love of chess it was hopeless and they gave up. A majority had for a time observed; keeping well concealed, German infantry forces in packed vehicles; on foot or clinging to the tops of tanks driving at high speed heading north to Germany. This movement became less and less no longer providing a topic of interest. A Radio had been placed on listening watch and messages between Axis commanders provided a picture of bewilderment and consternation. It was learnt from a signal sent; astonishingly, in clear text that a second front line was to be established on the approaches to the River Rhine.

“Message from GHQ sir”

“Prepare to move: ETA 1200 ---- ETD 1300 read the Colonel”

“Gentlemen it is now 0700 commencing at 0745 I want our home of the past 7 months to be given a good clean. Have the men check their dress; equipment, and weapons making sure they are clean and presentable. Inspection of accommodation and all ranks will be at 1000. Final meal will be at 1030 prepared by Sgt Issacs and Cpl Thompson assisted by Ptes Sowerby, Jameson and Andrews. The kitchen area is to be left clean and tidy. Captain Rowlands, Mr Lawrence prepare the wounded for travel. “Sgt Beamish and Cpl Coles you will ensure all records and documents are secured within the security boxes provided and those boxes shall remain your responsibility until handed over to GHQ. There is much to do I want this command ready to move by 1200 so everybody; lets get cracking. He strode into the kitchen area Ilsa, ladies the time has arrived for us to leave Europe and return to England. I know and understand that your nervous and afraid of what lies ahead; let me reassure you once again, provision has been made for your arrival and you will be well looked after. There is nothing more for you to do you’re relieved of duty to make preparation to leave. I shall be in my quarters if needed”

Sitting quietly contemplating his future surely they would not expect him or his officers and men to return to active duty within the next twelve months. The effort by Germany to conquer Europe had failed their supply of war materials was virtually non existent and they were now on the retreat. Their attempt to form a second front at the river Rhine could never succeed.

“John I’ve brought you and I a mug of tea may I sit with you for a few minutes?”

He roused himself from his reverie and came to his feet staring in stunned surprise, “Ilsa where on earth did you manage to obtain such a lovely outfit you look absolutely beautiful”

“Thank you; it was a gift from the women of San Jumiers, they gave it to me before they left with a wish that my life with you should be a very happy one. They also gave clothes and shoes to the other women”

“They were wonderful people giving so much and asking for nothing in return. I shall never forget them never nor the Herr Professor and his brother I’ve invited them and their wives; when it’s possible, to spend time with us in England as our guests”

“That’s a grand idea Hugh I shall remain here whilst you’re attending to your duties”

He rose to his feet saying “God bless you woman I am indeed a very lucky man”

“May I have a word Colonel?”

“Of course Ian is there a problem over moving the wounded”

“No they are all ready to go its Sgt Major Robinson his wounds were healing but unfortunately a serious infection started up in the leg. Lt Ashley re-opened the wound late last night and found a small section of bone to be the problem and he removed it. This does mean he will be left with a pronounced and permanent limp making him unfit for further military service. I’ve told him it will mean a medical discharge unless of course a post can be found for him in an office or stores. He has only three more years before completion of service as a regular soldier entitling

him to a full pension. Can you help him at all Hugh he is taking the news badly?

“The Sgt Major has proved himself on more than one occasion whilst under my command and I’ll not see him lose out. Let’s go and reassure him before inspection”

It was now 1220 and the men were fidgety unable to settle when a lookout came bearing the news they had all been anxious to hear. The convoy had been sighted approaching at speed and 15 minutes later Brigadier Carlisle arrived.

“Sorry were a bit late Colonel got held up on the way here we’ll talk later; Major Jenkins lets have the wounded away first. Captain Rowlands your medical team including the nurses to go with them please. RSM as soon as the wounded are clear you and the NCOs get the men aboard the transport. Colonel you and your lady will travel with me. Come along move lively now”

Inside of 40 minutes the crypt was empty and the convoy was making its return journey.

“Billy, Danny we’ve made it were going home”







