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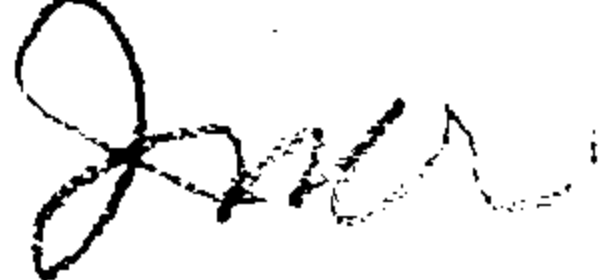
WEAR THE BUTCHERS' MEDAL

*A summer
hitchhike
across Europe turns into a
nightmare of horror and fear.*

John Brunner



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Cat of the Night—

She half turned and moved closer to him, her fingers twisting in his. He put his drink on the window ledge. With a kind of brutality, he lifted the hand which was locked with hers behind her back and pressed her body forward against his, opening his mouth on her lips.

There was a long zipper down the back of her dress. It opened with a sound like cloth tearing, freeing her arms and shoulders to clutch at him and tug him towards her. In the half darkness she was pale, like a white fish in deep water. Her teeth were sharp on his lips and tongue.

Behind him as he bowed over her, a footstep fell. Something long and heavy rose, swished, came down, and an appalling explosion of pain drove him into a tumult of darkness. . . .

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John Brunner

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

This story was written because in Switzerland a man was murdered for selling guns to the Algerian FLN, and because on the back wall of a *Gasthof* not far from Würzburg I found a foot-high swastika in blue paint.

It is, of course, fiction. But since most of the settings and much of the background are not, I should perhaps point out that where reference is made to institutions that may have real counterparts—a consulate, a choral society, or anything else—those counterparts are not intended.

So too with persons, such as officers of the NATO forces. In the latter case in particular I have attempted to ensure that opinions ascribed to my characters are shared by at least some reputable military commentators. Defense exercises such as the one referred to in Chapter XIX have been reported—in far stronger terms—in the British press.

J. K. H. B.

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CHAPTER I

Yesterday Phil Burns had awakened to feel the cold edge of winter reaching through the warmth of fall, like a razor so sharp that you feel only a feather-touch before the blood runs.

So that was that. It had been a good summer, the best, a summer of long roads and forests, lakes and hills, bright days and pale evenings, beer in china steins and *Berliner-weise* sucked through a straw.

Today he had done what had been at the back of his mind in coming to this corner of Germany. He had walked up to look at the line dividing the world, and he'd seen barbed wire and two stolid soldiers in unfamiliar uniforms with slung rifles, the whole thing as impersonal as a line on a map or a cut with scissors in a piece of paper. And that was all.

When he turned back, he suddenly wanted to be away from this place—a long way away, and soon. He set his heavy knapsack comfortably on his shoulders and headed down the little-used road toward the autobahn, a sense of oppression mounting in him that had only a little to do with the approach of winter. To the thud of his boots on the road he began to whistle *Muss i' Denn* and *Handwerksburschen-abschied*, but when he thought of the words that went with the tunes, he felt self-conscious and set his jaw hard.

Images crowded up in his memory. Wedel, with its absurd showpiece of a statue like a giant child's doll, and Hannele, as brown in April as he was now—and Munich, the "village of a million people," where he had stopped

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on the street to watch four policemen drag to a car a blood-soaked woman who had knifed her lover—and that strange, small town whose name he had never learned, with the huge Italianate garden built for some prince-bishop of the eighteenth century in which he had met Renate under a flowering tree.

Over. There was no point in trying to keep it; it would go sour.

Ahead, the road curved. He saw the huge roof sign of a gas station and he moved faster. That would be a good place to pick up a ride.

There was only one car there, but it was a dandy—a 300 SL finished in an unusual greenish bronze. He set his knapsack on a low concrete wall and walked over to take a closer look. Düsseldorf license plates, he noted. It was a long way from home.

There was no sign of the driver. A blond mechanic was checking the air in the tires. From the way he was boosting the pressure, whoever owned this fine car meant to go a long way in a great hurry. The mechanic got the pressure equalized at the front and disconnected his hoses to move them to the rear. Catching sight of Phil, he grinned.

“*Schönes Wagen, nee?*” he said, waving at the Mercedes.

“And then some,” Phil agreed. He walked around the car. There wasn’t a mark on it, except that it had killed a lot of flies and they were smeared on the windshield. But as soon as the tires were finished, the mechanic got a sponge and a squeegee and began to clean up the glass.

The door marked *Herren* on the side of the station office swung open and a man came out. Phil wouldn’t have said he matched the car, but he looked equally expensive. He was about forty-five, several inches shorter than Phil’s six three, and had pudgy cheeks and hands. He had crew-cut brown hair and light-blue eyes behind glasses. Incongruously, there was a splash of wet mud on one of his handmade brown shoes. On seeing that the mechanic was still cleaning

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the windshield, he stopped, his foot tapping, looked at his watch with a frown, then stared up the road in the direction Phil had come from. Having satisfied himself that there was nothing coming, he shot a hard glance at Phil.

"Ihr Auto ist sehr schön," Phil suggested.

"Ja," the brown-haired man said briefly. It was no invitation to continue the conversation, and Phil shrugged. He hadn't really hoped for a ride in the 300 SL anyway. Moreover, the brown-haired man had the indoors look that often goes with a contempt for people who tramp roads in shabby jeans and khaki shirts, toting worn knapsacks.

But no other car had come along, so there was no point in moving away.

The mechanic finished his job and came for his money. The brown-haired man peeled off bills from a fat roll and told him to hurry with the change. Waiting, still impatient, he caught sight of Phil's knapsack across the way, to which—for strictly practical reasons—a Stars and Stripes was tied. His manner changed magically, and he turned to Phil with a beam.

"You American?" he asked. He spoke good English with a mere trace of accent. Suddenly affable upon receiving Phil's nod, he took a pigskin cigarette case from his pocket. "Have an American cigarette," he invited.

"Thanks." They were Chesterfields. The lighter that followed had a jeweled design on its side.

"You're on vacation here?" the brown-haired man pursued.

"Kind of. I've been down in Nürnberg lately. Came up through Bad Kissingen and Fulda yesterday—thought I'd like to see the Iron Curtain from close up."

"Ah, yes. And where do you go now?" The man's interest was unexpected, but obviously genuine.

"England, maybe. Like to see it before I head for home."

"England?" the brown-haired man echoed. The mechanic came with his change, and he tipped him two marks. "How do you go to England, then?"

Phil was puzzled. You didn't expect a man of this type to

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be so eager to know the plans of a stranger encountered at a gas station. He said, not having given much thought to the question, "Oh—I'll make my way over to one of the Channel ports, I guess. I've been thumbing rides all summer."

The brown-haired man rubbed his chin. "I see. Well, I'm taking the autobahn past Köln to Düsseldorf. Would that be helpful?"

Who'd have guessed? "It'd be great," Phil said. "I was figuring it would take me two full days to get that far."

"Ausgezeichnet!" That rucksack is your baggage? . . . It can go in the trunk of my car. One moment."

The brown-haired man leaned through the driver's window and took a short chain of keys from the dashboard, then went to open the trunk.

Feeling slightly baffled, but in no mood to raise objections, Phil dropped the knapsack in alongside a pair of blue TWA canvas grips. There were name tags on both of them, but they hadn't been filled in.

"Please get in," the brown-haired man said. He brought the car to life with an even roar, let it settle down to a purr, and rolled to the edge of the highway. A truck and trailer went by, heavily loaded, its four-cylinder diesel pounding like a marine engine. The car shot after it like an arrow and in moments had left it to dwindle from sight.

Until they came to the autobahn, the driver said nothing further. That suited Phil. Leaning back in the seat, he watched the country slide by in afternoon sunlight, thinking that maybe it wasn't over after all—not if he could decide on the spur of the moment to move on, then find a means like this of doing it.

With a man who liked his car, too. Phil had traveled with drivers of all kinds. This one he had pegged at first glance as a man who would run a 300 SL for the same reason some people run a Caddy or a Jag—part of the color scheme. A few kilometers, and it was obvious that he had guessed wrong. The car took the swinging curve of the autobahn entry silken-footed, like a hunting cat. The driver shifted

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through all the gears to a hundred and fifty kilometers per hour, and the roadway went reeling under the wheels like a spool of tape.

The driver relaxed. He put his hand to the buttons of a radio under the dashboard and gave Phil a companionable smile. "Music?"

Phil started to toss his cigarette butt out the window, remembered the fire-hazard signs, and dropped it in the ashtray instead. "I'm happy listening to the sound of the car."

"As you like." The driver put his hand back on the wheel. "My name is Moritz, by the way—Max Moritz."

"I'm Phil Burns. You speak very good English, you know."

"I have been to London and New York. I must travel a lot in my business. I am an agent of exportation and importation. And you? A student, I guess?"

"Not any more. Sort of a bum, you might say."

"Ah-hah?" Moritz glanced at him. "What does that mean?"

"What you call a *Wandervogel*." There was an equivalent for that in English—bird of passage. A shame nobody ever used it, Phil thought. He'd rather be a *Wandervogel* than a bum.

"I see, I see. You have no profession, then. A permanent tourist, no?" Moritz laughed, sounding as if he were out of practice. "One says 'American tourist,' you know, and it brings the picture of a man hanging with cameras and exposure meters in a car much too big for our European roads."

"So I've heard." He'd lost count of the times.

Moritz caught the tone, and went on hastily. "But you are quite different, obviously. You have been in Germany long?"

"All summer, except for side trips. I went to Alsace and then into France for a little while, and had two weeks in Switzerland."

"It must be a cheap way to travel. Or have you been doing any work?" Moritz produced his cigarettes again and

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offered them. Phil refused. Moritz lit one for himself with the dashboard lighter.

"Oh, I picked up a few bucks here and there. Met a girl who played guitar, and sang with her for a while till she went off to Finland. Odd jobs, too."

"But now you go home, is that right?"

"Eventually. Not yet. To tell you the truth, I don't know what the hell I'm going to do, and I don't care."

"I envy you," Moritz said after a pause, and fell silent.

And I believe you, Phil thought. He smiled to himself and settled more comfortably in the seat. He'd never felt like this before. It was as if the whole long, lazy summer had distilled into his bones. Tomorrow? To hell with tomorrow. He'd been in a hurry when he came to Europe, aching to get started on his plans. He'd done it all, but no new plans had formed. Now he could still be in a hurry, but without impatience. He felt wonderful.

Go home? Maybe. Sooner or later. That was why he was heading for England, after all. But he might decide to turn around and come back. There was Italy. There was Greece. There was the world.

Moritz said nothing more until big signs indicating the Giessen turnoff came in sight ahead. Then he signaled right and pulled into the slow lane, braking.

"There is no point to go all the way to Frankfurt," he said. "We will go through Wetzlar and come back to the autobahn at Limburg. At Limburg I think we will stop for something to eat. It's a pleasant town, and I know a hotel with good cooking."

"Sounds great," Phil said. "But I'm on a limited budget."

Moritz detached his gaze from the road for a long, slow look at him. He seemed to be making up his mind about something. At last he said, "Since you are short of money, Mr. Burns, how would you like to earn a fee by doing a small job for me?"

"It depends on the job."

"I will say at once that it is slightly illegal." Moritz

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gave a crooked smile. "But not very much so. You are going to England, you say. You will be in London, of course?"

"I guess so."

"Good. Well, what it is, is this. I have promised to give my brother a very good and expensive Swiss watch, which I have with me. He lives in London. It would be expensive to send it to him because of the duty and so on, you understand. It is a little smuggling, if you like."

Phil studied him thoughtfully. He said, "I'd think in your business you'd have some way to send it. Or take it yourself. You said you go to England."

"I have too much business now. Besides, I or anyone in my employment is well known, and they are—how shall I say it?—they are careful with us when we go to the customs."

So he's one of the shady kind, thought Phil. He said, "It's an idea. But wouldn't they be just as—careful—if I showed up wearing an expensive Swiss watch and the kind of clothes I tramp around in?"

"Oh, no. It is quite ordinary to look at. It is the inside—what is it in English? The movement, yes. That is the important part." He paused, as if calculating. "It would cost me three hundred and fifty marks, about, to pay the duty and so on. It would be worth my while to give you—shall we say two hundred marks?"

Phil grinned and shook his head. "Herr Moritz, you must like the look of me. To give me an expensive watch and two hundred marks and turn me loose! It should be worth the other hundred and fifty to make sure the watch actually reaches your brother."

"Oh, I am sure of that," Moritz said. There was an odd wryness to the words. "I would not make the suggestion if I were not. But the two hundred marks you would receive from my brother when you deliver the watch. On those terms, would you do it?"

"Sure, why not?" The only reason he could think of against it was that he didn't want to get mixed up in

someone else's problems. But the money would be too useful to him to decline on those grounds.

"Excellent." Moritz seemed disproportionately pleased. "My brother is Hermann Moritz, of the agency Moritz and Hollweg in Scotts Court in London. I will give you the address when we stop. And also I will give you the watch, so I do not forget."

He swung the car expertly past a lumbering truck.

"And so you will be my guest at a meal in Limburg, yes? I will do you also the good turn. I do not think you will find another ride which will get you so far on your way so fast as with me."

"I guess not," Phil said, thinking of the distance he had covered in trucks like the one vanishing behind them. Moritz said nothing more, and Phil took out a pack of Lux and lit one, considering what he had just agreed to.

It didn't make sense. Why ask a complete stranger to take off with a single watch so expensive that it was worth trying to evade customs duty on it? A consignment of watches, maybe—that would figure. But surely a man like Moritz must have a reliable friend who could do the job for him. Better yet, why didn't he wear it into England himself? His brother couldn't be so desperate for the watch that it couldn't wait till his next business trip.

To hell with it. A couple of hundred marks would be very useful, and he could leave the worrying to Moritz.

They passed through Wetzlar and continued on the Limburg road. Phil wondered idly if this was the Limburg they had named the cheese for, and if it was, whether you could recognize it from a distance by the smell. He thought of asking Moritz, but changed his mind. He didn't think the joke would go over.

It was growing dark as they approached Limburg. Traffic was light, but they had to slow down about four or five kilometers before the town because some kind of road work was in progress. Dirt was heaped up alongside the road, and

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big stacks of drainage pipes half-covered with tarpaulins. A man in overalls was standing beside one of the stacks, and as Moritz's car approached, he stared toward it.

Phil noticed him looking, and thought nothing of it. After all, this was a car to attract anyone's attention.

Then, insanely, like the mouths of twenty dragons, the big earthenware pipes erupted a flood of flame across the road.

CHAPTER II

There was pain after that, and long darkness; then he came slowly back to the world.

He was lying flat on his back, without a pillow, on a hard bed. There was a sound of movement and talking, but hushed. When he got his eyes open he saw nothing at first but blurred neutral colors—cream, gray, pale green. Then, as if he were moving images into alignment in the viewfinder of a camera, he managed to assemble solid objects into place around him.

Wheeled screens beside the bed, and a ceiling above spread with grayish daylight. A hospital. He heard the tinkle of metal on metal and thought of instruments being dropped in a pan, and there was a girl's laugh which sounded exactly like Hannele's. He rolled his head and saw that there was one other person inside the screens, sitting on a chair near the bedside, a bald man in a dark suit who had turned over a book he was reading and laid it face down on his knee, presumably in response to Phil's movement.

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He half-rose and said something Phil's confused mind could not quite cope with, then spoke urgently over his shoulder to someone beyond the screens. They parted, and two nurses slipped into view, one going to each side of the head of the bed.

"Herr Burns?" the bald man said tentatively, and Phil felt a slow tide of comprehension rise in him. Germany. The car. The fire.

He moistened his lips. Over most of his skin there was a vicious tingling, as if he had been whipped, and he felt as weak as a baby. And his jaw was very stiff and painful. But the weight of what might be days of unconsciousness and delirium was sliding off him.

He said croakingly, "*Ein—Krankenhaus, nee?*"

"*Ach, wunderbar! Sie sprechen deutsch!*" The bald man put his book on the seat of his chair and wiped his forehead with the back of his hand, looking relieved. He glanced inquiringly at the nurses, one of whom checked Phil's pulse quickly and gave a nod. Then she and her companion helped him to raise his head and shoulders, packing pillows in behind him.

One of the nurses said something about getting the doctor and not talking too long, and slipped out between the screens. Phil felt his perception of the world settle to a normal attitude, like water finding its level in a bowl.

The bald man pushed his book to the floor and sat down, taking out a notebook and a ballpoint pen. He leaned forward.

"How do you feel, Herr Burns?"

"Lousy." Phil tried to smile, but his face was too stiff. "What hospital is this?"

"You're in Frankfurt. You were brought here from Limburg." The bald man made a check mark in his notebook. "Do you remember anything of what happened?"

Phil frowned. The most recent thing in his memory was pain, lit by snatches of dreamlike visions. Before that, there had been a scream, and . . .

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"I remember the car," he said. "I remember the pipes by the road. They suddenly shot a blast of flame in front of the car. I—" He closed his eyes for a moment. "You're not a doctor," he said.

"No, indeed. I'm Inspector Stauffel, Hessen State Police." He hesitated. "You know, you are very lucky to be alive, Herr Burns!"

"I guess so. How—how was it done? It can't have been an accident."

"We are investigating," Stauffel said. "But you are right: it was no accident. Those so-innocent pipes that spat flames had been converted into a clever infernal machine, filled with napalm and exploding detonators. We have not found anyone who saw what happened, but it appears that the car you were in was traveling too fast to brake. It ran straight into the sea of fire, skidded, and turned over off the road. The gas tank exploded, and that was nearly the end of you. Do you remember how you escaped?"

"No. No, I don't remember a thing." Phil felt shivers crawling down his spine.

"Perhaps you opened the door just in time. You were found thrown clear, five meters from the burning car, with slight burns and many, many bruises."

"And—" Phil stopped short. What was the name of the owner of the car? His mind was fogged there, and he couldn't remember it. "And the driver?" he went on finally.

"Did you not learn his name?"

"I think he told me. But my mind's all confused."

"It is the shock," the inspector said. "You have been unconscious for a day and a half. I have been watching by the bed—or one of my men—since you arrived."

"Did the driver get out?" Phil asked.

"No," Stauffel said. "He was burned to death. All the car was burned up."

"Why? Who did it?" Phil almost choked on the words.

"That is what we are trying to find out." The inspector poised his pen. "Please tell me as much as you remember

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about your journey in the car, about the driver, and about what happened at the end."

"That won't take long," Phil said. "I hitched a ride with him from a gas station near the autobahn at Hersfeld. I'd never seen him before."

"Did you talk in the car?"

"I suppose so. But I can't remember anything either of us said."

"I see. So you were simply a hitchhiker who was riding with the dead man." Stauffel grunted and tapped his teeth with his pen. "Where were you going—each of you?"

Phil frowned, searching his mind. "I think he said he was going to Düsseldorf. He had Düsseldorf license plates; I remember that. I was headed for the Channel coast and over to England."

Stauffel made quick notes. "Yes, it is much as we expected," he said. "We found in the back of the car the steel framework of a rucksack. Yours, presumably."

With a stab of freezing dismay, Phil said, "The frame? Nothing else?"

"It was all burned."

"Oh, my God," Phil said after a pause. "I hadn't thought of that. How about my money and my passport?"

Stauffel regarded him sympathetically. "You must have lost most of your belongings. But your money and your passport were safe in your pocket. We took your name from the passport, and the American Consulate has been informed."

Jesus, what a mess! In every way. Did they charge hospital fees here or not? He had no idea.

"I understand your worry, Herr Burns," Stauffel was saying. "But if you can please answer a few more questions—"

"Oh, sure; go ahead. But most of it's gone except the sight of the—did you say napalm?"

"Yes. Real napalm, such as is used in bombs." Stauffel

leaned forward. "But I think you were going to say something more."

Phil frowned. "You said nobody saw what happened. But what about the man in overalls? The one standing right there alongside the road as we drove toward the stack of pipes."

"Ah," Stauffel said. "Can you describe this man?"

"No. It was getting dark, and he was a long way off. I know I figured he was a workman on a road gang. He was definitely wearing overalls, but that's all I know."

Stauffel sighed. "We expected there must have been *someone* there. But he is not likely to come to us. Are you certain you did not see any more? How tall was he? Was he fat or thin?"

"I don't know," Phil said wearily. His head was starting to ache now. "I only caught a glimpse, and it was getting dark."

The screens parted again, and the nurse was back, with a youthful doctor in a white coat. The inspector glanced at them and closed his notebook.

"Well, that is of a little help, Herr Burns," he said, rising. "I will have a statement prepared for you to sign. It will be in German, of course, but you understand it well and will not mind. I will send someone to bring you to police headquarters when you are well enough to leave. But I doubt that we shall have any reason to delay you. It seems well established that you are an innocent outsider caught up in a deadly affair."

He made to click his heels and take his leave. With a great effort Phil raised a hand to detain him.

"What was the name of the driver?" he asked.

"He was—no, I had better not tell you. I will hope that you may remember yourself when you are better. You see, the name he gave you may not have been his real one, and if you remember it, it will assist our inquiries." He pocketed his notebook. "Thank you for your help, Herr Burns. And I wish you a speedy recovery."

CHAPTER III

For the next two days Phil lay restless and worrying in the hospital bed. It was small consolation to remember that he was lucky to be alive. What angered him was to have been tossed at random, as if he didn't matter, into someone else's funeral pyre. He cared less for the loss of his possessions than for the loss of that drifting, relaxed mood the summer had left with him.

And he kept thinking how napalm can turn a man into a screaming torch.

Nero used to light his feasts with Christians covered in burning pitch. I guess it's a measure of our progress that we don't insist specifically on Christians nowadays.

The insult in his mind was worse than the injury to his body. The doctors exclaimed over the few small burns he had sustained, and asked how he had spent the summer to make himself so fit. When he wearily told them, they looked wise and nodded approval. On the second day they told him to get up. On the third they said he could go if he wanted, provided he kept a dressing on the worst burn for another few days. He wanted to go. Staring at the ceiling and seeing projected on it visions of those pipes vomiting flame was becoming unbearable, and the visions were pursuing him into his sleep and exhausting him.

He was given his clothes back—what was left of them—and asked for his money and passport, but those were in the hands of the police. A black BMW V-8 picked him up at the hospital and took him to police headquarters, where Stauffel received him in his office.

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Rising and putting out his hand, Stauffel said, "I am glad to see you better, Herr Burns! Sit down, and I'll keep you as short a time as I can. I have had a statement prepared for your signature, as I promised. We have checked at the gas station where you got your ride, and the mechanic there says he remembers seeing you meet the dead man." He hesitated. "What brought you to that place, by the way?"

"I'd been to Nürnberg for a few days. I thumbed my way up to Hersfeld to take a look at the East-West border there."

"And did you do so? What did you think of it?"

"It didn't bother me much. It's too—I don't know—too unreal."

"All too real, I'm afraid," Stauffel said with a scowl. He made a quick note on a pad before him. "As a matter of fact, we knew you were in Nürnberg; we also made inquiries there. Another point—have you remembered more clearly the man beside the road you saw before the disaster?"

"The guy in overalls? No. I'm sorry."

Stauffel sighed, and made another note. "Lastly, have you remembered the name the dead man gave you?"

Phil shook his head. "The doctors said it might be weeks before I remember it all clearly. Some of it may never come back." He felt a momentary chill. The idea was eerie—that a piece of a man's memory could be scissored out like a cut in a strip of movie film.

Again Stauffel sighed. He put his fingers on a sheet of typed paper lying on the desk and turned it around toward Phil. "No matter, no matter. Here is the statement I have prepared. You will see where to sign at the bottom."

Phil read it. It was in highly general terms, referring to "the deceased" and "the event near Limburg," but accurate enough as far as it went. He took the pen Stauffel offered and added his name.

"Now you will want your belongings back," the inspector said, and thumbed a bell on his desk. "By the way, you may

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be glad to know this has not brought you publicity. We did not release your name to any newspaper, describing you as just a hitchhiker involved by accident. Naturally, though, we had to tell your consulate, and in fact, I have been asked to send you over there upon your release from the hospital. I will give you the address. It is not far."

There was a knock at the door, and a youthful policeman appeared with a large envelope. Stauffel shook it over the desk and asked Phil to check the contents. It was all there—his passport, the wallet with some German money, his small stock of American Express travelers' checks.

"Was there anything else?" Stauffel asked.

"I just remembered," Phil said, pausing. "I have a watch. Was it found?"

"A watch *was* found," Stauffel said doubtfully. He spoke again to the young policeman, who went out and returned with a sealed envelope. Stauffel took it and tore it open. "There," he said. "Is that yours?"

Phil took what he offered. It was a watch only in name. The strap had been charred away to two little tags of blackened leather, and the glass was starred and opaque.

"I guess so," he said. "I'd know if I could read the name on the dial." He attempted to open the face, but it was too stiff.

"The watch worn by the driver was found on his wrist," Stauffel said. "So presumably this one is yours. I will add it to the receipt you will sign for us, and perhaps you can have it repaired."

Phil shrugged, dropped the fire-blackened thing back in the envelope, and pocketed it. He said, "Do you know yet who did it, or why?"

Stauffel looked him steadily in the eye. "Let me give you some advice, Herr Burns. Be glad you were involved only as an innocent party and know nothing of the matter. Do you see why I say that?"

"It depends on whether the right man got killed," Phil said. "If he did, then someone went to a hell of a lot of

trouble to get at him. Whatever kind of business he was in, it was with people who fight dirty."

"You are a man of intelligence, Herr Burns. True, it is uncertain whether the right man was killed, but if you go to such trouble, you are usually careful to avoid the chance of a mistake. I repeat my advice. It is better to know as little as possible of such matters. Unless—like myself—you are compelled to learn more." He touched the receipt. "Now I must ask you to sign the receipt for your things, and I can let you go on your way. I could wish you had a less—uh—eventful time in my country. But you cannot say you were not lucky here. You go now to England, yes?"

"I guess. If I can still afford it."

"Well, I hope so. There you will certainly enjoy a quieter time."

CHAPTER IV

Out in the street he found drizzling gray rain.

He paused on the steps of police headquarters, shivering, looking with envy at a man across the way pulling up the collar of an expensive brown tweed overcoat. Phil's shirt and jeans and underwear had been laundered while he was in the hospital, and were presentable enough, except for a tear in one shoulder of the shirt—presumably caused when he was flung clear of the burning car. But his knapsack had held everything else except what he stood up in.

Stauffel had told him which way to head for the American Consulate. He turned and began to walk in that direction. At the first clothing store he came to, he bought a cheap, sticky, plastic raincoat that smelled of tar. It kept the worst

of the wet off him, but as he trudged down the street the drizzle collected in his hair and trickled coldly down his neck.

He'd been in Frankfurt before on this trip, and hadn't liked it. It was flashy and overgrown, self-styled "American" in its new postwar guise, with no personality of its own. The buildings were dull, the store displays affected, the people in the bars morose.

The rain made it worse.

At a busy intersection he had to wait for a streetcar to go by, and glanced over his shoulder. Another man—or maybe the same one as before—in a brown tweed overcoat caught his eye. He cursed under his breath. The sleeves of the plastic raincoat were too long for him, and that was the garment's only advantage. He pulled his hands up inside the flapping cuffs.

What Stauffel had said was echoing in his mind. He had thought a good deal about himself, lying in the hospital bed, wondering whether he could make it to England on the little cash remaining to him, whether it was worth trying, or whether he ought to have a plane ticket sent from home—wondering what it would cost to buy spare socks, underwear, and a sweater.

But he'd been broke before, and had always got out somehow.

He was asking himself now what name the dead man had given him. It kept wriggling away, along with memory of whatever else the man had said to him. The gas station was clear to him, and the look of the beautiful green-bronze car in the afternoon sunlight, and the suit the driver had worn, even the expression on his face.

So too was the horrifying sight of innocent drainage pipes spewing fire across the road.

But everything else was a blur of mist.

Call him Dead Man, then. Dead Man must have been more than what he seemed. He must have been mortally dangerous to a ruthless enemy who was willing to go to fan-

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tastic lengths to get rid of him. Think of the planning involved, to make sure the right man in the right car at the right time was swamped by that flood of flame.

You could work on from there, and surely Stauffel would be doing just that. There were tidier, easier ways of simply killing a man. To burn him and his car implied there was something that had to be destroyed—maybe something small, which there was no certainty of finding in whatever time was available, but which was known to be on Dead Man's person or in the car. That made sense. And if Phil's knapsack had been reduced to a steel skeleton, the attempt would probably have been successful.

He wondered whether, when his mind eventually settled down, he would feel more thankful at having escaped lightly, or more angry at the murderers. But that was for later.

He glanced up to see the name of the street he was entering. He was only a block or two from the consulate now. And the store he was passing was a clockmaker and jeweler's. The sight reminded him that he had a badly damaged watch in his pocket.

For a moment he hesitated. It seemed absurd to spend the kind of money it would probably cost to have the watch repaired, when his cash level was so low. Yet there was some reason—he *knew* there was some reason—why he should get the watch mended right away.

He shook his head. Crazy. He pushed open the door and went in.

The store was small but luxurious. At the jewelry counter a stout businessman was looking at some rings, with a pretty girl clerk serving him. Another girl, plain, wearing too much make-up, was lounging at the vacant watch counter.

"*Guten Tag*," Phil said in answer to her greeting, and took the damaged watch from his pocket. "Is there any chance of fixing this?"

She stared at it with dismay, rounding her mouth into an O. After a moment she shrugged and picked it up. Inviting him to wait, she disappeared behind a screened door

on the other side of the counter. There was a sound of voices.

Phil leaned on the counter and looked about him, idly reading price cards on the display shelves. The rain was getting heavier, he noticed as he glanced back at the window.

And wasn't that the same tweed overcoat? Just going out of sight at the side of the window?

He told himself his mind was playing tricks, and at that instant the screen door opened again and the girl was back. With her was an elderly man whose rimless glasses had slid most of the way down his long, pointed nose.

He looked at Phil severely. "This is too good a watch to treat as you have. You dropped it in the fire, perhaps?"

Phil didn't try to explain. "Can it be repaired?"

The old man shrugged. He put a black velvet pad on the counter and laid the watch on it. From the top pocket of his loose white coat he took some delicate tools. He fiddled with the watch for a few seconds, removing the starred glass. Not looking up, he said, "*Kommen Sie um sechs Uhr abends zurück—wir werden sehen, was wir sehen werden.*"

Shaking his head, he picked up the velvet with the watch on it and carried it back behind the screened door. The girl gave Phil a scribbled receipt and told him to come back at six. He put the receipt in his wallet, thinking with some depression of the little money there. He asked how much it was likely to cost, and she smiled and spread her hands.

"No idea, huh?" Phil said. "I'm not surprised."

Still wondering what had possessed him to arrange to have the watch repaired when he couldn't eat it, he went back to the street, his plastic raincoat stinking worse than ever.

A few yards along the street, looking with great interest into the window of a drugstore, was the—yes, definitely—same man in a tweed overcoat. He had put on a small brown hat against the rain.

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Phil stood quite still, studying him. After a short time the man glanced up and met Phil's gaze, and gave him a deliberate, rather sleepy looking stare. He was about thirty-two, Phil judged, slightly over medium height, well built, with dark hair and a barely tanned complexion.

There was nothing self-conscious about that stare, such as you might expect from an inexperienced tail caught wagging the dog. Phil frowned and moved slowly on his way. True enough, he was following busy streets, and there were probably dozens of people wandering aimlessly on this same route, or would have been but for the rain.

There was the flag in front of the consulate. He quickened his pace slightly, and as he ascended the steps to the entrance, he looked back. Yes, there the man was, coming quite openly after Phil.

Suddenly irritated, Phil stopped dead and swung around. A German policeman, near the door of the building, looked at him with much curiosity. Tweed Coat didn't hesitate. He came straight up to Phil and tipped his hat back.

"Your name Burns?" he said.

Phil looked him over. "That's right. What the hell's the idea of tailing me?"

"If I'd been tailing you, you wouldn't have seen me. My name's Greer. Come on inside out of the rain."

"Now just a minute!" Phil didn't know what it was about Greer that set him on edge, but something did.

Some people feel this way about cats.

Abruptly Greer's eyes—they were very dark, almost black—narrowed, and a hard line touched his mouth. "Do you feel worried about going into your own country's consulate?"

"I feel worried about you!" Phil snapped.

"You don't have to. But I have to worry about you, and I didn't ask for the privilege. Inspector Stauffel told you you were wanted here, didn't he?"

"By you?"

"As it happens, yes." Greer bit the last word off short.

Phil shrugged and gave in. He followed Greer into the

hallway of the building, down a corridor, into an office that Greer opened with a key from an inside pocket. There was nothing much in the office except a desk, chairs, and a locked steel cabinet.

"Sit down," Greer said. He went around the desk and did so himself, after leaving his hat and coat on a peg by the door. Under the coat he wore a suit of dark gray. Phil remained standing, a kind of cold chaos of irrational rage whirling in his guts. "I said sit down!" Greer repeated. "There's a chair!"

"Do you give this treatment to all the American citizens who come to this consulate?" Phil said in an icy voice.

"Most Americans who come to this consulate aren't on the bum," Greer said. "You're no advertisement for yourself, are you?"

Click.

It was as if the shutter of a camera had operated, giving Phil a tantalizing glimpse into his own memory. Something about "One says 'American tourist,' you know . . ."

It was gone. But he was sufficiently preoccupied by the flash of recollection to get down off his dignity and move, not thinking, to take the chair facing Greer's desk.

"That's better," Greer said. "Now, there are a couple of things we'd better get straight before we go any further, Burns. It seems to me that people of your sort think they can let the world turn around them and never pay it any attention. Then one day it slaps them in the face when they aren't looking, and they come howling to complain."

"I'm here because I was asked to come," Phil said stonily. "All my belongings except what I'm wearing got burned in that car—did you hear about it? But I didn't come to complain or beg help, and if that's what you're offering me, I'll tell you right now I don't want it."

Grudgingly, his eyes on Phil's face, Greer nodded. "I'm glad to hear it. Well, I'll come to the point. You objected for some reason to my following you here from police head-

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quarters. Use your brains and you'll see why I did it. To make sure you got here, of course."

"Did you think I wasn't going to accept the invitation?" Phil loaded the words with sarcasm.

"Maybe." Greer didn't react. "Even if you had it in mind to come, you might not have made it."

Phil didn't answer.

"You don't know what I'm talking about, do you?" Greer said with thin contempt. "All right, I'll assume that what you've been through has suspended your intelligence, and spell it out for you. You were over beyond Hersfeld, isn't that right? Why?"

"Looking at the East-West border. Out of curiosity."

"Do you often do things like that out of mere curiosity?"

"All the time," Phil said.

"And then the world slaps you in the face, as I said." Greer sighed and leaned forward on the desk. "Look, Burns. Just beyond Hersfeld, as you saw for yourself, the autobahn runs dry at the border of East Germany. The guy you hitched with was heading west after being around the frontier. Doing something there, maybe. Near Limburg somebody who knew who he was, knew he drove a distinctive car, knew what route he was following and what schedule he was keeping, laid napalm bombs for him. You don't buy napalm at a neighborhood drugstore. You'd figured that out?"

"Yes."

"And you still don't know why I wanted to make sure you arrived here?"

Phil took a deep breath. "Frankly, no. Either you assume that I'm what I claim to be—someone who got mixed up in it by chance, in which case I can't help you—or I'm lying, and in that case I won't help you."

"We also have some responsibility for our nationals when they're here. Even when they're on the bum. That is what you're doing, isn't it?"

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"You can call it that. I'm wandering around getting acquainted with Europe."

Greer scowled. "Didn't you like it back home?"

"My father wants me to go into his business, and I don't want to. Apart from anything else, it's easier to say no on this side of the Atlantic."

It was the plain truth, but Greer didn't like it any better than anything else Phil had said up to now.

"All I can say is, I hope you grow up," he snapped. "This world is a battleground, and if you walk around in the firing line, you have only yourself to blame when you stop a slug." He turned some papers on his desk, apparently hunting for something in particular. Still looking, he added, "You stopped at a store on the way here. Mind telling me why?"

"My watch was in the burning car. I went to see if it could be repaired."

Greer found what he was after, set it before him, and raised his head. "May I see the watch?"

"It's in the store."

"Then I'd like to see the receipt they gave you for it—please."

What was the point of getting his back up any further? Phil asked himself. He shrugged and produced the slip of paper. Greer accepted it, examined it, and handed it back.

"According to what you told Stauffel," he said, "you're going to England. Right?"

"I had the idea in mind."

"You stick to it. I'll pass the word to the British immigration authorities to watch for you, make sure you show, keep an eye on you after you get into the country."

"For doing nothing illegal, you have me watched," Phil said. "Thanks."

"Get it through your head, Burns. If you don't show, we want to know where to start looking for your body." Greer sighed. "I'd prefer to hold you here till your memory comes back, but I can't. Not easily. So I'll just try and

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impress one single thing on your mind. If you remember anything else about this affair—anything at all, even if it's only the color of the dead man's socks—between now and getting to Britain, you're to take that information direct to the embassy in Grosvenor Square, London. If you don't, you will in fact be committing a crime, and we'll see that you realize it. Bum or wanderer or whatever you like to call yourself, you still can't retire from the world. It's smart to learn that early."

Phil shrugged and got to his feet.

"By the way," Greer said, "the British authorities don't care any better than we do for visitors—even American visitors—without what they call 'visible means of support.' If you have any friends in Britain who can vouch for you, I'd advise contacting them before you arrive. Otherwise you may be in difficulties."

"I'll take that chance," Phil said. "I don't have any friends in Britain. Yet."

He ate the cheapest lunch he could find in a shabby snack bar. Afterward he lit up the last cigarette in a pack and used the pack to make some penciled calculations and find out how much cash he would have in hand when he got to England. It wasn't enough.

Too bad. But he'd get by. Even if he had to sweep the streets, he'd get by.

He spent most of the afternoon tracking down the cheapest clothing stores in town and buying the things he couldn't manage without—a sweater, thicker underwear, more socks. By the time he'd done that, the rain had let up, and he found a bench to pass the hour remaining till his watch was due to be ready.

While talking to Greer, he'd been so put off by the man's open hostility that he'd barely been able to take in what was said. Now, though, it was coming home to him.

People who had napalm, people who went to such trouble to wipe out an adversary, wouldn't stop at half measures.

They might be less readily satisfied than Stauffel that Phil Burns was an accidental intruder. He'd been at the East-West border, after all, in that curious twilight zone between two halves of the same country. Only to see it. But the killers wouldn't know that. They hadn't been watching him. Not then.

Were they watching him now, as Greer suggested?

He looked around at the passers-by. After a moment he shook his head. Just looking was useless. And in a surge of frustration he had realized that he didn't want to leave things here. He didn't want to wait for the killers to move against him when they felt inclined.

He felt a decision for action form rock-hard in his mind.

At six o'clock he went back to collect the watch. The old man came out from behind the screened door, shaking his head, and laid the black velvet pad on the counter. Phil could hardly believe his eyes. A new glass had been fitted. The case had been cleaned and polished and a new strap put on. The dial had been cleaned, and the hands pointed accurately to the right time.

"*Wunderbar!*" he said. "*Wieviel kostet das?*"

And then he looked again.

This was *not* his watch! At first glance it could be mistaken for his. But it was fractionally bigger. His had had the figures marked at the quarters. This one had no figures on the face at all—only wedge-shaped gold points.

It was a completely different make.

The old man did not seem to notice his puzzlement. He felt in the pocket of his white coat and produced a tiny brown-edged scrap of paper.

"It will go better now that this has been removed from the back of the case, Herr Moritz," he said, holding it out.

Phil was just about to say that his name was not Moritz. He stopped himself, and took the bit of paper in shaking fingers. It was no bigger than a postage stamp. On one side some figures were written in pencil, and on the other was a name and address: *Moritz, London EC 1, Scotts Court 14.*

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That was the name. That was the address. That was the watch he had been asked to smuggle to the dead man's brother. The path of action he had been aching for had opened miraculously before him.

CHAPTER V

Scotts Court was a narrow enclosure behind dark-gray buildings, paved with irregular flag-stones between some of which pools of grimy water had collected after a recent rain. Lightheaded, Phil emerged into it from the alley connecting it to City Road and looked about him.

You wouldn't think there was room for fourteen separate addresses in a rathole like this. . . .

On one side of him, from windows half below ground and facing a stone-walled pit, came the heavy, shifting thump and roll of a printing press at work. There was a smell of cooked cabbage and old wet newspapers. On the other side were narrow, dark doorways set in a stained wall, separated by windows with frosted panes to head height. Phil walked along them, checking numbers.

Fourteen. A door standing ajar, giving access to a short hall and a steep stairway. Eight various nameplates were fixed to the wall, dark wood, light wood, brass on which the edges of the engraved letters had been worn down by polishing in more prosperous days. No one had polished them lately.

There it was—*Moritz & Hollweg Ltd., Fourth Floor*. He went in.

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He thought once that he might not make it. The eight flights of stairs, each doubling back on the one before, seemed to multiply as he got higher. His head swam. He hadn't eaten yet today, and not very much yesterday. He had a pound left, but that was for the ultimate emergency. And the hollow feeling in his guts was expanding, absorbing his energy, leaving him drained and listless.

He made it at last, and came to a narrow landing with two doors giving onto it. The upper part of each was of yellow-frosted glass. The wood was painted a dung-brown color more or less the same as on the floors below, but grimmer. One of the doors had on its glass MO ITZ & HOLLWE LTD. PRIVATE and the other MORIT & HOLLWEG LTD. INQUIRIES.

He opened the door marked INQUIRIES and went through.

The girl sitting at the table beyond the door looked up. "Yes?"

Phil looked at her. She was considerably worth looking at. She had long, sleek black hair pinned together at her nape with a tortoise-shell comb. Her face and neck were as white and as smooth as whipped cream. You could see a lot of her neck—all the way down to where the neckline of her dress reluctantly came together fractionally above firm breasts. The dress was of fine dark-red wool, and where it held her, it held her close. She had large, long-lashed brown eyes, widening now, and a mouth whose soft lips were slightly parted, glistening.

She didn't go with her surroundings. There was a table before her, with a file of accounts and wire baskets full of papers on each side. Her chair was the swivel type. If she turned it to her left, she faced another table with a typewriter on it, a phone, and a two-extension switchboard. If she turned right, she faced a wooden file cabinet. That and the area of floor in front of the larger table, where Phil was standing, accounted for the available space. There were two inside doors that presumably opened into offices slightly larger than broom closets. Phil decided it would be a good

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idea to go back on the landing if anyone came out of the inner offices who was better built than a matchstick.

He leaned on the open door, feeling slightly dissociated from the world. He said, "Hi. I'm looking for a man named Hermann Moritz. Does he live here, if you can call it living?"

The girl looked him over. "You look half-dead yourself, come to that. What happened to you?"

"Oh, various things. Napalm happened to me, and a hospital, and sleep and food didn't happen to me very much lately. Any resemblance to Frankenstein's monster is purely coincidental." Phil rubbed his brand-new beard. He had started his economies by not buying a razor, and the whiskers were not yet to the combing stage. But he thought the effect was promising and might be worth keeping.

That apart, the reasons for the girl's reaction were obvious. The seams of the plastic raincoat had started to give way, and the extra sweater he'd had to buy in Calais to keep from freezing on the Channel boat was dirty because he'd slept on a bench at a railroad station last night, and his jeans showed the effects of a ride he'd hitched on a farmer's wheezing truck between Armentières and Hazebrouck. He didn't know what the farmer usually transported in the truck: he hadn't wanted to ask.

"Do you have a cigarette?" he asked.

The girl hesitated. Then, not taking her eyes off him, she took a pack from the side of her table and gave him one, and a light from a tiny, ridiculous, enamel lighter. As he bent to the flame, he saw that her nails were neat and short and she used colorless polish.

"Thanks," he said. "Now about Mr. Moritz. Is he in?"

"Yes, he's in. But he's busy with a visitor, and he's not to be disturbed."

She might be putting up a front suitable for strangers who look like Frankenstein's monster, or she might be telling the truth—Phil couldn't say.

"You mean there's room for *two* people in one of these other rooms?" he grunted. "A-mazing. Listen, beautiful, I

want you to inconvenience Mr. Moritz for me. He has a new visitor, and this visitor has come all the way from Frankfurt to see him, and it hasn't been a comfortable trip, and I'm sure he'll be interested in what I have to say."

"I'm sorry," the girl said firmly. "I daren't disturb him. If you can give me an idea of what it's about . . ."

Phil shrugged and took the pace necessary to bring him to the nearer of the two inside doors. He turned the handle and pushed it open.

The office beyond was a little larger than he'd expected. The ceiling, a sort of pus-yellow color, came down at peculiar angles where it approached the walls. At a large modern desk a man with a pot belly sat, facing a scrawny man on a tubular steel chair who gasped as the door opened, slapped shut a folder of papers he was holding, and thrust them into a portfolio on his lap.

They both stared at Phil.

"Mr. Moritz?" Phil said. Somewhere behind him he heard the girl say something about stopping it and getting out. He ignored her.

"What the hell do you want?" the pot-bellied man said. "How did you get in here?"

"I tried to stop him," the girl said. "I told him you were busy."

Phil continued ignoring her. Deliberately he raised his left wrist and began to unfasten the strap of the watch there. He said, "I let myself in, Mr. Moritz. I thought you might be in a hurry to have your brother's watch."

For a moment Moritz's small pursed mouth formed an O, but no sound emerged. His loose cheeks tensed, hollowed, and relaxed. He put his hands on the edge of his desk.

Then he looked at the scrawny man in the visitor's chair. He said, "I must ask you to excuse me. We shall finish our business later." The scrawny man tried to object. Moritz paid no attention, but got ponderously to his feet. "I said you will have to excuse me," he repeated.

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The scrawny man jumped out of his chair, zipped shut his portfolio in a manner suggesting he would have preferred to slam a nice noisy door, and strode out. Phil made room at the doorway. The scrawny man gave him a blistering look and went past.

"Angela," Moritz said, "for the next few minutes I must not be disturbed at all. Lock the outside door, do you understand?"

"Yes, Mr. Moritz," the girl said, subdued. Phil caught her eye and grinned at her. She shut the door between them. A moment later he heard the click of the lock going home on the outside door.

"Now come and sit down," Moritz said. "And let me look at this watch. Thank you." He turned it over, studying it closely. After a pause he added, gesturing at a box on the desk, "Have a cigarette, if you wish."

"Have one burning," Phil said. He took a long drag on it. Sitting down was a good idea. He felt he might not want to get up again in a hurry.

Finally Moritz laid the watch down on his blotter. He gave Phil a searching look. "So this is supposed to be my brother's watch. How did you come by it, Mr.—"

"Burns. Philip Burns. I guess you might say he left it to me in his will. You know what happened to him, don't you?"

"Yes, I know." Moritz's expression didn't alter even fractionally. "I also saw the *Limburger Rundschau* report. It mentioned a passenger—a hitchhiker—who was injured in the accident."

"Accident," Phil said neutrally. He repressed an urge to laugh.

Moritz leaned sharply forward. "Was it *not*—as I told you—an accident?"

Phil closed his eyes. "Sure it was. Someone accidentally filled some pipes at the roadside with napalm, and it accidentally caught fire as we were approaching, and it accidentally set fire to your brother's Mercedes, and it acci-

dentally overturned, and he was accidentally burned to death."

There was a long silence. At the end of it Phil opened his eyes and saw that Moritz's face betrayed no emotion at all.

"Napalm," he said finally. "*Aber grausam—grausam!*"

According to Greer, Max Moritz had been a casualty of the Cold War. It just locally heated up, and he got fried. If this was the limit of Moritz's reaction, he might well be of the same opinion.

Moritz took out a large white handkerchief and blew his nose. Phil half-expected him to say something about the people who had concealed the true facts of his brother's death. Instead, he put the handkerchief back and tapped the watch with a stubby finger.

"So! You brought the watch to me. Why? As a souvenir of my brother, perhaps?"

Phil drew again on his cigarette. "No. He told me he wanted it taken to England without paying customs duty. He said you'd pay the equivalent of two hundred marks in sterling if I delivered it. I hope he was telling the truth. I have no money and no prospects and I'm damned hungry."

Moritz pursed his lips. "He just handed it to you? Were you a friend of his?"

"I'd never seen him before I hitched a ride with him."

"Yet he gave you this watch—like that?" Moritz snapped his fingers, and the sound was peculiarly soft. "It seems a strange thing to do, doesn't it?"

"He said he was going to give it to me. He didn't get the chance. That one was found in the wreck of the car, and when I told the police I'd lost mine, they gave it to me. They found another watch on your brother's wrist, so they thought this was mine. So did I. I didn't realize the mistake till I'd had it cleaned and repaired."

"He told you nothing else?"

It seemed to Phil that Moritz might have looked a bit

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more pleased at having his brother's last wish fulfilled. But what the hell? He shrugged and shook his head.

"Then I can only thank you," Moritz said, getting to his feet. "And of course honor the promise he made you. Angela!" He opened the door to the outer office. "Angela, give Mr. Burns twenty-five pounds from the petty cash. If there is not so much in the box, then write a check for the balance and I will sign it now."

The girl muttered something about there being only twelve pounds, and there was a rattling of coins. Moritz turned to face Phil again, putting out his hand.

"Thank you again," he said. "You may perhaps have performed a great service for me."

Phil stood up and shook hands absently. Moritz held the door open for him to go out, then closed it behind him. In the outer office the girl Angela—counting pound notes from a green metal box—looked up with an inscrutable expression.

"You must tell me your trick for making quick money sometime," she said. "It takes me two weeks to squeeze twenty-five quid out of my boss."

Phil gave her a humorless grin. He looked for a clear piece of wall to lean on while she was making out the check Moritz had requested.

"Your boss doesn't look as if he gives anything away," he said. "I just told him his brother was burned to death with napalm, and he didn't blink an eyelid."

The girl stared at him for a long moment. "You have Frankenstein's line of conversation, too, don't you?"

"It's catching," Phil grunted.

The door of Moritz's office opened suddenly. Phil took a deep breath and stood up straight. The girl said, not raising her head, "Just doing the check now, Mr. Moritz."

Moritz ignored her. He swung to confront Phil and looked him up and down. He said, "Did you open that watch? When you had it cleaned, was something found inside it?"

Ah.

Phil pulled his plastic raincoat aside, reached up under his sweater, put two fingers in the pocket of his shirt, and drew out the tiny scrap of brown-edged paper the old watch repairman in Frankfurt had found.

"Do you mean this?" he said.

"If that was inside the watch, yes, I do!" Moritz reached for it, sweat springing out on his fat face.

Phil shut his fingers over the paper and drew back his hand. The girl looked from one to the other of them in amazement.

"That is mine!" Moritz said. "Give it to me!"

Phil nodded slowly. "I figured it that way. I figured it was this that counted, not the watch. Okay, Mr. Moritz, you can have it. But there's a price."

Moritz let his hands fall to his sides. "I was stupid. I should have known it was not sentiment that brought you, with your so-touching determination to carry out the wish of a dead man. Very well, I will pay for it if I must. I will give another twenty-five pounds."

Phil shook his head.

"If you are greedy, you will get nothing." Moritz's voice had a high-pitched edge on it, like a wet finger rubbing glass. "The paper is worthless to you, and I can always do without it if I have to. Thirty pounds, no more!"

Again Phil shook his head. "You don't understand, Mr. Moritz. I'm not asking for money."

"Then what do you want?" Taken aback, Moritz narrowed his eyes between roll-of-flesh lids.

"I want to know who killed your brother, and I want to know why. And as soon as you've told me, you can have this bit of paper. Until then—" He thrust it back in his pocket and pulled down his sweater. "You see," he went on, "whoever it was who arranged your brother's death came within inches of killing me as well. And I've decided I don't like people nearly killing me. I'm going to do something about it."

CHAPTER VI

Max Moritz had perhaps not known he was going to be killed. But he had certainly known he was in danger, and at least part of the danger stemmed from that scrap of paper. A watch that was going to be taken through customs without paying duty was a very bad place to conceal anything important. But a story about a watch he wanted smuggled was a very good false lead to give a casually encountered hitchhiker. Moritz might have had some such possibility in mind when he hid the paper there. He might have intended originally to change the watch for the one he was wearing, or he might have meant to leave it in the car, knowing that if something happened to him it would be sent with his other valuable belongings to his brother as his nearest relative.

Somehow Phil had taken it for granted that he wasn't married. He reminded himself to ask.

It was hiding the paper that mattered. It could have been put anywhere. It was small enough. Scissored from the corner of a sheet of airmail-weight writing paper, it was the size of a stamp. The paper was of exceptionally good quality. Even though it had been browned at the edges by the heat of the fire, it had not cracked where it was folded.

On one side, the name and address that had brought him here had been written with a very fine pointed pencil. On the other, with a softer and blunter point, some figures had been scribbled. There were only a dozen. Clearly Max Moritz could have memorized them if knowing them himself had been his only objective. They were arranged in four

groups of three, and in spite of some skull-cracking, Phil had been unable to work out what they were.

Moritz knew. Good enough.

Moritz stared at Phil incredulously. Through his wavering haze of hunger and tiredness, Phil realized he had to stand right up to the fat man and let him see he'd meant what he said. He kept his eyes unblinking on Moritz's face until at last the other's gaze shifted and he gave an uncertain laugh.

"Well, you surprise me, Mr. Burns. Let me begin by saying that it's wrong to set any price—cash or otherwise—for returning somebody else's property. But never mind. I can hardly deny I want that bit of paper. How to buy it on your terms, though—that I do not know. Surely if I knew who killed my brother, I'd have told the proper authorities—the police, in Germany, or at least in London."

"Why?" Phil said stonily. "They told you your brother died in an accident. Why *should* you tell them?"

Moritz produced his big handkerchief again and wiped his shiny forehead once, very quickly. His gaze had settled now on the spot over Phil's shirt pocket.

"Ah, yes. Well—" He cleared his throat. "You cannot expect me to say anything about my brother to a complete stranger, in any case. Look, you are hungry and tired. Come with me and have lunch in a good restaurant, and tell me something of yourself, and perhaps we can make some agreement between us."

"You can't take him to lunch," the girl said. "You have to see Mr. Kuyper at twelve-thirty."

"Damn Kuyper for a drunken Dutchman," Moritz said. "No, you are exactly right." He bit down so hard on his fleshy lower lip that Phil winced, thinking blood would run any moment. "I can throw Jones out to suit this young man's convenience, but when Kuyper plays, we all dance."

"And it's twelve-ten now," the girl went on evenly.

"*Du lieber Gott!*" Abruptly Moritz was furious. He

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doubled his hands into fists and stamped his foot, almost spitting his words at Phil. "Blackmailer! Thief! *Schmutziger Strolch!* Why did you come here? Who sent you?"

"Your brother," Phil said. "You should be glad to see me. But from the way you're acting, I'm wondering if maybe you had a part in his death."

"What?" The bluster faded, and suddenly a frightened man looked out of Moritz's eyes. "Who have you said that to? You must not say such things!"

"I've said it to you and no one else," Phil answered. "I could change that."

"No. No, you must not, you would not." Half muttering, Moritz fumbled out his cigarette case and put a cigarette between his lips. "Let me see, let me see what is to do." He tried to get a light to the cigarette. After two tries, he managed it. Sweat ran more than ever over his face. "I have it, I think. Angela, you must take Mr. Burns and give him a good lunch. Give him beer, wine, whatever he wants. But bring him back here at two o'clock and do not fail, do you understand? *Herr Gott, Herr Gott!*"

He wrung his hands and went into his office long enough to snatch down a raincoat and a hat from a peg behind the door, then came back struggling to put the coat on, still muttering to himself. Just before going out he shot a look of pure hate at Phil. Then the door slammed.

As if it were a snotty handkerchief, Angela picked up the envelope containing the cash between two fingers and held it out. "Here you are. What is your line, anyway—demanding money with menaces?"

"I buy low and sell high," Phil said. "According to the best commercial advice. If you don't want to obey the boss's orders because you'd rather not be seen in public with an obvious bum, you needn't apologize. I'll be back at two anyway. I want the answer to my question nearly as badly as he wants that bit of paper."

"I don't have to like you!" she snapped. "But you can't

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stop me liking the kind of lunch I can buy with Moritz's money. I'm coming with you, all right."

She slammed the drawer in which she had put the cash-box, locked it, locked the file cabinet beside her, and put both keys in her purse. Getting to her feet, she reached for a coat on a wall peg. He moved to help her with it. After a moment of hesitation, she allowed him to.

"You don't look like the sort of person Moritz usually has dealings with," she said finally. "Matter of fact, you don't look like a usual sort of person at all."

"I'm not. So that figures."

"If you're secretive, you're secretive. Okay. You wouldn't want a wash before you eat, would you? Or did you give it up?"

Surprised, Phil looked around the minuscule office. "You have a washroom here? I didn't think there was space."

"It's on the floor below. You need a key to get in. Take mine. There are paper towels there. I'll wait for you on the ground floor."

She handed him a key with a white tag tied to it. As he hurried down the stairs, he heard her locking the outer door of the office behind them.

CHAPTER VII

The paper towels dissolved at a wet touch, and the soap by contrast seemed not to dissolve at all, removing dirt simply by abrasion, but the water was hot and Phil had a comb in his pocket. By the time he joined Angela downstairs, he was feeling halfway human again.

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Falling in beside her as she led him along the gray alleyway out of the court, he said, "What racket is your boss in, anyway?"

"Am I supposed to know?"

"You don't take much interest in your work—is that it?"

Impatiently she said, "I take a lot of interest in it. So do you. I don't know why."

He shrugged and gave up. A few yards further on, he asked, "Where are we going?"

"I've been wondering too," she said caustically. She gave him a head-to-foot glare. "Where are they likely to let you in, looking like that?"

"Are they going to look at me when they can look at you?"

She flushed a little. "Well—thank you. I don't suppose you mean it, but it's nice." She hesitated. "Look, who are you, anyway? You walk into the office; you hold my boss up to ransom; you look as if you slept in a hedge last night——"

"Correction. Last night it was a bench in a railroad station. The hedge was the night before."

"I can't tell if you're serious or——" She broke off, coming to a halt outside a big and gloomy Victorian-style pub. "This will do. The food's pretty good here."

The frosted glass door, advertising in faded gilt letters drinks at prices long ago forgotten, opened on a bar full of loud-talking businessmen. The air was warm and sticky. Several of the customers looked up as they came in, glancing first with approval at Angela, then with puzzlement at Phil.

She led him across the bar and up a flight of dark stairs. A door at the top admitted them to a restaurant above the bar. There was a heavy smell of hot food and bitter beer, and Phil's appetite, which had been on the point of dying from sheer neglect, got up and began to growl.

A disdainful waitress, clearly wishing she could put Phil

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out of sight altogether, signaled them to a vacant table for two in a corner and dropped a menu between them before going to see to another order.

"Get me the most expensive thing there is," Angela said. "I don't see why I should economize on Moritz's money. And I'll have a lager with it."

The most expensive thing listed was Aylesbury duck with orange sauce, and it sounded good. He ordered two, with soup, and a pint of bitter for himself.

Angela threw her coat back from her shoulders. "All right. We get peculiar characters in that office often enough—I should be used to them by now. What's your story?"

In rapid outline he told her.

"I see," she said when he finished. "That makes a twisted kind of sense. What would you have done if after all your trouble, Moritz hadn't been interested in this watch you brought him, or this mysterious bit of paper?"

"I'd have gone off and bought myself a meal with the last of my cash, and come back to beat the hell out of him."

She studied him for a moment. "I believe you would, at that. Remind me not to cross you up, will you?"

The waitress put plates of pea soup in front of them, with ham floating on top. Phil began to eat cautiously. He knew better than to take it fast when he'd gone without for so long.

"And you?" he said, pausing to choose a roll from a basket on the table and break it. "You'd have stood by and watched?"

"What makes you think I don't like Moritz?"

"You don't." He made it a flat statement. "What does he do, anyway?"

"More than he tells me about, apparently." She sipped her lager. "I didn't know he was mixed up in something where a man could get himself burned alive."

"Apart from arranging funeral pyres for his relations, what does he *do*?" Phil persisted.

There was a pause while she seemed to be considering

her answer. When she decided what to say, she avoided his eyes as she spoke.

"We—uh—move things around the world. I just keep his accounts and type his letters. He sits in the other office and deals with people. Hollweg is the active partner—he goes places. Letters come in from him—he's in New York, or Sweden, or Zürich, or somewhere. Things shift from one country to another, and the commission comes in. He pays me twelve pounds ten a week and I do as I'm told."

"Export and import," Phil muttered.

"What?"

"His brother said he was in import-export work." It was odd, he reflected, how the little clues were now piecing together in his mind to refresh his memory about that fatal car ride. "I can't figure you, you know. Aren't you curious about your work?"

She met his eyes. Shrugging, she said, "Being curious doesn't get me anywhere. I gave it up."

"I've barely started," Phil said. "I'll stick to it."

Again there was a pause. The waitress came for their soup plates and brought the duck. Phil took a long swallow from his tankard of bitter. It wasn't bad. He took another swallow.

"I have a feeling about you," Angela said suddenly.

"Uh-huh? Pleasant, I hope." He cut a slice of duck and tasted it. It was as good as it had sounded.

"Not very," Angela said. "I have this feeling that you may be going to explode in my face." Amused, he asked a question with one eyebrow. Face set, she went on, "I'm serious. I don't get premonitions often, but as far as I'm concerned you *are* one, large as life. You must have more ideas than what you've said, to have come so far with such trouble. Please!" She leaned forward. "If you know something that means I might be—well—burned alive, if you like—won't you tell me?"

A haunted look came and went in her dark eyes. For a second Phil was taken aback. Then he told himself he would

have realized the truth already if he hadn't been preoccupied. This girl was very badly frightened.

"Please!" she said again.

He put aside the question of what could be scaring her, to be answered later, and sighed. "Honey, I have nothing but a stew of wild guesses that anyone could have come to. You must know more about Moritz and Hollweg than I do, even if you won't talk about it. Figure it! Moritz's brother was killed—thoroughly and nastily—on his way back from doing something around the East German border. Guess One: he crossed somebody up, maybe on the other side."

She didn't say anything.

"The West German police tell the newspapers and even his brother that it was an accident. A stupid thing to do. I know it wasn't an accident. So do they. So does someone else. Guess Two: people panicked. That makes it a very big affair indeed."

"What—sort of affair?" The words came out painfully.

"I'm not sure yet." Phil frowned. He'd speculated a lot in the last few days, and only one reasonable conclusion had emerged. "But putting guesses together—I just naturally don't like being pushed and ordered around. I want to go to hell my own way. My definition of a fifth freedom. Maybe Max Moritz was helping someone to go to hell his own way, too." Her luminous eyes searched his face. After waiting for her to speak if she was going to, he said, "And you? I've talked enough about myself, haven't I?"

"My name's Angela Walker," she said, forcing a smile. "I work for Moritz and Hollweg. Anything else you want to know?"

"Your taste in hats, maybe. Shoe size. Favorite cocktail. Anything."

"I'm from Cyprus. My mother was Greek. I came to England when the trouble started. I had a brother, too, and he is also dead. He said he was more Greek than English and stayed behind to fight for EOKA. He was killed."

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"And yet you're here?" In spite of himself, Phil sounded astonished. "In England?"

She shrugged. "Why not? It's over and done with now. Please God!"

The last two words were added so softly that he barely caught them. He thought of pursuing that line, but changed his mind. Something else had occurred to him.

"You were saying a little while ago that you were used to peculiar characters coming to your office. What kind are they?"

"Oh, seedy-cosmopolitan." She seemed relieved to change the subject. "Do you know what I mean? There's the rich kind, the Ritz-and-Riviera type, and there's another sort who live in a world that's just as international but quite different. They don't belong anywhere. They work in any country and at anything, and they manage to be just as much and just as little at home wherever they go. Moritz isn't like that—he's settled here. But Hollweg is, and a lot of the people we do business with. I'm sort of an honorary member of this half-world. Not an exile. An expatriate without roots. Maybe you qualify, too."

Phil shook his head. For a while he ate thoughtfully. At length he said, "I still don't figure why you'd rather people didn't know the line of work you're in. It's not just me you don't want to tell. You do it all the time. You steer the talk away from it, on to sidetracks."

"Aren't you being a bit absurd?" she said brightly.

"Have it your way. But I spent quite a while in Germany this summer. I talked with a lot more people than most visitors get the chance to. I have ideas. This export-import angle gives me one."

Her eyes were like pools of dark water. She didn't blink at all as she listened.

"In Germany," Phil said, "there's a trade—a kind of export-import trade, if you like—which became very profitable indeed for a while. Then the trade suddenly ran dry. I heard a lot of complaints about it."

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"It consisted of smuggling people, and it worked like this. Say you're a businessman building a new factory in Essen. You would go to one of the—uh—specialists, and you'd say, 'I want so many skilled workmen,' or so many trained engineers, so many metallurgists, or whatever. 'Get them for me.'

"So the specialist would go, or send a representative, to East Germany. He'd track down skilled workers and students due to qualify as engineers and so on, and hire them. He'd say, 'You're hired as of now, and your salary will be paid in the West from now on. When you get the word, just visit East Berlin and ride across on the U-Bahn to our side, and you'll find your job waiting and your accumulated pay.'

"This grew into quite a racket. The specialist got a commission on every trained man he produced, so everyone was happy except the East Germans, who were being bled white of their best technicians. This was one of the pressing reasons for the Berlin Wall, of course.

"But the wall hasn't stopped people in the West from wanting those technicians, any more than it's stopped people in the East from wanting to come over. So I imagine another hole in the border would be—let's say much appreciated. Follow me?"

"Is this supposed to refer to Moritz and Hollweg?" Angela said.

"I don't know. But it's the kind of trade that would fit the facts."

She pondered for a long time. At length, with a movement of her head that made her hair swoop like a raven's wing, she corrected him.

"No, you're wrong. Though I suppose it's true that I don't like to talk about what Moritz trades in."

Phil looked expectant.

"It's quite legal, you know," she went on defensively. "And for some people it's a very good thing. I don't mean

for people in it, like Moritz. I mean like the people in Cyprus."

"What?"

"Moritz and Hollweg trade in arms. Rifles, pistols, and grenades."

CHAPTER VIII

Moritz had changed. He had acquired an air of desperate decision, and a new—false—heartiness colored the words with which he greeted Phil's return to his office. There was a little wet smear on a corner of the big modern desk, and a suspicion of the scent of brandy in the air. He had clearly spent at least part of the intervening time rehearsing a line to take, and fueling himself to deliver it.

Well fed, and temporarily getting the better of that sense of incurable cold that goes with extreme tiredness, Phil felt able to face any new notions Moritz might have. He sat down and crossed his legs.

"Well, now, Mr. Burns!" Moritz said, putting his plump hands together and leaning back. "I think I have a suggestion for you. In fact, I am so confident it will appeal to you that—Angela!"

He bellowed the last word at the top of his voice. In a moment the door opened and she appeared.

"Angela, get out the checkbook again. Write a cash check for fifty pounds and go to the bank and get the money."

All the self-possession the girl had lost when talking with Phil over lunch had come back to her. She did not react at all, merely nodded and went to obey.

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"Yes, as I was saying, Mr. Burns," Moritz pursued, and rubbed his hands in a gesture which parodied itself, "I am sure I have an answer. Take a cigarette, why don't you? And make yourself comfortable. Have a drink, too."

He started to open a drawer of the desk. Phil, taking a cigarette, shook his head.

"No, thanks, Mr. Moritz. Just let me hear your proposal."

"As you like." He leaned forward confidentially. "To begin with, as you guessed, the bit of paper which you have is of much importance. I will hardly be breaking a secret if I tell you it might save me weeks of trouble and a lot—a big lot—of money. My brother had been on a journey, not for me precisely, but for my partner, Hans Hollweg, who is also at the time in Germany. You understand it is necessary in this business of ours, which trades internationally, to have a man on the spot as much as possible."

The door opened again. Angela brought the check, and Moritz signed it with a flourish. As she turned to leave, Phil caught her eye and gave her a wink. But her face remained impassive.

"Now! You were, I think, a little shocked that I was so angry about this paper when you had done this favor to my dead brother at such trouble for yourself. But bear in mind, please, that I have had some days now since I heard he had died, and in any case, we were not close to each other. I have lived in England many years, and he in Germany. I seldom saw him. We had no business together until this occasion. So you see, it is not that I have no feeling."

What could have sparked off this string of disclaimers? My gibe about his having something to do with Max's death?

Phil gave a neutral nod and knocked the first ash from his cigarette into a tray on the front of the desk.

"I must admit frankly it is because of this situation that I was preoccupied by that little bit of paper." Moritz made a large gesture in the air. "I am ashamed. Though we were

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almost strangers, it is after all my brother, and he was killed in a very horrible way. It is for me a responsibility to do something." His voice was growing oily, as if assurance were being oozed into it.

"So we come to our point. You have set a price for giving me that bit of paper which I could not possibly pay. I do not know who killed my brother! Until you came here, I was not even sure he was killed by anyone—though I had wondered to hear he was in an auto accident, since he was said to be a very good driver. What could I do, besides? I grow old—I am more than fifty—and I have very much business, so that I could not just leave everything and go to Germany." He gave an enormous shrug.

"But am I my brother's brother, to lose this chance to do something? When I had time to think of it, I said to myself, 'Here is this young man, not to be put off by difficulties, who is very eager to investigate. I can do no less than make it possible for him to do that!' This is why I have sent to the bank Angela, for money. You are American, yes? You are a stranger without work. It said in the *Limburger Rundschau* the car was all burned up, and with it your clothes, yes? You have nothing. So you are perhaps desperate. You have only this bit of paper which is valuable to me, and you see a hope in it. Oh, I understand it all and I forgive you!" He chuckled. But he had to keep his hands pressed together to stop their shaking.

"So! What I propose to you is this. I shall make it possible for you to find out who so nearly killed you. This is what you say you want."

Phil leaned toward the desk and stubbed his cigarette. It seemed about time to cut through Moritz's fog of explanations and learn his actual proposition.

"How?" he said.

"Well, you understand I can do nothing that touches the business of the firm unless I consult my partner. But I think perhaps—oh, I see no reason why not! I think we shall need some assistance in Germany with our business

deal which my brother Max was connected with. My partner comes tomorrow to London. You must meet him and we shall talk together, and if he consents I will engage you to make a trip for us to Germany again to see to some of this business, and you will be paid as well as you need to travel and live. As a sort of retainer I will give you fifty pounds to buy"—he waved his hand—"clothes, or whatever you need, and you will give me the paper."

There was a pause.

"It sounds," Phil said at length, choosing his words with care, "as if you think your brother's death had something to do with your business deal."

Moritz stared, then forced a laugh. "My dear Mr. Burns! What gives you such an idea? I have told you—we had no business together, my brother and I, until now. But he had other business of his own, and I think it is there he made enemies."

Phil was going to press the point. He changed his mind. It might be useful to conceal what Angela had told him about Moritz & Hollweg, at least for a time. He had no wish to make Moritz angry with the girl. With his most innocent expression he said, "What sort of business deal is this, anyway?"

"Ah." Moritz ran his finger around the side of his collar. "I think it better to give you details when my partner is here. We can discuss it all together."

There was the noise of the outer door opening. Moritz brightened. "There comes Angela back with your money, Mr. Burns. So now you must tell me. Do I interest you?"

"Yes," Phil said thoughtfully. "Yes, you do."

"Excellent." Almost visibly, Moritz's cloud of worry dissipated. He took a cigarette for himself. "Now, if you are to join the firm, you must tell me something about yourself. Your whole name, your age, what you have done lately, and so on." He picked up a pen from the desk.

"Philip Russell Burns," Phil said. "Twenty-two. American—New Jersey. Current occupation, *Wandervogel*."

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"You speak German?"

"A little." Phil wasn't thinking of modesty. He had to keep back a few surprises. "Enough to keep from getting lost is all."

"Business experience?"

"What I picked up being—uh—groomed for the family business."

"And that is?"

"Light engineering—metalworking."

Moritz wrote busily. "You know Germany well?" he went on, then interrupted himself. "You understand, I have made an offer and it is good, but it will help if you do know the country, as it is important that you speak a little of the language."

Phil nodded. He began to recite the places he had visited during his summer-long tramp.

When it was over, Moritz was clearly delighted. If he'd had an arm to spare, he would have patted himself on the back. He escorted Phil to the door, beaming.

"It is a good stroke of luck that you came, Mr. Burns!" he said. "Now Angela will give you the fifty pounds, and you will get your clothes and a room in a good hotel and whatever you require. And—Angela!"

She was typing letters. As if resentful of interruption, she swiveled her chair and looked their way.

"You will give Mr. Burns a card of ours, with the telephone on it. And you will ring me tomorrow afternoon, at three o'clock perhaps, to find whether Mr. Hollweg has safely come to London and where you should come to see us."

"Okay," Phil said.

"And now—" Moritz put out his hand and rubbed his fingertips together. Slowly Phil reached in his shirt pocket and extracted the scrap of paper. He dropped it on Moritz's palm.

The idea that he might have started complimenting him-

self too early arrived simultaneously. With a start Moritz brought his hand close to his face and stared at the penciled marks.

Odd. He doesn't look overjoyed.

"It is brown because it was in the burning car, is that so?" Moritz said after a pause.

"That's right."

"And there was nothing else?"

"In the watch? There was hardly room for that!"

Moritz hesitated. He gave a grunt and closed his fingers over the precious paper. "Well, then, I can only hope I have decided the right thing. Good afternoon to you, Mr. Burns. I will hear by telephone tomorrow, yes?"

"Yes."

With a final doubtful glance behind him, Moritz returned to his office and shut the door.

"Here's your fifty pounds," Angela said, pushing an envelope across her table toward him. "God knows how you do it. Listen, Phil!" Magically her manner changed, and her voice dropped to a whisper. "Please don't tell Moritz that I said so much to you. He doesn't like his affairs talked about to anyone."

"He doesn't talk about them much himself." Phil gave a crooked grin. "No, I won't. But thanks anyway. It's put me a jump ahead of him. Now there's one thing more I want. Do you have yellow pages in your phone directories—a section classified by types of businesses and professions?"

"No, but there's a separate classified directory, and we have it." She brought a fat orange volume from a shelf at her side.

"Great," Phil said, hefting it. "And a street map, or something of the sort?"

From under her table she brought a small, rather tattered book with a stained paper cover bearing the words *London Street Guide*.

"Perfect. Excuse me a moment." Phil carried the books to the side of the room and opened them on top of the

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wooden file cabinet. It took him several minutes to trace what he was after. While he was still hunting, the inside signal went on the little two-line switchboard. Angela answered it.

"Could you say that again?" she requested. "How do you spell it?"

There was a pause. Phil ceased turning pages and cocked an ear.

"Meissner—double s—yes. Munich five and what street? Vaduzstrasse eleven. And you want me to find the phone number there and get a call through. Right away." She sighed and cut the connection before dialing a code on the outside phone. Phil raised an eyebrow for his own benefit, then went back to the directory.

Twenty minutes later he was at the premises of the firm he had looked up, a large store which, considering it sold things supposed to make for amusement and gaiety, had a distinctly funereal air. There was a precaution he meant to take even before he got decent clothes or somewhere to sleep tonight, he reflected, as he fingered the comforting thickness of the wad of cash Moritz had given him.

Looking him up and down disdainfully, a dark-suited clerk came to inquire what he wanted.

"You sell carnival and fairground requirements," Phil said. "In which case I guess you have throwing knives."

The clerk, with a wondering expression, nodded.

"Right. I'm used to an eight-and-a-half-ounce double-edge by Godley of New York, with a one-piece horn handle and no guard. I want the nearest thing you have to that, and a two-strap wrist sheath, and I don't care what I have to pay to get it."

The clerk swallowed enormously. He said, "Uh—but that's not an exhibition knife."

"What do you think I want it for, then—peeling apples?" Phil rapped the counter impatiently. "Well, if you haven't got one of those, what have you got? Let's have a look at your stock."

CHAPTER IX

Phil chuckled at himself in the mirror mounted on the wall of the hotel room. It was like renewing an old acquaintance to see himself in something other than an unpressed shirt with the sleeves rolled up to the elbows and a pair of mended jeans. And his feet, in plain black leather oxfords, felt as if they belonged to someone else after months of wearing walking shoes or basketball boots.

He had acquired a lovat-colored tweed jacket, a pair of fawn whipcord trousers, incredibly cheap white nylon shirts, and a dark-brown worsted tie. He'd had his hair cut, but he had decided against shaving his beard. At the back of his mind was the reflection that it might come in useful to look different. Another three or four days would bring the beard to serviceable length, and it would greatly alter his appearance.

He turned aside from the mirror to the bedside table and looked thoughtfully at what lay on it. One leather sheath, with two wide, soft straps on it, padded with what felt like foamed polyurethane inside a chamois cover. It was beautiful. You could buckle the straps loosely enough to allow perfect circulation, yet you would never shake the sheath loose down your forearm. One carborundum whetstone, slightly used—he'd spent much of the afternoon working with it. And one double-edged exhibition knife.

It was the best he'd been able to get in a hurry. It wasn't like the Godley he was used to, but then—as the clerk had said—a Godley wasn't an exhibition knife. It

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was a killing knife. He had killed rabbits on the run with it, and once he had brought down a rising eagle after almost two hours of patient, patient waiting.

This wasn't horn-handled, painstakingly formed by hand into a precision tool. The handle was wooden. But at least it was a professional's knife. He could have gone to any specialist cutler and bought a so-called throwing knife, and eventually he could have learned to throw it with fair accuracy, after re-balancing it and whetting it down. By going to a carney supply house, he'd saved some of that trouble. He had a knife that any professional knife artist could have taken straight from its wrappings to the stage, and used.

But he wasn't a professional knife artist. He was just an amateur who happened to be able to bring down a running rabbit with a knife he had used for five years. He did nothing else in the world so well as that.

And his beautiful Godley, which made the task as simple as reaching out his arm, was gone to a scrap heap in Germany with the wreck of the Mercedes.

Of course, you could throw anything. Hatchets, if you liked. But you couldn't very well carry a hatchet inconspicuously up a sleeve.

Meditatively he slid the sheath along his forearm, pushing back his sleeve enough to allow him to fasten the straps. He got it comfortable, then put the knife into it. He walked to the end wall of the room, alongside the head of the bed, and turned to face toward the door. He had put a bundle of his old clothes there on a chair. It gave him a range of only about four yards, but it was a start.

He shook his arm as though cracking a whip. The jerk slid the knife across his palm. In a fraction of a second he had caught it with his fingers, given it its alignment, and let it go again with the full strength of his arm. He knew where it was going, but he could not follow it to the target—it was simply there.

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Good. *Very* good, with a brand-new knife. He walked down the room to inspect the result. A little left, the same as earlier. He extracted the knife, came back balancing it at various angles on his right forefinger, decided where he was going to lighten it, and picked up the whetstone.

It looked as if a knife like this, over a range of a few yards, would cope with a man normally dressed. In a tweed overcoat like Greer's—he wondered in passing why he thought of Greer—he might escape, but he'd be lucky. And at this range, anyway, it wouldn't be long before he was sufficiently accustomed to the knife to think in terms of aiming for the throat or the hand instead of the belly.

He didn't wonder at all why he was thinking of "coping with a man." He had no illusions about what he had got mixed up in. Not now.

He tried another throw, having lightened the knife, and this time the deviation to the left had disappeared. He gave a satisfied grunt, put the knife away, and reflexively checked a watch which wasn't there.

Damn.

He dropped into the room's only comfortable chair and took up the phone. When the operator's voice answered, he asked for the time. She told him it was six forty-five.

"How long would it take me to get from here to—where is it?—the Finchley Road at Swiss Cottage?"

"There's a bus that goes direct from here. About twenty minutes, not more."

"Good, thanks." He cradled the phone and took out a cigarette. It was an English brand, and he didn't like it, but maybe he'd get used to it. He lit it and stared thoughtfully at the punctured shape of his plastic raincoat on the chair by the door.

He'd rung Moritz as arranged at three that afternoon, and Moritz had given him an address to come to, in northwest London, at eight in the evening. Hollweg, he said, was due in on a flight to London Airport at about five. They had

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already spoken on the phone yesterday, and Hollweg was allegedly very much interested in Phil.

It would have been surprising if he weren't interested. Phil gave a wry grin.

Am I being a crazy fool?

Good question. He got restlessly to his feet and began to pace the narrow room. As far as he could explain it to himself, he had no better reason for doing what he was doing than that he felt resentment. His mood of happiness, contentment, whatever you call it—the sense that the world was running right which had distilled out of his summer tramp—had been shattered. (Greer had said, “The world gets up and slaps you in the face”—something like that. But it wasn't quite right.) He had almost been disgustingly roasted to death along with Max Moritz. But he wasn't thinking, hadn't thought, of revenge.

He was thinking more of sanitation. In a world that could run as right as he had known it, he didn't want to slap anybody back. He wanted to sterilize a small piece of that evil that ended with napalm on the road running into Limburg.

Now he was piecing together explanations, and it had been the first one that sent him in search of a weapon for himself.

Moritz & Hollweg were trading in arms. He knew, vaguely, that alongside the huge and visible bulk of that trade, supplying national armies under government contract, there was a smaller but very profitable section that, though quite legal, was of its nature furtive. Lately it had been flourishing. The FLN in Algeria, counterrevolutionary Cubans, Congolese wanting to secede—groups with the means of payment and a hunger for guns, shells, grenades.

He knew, rather less vaguely, that as well as being furtive, the trade was dangerous. During the Algerian war, for instance, a man organizing arms for the FLN was liable to be *plastiqué* in his bed, compliments of the OAS, as a—fashionable cliché—deterrent.

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Which meant that even if you were in a country where you made or bought your guns legally, even if you were fully paid in good money, it was worth your while to make sure that your cargo went deviously to its destination, worth taking a cut in your profits to create a string of subordinate responsibility, then tangle it up.

Which meant that it was perfectly reasonable for a man in a squalid office off London's City Road to be dealing in guns that probably had not been made in Britain, probably had never been loaded on a British ship, certainly were not destined to come to Britain, and more than likely would not be paid for in sterling currency.

It didn't account for something Max Moritz had said, though. He had claimed that customs was "careful" with him and his employees. He had claimed to be in import-export work. But either he handled different merchandise, or he had adopted this profession for the occasion. Customs wouldn't be "careful" with an arms trader as a person. You wouldn't smuggle guns in your private baggage.

Something else followed from all this. Put together a deal in arms, a trip to the East German border. You might perhaps get the conclusion, attempting to sell weapons made in the West to a Communist country. But add in burning Max Moritz to death. That made the conclusion very different—more like trying to get weapons *from* a Communist country.

Why?

Phil frowned. In any case, when countries like Egypt were full to *here* with Czech Skodas, the obvious route would appear to be through an intermediary in a neutral-bloc country, not directly. Of course, arms themselves might travel that way. Max's slip of paper might be a coded definition of a consignment, or its route, or its date of dispatch and arrival—anything.

It was small use guessing. He'd have to find out for sure.

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He had bought himself one of the street guides he had seen in Moritz's office. There was no other way of getting around London he could think of—the streets changed names and turned corners apparently at random. With the aid of the guide, he found his way from the Swiss Cottage station where the bus dropped him to the address he had been given by Moritz.

It proved to be that of a large house, its exterior in bad repair, set a short distance back from the road in a neglected garden. The neglect seemed recent. There was a drive beside the house, and a white three-liter Rover was parked there, facing the doors of a garage. Lights were on behind curtained windows on the ground floor. The evening was overcast and gloomy.

Phil walked the short length of path to the front door and caught a buzz of talking as he pressed the bell. The bell sounded Westminster chimes, the same maddening arpeggio as Big Ben.

A moment, and the door was opened not by Moritz or a servant, as he had expected, but by Angela. Something had clearly made her furious within the past few minutes, for her face was flushed and there was a shake of anger in her voice as she said, "All right—come in."

CHAPTER X

He looked at her for some moments, first in surprise, then in appreciation. Temper suited her. She was wearing a green satin sheath, and the comb holding her dark hair was of mother-of-pearl.

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"Are you working late?" he said at length, stepping over the threshold and unbuttoning his topcoat.

"I live here!" she snapped. "Any objections? You'll find them in the room on the right. Go in when you're ready. I'm busy."

She closed the front door and walked off down the hallway. A moment later, another door slammed out of sight.

Shrugging, Phil found a place for his coat on the hall stand, and paused to look about him. There was something indefinably Germanic about this house, overlying its basic Englishness. He couldn't place it. Maybe it was a function of the total effect of imitation wood paneling on the walls and heavy *bürgerlich* furniture. There was the hall stand itself, an overstuffed settle, dark oil paintings in thick, dusty, gilt frames.

Dusty? He put that together with the neglect of the garden, and felt that he almost had something. But before he could follow the train of thought, the door that Angela had told him to go through was opened, and Moritz looked out. His fat face was faintly worried.

"There you are," he said. "Angela, I suppose, has stormed off in a temper. Come in, come in; I am glad you are here."

He stood aside and ushered Phil into the room beyond the door.

There were two other men already present, side by side on a beige-colored lounge facing a fireplace in which stood an electric heater with a glowing log attachment. The mantelpiece was baronial, and a polished metal figure of an armored knight, fully three feet high, stood at one side of it with fire irons hanging from its arms. When Phil had seen that much, he felt he had seen the whole house and indeed most of Moritz's life in Britain. Repressing a slight shudder, he turned his attention to the men sitting before the fire.

They were of disparate ages. The nearer was the older. He was blond and pale-faced, with bright blue eyes. There was a barely discernible scar tautening the skin of his

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forehead. He wore a dark-gray suit and a polka-dot bow tie. On his feet, Phil judged, he would be barely shorter than himself. A glass half full of what looked like whisky rested on the arm beside him, and there was another on the side of an armchair, covered in the same beige material, from which it appeared that Moritz must have risen to come to the door.

The younger man might almost have been called a boy. He had smooth black hair, carefully combed, and a sallow olive skin. He wore a woolen shirt open at the neck and very narrow pants tipped by pointed ankle boots of yellowish tan. His hands were extremely slim, and Phil saw that his nails were as carefully filed as a woman's, each a perfect oval. He had a full, discontented mouth and the lids of his eyes were slightly puffy.

"My partner, Hans Hollweg," Moritz was saying, taking Phil's arm and urging him forward. "Hans, this is Philip Burns, about whom we have been talking."

The older man rose to his feet in a controlled motion, put his heels together but did not click them, and extended his hand. Phil took it, meeting the blue eyes deliberately from above. He had an extra inch of height, as he had hoped, and he made the most of it.

Hollweg clamped his hand tight, with a hint of a smile.

Well, if that's the way he feels about it . . . Phil returned the pressure with interest, and was satisfied to see the smile vanish at once. When their hands parted, he noticed that Hollweg put his in his pants pocket, as if reaching for a handkerchief, to flex it out of sight.

"And Wolfgang Meissner," Moritz said.

Phil noted the name, and started to offer his hand, but the young man merely looked up and didn't move.

"Du, Wolfi!" Hollweg said sharply.

With a sigh intended for public consumption, Wolfgang stood up, making a performance of it, and let his hand rest in Phil's for a moment before dropping back to his seat.

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"Sit down, Philip," Moritz said. "You do not mind that I call you Philip? I have learned English informality since I live here. You will have a drink, yes? Whisky, gin, vodka?"

"Whisky will be fine."

"Anything in it? A cigarette too?"

Moritz got the drink and a box of cigarettes from a mahogany cocktail cabinet with silver mountings, and fussed over Phil until he could do it no longer. All this time Phil was conscious of Hollweg's eyes on him, watching him.

Phil was as sure already as if he had known these men for years that Hollweg was in charge here, not Moritz.

"Sit down, Hermann," Hollweg said at last. His accent was stronger than Moritz's, but his English was fluent. "I'm very interested to meet you, Mr. Burns. Hermann told me yesterday by telephone what you had done for us, and I want to thank you also. It must have been a terrible experience that you went through. I'm surprised you weren't simply glad to escape with your whole skin, and leave it there."

No beating about the bush for Hollweg, obviously. Phil shrugged. "Nobody's ever come close to killing me before, as I told your partner. I find I don't like it, and I want to do something about it."

Hollweg pressed his narrow lips together and nodded. "I think I understand that. I would feel the same. You have not been in military service, then, I take it?"

"No."

Moritz had moved, very quietly for a bulky man, to resume his place in the other armchair, facing Phil. His eyes were switching between Phil and Hollweg as they spoke.

"How did you manage that?"

"A complicated matter of my father's engineering business, a Defense Department contract, and my college work. But we have only a selective draft, you know."

"Hans knows America well," Moritz put in. "He lived there for a time."

Hollweg gave Moritz a look that only for a moment said

You keep out of this, then changed to a polite smile as he looked at Phil. "Yes, I was curiously lucky. I was in America on business in 1941, and of course war was then declared and I was unable to return home until it was over. I was a kind of specialist adviser on industrial affairs to the American military government for a time, too, so I know your country and its people well."

Phil hesitated in his mind for a moment. Then he discarded his best working theory of the reason for Max Moritz's death and wondered how long he would have to wait for a substitute theory.

"You must have had very much trouble to bring Max's watch to London," Hollweg continued. "I hear you came with no money and almost even no clothes. You must have decided it was an important matter. How did you know? Was it something Max told you?"

"No. He said the watch was a present to his brother. It didn't take much intelligence to see that saving a hundred and fifty marks—that was what he told me—wasn't worth handing a valuable watch to a complete stranger."

"I see. That was intelligent, whatever you say. You are clearly an astute young man." Again Hollweg smiled, but the smile began and ended with his mouth. "And the paper in the back of the watch. That was found when it was cleaned after the fire?"

"That's right." Phil was becoming uncomfortably aware that young Wolfgang was staring at him with ill-concealed hostility, his full mouth set in a straight line. "It seemed obvious that this was what Max was worried about—not the watch."

"You didn't see why, I suppose. Do you know what it was?"

"No idea. A dozen figures could be anything. I took it for some sort of commercial code."

"Very shrewd of you," Hollweg said. "Because, to be precise, that's what it was." He leaned back and crossed his legs, cradling his glass between his hands. "I must tell

you that when Hermann called me yesterday to say here was this dirty American stranger who had done this and he had offered him this trip for our firm to Germany to finish the deal, and after such an experience the American had accepted the offer at once, I thought, 'Well, here is some kind of crazy fool!' And I don't know if I meant more you or Hermann. I believe now I was wrong. I think you have come to this with your eyes open."

It looked as if this was the time to impress Hollweg even more with his astuteness. Phil shrugged. "In your kind of business, what do you expect? It's bound to be risky."

There was a sudden blast of silence. Hollweg's face went as hard as a stone mask, and he shot an accusing glance at Moritz, who blanched and jerked on his seat. But before anything further could be said, Wolfgang provided an interruption. He moved very ostentatiously on his seat, and the movement attracted Phil's attention just in time for him to see that the dark-haired young man was accidentally-on-purpose knocking his drink over on to the floor.

An instant later he had bounded to his feet, making a dive for the glass, snatching it up, apologizing at the top of his voice, hoping it would not stain the carpet, and so on. Phil barely followed the rapid German.

Knife-edged, Hollweg's voice cut through the flow. He said in German, "Fetch a cloth, then, and clean it up! And be quiet!"

Wolfgang spun to face him, drawing back the hand holding the glass as if he would throw it in Hollweg's face, wild anger flaming in his eyes. But it was only for show. Obviously, Hollweg was used to this.

"Wolfi, you're going to have to learn you can't get all the attention all the time, and you're going to have to stop these babyish tricks to try to get it. If you're bored, go in the other room and watch television, or read a book, or something. We have business!"

Wolfgang scowled and slammed the glass down on a

nearby table, then strode out of the room. Phil took a deep breath. The air seemed clearer.

"Wolfgang is the son of an old friend in Munich," Moritz said in an apologetic tone. "Hans brought him as a favor on this trip to England so that——"

"Shut up, Hermann!" Hollweg broke in, reverting to English. "Burns is an intelligent adult, and you don't have to feed him polite fictions. Wolfi is an adolescent nuisance, and he'll have to be cured of it. Get back to the point." He looked at Phil penetratingly. "If I heard you properly, you just said something which shows you're even more astute than I guessed. You said something about 'our kind of business,' I believe. What kind of business do you think that is?"

"There's only one kind of business I can think of where your rivals would have napalm to play with." Phil felt sweat sticky on the palms of his hands, but his voice was level. "You're in arms."

Moritz and Hollweg locked glances for a moment. Moritz's lower lip trembled for a moment, then moved as if he were saying, "I swear I didn't—" But no sound emerged. Hollweg jumped to his feet and turned his back to the fire, tapping his foot and frowning in a way that threw his forehead scar into violent relief.

"I don't like people who sell me a bill of goods," he said at length. "I don't like people who try to impress by giving what they have been told as what they have worked out by clever deduction. Hermann!" He turned to Moritz. "You are at worst a fool, but your brother was a crook. Is he dead? Is he definitely dead, or has he sent this man to . . . to—" He made an impatient gesture as if trying to pick his intended words from the air.

"Thank you," Phil said. He made his voice deliberately smug.

Hollweg, startled, glared at him. "What?"

"Thank you. I'd been wondering why Moritz and Hollweg, which presumably is a legitimate firm in a trade which

isn't going to be illegal till they sign that agreement at Geneva—why you were so eager not to tell me what your business really is. Now I know. You are trading in arms, and you've been dealing with a crook."

He left it there. Also, he left a twisted smile on his face. He waited.

Hollweg let his arms fall to his sides. He was breathing heavily. "All right, Burns. You've proved your point. You are a clever man—so clever, and knowing now so much, I have got to have you either working on my behalf, or dead. Provided you're clever enough not to think you can outsmart me in the long run as you did just then, I guess we can come to the agreement Hermann suggested."

He emptied his glass and put it on the mantelpiece. Then he wiped his face with the back of his hand.

"We were dealing with Max Moritz not because he was a crook but because he was Hermann's brother," he said. "As you say, we carry on a legitimate business." His self-possession was rapidly returning. "It is often a big gamble, though. At the moment, for instance, we have a great deal of capital tied up in a transaction which is undergoing—difficulties. We want to see an end of it, but at the moment we are stuck. I imagine now you can tell me why, and also what makes us think even for a minute of spending money on you when we might have thanked you and shown you the door."

Phil chose his words carefully. "You don't know whether Max was killed because he was acting for you or because of something else he had done. But you're afraid it was because of you. And you're not sure who's sabotaging the deal."

"Almost right. As to the last point, we are sure almost beyond a doubt that his death was arranged by Communist agents. What we don't know is whether he was sold out by a personal enemy or a political enemy."

"What difference does it make now?" Phil asked after a moment for thought.

"A lot of difference. I assure you of that." Hollweg, quite relaxed again now, returned to his seat. "Now then! Max Moritz had an interest in a restaurant club in Düsseldorf. it was his—ah, ostensible profession. I was intending to go there myself and initiate inquiries, but I am known to be a friend of his and you are not. Let me see. There is a suitable flight from London Airport tomorrow morning at about nine-thirty, I think. We will give you your ticket and—oh, one hundred pounds for immediate expenses. You will stay here tonight and we will go together to the airport in the morning. I am returning to Munich in two days, and I will tell you how to contact me there." He must have read the words in Phil's mind, for he raised his hand. "No buts! These are my terms, and you have no choice."

"My gear, including my passport, is still at my hotel," Phil said.

"Then we will drive down and fetch it right now." Hollweg stood up. "Hermann's car is outside. That is no problem."

"One more thing," Phil said. He didn't move. "The deal itself."

"There is absolutely no need for you to know more than you do already," Hollweg said. "But I can give you my word it is nothing which you as an American citizen would feel ashamed of. Does that reassure you?"

What's the use of pushing him? He won't say any different. Phil shrugged and got to his feet.

"Do you know anything about guns, by the way?" Hollweg added, as if struck by a passing thought.

"Which end the slug comes out."

"It is not important to know any more. It is not important at all."

CHAPTER XI

"This way," Hollweg said. He led Phil along the landing at the head of the stairs. There were three closed doors—bedrooms, presumably—and a bathroom, of which the door stood ajar. They passed all of them, coming to the foot of a narrow winding staircase leading to the attic. Hollweg gestured for Phil to go up ahead of him.

The staircase led to a single room directly below the roof. It was painted a stark gray, lighted by a hanging naked bulb, and had a single uncurtained dormer window high up. There was nothing in it but a bed, a wooden table, some old cardboard boxes, and Angela, who was making the bed.

On their entrance, she turned and straightened, dusting her hands together. "Good, you can finish it yourself," she said, her tone and expression ill-tempered. Phil tried to catch her eye as she went past him, but she avoided his look.

"What's she so angry about?" Phil said when she had gone.

Hollweg made a vague gesture. "She had some disagreement with Hermann. Now I think it would be a good idea if you gave me your passport, as a kind of insurance against your changing your mind in the night." He put out his hand.

"Are you always so cagey, or do I rate special treatment?"

"Very special treatment." Hollweg nodded. "Please!" He took the document and pocketed it. "I hope you pass a comfortable night. You saw the bathroom, I think. Angela was told to put a towel there for you. Take a bath if you wish, or do as you like. And—by the way!" He smiled

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without humor. "Poor Hermann is very much concerned about burglars. Don't open any windows or outside doors, will you? When we have gone to bed, it will sound the loudest alarm you ever heard."

He turned away, still smiling, and went out.

Phil lit a cigarette and examined his surroundings. That took practically no time at all. The table was too rickety to hold his weight. The bed had no casters, and if he dragged it to the window it would screech on the floor. He could not get a hold anywhere on the window frame to pull himself up and look out. If the window had been open, he could have made it.

There was no key in the door on either side, which suggested that Hollweg had every confidence in Moritz's burglar alarm. What would it gain him to wander around the house anyway?

He sat down on the half-made bed and leaned on the pillows. He couldn't say he was surprised at what had happened. In fact, it matched pretty closely what he had expected. As yet he had no answer to the most important question: what was the deal Moritz & Hollweg were trying to swing? But assuming Hollweg had told the truth, he could forget his original theories. It wasn't likely that someone who had been trusted enough to serve as an industrial adviser to the U.S. military government in Germany would either try to sell Western arms to the Communists or buy arms from them for illegal use in the West.

Moreover, Hollweg had said his firm wasn't buying at present. They were sellers. Their capital was tied up in stock. Maybe they had bought a big consignment for a purchaser who didn't come through—so big they were hard put to it to find a substitute. Now they were on the verge of doing so, but Max Moritz had been killed, and if they went through with their existing plans, they might lose everything.

Communist agents had killed Max, Hollweg said. It might be a colorful lie, but it fitted the use of napalm. As

Greer had said, you don't buy that at a neighborhood drugstore.

There was nothing in the room for an ashtray. Phil spilled his ash on the floor and went on thinking.

He wondered if Greer knew about this. A load of arms in the middle of the powder-keg continent, Europe, was something his people ought to be interested in. But he might not know, for the same reason he had made Phil dislike him on sight.

Greer had seen only a shabby man with long hair. Maybe he put the label on—beatnik! He'd certainly said Phil was a bum. To someone like Greer, the country he was in was probably good only as far as it copied the States. Likewise, a man was only good as far as he copied the standard pattern.

Phil thought of what Germany was to him, the ways in which it was good because it was different. This was why Greer had his back up.

They talk about freedom. But there's a subtle tyranny there, too. You can fight political tyranny, and even if they kill you they can't make you like it. The other kind is patient, and it doesn't kill you. But it can do what the first one can't—grind your spirit into a mass-produced mold.

He had wondered more than once whether he was eventually going to do as Greer had told him—stop dead, break off what he was doing, and take his knowledge to an embassy or a consulate. He didn't know. If it had been anyone but Greer who had spoken to him, there upon his release from the hospital, he would probably have accepted the advice to do so. Greer had made it a contemptuous threat, and because of that, Phil was going to make up his own mind.

The consequences he would take. When they came, and not before.

There were sounds in the house around him, ordinary sounds—footsteps, doors opening and closing, water running, voices. But abruptly they were submerged for Phil by the memory of Hollweg's saying as clearly as if he were in the

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room, "I have got to have you either working on my behalf, or dead."

He got up, threw down his cigarette, and stepped on it. As he walked to the door, a board creaked under his weight. He went out on the winding staircase and slowly down it. The bathroom door opened as he approached, and Wolfgang came out wearing a pair of white silk pajama trousers. His torso was evenly tanned and glistened as if oiled. He paused and looked up at Phil, and twisted his mouth as if to spit. Then he went into the bedroom at the front of the house.

That's a case, that one. Phil started to enter the bathroom, but when he was on the point of shutting the door, he heard a voice suddenly raised with an edge of terror on it.

Angela was crying, "Stop it! Oh, *damn* you, stop it!"

CHAPTER XII

Phil whirled. In two strides he had gone back along the landing to the nearest door and put his ear to it. He heard Moritz's voice now.

"It's no good shouting—I locked the door! Now come on! Did you tell the American these things he pretends to have found for himself? You did! Admit it!"

There was the sound of a slap, and another cry from Angela. Phil's jaw set in a hard line.

Door locked, huh? See about that!

He stepped back across the landing, judged its width level of the lock, and drove himself forward. There was a crack compared to the length of his leg, raised his foot to the cracking of wood, but the door held fast.

Inside the room there were exclamations, and the noise of a piece of furniture overturning.

Once more. He kicked a second time—it was more like stamping—and jarred his leg all the way to the hip. The door flew open and he went through.

In a single rapid glance he took in what there was to see. This would be Angela's room. It was very feminine, with an ivory satin cover on the bed, matching curtains, a dressing table with an oval mirror in a carved frame. The furniture he had heard overturn was a small bedside table, the fall of which had scattered books, a clock, and pieces of jewelry.

Angela had been forced back into the corner between the bed and the wall. Her hair was hanging loose, and a dark wing of it shaded her left cheek but did not hide the rising mark of Moritz's slap. She was wearing a black silk robe with a red sash, and there was a wide rip in it where one sleeve had been almost torn off. Creamy pale, the skin of her shoulder showed through.

Still in the act of turning in astonishment, his jaw dropping comically, Moritz found himself face to face with Phil. Stopping for no explanations at all, Phil gave himself the very great satisfaction of hitting the fat man as hard as he could on his fleshy jowl.

Moritz went backward with a shrill animal howl and crashed over the fallen bedside table. It broke to splinters as his weight descended, and he howled again. Phil went after him, bent down, and took him with both hands on the lapels of his jacket.

As if lifting a sack of sawdust, he raised the fat man to his feet and propped him up with one arm. With the other, he hit him again—on the nose, this time. It seemed an appropriate target.

"Hans! Hans!" shrieked Moritz, and fell blubbering, putting his hands to his bleeding nose.

A door on the landing opened. There were running steps. Angela shouted a warning, but Phil was already on the move.

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He let Moritz slump to the floor, reached down with a long arm, and possessed himself of the snapped-off leg of the bedside table.

Turning, he saw Hollweg appear in the doorway, in pajamas, an automatic in his right hand. Hollweg gave an exclamation and began to say something, and Phil hurled the table leg. It was spinning end over end when it struck Hollweg's wrist with a noise like a mallet on a block of wood, and he snatched up his arm with a grunt of pain. But he did not drop the gun, as Phil had hoped.

Phil had insured against that: he was already coming after his missile. He ignored anything else Hollweg might do and concentrated on getting the gun away from him; that was the most dangerous point. He had the advantage in that he was still wearing shoes, while Hollweg had put on slippers. He did not hesitate. He had worked out long ago that against an armed man, you fight as dirty as you can.

He stamped down on Hollweg's toes. The pale man swallowed the pain and tried to bring the gun up to club at him. He slammed the wrist of the gun hand upward with his left forearm so that it passed by his head. Reflexively Hollweg tried to bring it down again, and Phil clamped his fingers over the wrist while bringing his left arm up, clubbing behind Hollweg's elbow and sidestepping. The shock of having his elbow bent suddenly against the joint made Hollweg open his fingers, and the gun fell. He made a dive for it. Phil kneed his face and sent him sprawling.

But Hollweg was a different proposition from Moritz. He was no youngster, but he was tough. He must already have been calculating as he fell that Phil would be forced to waste precious seconds getting the gun out of reach. He rolled over and came back to his feet.

Phil almost made the error of trying to pick the gun up. Barely in time he changed his mind and kicked it, sending it looping across the carpet with a thud in the direction of Angela. He had no time to see if she would have the sense

to seize it. While he was still off balance, Hollweg was on top of him.

A fist cracked the side of his head and made his head swim. He ducked and stepped back automatically, fainted with a left, and got a right through instead to Hollweg's belly. But the punch had only half his strength behind it because he was retreating, and served merely to make Hollweg hesitate.

That was enough. Phil finished stepping back, straightened regardless of another blow that took him on the shoulder, and snatched at Hollweg's already weakened right arm. With his left arm he dragged it downward, making Hollweg gasp and drop his other shoulder, and with his right he chopped, karate-style, under the angle of Hollweg's jaw. The man's face went stiff and wooden like a waxwork effigy's, and Phil took a deep breath and hit him with his bunched fist below the chin.

Hollweg swayed and began to stagger backward, only will power keeping him on his feet. Phil waited till he reached the wall, then looked around, panting. The first blow Hollweg had landed on his head was still making him dizzy.

Angela had taken the gun. Good girl. She was pointing it with determination at Moritz, who sat on the floor with a handkerchief to his nose, red-soaked with blood. He was mouthing a stream of German obscenities.

"All right—what happened?" Phil said.

"It started before you came tonight." Angela shuddered. "Hollweg said I must have been telling you things—you knew more than you ought to. He was shouting at Moritz for being a careless fool, so Moritz took it out on me. He always does. He—*Phil, look out!*"

Phil reacted slowly. There was a slam of pain on his left shoulder, and he was hurled to the floor by an attacker from behind who kicked, punched, and slapped in a wild frenzy of sobbing rage.

Wolfgang. That would have been the table leg he hit me with.

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Wolfgang had no idea of fighting, that was sure. If Phil had been able to take someone at such a disadvantage, it would have been a long while before the victim got up again. Feigning extreme suffering, Phil pretended to collapse with a groan after nothing more than a few wild swings at his back and head, too ill-directed to do harm.

He acted too well. With a gasp Angela tried to drag Wolfgang off him, taking him by the hair, and Wolfgang turned his attention. Angela cried out as he went for her, clawing at her robe and flinging her to the ground.

Phil rolled and picked himself up, thinking, *God above, he wants to kick her face in!* The robe had ripped now to the waist, exposing her breasts. She was trying frantically to drive Wolfgang back with her long, bare, beautiful legs, but he was poisoning himself, tears streaming down his cheeks, to plant his foot with all his weight on her head or neck.

"Du scheissfressender Hund!" Phil said between his teeth, and in a wave of berserk rage he hauled Wolfgang around and butted him under the chin with an impact that made his own skull ring like a bell.

Wolfgang went backward into the dressing table with a scream and a crash. The huge oval mirror was not fixed, as Phil had assumed. It was mounted separately on a narrow-based stand. The table went over, the mirror crashed forward and shattered on Wolfgang's head, showering him with brilliant splinters that scratched as they fell, tracing on his muscular torso a crazy red network.

"Also—das genügt."

With infinite weariness the words came in Hollweg's voice. He had recovered and waited his chance to move forward. Now he had regained the gun, let fall by Angela when Wolfgang attacked her, and was leveling it at Phil.

"That will do," he repeated. "Now we will get some explanations. Get up, Angela."

Slowly the girl obeyed, trying to pull her ruined robe together to cover herself. Moritz, his nose still running blood like a faucet, also rose, and took the lace-edged cloth

which had covered the bedside table to replace the sodden handkerchief he had been holding to his face.

"Hermann, you are a stupid fool!" Hollweg said viciously. "I heard what the girl said. You were trying to beat a confession from her—was that it?"

Moritz whimpered.

"And Burns caught you at it. I see." With deliberation Hollweg let his gun fall to his side. "I tell you this: if I had come in the room first, I would have done the same, do you understand me? Angela, get the sniveling fool to his room and take him cold water for his nose."

"He can walk by himself," Angela said. "Why should I help him?"

"*Und für mich?*" wailed Wolfgang, picking himself out of the ruined mirror. "*Hänsli, für mich!*"

"*Wasche dich,*" Hollweg answered shortly. "*Ich werde Sparadrap sofort bringen.*"

Wolfgang's lower lip trembled. But it was obvious he was going to get no more out of Hollweg in this mood than his promise of band-aid, and he went moaning and crying from the room.

"All right, Burns," Hollweg said. "There will be no more trouble. I'll see that Hermann gets sleeping tablets. He's in a hell of a state since his brother was killed . . . isn't he, Angela?"

Arms crossed on the bosom of her robe, the girl nodded. "God knows why. He says he barely knew his brother. But he's been acting like a lunatic. I don't know how much more I can stand of this."

"We'll talk about that in the morning," Hollweg said. "Now I think you can go back to your room, Burns. I apologize for my partner's behavior—I think it was disgusting, and as I told him, if I'd caught him at it, I'd have done the same as you."

Phil gave him a steady look. *Yes, I guess you would. You aren't the punching and slapping type. You'd use electricity, or matches under the fingernails.*

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He turned to the door without a word.

"And, Burns!" Hollweg said.

"Yes?" Phil paused, looking back.

"After seeing how you can fight"—he gave a smile, which for the first time since Phil had seen him went all the way to his eyes—"I am really quite glad you are on my side."

The latch of the door clicked. Instantly Phil was awake, one hand going under the pillow to the haft of the knife. He didn't move apart from that—the bed would creak. There was a little grayish light from the high-set window, but not enough to show details over near the door.

Still, he could be sure of hitting a man-size target by ear alone at this range.

Then, very softly, through the barely open door, he heard his name spoken.

"Phil? Phil, it's me—Angela."

He let go the knife and cautiously sat up. The door opened wider and closed again, and a dark shape moved across the floor. The creaking board sounded. She gave a soft murmur and stepped back to go around it.

A few feet from the bed she halted. He could just make out her silhouette.

"Phil, I—thank you very much for what you did." The words came in a trembling whisper. "I don't know what he might have done if you—" Her voice broke off, and she stifled a sob.

He put his hand out and found hers. Her palm was sweaty and she closed her fingers convulsively. He drew her toward him, and she half fell to the edge of the bed. He thought she was going to start to cry, and put his arm around her, but she had plainly been crying for so long already that she was exhausted.

She said, speaking very rapidly and quietly, "I was going crazy by myself in my room. I don't know what to do; I just don't know. I had to come and talk to you. It's quite safe. Hollweg made Moritz take four sleeping pills and put him

to bed; and Wolfgang and he are in the front bedroom, and in there you can't hear anything from up here. Oh, God, Phil, what am I going to do?"

"Walk out, for heaven's sake," Phil said. "Why not? What in hell are you doing here, anyway?"

She took a corner of his bed sheet and wiped her eyes. "I—I don't like telling people about it. It's a nasty story."

"Any nastier than what I saw this evening?"

"I guess not." She swallowed hard. "All right, it happened this way. I told you I am half Greek, from Cyprus. And my brother stayed to fight for EOKA and got killed. The reason he stayed was because he hated the English, and so did I, and so did my mother. And that was because my father was a bastard. He treated my mother like an animal. He used to drink until he was in a rage and then beat her, and—" She swallowed again. "I can't tell you everything he did. But eventually she died. When that happened, we—Georgie and I—took an oath to help drive the English out of Cyprus. To do anything to get them out."

Phil said slowly, "Were you the price of a cargo of arms for EOKA?"

He saw the dim outline of her head lift. She was staring at him. "How did you guess?" she said.

"Go on."

"Well, that's how it happened. I was a kind of hostage. Moritz and Hollweg were desperately eager to get this business with EOKA because the money was there and they had the guns. But it would have been treason if they had been found out, because Moritz is a British subject now. So he hung back, until I said I would be his mistress. Even that didn't finish it. He wanted more. And I gave it to him." A note of defiance sounded in her voice.

"Is it this—this thing more that stops you from just walking out of here?"

"Yes. It's a signed confession in my own writing of how I killed my father."

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There was a moment of silence. Phil found himself wishing that there was light in the room. She must be very beautiful, he thought, with the defiance that colored her voice sparkling in her eyes.

He said finally, "And is it true?" There was no hint of comment in his tone.

She gave a brief, bitter laugh. "Oh, I tell you because I am not ashamed—only terribly afraid of what will happen if—" She paused. "He deserved it, God knows. You see, he was in England, and the British Army took him back to Cyprus as an expert on local conditions after living there for more than twenty years, and I made—well, arrangements. EOKA saw to the rest."

Again silence, lying heavy between them like a wall of fog gone solid. She stirred at length.

"But it is a long time ago," she said, and all the defiance had faded away. In its place there rang a vast emptiness. "It's no longer a proud self-sacrifice for an ideal. It's a nightmare from which by my own decision I can never wake up."

"You were saying"—Phil licked his lips—"it was not so bad until the death of Moritz's brother."

"That's true." She put up her hand to brush back hair from her face. "But the change is not because he grieves for his death. He's afraid because he sees himself losing the fortune this deal would have brought him. Sometimes I have heard him in his office, groaning to himself about his bad luck. After that he is always angry with me. Tonight he was like a madman. His teeth were chattering and there was spittle running down his chin. And Hollweg had brought this awful Wolfgang, like an evil-tempered baby in a man's body—just to look at that creature makes me shiver." She hesitated. "Phil!"

"Yes?"

"Phil, I don't think you're like that. I don't think you're pretending to be something you are not. I believe you're a real person."

He didn't move for a few seconds. Then he turned his weight on his elbow. This robe was of some rough material—toweling, perhaps. He stroked his hand up it to the collar, under the mass and weight of her free-hanging hair, pushed his fingers into the tresses like the teeth of a comb, feeling them silky and rich. She trembled. He brought his hand back, caressed her neck and throat, traced downward with his fingertips in the opening of the robe. Nothing met his touch but the satin of her skin, even when he followed the perfect curve of her breast to the rising hardness of its nipple.

Suddenly she pushed his hand away and stood up. "I cannot beat him," she said between her teeth. "I cannot make him lie on the floor and groan. But I can do this to him."

She threw off the robe and let it fall, tugged back the covers of the bed, and threw herself upon him, mouth to mouth, breast to breast, thigh to thigh.

At the climax she moaned to herself in a language he did not know.

CHAPTER XIII

Denkmalskeller, said the red-glowing sign over the dark doorway. From across the narrow street Phil studied it, covering his interest by taking out and lighting a cigarette.

The Memorial Cellar. An odd name. A very odd name indeed.

The lights of a Mercedes 220 S snaked around the nearest

corner. The car came forward slowly, as if the driver was looking for his destination. Outside the Denkmalskeller it halted, and the closed rear door opened.

Two middle-aged men in expensive overcoats, smoking cigars, got out. One of them paused to say something to the driver of the car, looked at his watch, then took his companion by the arm and led him toward the doorway. The car moved away. Phil watched it go, his eyes narrowed, his eyebrows drawn together in a frown.

This morning Hollweg had been strangely cordial, during the drive to the airport and while waiting for Phil's flight number to be called. He had been almost expansive in answering Phil's questions, as if in the night he had resolved his remaining doubts.

Phil guessed that that was the impression he was meant to receive. He was postponing judgment.

At least, though, he knew a great deal more about Max Moritz than he had yesterday. According to Hollweg, after the war—during which he had served in the army—he made his way back from the Soviet Zone of Occupation, where he had been stranded, and settled in Düsseldorf. What he did after that was uncertain, but it was definitely shady. Phil assumed that he had gone into the fantastically profitable black market.

He had made his pile, and—so Hollweg claimed—had been able to take up more respectable pursuits. In particular, he had bought a half share of the Denkmalskeller, a cabaret-club that had scored an explosive success. The other half share belonged to the man who actually managed and ran the place. His name was Gerhard Kluger.

This information had provoked Phil into more questions, to which the answers were less satisfactory. Brother Hermann, Hollweg said, had left Germany for London late in the 1930's. He was older than his brother, and less dazzled by the glamour of the Nazi regime. When Britain declared war in 1939 he was still, however, a German national, and was interned. He applied for British citizenship but was

turned down because his brother was known to be an officer in the enemy's army.

That was a little too glib for Phil's liking. Apart from Jews, most refugees who had fled Nazi Germany must have had at least some relatives in the German forces, and many of them had been released from internment, even if not granted British nationality. Hermann had apparently not been released till 1945. When Phil tried to press the point, Hollweg became evasive for the first time that morning.

At length Phil gave up, and went back to something he had reminded himself to check up on. He asked if Max Moritz had any other relatives besides his brother. Was he married?

He had been, Hollweg said. His wife had died in an air raid during the war. He had not married again, but he had been living with a woman who starred in the cabaret at his club—to whom, indeed, the club's tremendous success was said to be due.

And still Hollweg would not reveal why after a separation of more than twenty years Max had suddenly joined in an arms deal with his brother, or why—having become rich and comparatively respectable—he had risked and lost his life.

Maybe the answers to those questions were down there in the Denkmalskeller. Phil threw away the match he had used for his cigarette, looked both ways along the street, and began to cross over.

The plain black door, recessed deep in its embrasure, was closed. There was neither bell nor knocker. Phil hesitated a moment, then rapped on the wood.

The door was opened by a man in black, whose clothes were cut to suggest a uniform but bore neither buttons nor braid. He was a good six feet tall, broad-shouldered and heavy-boned. His right arm stopped at the elbow, and its sleeve was sewed up. Above his square face was a black

cap with a faded patch over the peak. His nose was broken and his eyebrow ridges were thick with scar tissue.

He looked carefully at Phil before deciding that he did not recognize him, and moved half a pace sideways so that his bulk almost closed the opening of the door.

"Do you speak English?" Phil said. The doorman drew his battered brows together and shook his head. Mentally Phil crossed his fingers. Hollweg had assured him that the story he provided would get him into the club and would convince Kluger he was an innocent stranger.

Speaking in German with a deliberately bad accent and several hesitations while he pretended to hunt for words, he said, "Uh . . . I met Herr Moritz—I think the name is Moritz—I met him in Essen a few weeks ago, and he said if I came to Düsseldorf I should come to the club."

He had the exact date and a convincing place ready to give if he was challenged. Hollweg said he knew Moritz had been in Essen then; it was the day and place of their last meeting.

He was expecting the doorman to say, "Herr Moritz is dead." Instead, he was silent as if thinking over some instructions. Finally he stepped back and motioned Phil to come inside.

"Wait a moment," the doorman said, and turned to pick up an inside phone on a shelf just inside a sort of alcove that served as a hat-check booth. There were furs and coats on pegs. A projecting flap bore a large closed book and a plate with two or three five-mark bills on it.

There was no other splash of color visible at all. There was a corridor fifteen feet long, with its walls and ceiling painted solid black. The carpet was black. Bare white fluorescents were mounted down the middle of the ceiling. At the far end of the corridor another door, closed now, led off to the left. There was a faint sound of music, and somebody laughed briefly and loudly.

"Herr Kluger?" the doorman said to the phone. "There is an American here who says Herr Moritz invited him to

the club." There was a pause. Then he said, "*Jawohl!*" Cradling the phone, he waved his short arm at Phil. "Herr Kluger will come and speak to you," he said.

"Not Herr Moritz? Is he not here?"

"Herr Moritz was killed in a auto accident," the door-man grunted. "Herr Kluger is the manager."

Phil looked properly surprised. But at that moment there was a knock on the outer door, and the one-armed man went to answer.

He waited while a party of two men and two women were admitted, giving him curious glances as they walked down the passage. The far door opened for them, operated apparently by a switch on the wall of the hat-check alcove. Before it closed again, a small, dark, saturnine man in evening clothes came out. He had rimless glasses and a mustache running the length of his upper lip.

Coming toward Phil, he smiled with commercial falsity. "You were asking for Herr Moritz?" he said in good English.

"That's right," Phil said. "But I hear he's dead."

"Recently, in a car accident," the dark man said, not removing his smile. "Was it him that you particularly wanted to see? My name, by the way, is Kluger—perhaps you know."

"Well . . . uh, no. It was actually the club I came to see. Herr Moritz told me he was part owner of it when we met in Essen recently, and said I should come here if I could."

"That's very strange." Kluger's smile was unwavering, and Phil felt a stab of alarm. "Because the main attraction is our cabaret, and it's hardly for tourists. It is extremely German. There is much joking in slang, and so on, and unless you speak German literally as a native, I think it is—dull."

"Oh, Herr Moritz told me," Phil said, and risked an improvisation. "But he also said your food was some of the best to be found in Düsseldorf, and even if I didn't understand the cabaret acts, I'd enjoy a meal here."

A speculative look came and went on Kluger's face.

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"Well, we do have a good cuisine. When exactly did you meet Herr Moritz, if you don't mind my asking?"

Phil blinked, as if slightly puzzled, but answered with apparent frankness. "Oh, a matter of three weeks ago in Essen. About the twentieth of last month, I think."

It was Phil's guess that Kluger was trying to dream up a convincing reason for turning him away without being rude. He added, to make the job more difficult, "I'm very sorry to hear of his death. He struck me as a nice guy. Like to drink to his long rest in his own liquor."

Kluger gave a barely audible sigh, and Phil topped it all off by saying, "Anyway, I made the trip over especially from Essen, where I'm staying."

That was perfectly true. He'd checked into a hotel on the outskirts of Essen that afternoon.

"In that case"—Kluger shrugged—"it would of course be a pity to waste your journey completely. Manfried! *Das Buch, bitte!*"

He signed in with his real name. If Stauffel had told the truth and his identity had been kept from the papers, nobody would recognize the name except someone who knew more than he ought to. Apparently Kluger wasn't in that category, although for a moment Phil held his breath as the dark man's eyes scanned what he had written.

But there was no reaction. Kluger merely waved for him to proceed along the corridor.

The door at the end gave on to a steep staircase downward. There was smoke in the air. At the foot of the stairs was a sort of anteroom, painted black, with heavy red lounges and chairs. A waiter was serving apéritifs to the party of four who had come in while Phil was waiting. Kluger took him through the anteroom and held aside a black curtain.

And this was the Denkmalskeller itself.

About a dozen tables were arranged around a small square of floor. A tired-looking man was playing a piano with an electronic organ attachment. Eight of the tables were occu-

pied by a total of about twenty people. A cigarette girl was serving a party near the entrance. She was a busty blonde, her face painted mask-white and her lips livid green, her costume a hanging tangle of gray rags, her feet bare.

Kluger signaled a waiter in a quasi-uniform like the doorman's, spoke rapidly to him in German, and excused himself to Phil with a smile and a bow. Thoughtful, looking about him, Phil followed the waiter to a table for two in a corner on the other side of the floor.

The only light in here came from shaded lamps on the table. The one on his table was formed in the shape of a bone—an arm bone. The shade on it was of some translucent yellowish material, and on one side there was a bluish mark—the outline of a heart crossed by a scroll on which was the word *Mutti*.

A tattoo mark. Phil's stomach suddenly turned over, and he did not for a moment hear the deferential inquiry of the waiter. He looked at other tables, and saw that all the lamps were shaped like bones or set in skulls.

Not "Memorial Cellar." *Denkmal* meant "memorial" all right. But a memorial could be a gravestone, and in this place it was.

CHAPTER XIV

He grew aware that the waiter was offering a menu and asking what he wanted to drink before his meal. He pulled his mind back to the present long enough to order a Moscow mule and pick almost at random from the bill of fare—potted shrimps, something with veal, a side dish of salad.

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"Und Sekt damit?" the waiter said offhandedly, writing.

The hell! For a moment Phil almost forgot his ostensible difficulties with the language and framed a comment to express what he thought of people who knew nothing else but champagne for an evening out—there was a bottle on almost every occupied table. He checked himself in time and ordered a half-bottle of decent Mosel. The waiter looked depressed, but went away.

Now Phil had a chance to take in his surroundings properly. There was no doubt about it. The Denkmalskeller was one monstrous sick joke, carried out with Teutonic thoroughness. On the tables, these unpleasant lamps in the form of human bones, with their shades—he touched one—made of plastic, but each with its tattoo mark or scar, each treated and colored to resemble the shades the Beast of Ravensbrück had made from the skin of human victims. Jet black, the tablecloths hung down in tatters like the costume of the cigarette girl. When they remembered, the waiters limped conspicuously. Phil saw one of them turn away from a table at a normal gait, suddenly recollect himself, and begin to hobble. The pianist had been keeping one side of his face in shadow. Now he turned and gave a casual glance around the room, and it could be seen that he was blind in one eye. A dark patch covered the socket itself, but scar tissue spread downward over his cheek, puckered and red.

The party of four whom he had seen in the anteroom came in now, and were shown to their table—two prosperous men of middle age, two women in short, strapless gowns, one midnight blue, one silver lamé, with hair dyed glittering white to match. One of the men made some crack at which they all broke into brittle laughter. There was a lot of laughter, and the talk was loud.

Phil drew his brows together. Why should bright, seemingly cheerful chatter make the skin of his back crawl?

Abruptly he found out.

After placing an order with one of the limping waiters, the shorter of the two men who had just come in signaled

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the cigarette girl and bought a cigar from her. With tense fascination his companions watched as she lit it for him. He gave her what—by her expression—must have been an enormous tip. She turned then, and the other man pretended to study the contents of her tray before making a selection. With a wink at his companions, the man holding the cigar drew the end to a bright red glow, moved his chair back silently. One hand snatched up the trailing rags behind the girl's thighs, the other plunged the cigar down and crushed it against her chubby nylon-covered buttock.

She jumped, screamed in agony, spilled half the load from her tray, snatched behind her, and knocked the cigar broken to the floor. The man who had burned her hooted with laughter. Heads jerked around all over the room, saw what had happened or had it explained, and chuckles and cries greeted the joke.

In the middle of the field of attention, the girl stood with her tilted tray hanging on its straps, her face contorted with rage. Recovering from his amusement, the man who had burned her spoke soothingly and added another bill to his previous tip. Reluctantly she took it, bent to gather up her fallen goods, and moved away without another word.

So this was the place Max Moritz had half of. In the shadows of his corner, Phil drew his mouth into a thin, hard line.

There must be something more to the Denkmalskeller than met the eye. Phil had come to that conclusion by the time the introductory acts of the cabaret were over. There was a clever juggler who used for one of his items a set of four cutthroat razors with blades barber-sharp. There were two starkly blond girl singers with that curiously German intermediate sexuality that marked many screen stars of the Nazi period. One wore top hat, frilled shirt, tailcoat, and carried a cane. The other wore a wrap-around skirt slit to the thigh, a diaphanous blouse over nothing, and carried a trailing stole. They delivered erotic dialogue-songs in identically husky voices, and as the act progressed they

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exchanged items of costume so that at the end they had reversed their original quasi-masculine, quasi-feminine roles.

The juggler was practically ignored. The singers drew a little attention, especially from the men when they were exchanging their blouses, but no one appeared to listen to their songs—the talking was continuous. You could see similar acts in scores of places. Clearly the cabaret—or this part of it—wasn't the source of the Denkmalskeller's appeal. Nor could it be the food or wine. This was good, but not outstanding.

After the singers, however, a hush fell. The pianist chorded his electronic organ. The young man who announced the acts—a mediocre comedian with ambitions, by the sound of him—walked on to the floor and clapped his hands. Everyone turned expectantly. Waiters brought forward a table and two chairs and set them in the middle of the vacant patch of floor. The pianist spun around on his stool and lit a cigarette. If he was preparing to watch, it occurred to Phil, the next act must really be something.

The master of ceremonies wasted no breath this time on his usual wisecracks. He said simply that the Denkmalskeller was as always proud to present, "*Nummer eins, zwei, drei, vier, fünf*—Lotte Niemand!"

A roar of applause went up, and the master of ceremonies vanished. Phil leaned forward, wondering if this Lotte Nobody was the woman Hollweg had told him about. Surely it must be.

She appeared only after the applause was over—a dark-haired, very slender woman apparently in her late thirties, moving with incredible grace. She was wearing a fashionable cocktail dress of black with gold earrings and a gold bracelet high on one forearm. She stood for a while in silence, looking around the room. A woman in the audience giggled at something her companion whispered to her, and people glared at her.

Lotte Niemand seemed not to notice. She finished her

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survey of the room and glanced back toward Phil. For a long moment she studied him, and struck by an impulse he could not have explained, he moved his head forward so that the weak glow of the table lamp showed his face.

She waited one moment longer, still watching him. Then she moved and started to perform her act.

She walked to the table which had been placed ready for her, hesitated, spoke to an imaginary occupant of the other chair, received permission to join him—no, not him, her. It became clear after only a few seconds—this non-existent person was another woman, equally smartly dressed, equally beautiful, a rival.

Phil watched, fascinated beyond measure. Lotte Niemand was in a class he had seldom seen before. With incredible precision she created the other person at the table, till it seemed that there were no gaps at all in the one-sided conversation.

Little by little, it became obvious that these two had met before—somewhere very different, a long time ago. On reaching this conclusion, they agreed to sink their catlike differences for a minute and try to establish where over a drink. She signaled a waiter who of course would not come, and as she lowered her arm again her bracelet slid to her wrist, exposing a patch of stark white skin which it had concealed.

As if horribly embarrassed, she pushed the bracelet back hurriedly—so hurriedly that she knocked a non-existent purse off the table and had to pick it off the floor. But the other woman had had a clue about their meeting, and was referring to a mutual friend. Seizing the chance, she agreed warmly to the comment that had been made.

The friend was a doctor. He had been very ill. There had not been much hope for him. Obliquely the pattern of facts emerged, and behind them now a growing undercurrent of shaky titters and uncertain chuckles colored by fear, from the audience. Phil looked about him, seeing how pale the

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faces of the listeners were, how they tore themselves away from their obsession with the act and lit nervous cigarettes or poured more to drink and swallowed it like foul-tasting medicine. That had begun with the bracelet slipping, the same thing that had given the clue to the imaginary other woman.

All of a sudden he had it.

Such was the spell that Lotte Niemand was casting that he felt giddy for a moment and had—like so many others present—to snatch at his glass and empty it. When he put it back on the table, not looking at it, his hand was shaking so much that he made the glass chatter against the wine bottle. He wasn't noticed. Too many other people were doing the same.

The patch of white skin was where a tattooed number had been removed by plastic surgery. The place where Lotte Niemand had met the other woman was a concentration camp. And the mutual friend whose fate they were discussing with such warmth had been a sick man whom his companions wanted to die so that his body could be added to the available supply of food.

It was over. The other woman had taken her leave, and Lotte Niemand was sitting by herself at the table, her head bowed, her hands folded into fists, her arms shaking as if the effort of concentration had stretched her past the limit of endurance. A thunder of clapping and hammering on tables filled the room, punctuated by half-hysterical cheers. Phil thought of children waking out of a darkness full of nameless terror to rediscover the day.

He himself was exhausted with the virtuoso brilliance of what he had seen.

Was there more? She was not moving from her table. Everywhere men were beckoning waiters, gesturing, whispering. In a moment the waiters were fetching bottles of champagne and placing them on her table. One was opened, and a glass was poured for her. She raised her head, sipped, and seemed to gain strength. Her tired dark eyes sought

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out the man who had sent the wine first, and she smiled to him and drank a polite toast in his direction. He beckoned her, but she shook her head and remained where she was.

After a while the talk became general again, and the attention of everyone was no longer upon her. She sat alone and drank the wine. Phil watched her, unable to tear his eyes away.

At last she rose, a waiter hurrying to draw back her chair. She had not looked again toward Phil since her entrance, and the last thing he expected was that she should walk now, with that unbelievable grace, directly to his table.

Startled, he jumped to his feet as she stopped before him. "Herr Burns?" she said in a low, pleasant voice. "May I join you?" She spoke in German.

"I'd be delighted," Phil said. "And flattered. Your act is one of the most amazing I've ever seen." He moved to place her chair for her. "*Herr Ober!*" he added, gesturing to a waiter. "Let me get some wine, and——"

She stopped him, raising a pale hand, giving a faint smile. "I have a great deal which has been bought already." She turned to the waiter. "Rudi, bring one of my bottles and some fresh glasses."

People now were noticing and commenting on her arrival at Phil's table.

"Gerhard Kluger tells me that you knew Max," she went on, accepting the offer of a cigarette from him.

"Not exactly knew him," Phil said. "I met him in Essen last month."

"Yes, I remember his going to Essen a few weeks ago." She leaned back in the chair, white smoke wreathing from her nostrils. She had extraordinarily delicate features, almost starvation-fine. "You know he is dead, of course."

"Herr Kluger told me."

Rudi brought the champagne, opened, and poured for them. Phil took up his glass. "Max Moritz," he said. "May he rest in peace."

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"Thank you," she said, and drank with him. "He invited you to call on him here, I believe. I doubt that our cabaret would appeal very much to foreign visitors."

"I wouldn't say that your act appealed to me," Phil said. "But it impressed me tremendously. I've never seen anything so brilliant."

"I'm surprised that you understood it." Her eyes rested speculatively on his face for a moment. "But of course you speak amazingly good German."

"I understand it quite well," Phil said, choosing his words cautiously. "But I speak it better when I've had a few glasses of wine than I do at ordinary times. I didn't follow the songs those two girls were singing, I'm afraid, but you have beautiful diction."

She gave a wan smile. "You are modest and flattering, and since you are also tall and handsome, I think you must be a dangerous man. What do you think of all these people who come to laugh over the sickness of our German past?"

"I think it's probably better to laugh at it, with a little shame, than to pretend it never happened."

"Yes." She let her gaze roam the clientele. "So I say, usually. But tonight—you saw the poor girl who was burned with the cigar."

"Yes."

"In her place I would have broken a bottle on the man's head—whether it lost me my job or not. Did you laugh?"

"No."

"Good. These people who did are depressing me." She drank the contents of her glass at a gulp.

"Another?" Phil said, raising the bottle.

"Not here. I am tired of this place and its people. I have nothing more to do here tonight. Come with me and drink another toast to Max. We were together for a long time, he and I. Do you mind that I ask you? I am lonely, and there is no one else here except these—these—" She waved a beautiful slim hand.

"I'm sorry you're lonely," Phil said. "But your misfortune is my good luck. I'd be delighted."

"You have a silver tongue," she said, and once more seemed to study him with deep concentration. Unaccountably disturbed by her eyes, he turned to call for his check.

CHAPTER XV

There was only one thing Phil disliked about the turn of events, and that was that he could hardly have made a more attention-getting exit from the club if he'd hired a brass band. In the anteroom she paused and said she would get her coat—would he ask Manfred to call a cab? He complied. When she rejoined him she was wearing a fantastic sapphire mink cape.

He looked her up and down. "You look like a present from Cartier's," he said.

She laughed and moved toward the door, which Manfred had left ajar. Outside, she looked up at the narrow band of sky between the buildings. The air was cool, but it was a fine night.

"Where shall we go?" he said as the cab drew up.

"Will you not take me home?" she said, shrugging the cape closer about her. "There is a beautiful view over the river on a night like this."

Without waiting for his answer, she gave an address to the cab driver.

As he followed her into the cab, Phil felt a tiny alarm begin to ring in the back of his mind. Something had gone indefinably awry with his straightforward plan. He had intended no more than to make the acquaintance of some of

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Max Moritz's associates, talk with them about his death, find out whether any of them had reason to know it was not the accident the published accounts claimed.

If he had given himself away so quickly, that implied one of two possibilities. Either the truth about the "accident" was practically common knowledge here, or there was some flaw in the lie Hollweg had suggested as a cover. Yet unless Kluger was a star-quality actor, the name Burns had meant nothing in particular to him.

Phil could only suspend judgment and keep alert, and he knew that was going to be a tormentingly difficult task.

Her home was the penthouse of a new apartment block. The architect had been helping himself wholesale to Scandinavian fads. The lights went on to show a wide living room with polished parquet floor and a few choice, beautiful rugs, plain light-wood furniture cushioned in orange, green, and tobacco brown. There was an enormous wall-long bookcase filled with books, a built-in hi-fi unit, a television set on a castored trolley with its antenna balanced on top like misplaced antlers. Also running the whole length of a wall, the one facing the river, was a four-foot double-glazed window with French doors set in the middle.

She paused by the door as if thinking for a moment, then cut back the lighting to a dim glow.

"Do you like it?" she asked.

"Very impressive," Phil answered neutrally.

She laughed. Tossing her cape on a chair as casually as an old shawl, she crossed the room to a cocktail cabinet set alongside the hi-fi. "You will have a drink?" she asked.

"Please."

"Bring some ice, then. That door there"—she pointed—"is the kitchen."

He obeyed, leaving the door ajar. A touch on the light switch brought bright fluorescents blinking into life. The kitchen was all white formica and mahogany veneer sealed with silicones. Even the door of the icebox was veneered. It

didn't look like a place where much cooking got done. He opened the icebox and bent down to take out a tray of ice cubes and saw, wrapped in transparent plastic in the compartment next to the butter, a wax-white human hand.

"Je-sus—God!" he said very slowly under his breath. There was no doubt about it—that was a real hand, taken off by an expert. At the wrist, the dissected tendons showed silvery against the meat-red flesh. The fingers were peculiarly twisted, suggesting some congenital deformation.

Phil swallowed hard, reached above the grisly object to get the tray of ice, and closed the door with an absurd and suppressed impulse to apologize to the occupier. He went back, feeling the prickle of sweat on his nape.

"Do you—uh, always keep things like that in your kitchen?" he said. She had brought out a bottle and two glasses, and was selecting a record to put on the player now. With a casual glance at him, she made her final choice and slipped it from the jacket.

"What?" she said, and reached down to the switch of the record player. On her outstretched arm there showed the patch of death-white skin which had been the key symbol of her act. It wasn't make-up. So there probably had been a concentration-camp brand there.

For a wild, nightmarish moment he remembered the sick, sick point of her cabaret sketch—the literal hunger of the more fortunate for the death of the weak. He had visions of stumbling into the clutches of some latter-day German Sawney Bean, who had acquired the taste for human flesh in a Nazi hell and had been unable to relinquish it.

The appalling fantasy passed, and he heard himself saying in a normally level voice, "There's somebody's hand in the icebox."

"Oh!" Strains of wistful music rose softly from the record she had put on. She laughed as she closed the front of the player. "My husband is a doctor. He does that to me sometimes. It must be some interesting specimen—a pathological condition he is investigating. Let me take that ice now."

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She laid the tray upside down on a silver bowl from the cabinet, tapped it sharply, and all the cubes fell into the bowl with a melodious ringing noise. "Oh, yes," she went on. "You have no idea what I have found in this apartment. Once I opened a closet to put in my coat and found a bare skull grinning at me from the shelf next to my underwear. Here's your drink."

She turned, offering the glass. Phil took it, his mind still rocking gently. He said, "Your husband?"

"Yes. Are you worried? He is at a medical congress in Uppsala and will not be back for three days." She gave a slow smile that made Phil think that for the first time he really knew the meaning of the word *lascivious*. Raising her glass, her eyes locking with his, she drank with him in a wordless toast.

If one thing was certain, Phil thought dizzily, it was that the relationships among all these people were on the complicated side. What exactly did this doctor-husband feel about Max Moritz, for instance?

Oh, to hell . . . He drank.

"Now you must admire my view," she said with housewifely briskness. "Come to the window and see!"

She went first to the door, and touched the light switch. The last dim glow vanished, and there were only the stars cold and faint through the window, and the lights of the city at night. Taking his hand, she led him to the French doors, but did not open them.

"It's beautiful," she said, not releasing his fingers.

There was no denying it. Glowworm-lighted, one of the huge Rhine cargo tugs was making its way upstream on the mercurial surface of the river, its wake catching and breaking the reflected polychromic images of the waterside lamps and neon signs. In front and beyond, the checkered yellow windows of houses, hotels, and apartments shone, came on, blinked out, making of the city one vast, impersonal instrument board, like the panel of telltale lights on a computer.

Phil looked at it for a long time in silence. The sight

so depressed him that he could not put his sensations into words.

At last, turning to him, she said in a puzzled voice, "Why are you so quiet?"

He shook his head. He couldn't have explained to anyone the mood that had seized him. He had been thinking, in formless, unverbilized images, of the likeness of this city to the machine, of the half-million people in the machine, of the age which had reduced individuals to numbers on an extermination list—and how all this seemed part of the same process. He licked his lips, breaking free of his train of thought.

"Yes, it is beautiful," he said. "It reminds me of you."

"Thank you." She half-turned and moved closer to him, her fingers twisting in his, and raised her hand. He put his drink on the window ledge. With a kind of brutality, he lifted the hand that was locked with hers behind her back and pressed her body forward against his, opening his mouth on her lips.

A long, trembling time later she said, "I—I told you you had a silver tongue." She laughed shakily, freeing her arm and moving it as if in pain. "Come!"

When I said that the view reminded me of you, I didn't mean any compliment.

There was a long zip down the back of her dress. It opened with a sound like cloth tearing, freeing her arms and shoulders to clutch at him and tug him to her. In the half-darkness she was pale, like a white fish in deep water. Her teeth were sharp on his lips and tongue, like the beak of the vulture that tormented Prometheus.

Behind him as he bowed over her, a foot fell. Something long and heavy rose, swished, came down, and an appalling explosion of pain drove him into a tumult of blackness.

CHAPTER XVI

The image of a man swam into his awareness, expanding and contracting like a balloon attached to a leaky air pump. It stabilized. The man was sitting opposite Phil, perched on the edge of an armchair, staring toward him. His face was pink and baby-smooth, his hands—which held an old but serviceable officer's Luger and a glass of whisky, respectively—were chubby and carefully manicured. He wore a gray suit, a green tie, a pair of brown suede shoes.

Something had been put on Phil's aching head. It was cool and it dripped. He was propped in the corner of a wooden-framed double seat, and he had been efficiently bound at the ankles, knees, and wrists with cords that ate into his flesh.

"Put more ice on his head," the man said. His voice was a child's treble layered with adult menace. Phil managed to make his eyes obey him, and saw from the side of his field of vision that Lotte—her dress refastened—was bringing the silver bowl from the side of the cocktail cabinet. He felt sick at himself and her for the way he had been lured into this trap.

He told her with considerable fluency and detail what she could do with the ice.

"Ah!" the man with the Luger said, putting his glass on a low table at his left. "You're back with us, are you? I understand your name is Burns. Permit me to introduce myself. I am Doktor Helmut Schwann—Lotte's husband.

My trip to Uppsala was"—he chuckled, and the sound was a horrible thin piping—"shall we say, cut short?"

Phil debated, as much as the pain in his skull would allow, whether to be apologetic, angry, or what. In the end he said nothing. It might please Dr. Schwann to use his role as an offended husband for an excuse. Phil was gambling on there being a deeper purpose behind this.

"Your knowledge in our language of intimate female anatomical terms suggests that my wife is not the first German woman you have taken—or tried to take—to bed with you," Schwann said, relishing the sarcasm he loaded into the words. "I assure you that in spite of everything, it was not jealousy that made me interrupt your little love drama."

In spite of everything? Phil shook his head. He must have been badly befuddled by the blow Schwann had given him, or it would not have taken him till now to account for the pink hairless face and shrill voice. He looked at Lotte. She had put back the silver bowl, and was now standing at Schwann's side, one hand resting relaxed on the back of his chair.

You couldn't read a thing in that lovely, impassive face. But had it only been superb acting there by the window when he kissed her?

He said, hearing his voice rusty and grating, "Then why in hell *did* you interrupt? It was just getting interesting."

Schwann shrieked with soprano laughter. "You Americans!" he crowed. "Always full of wisecracks!"

"Helmut," Lotte said under her breath, touching him on the shoulder, "I think it would be fair to explain now. I do not believe he is with *them*."

Phil tensed and shifted on his seat as far as his bonds allowed.

Schwann raised his head to look at his wife. For all his disclaimers of jealousy, there was a flicker of malevolence in his gaze. But he said, "There is a way to settle that. Get it and show it to him."

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"Not yet." Lotte swept her skirt under her slender thighs and sat down with her invariable grace on the arm of the chair, and addressed Phil. "Have you yet discovered how I knew you were not just a casual acquaintance of Max's, come to visit the Denkmalskeller?"

Phil shook his head. Actually, of course, he still had two hypotheses, but he didn't want to voice either of them. He might have a few facts in his possession that these two did not yet have.

"You did not meet Max in Essen on the twentieth of last month," Lotte said. "He was there, certainly. But he made an afternoon visit only. For one thing, I was with him the whole time. For another, he met only one person and preferred that the meeting should not be noised around."

So either Hollweg had made a genuine error, or he had fed his annoying new employee a story with holes in it to make sure he immediately tripped over his own feet. Phil reserved judgment on the matter.

"There are several ways you might have learned about his trip to Essen that day," Lotte went on. "You might have said it was some other date, of course, and I'd not have suspected, because Essen is close and he had interests there. But you said this particular day. At first I believed that not Max but someone else had invited you to the club—there are, one must admit, American Nazis. But you said things to me that changed my mind."

Phil felt his heart beginning to pound. The secret of Moritz & Hollweg's mysterious arms deal was almost in his grasp. Not quite yet, though. He concentrated on what Lotte was saying.

"So that leaves one explanation. What connection do you have with Hans Hollweg?"

They waited, the beautiful woman and the horrible man with the Luger resting comfortably on his knee, like unfrocked inquisitors pursuing heresy.

"American Nazis?" Phil said. "Hans Hollweg? I'm sorry, I don't know what the hell you're talking about."

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"Herr Burns," Schwann said, "we can be very patient, you know. Lotte tells me you were surprised at that specimen I have in the icebox, and so you know my profession. I have this dreadfully sloppy habit of bringing my work home." He giggled. "Among the odds and ends I have in the apartment I'm sure I can find some scopolamine. I sometimes act as anesthetist for surgeons I know."

"I don't think it will come to that," Lotte said. "Perhaps the trouble is, Helmut, that we've found an honest man. It's a long time since I last met one. I've forgotten how to recognize them."

Phil had no illusions about scopolamine. It was a long way from the miraculous truth drug some people imagined, but it did make the keeping of secrets a hundred per cent more difficult.

"You recognized something about him," Schwann said, scowling. "You were not play-acting with him."

"Be quiet." Lotte moved uncomfortably on her narrow perch. "Herr Burns, I am sure—for myself—that you have something to do with Hans Hollweg. Perhaps you don't know what he is planning to do."

"Get the thing and show it to him, then!" Schwann broke in. "I told you to."

"Yes, I will."

She rose and crossed the room to a door at the far end. When she left it ajar, Phil glimpsed a bedroom beyond. There was the noise of a closet being unlocked, and several heavy objects were shifted. Then she was back, carrying something long, darkly glistening, which he recognized instantly.

"Show it to him," Schwann said. "Well, Herr Burns, what is it?"

Phil licked his lips. "It's a Belgian FN nine-millimeter carbine—NATO standard issue."

"Yes, but—show him the plate on the butt, *Liebchen*." Schwann gestured with his empty hand, pantomiming turning the gun over.

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Lotte obeyed, and with puzzlement Phil saw, deeply stamped into the metal plate to which she pointed, the figures 1944.

Very conscious of their eyes on him, he tried to work out why that should be on a brand-new, extremely postwar carbine. At last he shook his head.

"I don't get it," he said. "It looks like a date, but it's absurd. They weren't building the FN carbine in 1944."

She turned away and placed the weapon on the same table as her husband's glass. She said, "I think he's telling the truth. He doesn't know about——"

"One more moment!" Schwann said. "Burns, how do you think that gun came to be here?"

"No idea," Phil said thickly.

"Max Moritz was given it as a sample—a demonstration model, if you like. *Now* do you know what we are talking about?"

A huge, freezing coldness formed in Phil's mind. He said, "I'm beginning to get an idea. And—my God, I don't like it. I don't like it at all!"

With a gigantic sigh, Schwann laid aside his Luger. He got to his feet and began to walk up and down the room. Over his shoulder he said, "I think you should slack his bonds, Lotte. I tied them like tourniquets, and we don't want him to have gangrene."

"You think I was right?" she said, moving to comply.

"Oh, perhaps, perhaps." Schwann seemed distracted. "Get him loose; come on."

She knelt at Phil's feet to untie his ankles, glancing up at him once with troubled eyes. It was absolutely irrelevant in his present plight, but he found himself wishing with ridiculous violence that he had after all been able to feel that taut, graceful body naked under his hands.

God, what a woman! God, what an incredible couple!

She freed him and left him to massage the circulation back into his limbs. In the act, he found that his knife, which he had been wearing on his arm, was gone. Schwann must

have removed it when tying him up. He looked around for it and did not see it.

He managed to stand up, his legs fiery with the pain of cramp, and without a word Lotte brought him from the ledge along the window the unfinished drink he had put down in order to kiss her.

"What do you know about Hans Hollweg?" Schwann asked suddenly.

"No—first we must explain a few things to him," Lotte countered. "Better—what do you know about Max Moritz?"

"He was a crook," Phil said. "He was in the German army."

"Is that all?" Lotte gave a bitter laugh. "Then you have a lot to learn. Max Moritz was a Nazi—not the for-convenience kind, the dazzled kind. He was an officer in the SS, and so well trusted that he was picked for the special jobs that could not be given to just anybody, because ordinary people have consciences, and these consciences were a drawback. You know about the Sudetenland?"

"Uh—" Phil wiped his face with his handkerchief. "That was the area that was put in with Czechoslovakia under the Versailles Treaty. Hitler wanted it back—he said all German-speaking peoples ought to be part of the Reich. So he took it and carved up Czechoslovakia into bits."

"Good!" Schwann said. "So few people remember!" He ceased his pacing up and down and perched himself on the corner of the table, facing Phil. "Among the Sudeten Germans, though, were many who hated the Nazi idea. It was held to be disgraceful that they should betray the Master Race like this, so, as a lesson to the rest, certain families were blotted out. Mine was one; Lotte's was another. Parents and teen-agers were sent to labor camps, old people were killed, and young children were sent to other camps where they were treated as degenerate animals."

Lotte Niemand—Lotte Nobody. Phil nodded slowly.

"How old do you think I am?" Lotte said.

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"You look almost ageless," Phil said honestly. "But—oh, thirty-six, thirty-eight?"

"I'm twenty-nine," she said. "When I was twelve, I looked like my grandmother."

"Max Moritz was one of those responsible for this—operation," Schwann went on. "As a result he was placed on the condemned list of the Rächerbund."

The Avengers' League. Phil had heard of such organizations, composed of concentration-camp victims who swore to bring retribution to their torturers. Could it be because of this, and not because of his connection with Moritz & Hollweg, that Max Moritz had been burned to death on the Limburg road?

He said, "Do you belong to this—Rächerbund?"

Schwann gave a thin, mirthless laugh. "We are the Rächerbund. As far as we know, we are the only survivors of one hundred and forty Sudeten German families, totaling five hundred and eleven individual members, removed from their homes under the orders of Max Moritz and"—he snapped his fingers—"destroyed."

There will, of course, be no descendants. Phil stifled the unpleasant mental comment and flexed his legs one final time. The circulation had returned to normal.

"What has this got to do with that gun?" he said.

"Patience," Schwann countered, raising his hand. "We looked for him for a long time after the war. Eventually, a little more than two years ago, we found him here in Düsseldorf, having escaped the denazification courts. He was in what is now the East Zone at the end of the war, and if he had not escaped and put a political line between himself and those who remember him over there, he would have been executed. By that time, however, we had begun to see something more important than our wish for revenge. This is why we have been . . . good friends of Max Moritz." His mouth twisted with disgust.

"What did you find out?" Phil pressed. What he was being told certainly solved one problem for him: if Her-

mann Moritz had a brother who was a star pupil in the SS, small wonder that he was never released from internment during the war.

Lotte answered him obliquely. She said, "One sees few foreigners in the Denkmalskeller. You would not like those whom one does see. They come to exchange news and views with their German colleagues, and I have sometimes had the pleasure of seeing them squirm as I—there is a phrase in English I like—as I rubbed their noses in their own dirt. The Denkmalskeller, the place where the horrors of the past are so openly paraded, has another horror behind its façade. Who would think to look there for the regular meeting place of the strongest neo-Nazi organization in all of northern Germany?"

"There is one in Munich which is stronger," Schwann said. "But not much stronger."

CHAPTER XVII

"All right," Phil said at length. "What's this got to do with *that* gun?" He emptied his glass and set it down. "You aren't going to tell me that Moritz and Hollweg are going to supply the arms for a new Nazi *putsch*!"

Very softly Schwann spoke to his wife. "He knows Moritz and Hollweg. He knows they trade in arms. Were you so right, *Liebchen*?"

Taken aback, Lotte paled. She turned accusingly to Phil. "Who are you, anyway?" she demanded. "Why did you come to Düsseldorf looking for Max?"

For a long moment Phil balanced alternatives in his

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mind. He came to his decision at the instant Schwann took up his Luger again and leveled it. He said wearily, "You don't need that thing. I'm not on anyone's side but my own."

"Explain!" Schwann commanded.

"How did Max Moritz die?" Phil countered. "And before you answer, I know how he died, so be careful."

Schwann and Lotte exchanged startled glances. After a pause Lotte put her hand to her mouth, her eyes widening. "Were *you* the hitchhiker in the car?" she said.

"Answer my question."

"Why—why, his car crashed and caught fire. We were told that was what happened." Doubt lay on her voice like a dead weight. "Wasn't—"

"All right, I believe you." Phil took a deep breath. No, it wasn't any of the Rächerbund's doing. A proud title, that, for an organization with two members! "Now I'll tell you what I know about Moritz and Hollweg, and it isn't much."

He summarized the entire story, from his meeting with Max Moritz to his assignment by Hollweg to inquire into the dead man's betrayal. They listened, still as statues.

When he finished, there was a moment's silence. Then Schwann stirred.

"Much of that we knew," he said. "It's interesting that Hermann Moritz was so frightened when you said he might have had a hand in Max's death. He was very reluctant to agree with Hollweg's approach to his brother—wasn't he, *Liebchen*?"

Lotte nodded. "So Max said. He talked a great deal to me—much more than Hollweg would have approved."

"You know all I have to tell you now," Phil said. "Maybe you'd fill in the gaps in your story. Mainly about that gun."

Schwann reached over and picked the carbine off the table, turning it so that the plate with the stamped date 1944 was uppermost. He said didactically, "In certain areas of the world, especially in Africa, weapons of the Second

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World War fetch a much higher price than newer ones. Sometime last year, it seems, Moritz and Hollweg were approached by a group in an African country to obtain for them a large quantity of carbines and ammunition. Moritz and Hollweg bought them, from a firm in Benelux."

Suddenly Phil recalled Moritz saying in his London office, "When Kuyper plays, we all dance." He leaned forward. "Not by any chance from a man called Kuyper?" he asked.

"I don't know. It was certainly a Dutch or Flemish name." Schwann was impatient. "Let me continue. These Africans were discovered in the plot they were making against their government. They were jailed or fled the country, and that was that. Moritz and Hollweg found themselves with three thousand FN nine-millimeter carbines, two hundred thousand rounds of ammunition, and no purchaser."

Phil shaped his mouth into a silent whistle. He said, "But even with an armory that size, you couldn't revive Nazism."

"Who said anyone was going to?" Lotte rapped impatiently.

"I'm sorry. Go on."

Schwann held out his glass to Lotte for it to be refilled, and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. "You know that Hollweg turned his coat during the war, don't you? He was an overseas purchasing agent for the Nazis. He was one of the people responsible for there being self-sealing gas tanks in Messerschmitt fighters which were stamped *Made in USA*. In 1941 he was caught in America by the outbreak of war. As I say, he turned his coat, and in 1945 he was brought back here as an adviser on industrial matters to the military government."

"He told me about that."

"I'm not surprised," Schwann said, accepting his fresh drink. "He's proud of it. I am telling you all this, you understand, so that you will know what sort of man your—uh, employer is."

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Phil took out a cigarette, nodding. On impulse he offered the pack to Schwann, who refused, and Lotte, who accepted.

"I believe he knew Max from the days just after the war," Schwann resumed. "At any rate, he knew of the Denkmalskeller and the neo-Nazi organization, and in desperation at the threat of bankruptcy over these three thousand guns, he seized on this hope of a substitute purchaser. He promised Max a commission of twelve per cent if he could persuade his Nazi friends to buy the guns. And Max did so, conditional upon one thing—a means of getting them into the East Zone."

"My—God!" Phil said. "So that was the idea behind it!"

Schwann gave a bitter smile. "It's no secret, is it, that the people over there detest Ulbricht and look with envy to our tinseled economic miracle? There have been uprisings before, which were suppressed. Very slowly, things grow better on the other side. We who came from there are relieved to see it; but our Nazi friends become desperate. Do you know why?"

Phil shook his head.

"You've observed that we say 'East Zone.' But we don't generally say 'East Germany.' What the rest of the world calls East Germany is officially *Middle* Germany in the *Bundesrepublik*. East Germany is the area beyond the Oder-Neisse line, including the Sudetenland that Hitler claimed. And now it is claimed again." He paused. "The madman's dream that possesses these Nazis of today is that there shall be a rising in the East Zone that overthrows the government. The *Bundeswehr* will march in to the aid of their fellow countrymen, and before the rest of the world can react, a German army will stand beyond the Oder-Neisse defying anyone to drive them back."

"Is this what they expect to do with three thousand of those things?" Phil gestured at the carbine on Schwann's knee. "They're crazy!"

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"Oh, they're crazy, all right," Lotte agreed with a wan smile. "I've seen them coming to the Denkmalskeller with their leather brief cases. They go into an inner room and open the cases up; then for a few furtive hours they can wear the medals that the butchers gave them, and drink and toast the past and make their plots. But only part of their dream is absurd. These guns would make the uprising possible, and it's even conceivable that West German forces would march across the frontier. After that, though, there would be no Germany to unite—nothing but a radioactive desert."

"Did Max find a way of getting the guns through?" Phil asked.

"After his last meeting with Hollweg, that day in Essen when I knew you did not see him, he hinted that he knew of a way. I don't know what it was—he wouldn't tell me the details. But I think it was in connection with the delivery of the arms that he went out to the East Zone border the day you met him."

Phil was very thoughtful for a time. Eventually he said, "What did Hollweg do when Max was killed? Did he try to go on negotiating with this Nazi group?"

Lotte frowned. "I believe so," she confirmed. "But I have the impression that after that they began to back down. They got—what is that American phrase? Yes, they got cold feet."

That figured, too.

There was something important itching at Phil's mind. Abruptly he got it. He said, "You mentioned another strong neo-Nazi group in Munich, didn't you?"

"Yes." It was Schwann who answered. Phil turned to him.

"Do you know anyone connected with it who's called Meissner?"

He waited tensely for the answer, remembering Angela on the phone in Moritz's office, taking down a Munich address. Vaduzstrasse—was the number 11, something like

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that? But after a frown of concentration, Schwann shook his head.

"What makes you ask?"

"Just a random idea. Apparently there's nothing in it." He hesitated. "Have you told the authorities about this?"

"No." Lotte's voice was level and cool.

"Why not?"

"For one thing, neo-Nazi groups officially do not exist, and even if they do, they are small, impotent collections of idiots, and even if they are not, many officials have a lot of sympathy with them." Schwann charged his statement heavily with sarcasm. "Our intention was—well, never mind." He broke off and cast at his wife a glance, which she avoided.

One thing was sure, Phil thought grimly. An affair like this couldn't be left to cook much longer. If Lotte and Schwann weren't telling the authorities, someone else had to.

"I suppose I should conclude by apologizing, Herr Burns," Schwann said. "When Lotte telephoned to me that a stranger who could not possibly be telling the truth had come to the Denkmalskeller inquiring about Max, I at once assumed that you were—shall we say—hostile?"

"Representing whom?" Phil asked wryly.

"Hollweg, who knew Max had been in Essen that day. And I was correct in that." Schwann got up.

It was abundantly clear to Phil now that Hollweg had deliberately suggested a cover story to him that would give him away at once. Maybe this explained the man's affability on the way to the airport and his apparent willingness to speak frankly. He had figured out a tidy way to eliminate a nuisance.

"I suppose this means that Hollweg was probably telling the truth when he said Max's death was arranged by East German agents?" he suggested.

"Very likely." Schwann shrugged. "They knew him in the old days, you see. After the war he was involved in the black market in currency, especially in East marks. I think

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he also smuggled such goods as penicillin across the border. The East Germans were very glad when he—uh—retired. It may not have been definite knowledge of this deal in arms that made them act. They might perhaps have heard of his making inquiries about routes across the frontier, and decided to eliminate him before he could start a new racket. There are so many possibilities that my head is swimming. If you will excuse me, I do not think there is any point in my remaining longer.”

Indeed, he sounded suddenly weaker, and his pink face had paled. Carrying the carbine, he walked across to the bedroom door and closed it behind him. There was the noise of the closet being opened again to put the gun away.

A long silence followed. At last Lotte stirred and got up. She went to the door, turned down the lights to the lowest level, and came back, passing behind the lounge on which Phil was sitting.

“Does your head still hurt?” she said in a low voice. “He must have hit you very hard. I—I am sorry, you know.”

“It aches,” Phil grunted.

“Let me look at it.”

He felt her fingers, gentle as a breeze, parting his hair over the bruise. The spot was tender, and he winced. The fingers stopped, withdrew, and a different touch, softer and warmer, replaced them. Something moved caressingly on his scalp. When that ended, the skin felt cool. Her hands came down on either side of his face, stroking his cheeks.

“Is my tongue silver?” she murmured.

Violently he caught her wrists and pulled them apart, leaping to his feet and swinging around. Startled, she blinked at him.

“What’s wrong? Did I hurt you?”

Phil let his arms fall to his sides, breathing deeply. “What sort of a person are you, anyway?”

She gave a low laugh. “A beautiful person,” she said. “So I am told. You told me, but you’re not the only one.” She put her palms on the front of her shoulders and drew them

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down with a lover's delicacy over her full breasts, her flat belly, her slender thighs. Breaking off the movement, she added, "You don't have to care about Helmut, you know. There's nothing between us but a bond of vengeance. How could there be?" A throaty chuckle pointed the remark. "You've seen him!"

Normal service will be resumed as soon as possible. Phil had a lunatic sense of disorientation, as if a huge intervening span of time had been chopped from his experience.

He turned toward the door. Remembering what had been taken from him, he did not reach for the handle but for the light switches. He put all of them on.

In the sudden daylight brightness of the room, she turned up her eyes. "Why do you want to go?" she cried. "Where can you go at this time of the night?"

"Back to my hotel in Essen," Phil said curtly, searching the room with his eyes. There was no sign of the knife anywhere.

"But—why?" The words were almost a wail.

"If you don't know, I can't explain." He picked up cushions and looked underneath them, opened drawers and glanced inside. "Where's my knife?" he added out of the side of his mouth.

"No, leave it—I know where it is. I'll give it to you in the morning." Now she was gabbling, the beautiful voice discolored with a hint of hysteria. "You don't want to leave—I'm sure you don't—I can see you don't!"

That wasn't altogether improbable. Phil caught sight of something on the cocktail cabinet's lowered flap which might be the hilt of his knife. He moved toward it.

"Stop! Wait!" She came after him, clutching at him with one hand, the other twisted up behind her to tug at the zip of her dress. "You could have this. Don't you want it?"

The zip came down. Feverishly she peeled the clinging black dress over her arms and let it fall, making a sound like a sigh on the nylon slip below, then caught at the narrow black ribbons over her shoulders. Phil twisted his

arm free and went to the cocktail cabinet. It was his knife, dropped behind a row of glasses. He picked it up and put it in its sheath.

Now she had thrown the slip down also, and her black brassière hung in her hand. For all the torment she had been through as a child, her body was almost flawless. Only the way in which her ribs showed below her breasts hinted at a past of privation from which she could never escape. She stood quite still and hopeless as he turned to the door.

"Good night," he muttered, and reached for the handle.

"One moment." Her voice was quite steady again. He glanced back, seeing that she was standing perfectly motionless, and her eyes were closed.

"Yes?"

"I must—explain something." She spoke with great effort. "I'm sorry. I don't know what you must think. But the things that happened—*then*—have left some of us different from ordinary people. Maybe you knew that."

Phil waited, not touching the door handle.

"With Helmut it's obvious. He was a *Piepel*." Her voice was growing stronger. "You know what a *Piepel* is?"

"Yes," Phil said, and had to swallow very hard.

"The one who had him couldn't bear the idea of his growing up—his voice cracking, his beard coming. He never will."

What the hell comment can you pass on a story like that? Phil said nothing.

"For me—I told you, at twelve I looked like an old woman." Her eyes were still closed, and her tone as impersonal now as a machine's. "My breasts were sagging and shrunken before they were properly grown, and my face was an old hag's face. They let me out, they gave me food, they dressed my sores and cured my tuberculosis, and later they said to me, 'Lotte, you are beautiful.' And I try to believe it, but all the time it's—it's more like a dream, a dream I used to have there in the camp, that all this

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was not really happening and that I was neatly dressed and slept in a clean bed and went every day to school and came home to my parents and family. I keep thinking, 'Tomorrow I shall wake up. Tomorrow I shall know that in fact I am ugly.' I am afraid. And now you—" She opened her eyes and looked straight at him. There was no expression on her face, but Phil felt as if he had been accused and was guilty of a crime. "So before you go," she went on, "at least do one thing. At least tell me honestly if you think I am beautiful."

"You are so lovely I can hardly bear to look at you."

"No." She sighed and shook her head, glanced down at the brassière dangling from her hand and tossed it away. "No, I can't believe it."

Her eye lighted on the sapphire mink cape she had thrown on one of the chairs as she came home, and she bit her lip. Stepping free of the dress and slip which had been around her ankles, she went to the cape, picked it up, and pulled it close about her.

"Still—" Her voice was barely audible. "If I cannot be beautiful to myself, I can take to myself beautiful things."

She began to hum to herself, a simple tune like a nursery rhyme, and danced a few steps in rhythm with it. Still dancing, as if with an invisible partner, she headed toward the farthest door in the room.

Phil reached out his hand. Halfway to the handle of the door, he hesitated. Then he turned off the lights instead and spoke her name.

CHAPTER XVIII

The dawn was slapping crude patches of gray on the eastern sky when he came back to the street. Clouds had blown over, and the air was cold. He stood on the sidewalk and glanced about him at the dark, colorless shapes of parked cars, and shivered. That had nothing to do with the cool of the air.

Same country. But it feels like a different world.

He shook his head, thrust his hands deep in his pockets, and turned in the direction of the river. It occurred to him that fresh air off the water might help to settle the stewing mess of contradictory ideas in his mind.

Across the street a black Chevy, which had been standing at the curb, suddenly came to life. He heard the noise of the engine, checked and looked to his side, and was still too preoccupied to react before it came to a wheel-locked halt again with the rear doors a couple of paces ahead of him. A man leaped out and stepped in his path.

"In den Wagen, bitte," he said in a sardonic tone.

The black patch registered, and the red scar tissue spreading down over the cheek. This was the one-eyed pianist from the Denkmalskeller.

For a long moment Phil was taken aback. A row of possibilities filed past him. He settled on the most likely, and scanned the length of the street with a quick turn of his head. There was no one in sight, of course. There wouldn't be.

"Go to hell," he said. He loosened the knife a little in

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its sheath with a flick of his arm, and felt the hilt glide an inch downward over his palm.

"Do as you're told, Burns! You can't hide behind that scruffy beard!"

The use of his name was a fresh shock—in English and in a familiar voice. It was the driver who had spoken, twisted around in his seat, half opening his door and putting one foot to the ground.

Greer. What in the name of—

"Are you going to be difficult?" Greer said. He pushed the door all the way open and got out. The one-eyed man moved aside a little. "I'm sick of you frigging me around, Burns! Get in the car!"

He put his hand under his coat and brought it back with a police-type .45 looking in the gray washy light as big as a cannon. It occurred to Phil that if anyone showed him any more guns tonight he'd be able to set up as a connoisseur.

"Go ahead!" he said. "I'd surely love to see you in court explaining why you threatened a United States citizen in a foreign country with a gun."

He brought his knife down a little further into his palm with the tips of his fingers, keeping the hand in shadow.

"You talk big," Greer said. "I can use this thing if I have to, and get away with it."

Phil curled his lip. "Diplomatic immunity?" he said in a sneering tone.

"Diplomatic hell," Greer answered evenly. "I'm not on the staff of the Frankfurt consulate, if that's what you're thinking. I borrowed that office to work out of while I was covering the Moritz murder."

Phil stopped easing the knife out. "All right. What are you, then?"

"CIA." Greer jerked the muzzle of the gun toward the car. "Do I have to explain what that stands for, or do you get in now?"

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Phil digested the information slowly. "And your piano-playing pal?"

"Fenstermacher is an associate of mine, and that's all you need to know."

It might have been reasonable to go on arguing with either a gun or a CIA man—to cope with both was more than Phil felt inclined to do. He shrugged and moved to the car. Greer holstered his gun and indicated that Fenstermacher should take the driver's seat, then followed Phil into the back.

The car moved away and began to cruise, apparently at random, along the dawn-gray streets. Phil got the knife inconspicuously back in place, then took out a pack of cigarettes—careful not to give the wrong impression to Greer—and lit one.

He said when a minute or two had gone by in silence, "Well, what's your interest in me? And why did you spend what must have been a damned uncomfortable night sitting there?"

"I ask questions," Greer said. "Not answer them."

Phil yawned. "Sorry. You didn't seem to be doing either," he said in a tone calculated to imply culpable neglect of duty. Greer flushed and spoke harshly.

"Burns, you may think it damned funny to make me come running after you, stake out on corners waiting for you to show, lie about going to England and then come back in a couple of days—but you're going to learn different. Here and now." He shifted in the seat. "I'm giving you credit for being nothing worse than a fool, though I'm getting doubtful. Immigration picked you up at the airport and notified me. I got the state police to check the local hotels, and we found your booking in Essen at ten last night. Fenstermacher reported you at the club because he didn't know who you were, but you seemed to be a friend of that Commie actress they have there. So you have one hell of a lot to explain."

"Commie?" Phil said in a voice like a lead drum.

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"You—no, it isn't possible. It just isn't possible in this day and age." Greer made with his mouth as if to spit.

"What do you keep between your ears—high vacuum? You were at the club. You heard her act. You speak German. Do you think anyone but a Red would have an interest in dragging up the past like she does? Concentration camps, *shit*. That's all dead and we're trying to bury it. We've got a different war on now. And she and that baby-voiced Dr. Schwann come from the East—didn't they tell you?"

"Is that why you have Fenstermacher posted at the club?" Phil said.

"Why else, for Christ's sake?"

"Not because it's the meeting place of the second-strongest neo-Nazi group in West Germany?"

"Are you falling for that line?" Greer's voice was rich with incredulity. "You must really have taken to Lotte in a big way. Or are you old friends?"

"It turns out we had a mutual acquaintance," Phil snapped. At once Greer tensed.

"Who?"

"Max Moritz."

The tension faded. "Very funny," Greer said sourly. "So she picks you up and takes you home for the night and you come out thinking with your balls. Get this. Of course there are groups of idiots around the place who still follow the Hitler line. But they're no threat to anyone. Their day is over. The Red threat isn't. You go talk to some of the people who've come over and have them peel the scales off your eyes. You'll stop worrying about a few posturing Nazis and start worrying about the real problem." He swallowed loudly.

Phil was silent for a moment, thinking about three thousand carbines and two hundred thousand shells. He said, "They don't even worry you when they talk about fomenting armed uprisings in the East Zone so that the *Bundeswehr* will have an excuse to move in?"

Greer gave a hoarse laugh. "Pipe dreams. We used to

worry, till we found out that they only talk about it, and it never comes to anything. What's more, it's never likely to. As the years pass, they get fewer and less loud-mouthed."

He lifted his forefinger and pointed at Phil. "Now as for you!" he went on. "You claimed to have got mixed up in this by accident. Okay, I believed you—nobody who acts as dumb as you can could possibly be involved with the clever bastards we're up against. But you didn't come back from England by accident. You didn't go to the Denkmalskeller by accident. You told me in Frankfurt you didn't know Moritz's name, but you come back and your first evening you track down his mistress and go home with her. I suppose you—uh, *remembered* what his name was and where he came from."

"Yes, I remembered," Phil said stonily.

"And you thought you'd do a little amateur detecting, is that it?" Greer made his words honey-sweet with sarcasm.

"Are you in your line of business because you like having people try to kill you?" Phil cracked back.

"Oh, I get it, I get it. You want to settle accounts. You won't make it. Listen, if you don't stop thinking about somebody trying to kill *you*, when it was Moritz they were after, and get the hell out while you can, they *are* going to come after you. And you've seen in the Moritz case that they're plenty efficient."

He interrupted himself to tell Fenstermacher in German to turn out on the Essen road. They had driven several miles around Düsseldorf.

"I'm going to take you back to your hotel," Greer said. "And I'm going to tell you this. Either you get the hell out of this affair now of your own accord, or I'll see to it that you find yourself on a New York plane, under escort. That is, if you don't go home in a coffin."

CHAPTER XIX

What it comes down to, Phil thought grayly, is that I have no confidence in Greer. The way he treats me stops me from believing that he knows what the hell he's up to.

There had seemed no point in going to bed when he got back to the hotel. He had dozed in the lounge until breakfast began. Now he was sitting over the last cup of coffee from his pot in the dining room. It was still early, and no one else had come in yet, except a man who looked like a salesman, who brought a large leather case with him, kept a keen eye on it while gulping down his coffee, and went out again in less than ten minutes.

He wished achingly that he could go back in time to that day when he felt the end of the summer upon the world, avoid Max Moritz and his car, and never have to learn the existence of Greer or Lotte Niemand, Hollweg or Hermann Moritz, three thousand guns . . .

I guess Greer hasn't met Hollweg. Maybe if he had, he'd be less ready to dismiss the danger.

He sighed and glanced up as newcomers entered the room—two men in their early thirties, about the same height and build, one with brown hair and one with black. The brown-haired man wore a London-styled tweed jacket and cavalry twill pants, and the black-haired man wore a blue jacket and gray pants that somehow labeled him as an American. They were asked their room numbers, and shown to a table next to Phil's.

Idly, he listened as they placed their orders in good but

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accented German. Correct—one brown-haired Britisher, one black-haired American, almost certainly Texan.

He went back to what he'd been thinking about. He remembered with a pang that he'd told himself his summer mood might not be over after all, not if he could decide on the spur of the moment he wanted to be a long way away, then have the means of achieving it promptly presented by some friendly godling. That had been Moritz's 300 SL. His mouth twisted sardonically.

At the next table, the Britisher was saying to his companion, "Well, what did you think of the last show down your way, Rod?"

"You want my honest answer?" the Texan grunted. "Okay, Mac, you asked for it. It scared me stiff. How long did the umpires say you had to hold off with the tacticals?"

"Three mortal days," the Britisher said. "Same as with you. And then of course it was a shambles. They stretched it out to the full six days because they had to, but it was a farce."

"I didn't notice anyone laughing around where I was," the Texan said morosely. "If I had, I swear I'd have taken him for a Red and put him under guard."

Click. Phil sat up and began to take notice, making a profuse mental apology to the friendly godling. Here he had been sitting wondering how he was going to get the basis for a decision on his next course of action, and now it had cropped up under his nose.

He leaned forward. "Say—excuse me," he said.

One pair of gray eyes and one of brown switched to look at him. "American," the Texan said.

"That's right. Name's Phil Burns."

"Uh—" The Britisher was looking a little uncomfortable, as if thinking he ought not to have broached the subject he'd brought up when there was a stranger within earshot. The Texan glanced at him wryly.

"Didn't say anything that hasn't been in the papers, did we?" he said. "Just in case we did, Mr. Burns, forget it,

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will you? I'm Rod Voychek—Major Voychek. This is Captain Mackay."

There were nods.

"I don't want to intrude," Phil said, thinking rapidly. "But I was having an argument with a friend last night, and I would like to ask you to settle it for us, maybe."

Voychek and Mackay exchanged glances. Voychek gave a kind of shrug with one eyebrow. "Glad to help out," he said. "What was the argument about?"

"You may not be able to answer without using classified information, of course," Phil said. "In which case just say so and I'll understand. But it was this way. We were talking about the risk of a Hungarian-style uprising in East Germany, and I was saying that first off it couldn't succeed without outside help, and second the West Germans wouldn't be allowed to help because that would start a world war."

Again Voychek looked at Mackay. Then he said, "Where's your argument? It's no secret that if the *Bundeswehr* tried to go into the East Zone, the Reds'd kick 'em back and keep coming, and you'd have your world war in a few days. There are even books about it."

"No. He was arguing that nothing on earth would stop the *Bundeswehr*. If there was a rising in the East that looked like it had any chance of success at all, nothing would stop 'em."

They looked at each other once more. It was as if they were having a wordless consultation before every answer. This time it was Mackay who replied.

"Well, this is one of the problems we've had to think about, of course. But it's a very slim chance, you know. There have been risings in East Germany, and they've failed. And in the present situation, however much we sympathize with the poor sods over there, we've just got to thank God they never did reach the crisis point you mentioned."

"Would it make a difference if—instead of being like

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the Hungarian uprising, for instance, where they were attacking tanks with homemade gasoline bombs—they had a supply of arms?”

Phil waited for the answer with such intentness that his heart seemed to have stopped to listen too.

“I’m—not sure,” Mackay said slowly.

Voychek grunted. “Don’t try to kid us, Mac,” he said. “You know as well as I do that there’s enough discontent over there for anything. Give me a thousand guns and sufficient ammunition, and a few hundred grenades and some plastic explosive, and I’ll cook you a revolution in a couple of weeks.”

“All right, go ahead,” Mackay shrugged. “I’ll give you a hundred-to-one against your living to enjoy it.”

“That’s as safe a bet as you’ll ever make,” Voychek said with a sour laugh. “But you wouldn’t be around to collect, either.”

“The question’s academic, anyway,” Mackay said. “How would you get a thousand guns into East Germany? That border must be just about the tightest in the world.”

“Till they built the wall I’d have said take ’em through Berlin,” Voychek frowned. “But now——”

“Airlift them?” Mackay proposed.

Voychek shook his head. “You drop anything from a plane that strays out of the corridors, they’ll be on you at once. They watch all overflights like hawks. Might take ’em in by sea—Baltic coast somewhere. But I wouldn’t try it for a million. And I doubt if anyone else is going to, thank God.”

“You don’t seem to like the idea,” Phil said. He hesitated a moment, and went on. “Would I be right in thinking you were talking about a NATO exercise when I interrupted?”

“You would,” Voychek agreed curtly. “Like I told you, it was in the papers.”

“I got the impression it wasn’t a great success.”

“Nothing in our line is going to be a great success ever again,” Mackay said with a thin smile. “The bloody scien-

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tists have worked us out of a job, and all we can hope to do from now on is avoid digging our own graves. What do you chaps call it in America—built-in obsolescence, isn't that it?"

So there was no longer any doubt about it. Philip Russell Burns, occupation *Wandervogel*, chief hobby not meddling in other people's affairs, had been dropped—pitchforked—catapulted—into the middle of a worse mess than he had ever dreamed of.

It was reassuring of Voychek and Mackay to say that getting guns into East Germany was virtually impossible. But it did appear that Max Moritz had found a way likely to convince people to part with money—a tough standard of judgment.

Or had he? Had he actually found a way? Or had he invented one to make sure of his promised commission on the deal? Or had he and Hollweg together invented one? Phil discarded the last two possibilities for the moment, although he was prepared to reconsider them. It looked more probable that Moritz really did have a way over the border, and he had been to check on it for himself, and—

And in that case the figures on the scrap of paper in the watch were a map reference.

After Voychek and Mackay had turned their attention to their breakfasts, Phil sat, slightly bemused at his own blindness, for a long time before he dug out his billfold, a bit of paper, and a pen. He had copied the figures on the lining of his billfold, but he knew them by heart. He also had a tourist map of Germany that he had picked up at the airport yesterday.

Looking at it, he shook his head. No, it wasn't a plain map reference after all; it was all wrong. Encoded, perhaps. He made a rough estimate, from the tourist map, of the latitude and longitude of the border where he had visited it, and tried to sort some sense out of the figures on that basis.

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Alternate figures—no, that didn't fit. Reversing the figures also failed, and so did reversing them in pairs, fours, sixes.

After considerable study, he was compelled to give up. It was probable that the code was solved by subtracting from or adding to this group a previously agreed number. Without the key he could never come closer than several miles of ground.

Starting with some other figure than the first? No, that didn't do it either.

All right, put that aside for the moment and concentrate on another angle. Loathsome Wolfgang's surname was Meissner. Directly after Moritz first met Phil in London, he put through a call to someone named Meissner in Munich, and Hollweg stated the following day he had spoken on the phone with Moritz.

No genius was required to suspect that Hollweg, his deal in Düsseldorf spiked by Max's death, might have gone to Munich to open negotiations with the other neo-Nazi group Schwann had mentioned.

And the way in which Hollweg had suggested that Phil report to him on his return to Germany—now, tomorrow was the date—was to call him at a Munich phone number.

In spite of Greer's offhand dismissal of anything Schwann or Lotte had said as Communist fabrications, it was impressive how things were fitting together.

What had Hollweg's purpose been in sending Phil to Düsseldorf with a leaky cover story? That was another unanswered question. Perhaps he believed that the East German agent—whoever he was—who had organized Max's murder would at once turn his attention on an American who came asking after him.

That would have to wait, too. Right now he had to make up his mind. He could go to the embassy in Bonn, for instance, and say, "There is a plot to foment a rising in the East Zone, and three thousand guns are going to be smuggled in."

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They'd say, "Who's supplying them?" *A former industrial adviser to the U.S. military government.* "How are they being sent across?" *I don't know.* "That's the door over there."

No, he needed something a hell of a sight more positive than the hearsay of two former concentration-camp victims. And there was only one man he could get it from—Hollweg himself.

CHAPTER XX

In the Munich phone directory he found a Meissner living on Vaduzstrasse—Frau Bertha Meissner. And the number was 11.

Thoughtfully whistling very softly to himself, Phil turned up the collar of his coat and walked down Vaduzstrasse from the farther end. It was a pleasant street. When he had first heard the common nickname for Munich—*das Millionendorf*, village of a million people—he had assumed it was due either to the curious way in which it is still dominated by a single main street, like a spinal column, or to the many corners of it which look like small country towns.

The name had nothing to do with either, of course. It was a derogatory reference to the supposed parochialism of Münchener. None the less, Vaduzstrasse brought his first impressions back to mind. There were neat gardens in front of the houses, and lime trees were set at intervals in the sidewalk.

A *crazy* town. Whereabouts was it he had seen that woman soaked in blood fighting the four policemen as they dragged her away after knifing her lover? Not far from here. There was something sick about the place when you got to know it.

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He'd been glad to move north to Nürnberg after a week or ten days, even though it had meant leaving Renate behind.

Same country, another world. Maybe that had been his first glimpse into the other world. He'd disliked it instinctively and had moved on. But this time he couldn't.

Number 11 was on the opposite side. Under one of the limes he stopped and surveyed it. There was a shocking-pink Borgward Isabella parked outside. The house itself was an architect's adaptation of the German country-style buildings he remembered from childhood fairy-tale books—wooden shutters at the windows pierced with cutout hearts, gabled dormers in the roof. The whole thing was as neat—and as phony—as a studio set.

There was no hope of seeing inside, through the windows, unless someone came very close to the glass. The day was dull and overcast, and there were the usual net curtains across the lower panes.

He glanced both ways and crossed the road, walking around the parked car by the gate. The driver's window was down, and the ignition key was in the dash. A coat lay on the passenger's seat. It looked very much as if it had arrived within the past few minutes, and the occupants had gone indoors—maybe with the first of their baggage—and were due back any moment. He grunted to himself and walked up the path to the front door.

Soft chimes sounded when he pressed the bell. He waited. Shortly the door opened.

In the hallway stood a woman with a face as round and expressionless, and nearly as white, as a Bavarian dumpling. She stood foursquare on legs like pillars, her body stylized into a thick column decorated with immense breasts and vast hips. Her gray hair had been given a purple rinse by an expert coiffeur. Her brown-and-gray dress was of *couture* design. Black eyes like sultanas in the dough of her face regarded him. Red-pasted lips parted to say in a tone neither polite nor rude, "*Ja?*"

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"*Herr Hollweg, bitte,*" Phil said easily. "*Sind Sie Frau Bertha Meissner?*"

"*Ja.*" She hesitated a moment. "*Ihr Name, bitte?*"

"Phil Burns."

She hesitated again. At length she sighed and stood back from the door. "*Herein, bitte.*"

"*Danke.*" He crossed the threshold, looking about him. A single glance, and he knew beyond doubt that in all his life he had never been in a house so expensively furnished in such execrably bad taste. A combination of German *Bürgerlichkeit* and Victoriana contrived to make even this entrance hall an oppressive nightmare.

She invited him into a room off the hallway which was no better—dark with brown velvet drapes, every inch of space on walls and tables crammed with bric-a-brac, as welcoming as a funeral parlor. She waved him to a seat and promised to inform Herr Hollweg that he was here.

The door closed on Phil moving obediently to the indicated seat. The instant the latch clicked, he was doubling back on his tracks and putting his ear to the door. He heard her ponderous footsteps swishing across the deep pile of the carpet on the other side, then another door opening—that of the room next to this at the back of the house, he judged. He heard her say that a man called Phil Burns was asking for Hollweg, and Hollweg's voice, accompanied by a clatter suggesting he had dropped a piece of cutlery on a china plate.

"*Donnerwetter! Wo ist er?*"

He barely caught the answer. There was no getting around it—he was going to have to open the door. The wall between the two rooms was too cluttered with pictures, framed photographs and porcelain plates on wire mounts, for him to risk putting his ear to it, even if he climbed over the furniture ranged along it. Fortunately the lock was well oiled. He missed only one or two exchanges as he slipped out into the hallway again.

The door of the back room was closed now. Creeping up to it, he heard Frau Meissner excusing herself in an injured

tone for saying Hollweg was here; if he didn't want to see Burns, why didn't he warn her? There was some interjection in a third voice then—Wolfgang's. So he'd come back with Hollweg.

Phil considered Frau Meissner, Wolfgang Meissner, and Hans Hollweg in rapid sequence, and was unable to decide which of the trio turned his stomach the most.

"Tell him I can't see him," Hollweg was saying. "Tell him to leave the address of his hotel or whatever and I'll call him later."

Phil turned the handle of the door and threw it open.

For a moment there was a tableau. Hollweg and Wolfgang—resplendent in an Italian suit of palest blue-gray, with a narrow silk tie and an American button-down shirt—were sitting on opposite sides of a dining table covered with an elaborate hand-embroidered cloth. The vacant place at the end of the table between them would be Frau Meissner's. In front of it steamed a china tureen full of plum dumplings in syrup sauce. Wolfgang, tired of waiting, had begun to help himself, and one dumpling lay on a plate before him. There were stacks of gingery *Nürnberger Kuchen*, *Dalken*, an enormous *Gugelhupf*.

Obviously Frau Meissner believed in feeding her boys.

"Burns!" Hollweg said. "What the hell do you mean by walking in here uninvited?"

Phil put one shoulder against the door jamb and shrugged the other. "I'm not staying at a hotel," he said. "So there's no point in your ringing me later. I don't like people trying to fob me off."

"What are you doing here anyway? I told you to call me from Düsseldorf this evening!" Hollweg snatched up a napkin from his lap, wiped his mouth rapidly, and pushed his chair back from the table. Frau Meissner, staring at Phil, began to sidle around the room away from him, as if intending to get the table between her and this maybe dangerous intruder.

"Another thing I don't like is being lied to." Phil made

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the statement evenly and dispassionately. "I've got a bone to pick with you, Hollweg, and the sooner the better."

Hollweg's face reflected his indecision. He bit his lip. At length he said, "Bertha, would you and Wolfgang mind leaving me alone to deal with this son-of-a-bitch?"

Wolfgang, who had been gazing at Phil with hate-filled eyes, let out a wail. "I haven't finished! Mutti, it's been like this the whole time. He's ordered me out of his way; he's pushed me around as if I were *dirt!*"

In Frau Meissner's pudding face Phil could read the high probability of a nauseating attack of maternal devotion. Rather than face it, he pushed himself away from the door jamb.

"You'd better come into the front room," he said. "You wouldn't want to upset Wolfi, would you?"

For an instant he thought Hollweg was going to throw something at him. Then the pale man was on his feet, balling up his napkin and throwing it on the table.

"All right, get in there," he said.

The moment Hollweg had closed the door of the front room, he turned on Phil.

"What the hell's the idea?" he snapped. "If you're trying to be clever——"

"Shut up!" Phil gave the words the finality of a steel trap. "First off, I want to know why you sent me to Düsseldorf with a cover story that was an obvious lie to the people I had to deal with."

"What do you mean?" Hollweg's scar was standing out on his forehead, and a trace of sweat made his face glisten.

"You know what I mean—saying that I was supposed to have met Max in Essen on the one day when it was impossible for him to have met anyone except you because he kept that meeting as short and secret as possible."

Hollweg's eyes twitched from side to side. He said, regaining some of his composure, "My dear Burns, I did

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nothing of the kind. Max didn't tell me he was hiding the fact of his visit to Essen. I assumed he made the trip on some excuse and combined it with a call on me."

"He may not have told you. He told Lotte Niemand."

"I—see." Hollweg was calm again now. "From the furious way you burst in here, I assume that oversight of mine got you into trouble. I apologize. It *was* only an oversight. But if you came down here to Munich in a flaming temper just because of that, I must say you're not the man I took you for, nor the type of person I care to rely on."

"The hell!" Phil said with violence. "I came here to ask you two things and tell you one. This—this 'oversight,' as you politely call it, didn't get me into any trouble I couldn't handle, but it damned well might have." He paused, for effect. "All right, you sent me to Düsseldorf to try to discover who sold out Max Moritz. Thanks to this transparent lie, I damned nearly didn't get anywhere. Why in hell didn't you *tell* me what you were doing?"

Hollweg's face went stony. He said, as though compelling himself not to be impatient for the answer, "What am I supposed to be doing?"

"There's only one rational explanation!" Phil wondered how long he could keep Hollweg on the jump so that he had no time to ask for detailed information about what had happened in Düsseldorf. "You're trying to get arms into the East Zone. Jesus, did you think I'd foul up the deal? Putting something like that over on the Commies sounds like the greatest!"

Add to the list of people who turn my stomach Phil Burns, liar.

"But the way you're going about it," he plunged on, "you aren't going to see the deal through! Or maybe it wasn't your fault directly—maybe it was Max's for not knowing about the man planted at the club. In which case it was damned stupid to enlist Max's help."

"What man planted at the club?" Hollweg demanded sharply.

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Phil gave a laugh which he hoped didn't sound as forced as it felt. "Staring you in the face!" he said. "Fenstermacher, the one-eyed piano player."

Hollweg's expression changed completely. "Just a minute, Burns," he said. "You wait here. What you've just told me is so important——" He turned to the door.

"Hold it! Am I right?"

"About Fenstermacher? I'll have to check up, but——"

"About what you're doing!"

Hollweg's eyes were shifty again. "Yes!" he exclaimed at last. "But I'll be back in a moment. Just wait here."

He slipped out the door. There was a click, and a key turned in the lock on the outside.

Phil, in the middle of a wave of relief, tensed in horror. He strode over to try the door, found it was solidly locked, and let his hand fall disgustedly to his side.

The fact is, I'm not cut out for these capers.

After a moment he breathed more easily. At least he seemed to be stringing Hollweg along satisfactorily up to now. And he was going to have to put up with treatment like this, uncomplaining, if he was going to get any closer to the details of Hollweg's plan.

He walked back across the room, to stand facing the door and await the other's return.

Shortly, the key turned, the door opened, and Hollweg came in. On his face was an expression of mockery mingled with relief. And in his right hand, which he removed from his jacket pocket as he closed the door again, was a nine-millimeter Biretta automatic.

"Very close, Burns!" he said, wiping his face. "Very close indeed. It was a sheer miracle that I insisted on Hermann's going to check up on your story under the pretense of settling his dead brother's affairs. I saw him in Frankfurt this morning and he told me that directly after you came out of the hospital there, you went to see a CIA man at the United States Consulate!"

CHAPTER XXI

Next time I see Greer I'll say to him, "I'm tired of you frigging me around." If I ever do see him.

It seemed like a very remote possibility as he stared down the muzzle of Hollweg's gun. But he said in a voice that blended alarm and anger in fairly convincing proportions, "I don't know what in hell you're talking about!"

"No?" Hollweg's tone was cynically suave.

"When I came out of the hospital in Frankfurt, it's true there was a message waiting for me to call at the U.S. Consulate, and I went there. But the man I saw was a member of the staff—wasn't he?"

"You're a clever liar," Hollweg said, after a moment of incipient doubt. "No, it won't wash. No member of the consulate's staff would be as interested in the death of Max Moritz, a German citizen, as this man has been." He gave a chuckle that made Phil's spine crawl. "And you know, Fenstermacher was almost a good choice for a traitor. I believe he is paid by somebody to watch the club—but by the police, I think. I'll look into it, but I'm pretty sure. I suppose you took him for a concentration-camp victim sympathetic to the Communists. A lot of people do. But he lost his eye fighting in the army on the Russian front."

Phil was hardly listening. His mind was racing at top speed.

"I appreciate your consideration in not checking in at a hotel here," Hollweg went on. "It's going to make your

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mysterious disappearance a great deal easier to arrange. I told you that you knew so much I had to have you either on my side or dead. Well, you aren't on my side. So—" He gestured with the gun. "Put up your hands and come slowly toward the door. You'll have to be kept out of the way till I can dispose of you."

Obediently, Phil made to raise his hands. He did it so naturally that for a moment Hollweg relaxed.

At waist height, Phil gave his right hand a flick. At chest height he turned the knife over with blurring speed, and at shoulder height he threw.

The blade went into Hollweg's right biceps with a sound like a cleaver cutting beef. He cried out at the pain, and the muscles of his hand went limp. The gun thudded to the carpet. Phil swept up a miscellany of articles from a table close beside him. A china-based lamp smashed on Hollweg's forehead, a silver-framed photograph slashed edge-wise against his mouth, and an immense ceramic ashtray thumped into his belly.

Grunting, Hollweg doubled over, partly from the blow in the belly and partly in a wild attempt to retrieve his gun. Phil closed the gap between them with a stride and a half and kneed him in the face, then knocked him sideways with a crash against a spindle-legged occasional table. He heard a rattling commotion in the next room, as if Wolfgang had been startled at the noise and had let something fall.

The gun. He snatched it up and dropped it in the side pocket of his coat. And the knife—he dared not leave it behind. He clubbed Hollweg behind the head as he struggled to free himself from a tangle of lace tablecloth, pulled the knife out, and wiped it clean on the end of the cloth. It was incredible how much time he had at his disposal now that he knew exactly what he was doing.

He hurled the blood-smeared cloth aside and ran to the door. He flung it open on the sight of Wolfgang and his mother struggling in the middle of the hallway. Wolfgang

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was shrieking to be allowed to go to Hollweg's help. His mother, Wagnerianly brawny for all her fat, was dragging him back and refusing to let him expose himself to danger. On Phil's emergence both of them fell back with shrieks of alarm—Wolfgang's almost soprano, his mother's chording insanelly below it.

Phil ignored them and raced to the front door. He slammed it behind him, raced down the path, and jumped the low gate. The door of the shocking-pink car opened at his touch. The engine was warm and came to life with a roar. He was in gear and accelerating down the street before the front door of the house opened again.

He caught one glimpse of Hollweg, death-pale, shaking off the attentions of Wolfgang and staggering down the path before he swung around the corner and out of sight.

He gave a faint chuckle at the memory of Wolfgang and his mother wrestling in the hallway, turned another corner, and slowed as he approached traffic waiting for lights to change. Then his mouth set in a grim line.

First off, he was going to have to lose this car. It was far too conspicuous a color. It had probably been given to Wolfgang by his mother. *Why couldn't the bastard have settled for something that didn't announce its presence as clearly as a fire truck—a black Opel, say? Or a VW?*

Nuts.

The point was that Wolfgang, or Frau Meissner, could, and by now probably would, have decided to notify the police that the car had been stolen. It was extremely unlikely that Hollweg would dare to tell the police about the knifing, in his present precarious situation. All the more, since he had apparently got the impression that Phil was an American intelligence agent working with Greer.

The best Hollweg could hope for would be to have Phil caught with the car and shoved into a cell for a while—long enough to cook up a convincing counter-story. Even that wasn't reliable insurance. As Hollweg had seen very clearly, his only real path to safety was to have Phil put permanently

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out of the way. And if half the stories that were told about this town were true, Phil's being in police custody might not save him.

Moral: Don't get caught with the car. Long-term moral: Don't bank on your ability to bluff desperate men without making contingent plans.

Because the unfortunate truth was that he had nothing worked out past the point at which he had hoped to persuade Hollweg he was an enthusiastic supporter. *Damn* Moritz for going to Frankfurt! He wasn't supposed to travel—he was supposed to sit on his fat behind in London and look after the office . . .

Look after the office.

The seed of an idea took root in Phil's mind. Angela. And on the subject of girls, Renate.

It was about as slim a chance as you could hope for. But he didn't have anything better.

Three-quarters of an hour later he was outside the door of Renate's apartment. A hell of a lot of things had changed, he reflected sourly, since that pleasant afternoon in July when he had picked her up under a flowering tree in those extraordinary Italianate gardens at—no, he never had remembered the name. Their nine days together had been fun but exhausting. He had been glad to bow out when her parents came back to the apartment from a trip abroad. She had wanted him to take a room with her and stay on, but what the hell . . .

He was a trifle dubious about what he'd done with the car. He had never been faced with the problem of losing one before. In the end, he had run it down a narrow alley not far from a bus route that would take him to Renate's place, wiped it absolutely free of fingerprints as far as he could tell, put the coat and all other loose gear in the trunk, which he had locked, then locked the doors and dropped the keys, wrapped in a sheet from an old *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, into a handy litter bin.

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He rang the bell. Instantly there was a faint gasp from inside the apartment, followed by a scuffling and what sounded like sharp panicky instructions issued in a shrill whisper. He didn't catch their meaning, but the general tenor was obvious. Suddenly extremely weary, he leaned one arm on the doorpost and grinned to himself. Renate's parents were away a second time, that was for sure.

He rang again, for the hell of it, and she called out in a shaky tone that she was coming as quickly as she could. An inside door opened and closed rather too hurriedly for quietness.

Then the outer door opened cautiously about two inches, and Renate's baby-blue eyes and chubby face appeared in the gap.

The door flew wide, and she let her hands fall to her sides, limp as a rag doll with relief. "Phil! I almost didn't recognize you with that beard. I thought you were my parents come back a day early."

"Can I use your phone?" Phil said.

The words didn't register. Renate had pulled on—with such haste she had mussed her upswept blond hair—a sweater and jeans. It wasn't a good choice. Even without his personal knowledge, he would have been aware of the absence of her bra.

"Phil, it's wonderful to see you, but—uh—you haven't picked exactly the most convenient time—"

"Can I use your phone? I'm on the run from the cops." He knew that would reach her; Renate was extremely proud of the people she knew on the shady side of the law.

Her eyes widened tremendously. "Heavens! Come in quickly!" She seized him by the wrist and dragged him across the threshold, slamming the door behind him. "What *have* you been doing? You must tell me! Poldi, it's okay—it's a friend of mine, so you can come out." That was hurled over her shoulder at a closed door on the other side of the open-plan room into which he had come. "There's the phone over there. . . . Oh, but you know, of course."

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She went to a big lounge on which the cushions showed signs of having been frantically shoved back into place, and pushed at it to straighten them a little. "Go ahead. Are they following you? Shall I lock the door again?"

There was a black ribbon hanging out from under one of the cushions. Catching sight of it, she put her hand to her mouth in horror, then giggled.

"Phil, I'm *so glad* you weren't my parents coming back! I was in what they call a compromising position. Poldi, where the devil have you got to?"

From the inner room a good-looking red-haired young man about Phil's age emerged rather bashfully, tucking a comb into his pocket. He said, "Uh—hi."

"Phil, Poldi—Poldi, Phil. Phil's on the run from the cops, Poldi. Isn't it exciting?"

Poldi didn't quite know what to answer to that. He compromised with an unverbilized noise and ran a finger around the inside of his shirt collar.

"How do you get an overseas call from here?" Phil said, moving to the table on which the telephone stood. Renate put a finger childishly between her teeth.

"I don't know," she said. "I don't think I ever made one. Where do you want to call?"

"London." Phil found the directory instructions and began to leaf through them, pulling a chair around with one foot and sitting down on it. Renate came over and leaned on his shoulder, her hair tickling his ear.

"Phil, what have you been *doing*? Please tell me!"

"You can go and wash that if you like," Phil said, pulling his knife from the side pocket into which he had dropped it. He had wiped the blade fairly thoroughly, but there might be a trace of blood near the handle. "Handle with care—it's sharp." *Blood on the lining of the pocket, maybe. Who uttered that monster platitude about tangled webs?*

Renate took the knife with an exclamation. "Phil, you haven't *killed* anybody, have you?"

"Nope. And nobody's killed me, either, but it wasn't for

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want of trying." He found the paragraph of instructions he wanted and read it as he fumbled out his billfold to look for the business card Moritz had given him.

What to do if she's not there? He invoked the friendly godling and reached for the phone.

"Renate, I didn't mean to interrupt, you know. Why don't you and Poldi forget that I'm here? I won't be long, and I can let myself out."

Poldi gave a stifled sort of noise that might perhaps be interpreted as "I couldn't!" Renate, by contrast, gave a smile as sweet as honey.

"That's very nice of you, Phil. You're sure you don't—"

"No, I don't anything. But give back that knife, for God's sake."

"Yes. I'll wash it for you first."

He got out a cigarette and lit it, waiting for the operator to speak. When the answer came, he gave the London number and asked how long it would take to make a connection. A few minutes, she told him. He cradled the phone and leaned back.

"Here's your knife," Renate said. She watched with fascination as he returned it to the sheath, then caught his wrist for a closer look. "You didn't have that when you were here before, did you?"

Gently he detached her hand. "Honey, I have other problems on my mind."

"Okay," she shrugged. "Come on, Poldi." And she dragged her astounded and protesting boy friend in the direction of her own bedroom.

CHAPTER XXII

Of course, all the odds were that when the phone rang again and he lifted it up, he'd hear the operator saying that there was no reply from the London number. What was he going to do then? He drew on his cigarette and tried to work out something. And failed. No good. His planned resources had been drained dry by the helter-skelter succession of the day's events.

Maybe a drink would help.

He got up and went to the cabinet at the end of the room, against the wall under the original Picasso, to see what was left after Renate had been here on her own. Amazingly, there were several bottles nearly full. He poured himself a large measure of Stock Italian brandy and drank half of it, refilled the glass to its former level, and walked slowly back to the chair by the phone.

Same country, different world. Those words kept coming back and beating in his mind. What the hell was Phil Burns, *Wandervogel*, doing making with the cloak-and-dagger stuff, anyway? He didn't have to find himself here for the second time because he'd knifed a man and stolen a car and been warned off by Greer and attempted to foul up a dangerously explosive plot—he could just have come back for Renate.

Not expecting to find her waiting, of course.

No, he couldn't. The reason why not was a long way back in his mind, but he dug for it and finally thought he had it. It had a little to do with what Greer had said—you can't retire from the world. That, though, was a superficial way to look at it. More to the point, he felt responsible.

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It wasn't any of his doing that made the world as it was, divided into hostile camps, a single vast battleground as Greer had called it. It wasn't his fault that Lotte Niemand was orphaned with a beautiful body and a scarred mind.

But for what might happen tomorrow, next week, next year—for that, Phil Burns was responsible, along with all the Joe Smiths of the planet Earth.

He took another gulp of the warming brandy. *We got lazy somewhere along the line. We rewrote the old saying and made it: If you want a thing done well, you hire it done.*

The phone shrilled. He almost spilled his drink in his hurry to get at it.

"Your call to London," the operator said. And then, faint and crackling, a voice he recognized.

"This is Angela Walker. Is that—is that Mr. Hollweg?"

"No. It's Phil Burns."

There was a stunned pause. Suddenly a burst of laughter, discolored with hysteria, filled the phone. He waited for it to end. At last she drew a deep, shaking breath. He heard her teeth click together as if she were biting off a threatened renewal of the laughter.

"Oh-oh-oh-oh, my *God!* Phil, damn you—if you knew what it cost me to make myself answer the phone, because if I didn't and it was Moritz or Hollweg calling they'd be suspicious, and then when I heard it was from Munich—"

He said, "You aren't working for Moritz and Hollweg any more."

"How do you know?" Wondering, as if she had witnessed a minor miracle.

"I'm telling you. But I get the impression you already made up your mind."

"Phil, yes I did! I'm free—I feel crazy with joy, I just can't say! And—my God, I must warn you! Moritz went off to Frankfurt to check up on the story you told him! They gave you that money and sent you to Germany to get you out of the way, and really, they're——"

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"I know," Phil cut in. "I saw Hollweg this afternoon. Do you know what your bosses have been trying to do?"

Suddenly very calm and serious, she said, "Yes, I think I do. I've spent the whole day hunting through Moritz's papers—I managed to get the key to his safe off his key chain while he was asleep, to look for that—that thing I told you about. I was afraid he might have it in a safe-deposit somewhere, but I found it. Phil, do you hear me? I found it! And I've just burned it right in the middle of Hermann *bastard* Moritz's desk!"

"But you found other things as well?"

"Yes. I knew they were in trouble; I knew they'd contracted with Kuyper for some arms, and then the deal fell through and they couldn't pay. But I didn't know how desperate they were. That's not the only debt they have hanging over them. There's a set of accounts in the safe that I didn't know about, which I've only glanced at, but it looks as if they're in the red for about twenty thousand pounds."

"Good," Phil said without emphasis. "What are you going to do?"

"I don't know." She took a deep breath. "When the phone rang, I suddenly realized. I don't even know whether Moritz is going to stay in Germany or come straight back. I've got nothing to go by; he's never gone away and left me here by myself before, and usually he won't even let me be in the office alone for more than a few minutes. It's only thanks to you that he got absent-minded and worried enough to let me steal the safe key from him."

"Do you want to foul them up, stop them doing what they're trying to do?"

"If you know a way I can get a little of my own back on them," she said with passionate bitterness, "just tell me."

"Right." Phil raised his glass and drained it in a silent toast to the friendly godling, who was doing him proud at the moment. "I'd suggest you start by wrapping up those

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secret accounts, along with maybe the safe key and a sheet of the firm's letterhead, and putting them in the mail to the Fraud Squad at Scotland Yard. If things happen in Britain anything like they do in the States, that ought to give them a headache for a few weeks. Maybe you could send a note to this guy Kuyper, too, saying the police are getting interested in the firm."

"Right, I'll do that." She sounded satisfied.

"Now, you've been through the safe. Did you find any maps or anything in there? Did you find the bit of paper that was in the watch I brought Moritz?"

"No—Hollweg has that. And there aren't any maps."

Too much to hope for anything as obvious as a map, anyway. Phil considered for a moment.

"Look, the figures on the back of that bit of paper—they were probably a map reference showing the place where Hollweg's guns are supposed to be taken across the East German border. Have you found anything with figures on it—probably a dozen random-looking figures?"

"I—I may have. I'll look for it now, if you like."

"You do that. Then—you have a valid passport?"

"Y-yes."

"Fine. I want you to come over here to Munich. I've got to know every scrap of information you've picked up about Moritz and Hollweg's dealings. Get a pencil and make a note of this address, and cable me the time of your arrival—better fly out for the sake of speed. Oh, just a moment." Suppose Renate's parents came back? But what the hell, even if he couldn't stay here, which he'd been subconsciously considering, he could get Renate to pass the message for him. "You have enough money?"

"Yes. I've saved quite a lot."

"Fine. You'll be spending it in a good cause. Buy some American Express or Cook's travelers' checks. Oh, you figure that side of it. I'll meet you at the airport."

"And—what do we do then?"

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"We go into the carpentry business," Phil said. "We saw, and plane, and screw, and varnish a nice big coffin for Moritz and Hollweg. Suit you?"

For the past few minutes there had been a stifled altercation going on behind the door of Renate's room. Just as Phil cradled the phone, that door flew open and Poldi emerged, his face as red as his carrotty hair, pulling tight the belt of his pants. Behind him appeared Renate. She had taken off her sweater. Phil looked with clinical approval at her handsome bosom. It was just as well formed as he remembered.

"Poldi!" she exclaimed.

Poldi threw over his shoulder some remark about girls who want to do it practically in public, flung open the outside door, and slammed it behind him on another angry wail from Renate.

Sensitive type, obviously. Phil lit another cigarette. His first had burned out while he was talking on the phone.

Renate's command of English was limited, but it included a few cult words like *creep* and *square*. Poldi was both, with knobs on. It took a little while for her temper to cool. When there was a break in the flow of insults, Phil took advantage of it.

"Have a drink," he suggested.

"Great idea," she agreed sourly, and turned to the cabinet. "You?"

"Another brandy."

"Another? Make yourself at home!" But she came and got his glass and refilled it, then poured for herself, took a big cushion from the lounge, and squatted cross-legged on it on the floor.

"Isn't there anybody alive in this miserable hamlet?" she exploded. "I'm so *bored*, I'm so *depressed*—" She tossed back her drink. "Give me a cigarette," she added.

Phil obliged.

"Okay, now then!" She leaned against the front of the

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lounge. "Since you've driven Poldi away, I guess I'd better hear what you've been up to. I hope it's interesting."

"Just a moment," Phil said. "How long are your parents supposed to be away?"

"Till tomorrow. It was just that when you rang the bell I had a horrible feeling I might have got the days of the week wrong. I usually do."

I remember. "Can I stay here tonight?"

"I haven't got anybody else lined up," she said with heavy sarcasm. "Apparently Poldi changed his mind."

"That'll do fine."

A spark of real interest glowed in her china-blue eyes now. She said speculatively, "Phil, you're beginning to sound exciting."

"It probably does sound exciting." He sighed. "If you're in the middle of it, it's different."

She gave a kind of frog hop without getting up, and moved from her cushion to the floor at his feet, putting one elbow on his knees. Looking up at his face, she said with impatience, "Well, go *on*! You said the cops were after you—why?"

"Presumably because of the car I had to steal to get away."

She pressed her lips together—not good enough yet. "Whose car was it?"

"I imagine it belongs to someone called Wolfgang Meissner. Or maybe——"

She sat upright, startled. "Wolfi Meissner? Not that unfortunate queer with the horrible mother?"

"You know him?" Equally startled, Phil blinked at her.

"He's practically one of the sights for tourists. Phil, you haven't been going around with *him*, have you?"

Phil threw his head back and roared with laughter. He couldn't remember when he'd last found anything so funny. It was a rest cure in itself to enjoy the laughter.

Finally he recovered and had to wipe his eyes. Renate was looking at him with a mischievous grin.

"I didn't really think that," she said. "I just said it

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because I was annoyed with you for driving Poldi away. He's very nice, even if he is shy. Where's Wolfi mixed up in this?"

"Ah . . ." His mind worked swiftly. Anything he told Renate was likely to get passed on in highly decorated form, so he would have to doctor some of the details. "Well, one of Wolfi's boy friends is connected with an import-export company—you know, shady type—and I was hired to deliver something for him." A bit of smuggling—that would be to Renate's romantic taste. "And he tried to welsh on the deal, pulled a gun on me, which I didn't approve of, so I had to use the knife and steal the car to get away. I've got to lie low till tomorrow morning. There'll be a cable for me from London telling me a plane to meet at the airport."

Renate's eyes were quite round. "Goodness! Did anyone see you come here?"

"I doubt it very much. This man doesn't dare give too many details about me, because he'd involve himself, you see."

Renate jumped to her feet. Crossing her arms on her bosom, she went to the window and peered cautiously down at the street. "I don't see anybody who might be watching this building," she said in a whisper. "But we'll have to be careful."

"Oh, sure. I hope you have food in the place, because I don't want to show myself on the streets."

"Yes—yes, there's plenty of food laid in." She came back padding on bare feet, looking at him delightedly. "Oh, Phil, this is exciting!"

She stubbed her cigarette, finished her drink, and sat down on his lap. "Phil, I'm awfully glad you thought of coming to me for help. Why did you?"

No use telling the exact truth and saying he couldn't remember anyone else's address in Munich. He shrugged, framing his reply carefully.

"Well, if I'm going to have to lie low for a while, I thought I might as well pick somebody worth passing the time with."

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She gave a little squeal of pleasure. "Tough guy!" she said in English—that was also in her selected vocabulary. She snuggled up to him and put her arm around his neck, opening her mouth against his.

He was considerably disturbed, sometime after midnight, when she moved sleepily alongside him and spoke reflectively to the ceiling.

"Shame Poldi walked out. That would have been interesting, you know."

Jesus. Phil had no answer to that, and after a while he drifted into sleep.

CHAPTER XXIII

The cable had said, *Arrive 1210 hours meet me Walker.* At about 10 A.M. Phil stretched himself, rolled over, and pushed a protesting Renate out of bed to make coffee for them. He lay for a few minutes longer with his eyes closed, enjoying a sensation of buoyancy he hadn't expected to feel again till this business was over and done with.

Things seemed to be remarkably under control. Only one serious risk faced him at the moment that he could see: he might conceivably run into Hollweg at the airport. Munich was a big city, and the danger of their meeting by chance anywhere else was negligible.

At the airport, though . . .

"Phil!" A squeal from Renate, pushing back the bedroom door. She had put on a shorty robe which came just to the

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crease under her buttocks, but hadn't bothered to fasten it. "Phil, where did you get this?"

This, he saw with horror, was the nine-millimeter Biretta he had taken from Hollweg. She was turning it over from hand to hand as if admiring a new piece of jewelry. Now she raised it, laughing, to pantomime leveling it at him. He swept the covers aside and was on his feet with a bound.

She cried out as he took it from her and clutched her hand. "Phil, that hurt!"

"These things don't just hurt, they *kill*," he said roughly. He checked the safety. Then he did what he ought to have done the evening before—he stripped the magazine and cleared out the shells. Then he put the gun and shells in separate pockets of his coat. "I'm not kidding," he said over his shoulder. "That gun was damned nearly used on me yesterday, and I don't want it pointed at me again."

"But you didn't have to hurt me!"

He folded the coat carefully and put it down. Turning, he gave her a thoughtful look. He said, "I could imagine Wolfi Meissner saying something like that."

"What?" Her pride was tender. He had aimed the remark squarely for it.

"It's a spoiled-baby sort of complaint. Why do you think I used my knife yesterday? When you point guns at people, you aren't playing."

"But *I* was . . ." The words trailed away. She pulled her robe around her and did it up. "Yes, I'm sorry. I'll go fix the coffee."

He watched her go to the kitchen with the hem of the robe bobbing at her bottom, then sighed and made for the bathroom. Under the shower he thought about Renate and girls like her—children of wealthy parents (he didn't know what business her father was in, but it paid immensely for things like original Picassos) trying to make a life for themselves in a muddled, threatening world. His thoughts

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were gray and seemed patronizing. A few months ago, he hadn't felt this way about her.

Maybe this is what nearly being killed does to a man. I feel older. I feel old.

He shut off the shower and went to rinse his mouth. All his gear was in the locker at the main railroad station where he'd left it on arrival yesterday. It depended on what Angela told him whether he collected it or left it for later.

Dry, he walked back to the bedroom to get dressed. He was just picking up his clothes when there were soft steps behind him, and a hand touched his arm.

"Not yet, Phil. I want to show you I'm sorry. I didn't mean to upset you like that."

Beyond this point, there were plenty of alternatives open. As soon as he had something concrete, he would go to the authorities. He had been handed a monstrous gift of power, and the weight of it was exhausting.

"Phil! Phil?" Uncertainly, as she started to open her robe. She bit her lip, staring at him. Suddenly she flung her arms around his neck, put her right leg behind his calves.

"Phil, you look so miserable you're frightening me!"

"It's not your fault," he said. "It's the fault of the whole goddamned world."

Cautiously, mindful of the fact that his luck had been far too good, he waited by a pillar in the airport building for the passengers to come off the London flight. He saw Angela long before she saw him—pale, so that her lips were like a red bruise on her white skin, her black hair coming loose from the mother-of-pearl comb he had seen her wear before. She was frightened, but you had to know it before you saw the signs.

It hadn't occurred to him to worry that she might arrive with a load of baggage. He didn't have to. At the customs bench she picked out two light canvas grips. It was then that she saw him, as her eyes flicked for the hundredth time over the crowds coming and going, wondering if Hollweg

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might be here. After that recognition, which brought relief to her face and a flattering light to her eyes, it seemed to take an eternity before she was through all the formalities.

Gathering her bags, she hurried toward him. As casually as if he were greeting a sister, he took one of the bags, kissed her cheek, and linked arms with her.

"Phil, am I glad to see you!" she said in a low voice. "The time since you called me—it's been a nightmare. Especially the trip over. I cleared everything out of the house and went to stay at the hotel near the airport, and I couldn't sleep because I was visualizing Moritz coming back and finding me gone and perhaps telling the police that I'd stolen something from him."

He gave her a sidelong grin. "And did you?"

"That bag you're holding has my clothes in it. This one has some things of his you'll be interested in."

"Good. I'm going to take you and look for a restaurant well away from the airport, and we'll have some lunch and give you a chance to calm down. I can't say how grateful I am for doing what I asked you. There wasn't any reason why you should."

She shrugged. "I found myself getting on the plane, and I suddenly thought, my God, here I am, burning my boats, headed for a strange country because a man I've known about three days says I ought to, with a collection of my employer's private papers in my bag and just about all the money I have in the world in my purse." She gave a tremulous laugh. "I thought, I've gone crazy—Isn't it wonderful?"

With a pang Phil remembered something he'd said to Max Moritz: "I don't know what the hell I'm going to do, and I don't care."

They found a restaurant where they could sit inconspicuously at the back, well away from the street. An apple-cheeked waitress brought them a fantastic dish of *Sauerbraten* and a mound of potato *Klösser*, and steins of *Löwen-*

bräu to drink with it. While they were eating, he recounted briefly what had happened since he left London.

She was paler than ever when she heard him out.

"I didn't know much of this," she said finally. "As a matter of fact, I didn't even know of Max's existence till after he was dead. If he was in the SS during the war and the black market afterward, it's not surprising Hermann wouldn't want to advertise his brother, I guess. But"—she leaned across the table and lowered her voice—"do you honestly mean that they're willing to risk triggering off a world war to get a purchaser for those guns they're stuck with?"

"All for the sake of a horseshoe nail—" he said. "I don't think I could ever get that desperate, and maybe Moritz couldn't, but Hollweg is a different case. He's going bankrupt, he has to find a purchaser, and he gets one contingent upon his finding a way of smuggling them into the East Zone—oh, I accept it."

"Then why haven't you reported this, to the German government or somebody?"

"I want to take it to our embassy in Bonn. But the point is this. Greer is CIA. I don't know how much weight that carries, but I imagine it's a lot. He hated my guts the first time he saw me. He doesn't approve of bums. He warned me off, telling me that if I didn't get the hell out of my own accord, he'd have me sent back to the States under escort."

"Can he do that?"

"He could probably fix it. I don't know about the legality of it. But even if it wasn't legal, and he did it, it'd be a hell of a lot of good establishing the fact on the other side of the Atlantic. And another thing—Hollweg was formerly an industrial adviser to the U.S. military government, and presumably he's kept a clean nose since then. If I were to show up at the embassy with the facts as I've got them, especially since I had to use my knife on Hollweg—and stole

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his gun, and his pal's car—I'd be in a hell of a mess. Worse still, if Greer has done as I feel sure he has—sent in a report complaining I've been obstreperous and unco-operative."

"Why would the CIA be interested in Max's death anyway?"

"You'd hardly expect Greer to tell me, would you? I can think of half a dozen possible reasons, but one's no more likely than any other." He pulled gloomily at his beer. "Why does this have to happen to *me*?"

"Aren't you pleased with yourself? Not at all?" She tried to gloss the words with mocking amusement, and failed.

"No. No, because I haven't got reason to be, as you have. You involved yourself for an ideal, as you saw it. When it turned sour on you, you took steps to redress the balance and break free. Which you've done. Whereas this whole thing just jumped on me. I didn't ask for it, and by and large I haven't done anything that wasn't dictated to me. On top of which, I'm operating on hearsay and guesswork, and I suppose it could turn out tomorrow that everything I've done was based on false premises. What the hell." He wiped a trace of beer foam from his upper lip and gestured at the bags on the floor under the table. "Did you find anything interesting in Moritz's safe, apart from your certificate of manumission?"

"My what?"

"The thing they give to slaves when they set them free."

She stared, then laughed. "Oh, I didn't find that in Moritz's safe. You gave it to me. You cut Moritz down to size for me. I guess I'd let him build up in my imagination to a kind of ogre; then you proved he was just a nasty, ordinary man. Even if you won't take credit for anything else, you've got that to be proud of."

He was astonished to see, as she bent hurriedly under the table to open one of her bags, that her cheeks had gone as red as fire.

CHAPTER XXIV

"You asked for anything with random-looking figures on it," she said, pulling out a fat bundle of papers. "This was all I could find."

He looked, slightly daunted, at the mass of documents. Then he sighed, pushed away dishes to make a clear space on the table, and lit a cigarette.

"Let's see them," he said.

But there were only commercial papers here. When he had sorted through them all without anything catching his eye, he glanced up to find Angela regarding him anxiously.

"Oh, nothing that looks likely. Have you anything else?"

"Yes." She sounded puzzled as she dipped into the bag again. "I don't know whether I did right, but I found these. They're not Moritz's. I think they may possibly be Hollweg's."

This time she brought up an envelope and gave a quick look around before taking out what was inside. It was a buff-colored file cover containing a number of printed forms. On the head of each was a U.S. Army imprint, and the words, *Office of the Receiver-General, United States Occupation Forces in Germany*.

Phil shaped his mouth into a soundless whistle. The sheets were numbered, but not in sequence. The first one was page 3, the next 8, and the rest were equally assorted. They were third or fourth carbon copies, gray and indistinct. There were printed rules dividing each page vertically into four columns. The first entry on page 3 read:

6) Neggeburg-Barfeld, Bav. / Munitions class II. /
In pilot production. / Located RAF photoreconnaissance

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mission, 1/17/45. Raided 1/21/45. Severe bomb damage, main tunnel collapsed, production ceased, not restored prior to VE-Day. Recovery of matériel not recommended—uneconomic.

A slow shiver crawled up Phil's spine. He turned the pages rapidly, looking for what a flash of inspiration told him must be there.

"Phil, do you think you've got something?" Angela demanded.

"I'm pretty certain." He didn't raise his eyes from the papers on the table. She didn't press him, but waited for him to speak. At length he leaned back in his chair, drawing on his cigarette, his eyes fixed on a point in space somewhere above her head. "Are you a—oh, a painter or anything?"

Startled, she said, "Well, as a matter of fact, I have done some water-color work. Phil, what on earth has that got to do with it?"

"Landscapes?"

"Yes!" Impatiently she waited for an explanation.

"Absolutely perfect. Couldn't be better. Did I ever tell you that a minor god has taken me under his personal supervision? Anything I need really badly, such as——"

"Phil, for heaven's sake!"

He sat upright in his chair, shaking his head and chuckling. "Sorry. I feel a bit dazed. I didn't expect to have the whole thing dumped in my lap like this. No, wait a moment—I'm exaggerating, because I may be completely wrong, but if I'm not, then I've found out how Hollweg proposes to get those guns through the border without anyone knowing." He drew on his cigarette a last time, and stubbed it.

"We'll have to go up there ourselves and make sure, of course. it's bound to be an isolated district—probably farming country with a small village of a few hundred inhabitants. The sort of place where strangers get gossiped about. You

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couldn't just go there and snoop around. But if you can paint landscapes, and if you don't mind my claiming your work for a few days, we can probably get away with it."

"Away with *what*? And give me a cigarette—you owe me one from our first meeting."

He took out his pack and gave her one. "What do you make of these forms here?" he said.

"Well, I assumed they were something Hollweg collected when he was working for the Americans over here after the war."

"Yes, obviously. But you know what they give details of?"

"Some sort of factories, by the look of them." Angela kept her eyes on his face.

"A particular kind. Dispersed underground factories. You know the Nazis suffered so badly from Allied bombing that they had to scatter their industry over half of creation—in forests, old mines, special underground tunnels. It was a fantastic job in the time available. They were still turning out V-tuos when the Allies crossed the Rhine."

"I've heard about this. But why would Hollweg want these forms? Not just as a souvenir!"

"Of course not. At first I wondered, why did he take just page 3, page 8, and so on, from what must have been a complete register? Then I got it. On each of these sheets are details of underground factories where either it wasn't considered economic to dig out and take away matériel buried by bombs, or else the occupying forces hadn't located the actual site. My guess is that Hollweg, with an eye to the future, envisaged salvaging the equipment from these places when the Allied pressure was off. Probably he never got around to it; he met Moritz and went into a different line of business. And then comes a real stroke of luck."

He turned the last of the assorted pages around so that she could read it, and put his forefinger on the next-to-last entry. She read aloud slowly, "Norbach—what's this abbreviation 'Thür.'?"

"Thüringen."

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"V-three production—was there a V-three?"

"There was going to be a whole series of V-weapons, but only V-one and V-two actually got off the ground. I don't remember what V-three was, but it doesn't matter. Read the rest of it."

Angela frowned. "Status uncertain. Record of appropriations of supplies for this factory exists, but no trace of a site survey has been found. Almost certainly it would be uneconomic to commandeer matériel (if any, which is doubtful), as this is a lonely and hilly area with few roads."

"Yes," Phil nodded, and said again, "Yes. It all fits too well to be coincidence. Here, look at this map I have." He took out his flimsy tourist map, now torn at the edges and beginning to split along the folds. Spreading it on the table, he went on. "You see Thüringen here—East Germany. Norbach is probably the name of a village so small you'll only find it on a really large-scale map, but that doesn't matter. The point is, the Nazis planned a V-three factory in lonely, hilly country. I'll lay a bet that because it was for *Vergeltungswaffen*, they did it up proud, put the whole thing underground. I'll lay another bet that it was somewhere within a few miles of *here*." He stabbed his finger down on the map between Hersfeld and Eisenach. "And I'll lay one further bet. The pilot tunnel for the underground workings exists, though nobody knows about it, and it runs slap underneath the East-West border."

They sat thinking about that in silence for some time. At length Phil stirred and gave a harsh laugh, taking out another cigarette.

"Hell of an idea, isn't it?" he said. "Hollweg must have had these papers for ten or twelve years at least. I wonder when it occurred to him to check up on this entry."

"But—" Angela's hand shook as she tapped ash from her cigarette. "But how could a thing like this escape notice for so long?"

Phil shrugged. "It's not inconceivable. Some of these un-

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derground factories were enormous places. If this one was planned on the grand scale, the pilot tunnel might be a mile long. They were worried about the efficiency of Allied aerial photography, so they'd have camouflaged the ends thoroughly—maybe planted a screen of shrubs and trees. If it's rough, hilly ground, with no roads passing within miles, why should anyone stumble on the tunnel?"

"Oh, but surely—right on the border as you assume it is . . ." She broke off.

"According to what I remember, they didn't actually go out and survey the whole border before defining it; they agreed to it over a map. Then presumably they marked it out, put up wire or whatever—and more recently, to stop the flood of defections to the West, the East Germans cleared a strip on their side. I don't know how wide it is—must be fifty yards in most places, I imagine. They've cut down trees and bushes and plowed up grass." He took a long swallow of his beer, his eyes focused somewhere in memory. "I remember thinking, when I went up to look at it, how artificial it seemed."

"And you think they could have missed a tunnel a mile long." Angela shook her head. "In that case, then, how do you propose to find it? Do you just get a map and a compass and follow up this reference Max Moritz got for Hollweg?"

"No, unfortunately. The reference was encoded. It'll mean locating the village of Norbach, going out there, and tramping the countryside maybe for weeks, hunting for it. Now you see why I wanted to know if you can paint. I think an artist, looking for places to paint, might convincingly do exactly that."

"Isn't there a risk that we'd find it too late?"

Phil frowned. "Of course there is. For one thing, you can't just move three thousand guns in the trunk of your car. I've no idea how big a consignment like that actually is, but you'd certainly need trucks and trailers for it. I'd say that Hollweg will want to shift his goods while there are still at least some leaves on the trees—unless there are only ever-

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greens in the locality, in which case it won't matter so much—but in any case before the first snow. Vehicle tracks on snow, lines of footprints, sound carrying more distinctly—all these are good reasons why he'll want to hurry. And his backers too, of course."

"How long has he got, then?"

"Not much more than a month. If he wants to play safe, two to three weeks." He emptied his stein of beer and looked at her. "Well? How do you fancy my suggestion?"

She colored a little. "You mean helping you to pose as an artist while you hunt for this tunnel? Oh, I'll do it, naturally. I think it's ingenious. But when I told you I'd be glad to get my own back on Moritz and Hollweg, I didn't realize this affair was so—so *big*." She made a helpless gesture.

"You think I did?" Phil said with a trace of bitterness.

"And you're still trying to tackle it on your own?"

"Listen!" Phil said, leaning forward. "I've been cracking my skull wondering when I'll be able to wrap up the whole lot and leave it for someone else to deal with. Do I say that we learned of the—barely possible—existence of an old tunnel under the border because you were burgling your boss's safe? If I'm wrong in my guess and it isn't there after all, how will they react? No use telling them, 'We did it with the best intentions!' When I started off in this I was angry at the people who killed Max Moritz because they nearly killed me too. Now I'm angry at them because by killing him they left me stuck with a problem I'd never otherwise have heard about, let alone had to try to solve!"

"Yes. Yes, I see all that." She sounded nervous. "But you'll have to forgive me for being worried."

"I'll forgive anybody anything if it'll help to take this load off my back," Phil said with feeling. "You know what's crazier about this than everything else put together? Max Moritz must have been conditioned worse than one of Pavlov's dogs by his black-marketeering and the rest of it. It was open to him at any time to seal his message up

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in an envelope and mail it. And he didn't. He went through this rigmarole of hiding it in the back of a watch."

"It wasn't that simple," Angela said. "His brother refused to let him. Hermann was terrified out of his wits by the whole deal. You saw what happened when you turned up, even though you had none of the details. He was afraid that the mail might be tampered with, the telephone might be tapped, or anything. Don't you remember how he tried to beat me for talking too freely to you? He saw his brother's death as confirmation of his worst fears. Even before you told him for certain it wasn't an accident, he was eaten up with terror."

"Served him right," Phil said morosely. He looked down at the folder containing the U.S. Army documents, and gave a sigh. "Well, since we can't think of anything better to do, we'll have to get on with it. Come on—we have a lot of stuff to buy."

CHAPTER XXV

This knapsack was not as good as his old one—its straps chafed. Besides, the folded easel tied across the top made it awkward. At a bend in the road Phil paused to settle it more comfortably.

"How you doing?" he said, giving Angela a crooked smile. "You look great—did I tell you?"

A trifle self-consciously, Angela glanced down at herself, trim in black jeans and woolen sweater. Her hair was tied back on her nape with a red handkerchief. She said, "Well, I can't help wishing our last ride had brought us a mile

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or two further." Putting one hand on his arm to steady herself, she lifted one leg and tugged at her sock where it met her flat-heeled shoe. "How far is it now?" she added.

"Should be able to see it over the next rise," Phil said. "Am I setting too fast a pace?"

She laughed and shook her head, lowering her foot to the road. "We want to get there before dark, don't we?" she answered. "Okay, keep moving."

Phil glanced sidelong at her as she walked on. No trace of a limp, luckily. He'd been worried. His own feet were hardened by his months of tramping, and when he put on his old walking boots again, they felt comfortable and familiar. But Angela's shoes were bought in Munich, and had had to be cheap.

Okay so far. He turned his attention to the way ahead, and after a while started to whistle absently.

This was pleasant, rolling country, patchily wooded. The road, which was narrow, wound Boston-fashion, often—as here—going between steep banks the height of a man, from whose sides the toes of tree roots poked. The leaves were turning, and an evening breeze was bringing the first of them down. He could almost imagine himself back on the road in pre-Moritz days.

But not for long. His whistling died away and a frown creased his forehead.

Norbach, located on a large-scale map, had turned out to be where he'd expected, on the eastern side of the border. The nearest village on this side was called Welbing, and in a few more minutes they'd be in sight of it. The road they were on, it seemed from the map, led nowhere else, just meandered around in a half-circle, passing two or three outlying farms, and rejoined the highway from which it had forked off. A young man in an ancient Volkswagen had brought them as far as the signpost which said *Welbing 4.5 Km.*

A growling noise came from ahead. Over the brow of the slope appeared a mud-splashed farm tractor towing a wagon

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on which was stacked an enormous mound of beets. From the top of the pile a brown mongrel looked haughtily at them, its forepaws dangling in space. They moved well to the side of the road to let it grind past.

"Is that a church?" Angela said, pointing over the hill.

"Great. We're there!" Phil exclaimed, and took her hand.

There wasn't much to Welbing, on first sight. Along the road, on either side of a bridge spanning a stream, were about a score of buildings, most of them shabby and ill-preserved. The church, the low tower of which Angela had spotted, looked disproportionately large, as if expectations of prosperity when it was built had never been fulfilled. Beside the stream the timbers of an old water mill stood, deformed with rot, and on the grayish-white wall of what must once have been the mill itself could be seen crude Gothic letters—*Gasthof zur Mühle*. Some ducks quacked around the base of the bridge. Otherwise there was almost no sign of life.

Out beyond the village, on the rising ground two or three miles away, another tractor was visible, crawling snail-slow over a rutted track. It was headed for one of the four farmhouses near by.

"Good land," Phil said thoughtfully. "Rich color to it, anyway." He glanced at the western horizon. The sun was close to it and bulbously distorted among red streaks of cloud.

"There doesn't seem to be anyone about," Angela muttered.

"In these places there never is," Phil shrugged. "Half an hour ago you'd probably have seen the cows going in for milking. Big event of the day. The harvest's been in for weeks. A lot of the land has already gone back under the plow. Let's go down and see if the *Gasthof zur Mühle* has a room free. And have a beer, too. I'm getting thirsty."

"What do we do if they say, 'Sorry, we're booked up'?" Angela inquired in such a reasonable voice that he took her seriously for a moment.

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A stout, tired-faced woman of sixty in an apron patched with old stains watched them all the way over the bridge to the door of the Gasthof. Another Volkswagen was parked there, and some yards along the narrow street was a rusted Opel Rekord, the lid of the trunk held open by a crosscut saw.

"*Grüss Gott*," the stout woman said. She didn't smile. She was looking hard at Angela in her tight new jeans.

"*Grüss Gott*," Phil returned. "*Sind Sie die gnädige Frau Wirtin?*"

Being called the gracious lady innkeeper improved her expression somewhat. She agreed that she was, and what could she do for them?

Phil explained that they were artists wandering around the country looking for places to paint. They thought they might stay in Welbing for a few days, or a week, or possibly more. Could they stay here? Would meals be provided?

The *Frau Wirtin's* disapproval of Angela's jeans struggled with her business sense, and lost. Wiping her hands automatically on her apron, she agreed that it would be possible, and bowed them indoors. A miserable-looking, wild-eyed girl of twelve to fifteen was deputed to show them a room. A boy of perhaps eighteen was ordered to fetch water. Phil wondered if it would be dipped straight from the river, but later he heard a creaky pump being operated behind the house.

The conversion from mill into inn had been crude and minimal. The girl led them out of the dwelling side of the house, across the echoing floor of a warehouse-like room—whitewashed walls, unplanned beams secured with iron clamps—which was depressingly decorated with faded old photographs and apparently served now as the inn's banquet hall, up a narrow, dusty stairway hardly less steep than a ladder, and into a room furnished with two large wooden-sided peasant beds, like drawers. There was a latticed window looking out on the river.

Somehow *Frau Wirtin* managed to follow them up a

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minute after they arrived, saying something about getting feather beds for them. If the room would do, there would be supper in an hour.

It would do. Phil paid three days' rent in advance. The feather beds, like awkward clouds, were brought up and put in position, and a ewer, a handbasin, and a chamber pot were assembled from elsewhere in the building. Last, he was given instructions on the use of a lethal-looking kerosene lamp with a bulging glass shade and a brass tank decorated with the motto *Unauslöschar: Essen 1910*.

The clumping footsteps faded down the stairs. Studying the lamp a trifle nervously, Phil said, "I hope this lamp doesn't live up to its name."

"What?" Angela had sat down on the bed, and was now finding out the drawbacks of having vertical wooden sides on it.

"It says on it 'inextinguishable,' " Phil translated. "Well, in the hope that it's a lie, I'll try to get it going."

A couple of minutes' work, and it blossomed into fizzling life. He turned triumphantly to Angela.

And his face fell.

"Jesus!" he said. "Your feet!"

"I—I'm not used to walking, I'm afraid." Angela brushed back her hair from her face.

"You must have been in agony!" Phil dropped on one knee, lifting her right foot and turning it so he could see the heel. A raw patch as big as his thumbnail had been rubbed by the shoe, and there were blisters on the little toe and the ball of the great toe.

"The other one isn't as bad," she said defensively.

"Damned good thing I remembered to buy a first-aid kit," Phil said. He got up and went to bring a basin of water. "I'm going to clean those up and get a bandage on. Hell, why didn't you say something?"

"I didn't want to," she said. "If I had complained, would we be here now?"

"Have to see if *Frau Wirtin* has some grease," Phil mut-

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tered. "Work over those shoes for you—stretch them and make them a bit more supple. Do you have any others with you?"

"Yes—a pair of soft pumps."

He grunted, delicately separating her toes and letting the cold water flow between them, then soaping them and rinsing off the lather. The water was extremely hard, and scum formed at once.

"Don't be angry with me," she said.

"I'm not. Other foot, please." She winced as he touched it. "I thought you said this wasn't as bad. It's just as bad."

"Phil, for God's sake!" Startled by the violence of her tone, he stopped and looked up, and met her blazing eyes. "Phil, will you stop going on about it? I'm sick enough of myself as it is, and if I've got to hate myself for not being able to walk a few miles without getting blistered feet on top of everything else, I won't be able to stand it!"

"What on earth do you mean?" He let go of her foot and sat back on his heel.

"What do you think I mean?" Her tone was thick with bitterness. "Listen! For years I've been wringing my hands and moaning to myself about my miserable fate, tied to Moritz, telling myself I was helpless. Tied by what? Tied by a piece of paper and my own stupidity, that's all. All the time we've been walking along, I've been asking myself why I didn't have the guts, and the persistence, and the determination, to cut myself loose ages ago. I haven't got an answer. There isn't one. Do you realize this is the first whole day in all my life that I've walked in the country a free person? I was frightened by my father; I had a duty to my mother and brother—but they're dead. All of them are dead. I must just have been so terrified of being free because it meant being on my own that I went on clinging to Moritz long after I'd fulfilled any obligation I ever owed him. Now I'm even beginning to wonder whether there was an obligation—maybe I didn't have to do what I did, be-

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cause he'd have come around out of greed sooner or later, so in fact I gave myself away for no reason."

There was a dense silence. At length Phil stirred. He said, "But you aren't on your own. Being free and being on your own *aren't* the same thing."

"No, but don't you see?" she said passionately, leaning forward. "I thought they had to be the same. I'd never seen anything different. Why should my mother stay with a man who beat her and—and did worse things? Why, unless breaking free meant being lonely and equally helpless? Now here I am with you, not on my own—but I'm with you of my own choice, aren't I? I hate myself for being self-pitying and silly for such a long time. There can't have been any need, because you just—sort of turned up, and here I am only a few days later, and the whole world is completely different without having changed in the slightest, and—and, oh, God, Phil, I love you for it. I can't help it—I do!" Suddenly her shoulders were shaking, she was pressing her hands together so hard that her knuckles were white, and there were tears glistening down her cheeks. "And if I think *that* about myself," she forced out, the words coming in a last soul-racking moan, "God knows what you must think of me!"

She buried her face in her hands.

After a while Phil nodded to himself. What she said made sense. But . . .

"It isn't the world that's changed," he said. "Think it over. It's you."

He got up and moved to sit beside her, putting his arm around her. At his touch she tensed and seemed to attempt to move away. He checked her, and she yielded. He put his fingertips on the nape of her neck and caressed it gently, letting her finish the job of ridding herself of the pent-up emotion. When the shaking ended, and she raised her head from her tear-wet palms, he said, "What I think of you—do you want me to show you what I think of you?"

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Not quite understanding, she turned her face to him, and he began to kiss away the wetness on her cheeks. Once more she tensed and almost drew away. Holding herself rigid, she said, "Phil, you don't have to do anything out of—out of sympathy or anything."

"Jesus," Phil said with unfeigned exasperation, "what do you think I am, anyway?"

She hesitated a moment. Then she burst into an agony of laughter and relief and threw her arms around him, trying to kiss and go on laughing at the same time.

CHAPTER XXVI

An hour later, in a kind of drifting contentment, they made their way back down the steep stairs and out across the dusty floor of the place Phil had privately named the banquet hall. It must formerly have been the flour store of the mill. Water lapped underfoot, and one could picture white-dusted men heaving and tugging to bring sack after sack under the chute from the grindstones above, hear in imagination the laborious turning of the wooden gears between the water wheel and the stones.

"Did you notice these incredible photographs?" Angela said, pulling at his hand and pointing. In the dim light, above the folded trestle tables stacked along the wall, rigid groups of sepia-tinted figures gazed down.

"*Osthessischer Singverein 1920*," Phil read from the fading inscription below the first of the pictures. "A male voice choir, by the look of it. Been coming here every year for more than forty years." He waved at the long line of identical frames. "Who'd have thought it in a place like this?"

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"Do you suppose they keep this big room just for an annual visit?" Angela had let go his hand and wandered off across the dark floor to peer at the recent pictures. "There's a piano in the corner there—see, under the dust sheet?"

"Must be occasional festivities," Phil said absently. "At Christmas, maybe. And they must have harvest festivals and things. Come on; I hear dishes rattling, and I'm hungry."

They continued on to what appeared to be the Gasthof's only other public room. Opening directly on the road, it was furnished with heavy wooden chairs and tables. Beer kegs were racked on one wall, and shelves carried big china steins, century-old china-bowled pipes, and incongruous modern odds and ends of colored plastic. There were two doors at the back, one shut, one ajar and giving a glimpse of a low-ceilinged kitchen where *Frau Wirtin* presided over a dirty black cooking range. There was a phone on a table just visible through the door. Advertising calendars tacked on the wall and commercial beer mats on the tables completed the anachronistic decor.

An elderly man with a face exactly like a rabbit's—up-turned nose, big front teeth—sat at one of the tables reading a newspaper, eating bread and *Wurst* and taking disproportionately large gulps from a stein of beer. He gave them an intent look as they entered. Phil wished him good evening and received only a grunt in reply.

The wild-eyed girl reported their entrance to *Frau Wirtin*, pointed to the table they should take, and shortly brought an assortment of cutlery. Then came beer, a stack of black bread, and bowls of beer-flavored vegetable soup. It was hot and good.

After that, there were half a dozen *Rippchen*—pork chops—a bowl of boiled potatoes, another of dumplings, and another of sauerkraut. Phil surveyed the array.

"How's your appetite?" he asked.

"It'd be a lot better if the man over there stopped staring at us," Angela said wryly. "He makes me feel self-conscious."

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"Forget him. People are bound to be curious."

The outside door opened, and two men in mud-encrusted rubber boots tramped in. They greeted the rabbit-faced man, sat down to his table with him, and told the girl to bring beer and *Wurst* for them also. Then they joined in the staring game, passing occasional remarks. So, a few minutes later, did another man who came in; stouter than the others, he had the air of a farmer rather than a farm worker. *Frau Wirtin* came out herself to see to his needs, and spoke in a low voice with occasional backward glances.

"I'm beginning to feel like a circus freak," Angela said at last.

"I hope they don't take so much interest in us that we can't escape notice occasionally," Phil agreed with a frown. He loaded the last of his sauerkraut on his fork, pushed away his plate with a satisfied sigh, and leaned back in his chair. Angela copied him, leaving part of her helping.

Frau Wirtin caught the movement and turned, demanding if it wasn't good. Phil assured her that it was, but she wasn't convinced, and shook her head regretfully as she cleared the dishes. Two more men came in. The two others sitting with Rabbit Face finished their beer and left. The newcomers went through the ritual of discussion followed by staring. When Angela took a cigarette from Phil, their eyes moved simultaneously as if pulled by strings.

Rabbit Face emptied his stein and told the girl to fetch him another. Then he leaned one elbow on his table and called to Phil. "*Sie sind Künstler, nicht wahr?*"

"*Ja! Ich heiße Phil Burns.*"

"*Sie sind kein Deutscher!*" Rabbit Face showed considerable interest.

"*Nein—ich bin Amerikaner.*"

"*Amerikaner!*" The word acted on Rabbit Face like an electric shock. He turned back his newspaper to the front page. The girl delivered his beer, and he gulped at it before speaking again. When he did, it was to demand Phil's opinion of some alleged insult which an American

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soldier had offered to a girl in Berchtesgaden. He didn't wait for a proper reply, but used that as a peg on which to hang some well-matured remarks about Coca-Cola, American cars, and the dollar.

"Phil, what's he saying?" Angela whispered.

"From the sound of it, he's ventilating some grudge against Americans," Phil explained.

Rabbit Face appealed to the other two men in the room for support. One gave a reluctant nod; the other took issue with him violently, and within minutes a fierce argument was raging. A little relieved, Phil hoped he might get left out of it. But whatever had made Rabbit Face bitter had gone deep. Another gulp of his beer, and he tossed at Phil a remark to make the heart sink.

"What was that?" Angela demanded.

"Says if I'm an artist, why don't I do a picture of him? He might as well get something out of the American occupation of his country."

"Oh—Phil!"

Phil's mouth quirked upward at the corners. "I may not be a portrait painter—but have you looked carefully at our friend over there? Give me one of those beer mats, will you?" He fished in his shirt pocket for a pencil. "I'll be delighted to draw you," he said to Rabbit Face. "But you must let our companions here"—he gestured at the other two men—"say whether it's a good likeness or not. Please! Sit still for a moment."

Uncertainly, Rabbit Face complied, a look spreading over his face that suggested he thought he might have been had. Phil tried not to grin as he sketched quickly on the off-white back of the beer mat.

"Phil, that's wonderful!" Angela said, stifling a giggle. "You didn't tell me you could draw."

"Used to do a strip cartoon for a college magazine," Phil said briefly. "*Also!*"

He completed the masterpiece—a portrait of Rabbit Face as a rabbit, one ear up and one down, mouth wide open, a

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stein of beer in one hand and a string of sausages in the other. Then he handed it gravely to the other men.

After a moment's bewilderment, the nearer of them slapped the table and gave a whoop of laughter. "The joke's on you, Herr Langbaum!" he exclaimed, and sent the mat looping to fall in front of Rabbit Face.

He has a sense of humor after all. Phil breathed a silent sigh of relief as a grin brought the big teeth into still greater prominence. "Frau Schenker!" Rabbit Face called. "*Guck mal!*"

Out from the kitchen came *Frau Wirtin*, and for the next ten minutes there were approving exclamations, offers of beer all around, and general comment.

"I'm a success," Phil said out of the side of his mouth.

At length Rabbit Face introduced himself as Willi Langbaum, apologized for seeming rude, and proceeded to turn himself into a one-man committee of Welcome-to-Welbing. Everyone who came in during the evening had to be presented. The talk moved on from a serious political level which revealed Langbaum as a far better-informed person than Phil would have expected in an isolated village, to an exchange of jokes that got steadily and Teutonically dirtier. When they finally broke it up at ten-thirty, there was handshaking and back-slapping all around.

"I'm going to have to learn German, and that's all there is to it," Angela said, snuggling down under the bulging feather bed. "I've hardly understood a word all evening. Who is our rabbit-faced friend, anyway?"

"His name's Willi Langbaum." Phil proceeded to prove the falsity of pre-World-War-I German advertising claims by putting out the inextinguishable oil lamp, and slid down into the bed beside her. "I couldn't make out much about him, but he seems to be a retired petty official who lodges with Frau Schenker."

"Why doesn't he like Americans?" She nibbled his ear.

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"Do you want an answer, or something else?"

"Mmm—both. Eventually. Go on about Rabbit Face."

"He says he's a lifelong socialist. Hitler put him in Dachau, the war put him in uniform, and the Americans put him in the mess he's in now."

"Which is?"

"How can I talk when you're doing that?"

"Try."

"Oh, all right. Something about corrupting the ideals of his party, I think. He's a bit of a joke in the village. The others were teasing him about going East—you know, 'There it is; why don't you go there?' But it didn't sound serious."

"Did you find out much about the village?"

"There isn't much to know. It's down on its luck. In the last century apparently this was the mill for all the farms for miles around, and the place was quite prosperous. You remember we saw the church, and it looks too big for the number of houses here. But some of the farms have been abandoned, and of course the mill closed, and now there's practically nobody here apart from the people who work the remaining farms. You noticed the fat man with the crew-cut?"

"Mm-hm."

"It's getting impossible to concentrate. Well, he's the only person of any consequence here. His name's Otto Gengel. Willi Langbaum calls him *Herr Beamter*, which means 'Mister Official.' He's a sort of postmaster, I guess, and his wife runs the only store in the place. There isn't a parson; a minister comes once a month from somewhere else. There isn't even a policeman. Gengel sort of keeps the chair warm, and a car comes around occasionally from the State Police. Uh—do I have to go on? We're going to be here for some time, I'd say, and we'll find it all out sooner or later."

"It sounds like the next best thing to a desert island," she murmured, and after that talking seemed superfluous.

CHAPTER XXVII

"Found it?" Angela asked, trying not to sound too hopeful.

Phil shook his head dispiritedly. "This is real needle-in-a-haystack stuff. Drunk all that beer yet, or is there some left for me?"

"Haven't even started on it," Angela said in an injured tone.

"Great." Phil bent over the knapsack lying on the ground beside her. She was using a tree stump as a chair and making a quick water-color sketch of a copse a short distance away. The air was crisp and cool, and the sun, noon-high, shed a watery brilliance on them.

Phil uncapped the beer, took a swig, and came to stand by Angela, putting one hand on her shoulder. He cocked his head and spoke in mock-critical tones.

"Not bad. Wouldn't mind running it in my next exhibition."

She laughed and turned away from the easel. "If we have nothing else to show for our stay here, we'll have a lot of pictures. Think we can sell them to defray expenses?"

"We'd better." Phil took another swig and offered the bottle. "Is it finished?"

"Good enough." She put her brush to rinse and swiveled around on the stump. "Want me to break out the sandwiches?"

"Go ahead." Phil dropped tiredly to the ground. "I've been backward and forward, backward and forward, looking at every likely dip in the ground and clump of bushes, and

I'm beginning to realize just how much ground there is in the world."

"We've covered quite a lot," Angela said optimistically.

"Yes, but it's taken us four days," Phil countered. "And at that, we can never be sure we didn't miss it." He scowled toward the sun. "It'd help if people weren't so friendly, too. I had to spend a quarter of an hour chatting with that farmer Kronecker we met in the village the other night, hoping like blazes he wasn't going to ask me where my painting gear had gotten to."

He reached over to the knapsack and took out his large-scale map. With a pencil he shaded in the approximate area of ground he had covered this morning. He looked at the result with downturned mouth.

"Sandwich?" Angela asked.

"Thanks. You know, it's bound to turn out that this tunnel—if it exists—is as far from here as it was humanly possible to put it."

"What on earth do you mean?"

"Had a friend who served with the Air Force in England. He said the RAF calls its airfields after little villages, but when the name of the nearest village is too much like another that's already in use, they pick at random another that can be five miles away. Welbing is certainly nearer to Norbach than anywhere else on this side of the border, but the site might just have been called after Norbach and not be close to it at all."

He stared glumly at the map. For want of any better starting point, he had drawn a straight line on it connecting Welbing and Norbach, and they were working outward from that line, a day on either side. On the further assumption that the tunnel mouth must be a fair distance from the actual border, they were working away from the Welbing direction.

He finished his sandwich and held out his hand for another. "That's not the only thing that's bothering me," he said. "There's the possibility that the tunnel may be

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immensely long, and reach all the way back past Welbing, coming out on the west of the village. There's also the possibility that the tunnel may not exist at all."

"Of course," Angela said. "But surely it can't come out on the west of the village. I mean, we're already a good three kilometers from there, and we aren't in sight of the border yet."

"Mm-hm." Phil went on staring at the map while eating the second sandwich. At length he raised his head. "Suppose you were Hollweg, honey. What would you be doing right now?"

"Trying like blazes to get the goods through before a certain nosy American, who has learned much more than is good for him, manages to wreck the deal."

"Right. Which will involve frantic conning of his backers—these neo-Nazi types. And equally frantic conning of the people on the other side who are taking delivery of the stuff."

Angela paused in the act of biting her sandwich. She said, "You know, I've never given much thought to that. Of course there must be people ready on the other side."

"East and West Germany are two halves of one country, after all," Phil said. "I get the impression that this is the easiest place in the world to organize espionage and underground contacts. I haven't given much thought to the people on the other side, either. There was something Willi Langbaum was saying the other night—the night we arrived—about foreign occupation. He was shooting his mouth off about the American troops here. And it occurred to me that it can't be so bad as all that, because if it were, you'd have people risking their lives to get hold of guns and explosives, and kick them out. Just as those poor jokers the other side of the line must be risking their necks."

"Are you sure there aren't?" Angela said.

"What?" He blinked at her.

"Are you sure there aren't people laying in arms and explosives over here? Just because you don't see them

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doesn't mean they don't exist. One of the things I found out when I came to England from Cyprus was that the ordinary person in London didn't believe for a minute that anyone could want to be rid of British domination. But people did, and got killed because they wanted it so badly, like my brother."

He hesitated. Then, thinking to turn the subject with a joke, he said, "Well, any American can sympathize. I mean, we started off by kicking out the British."

"It isn't funny, Phil. It's tragic. It's politics in the newspapers, and areas on maps, and positions of strategic importance, and that's how people think of it—big, convenient blanketing labels. But in the end it's always a person. My brother Georgie bleeding to death in scorching sunlight with a British bullet in his lung."

There was a moment's silence. At length Phil said in a wan voice, "I don't *like* to think of the people on the other side of the border. What do three thousand guns mean to them? I only know that they mean a lie. They aren't tools for freedom. Because if they get through, and they're used . . ." He snapped his fingers. "Somebody said that if Patrick Henry were around today, he'd have to rewrite his famous slogan. He'd have to say, 'Give me liberty or give everyone death.'"

"If there is any history," Angela said, "I suppose history will be grateful to people who suffered through this part of it."

"Great," Phil said sardonically. "Meantime we can only sympathize. And sometimes I feel ashamed of sympathizing. Pass me another sandwich, and we'll move on toward the border."

She complied. "At least," she said with forced optimism, "we don't have to worry about finding an excuse for staying over a few more days."

"What? Oh, you mean this annual visit by the *Singverein* next Saturday?" Phil chuckled. "I think Willi would hold us back by force if we tried to get away before then."

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"I wonder if they really look like those terrible photographs."

Laden with knapsack, easel, and all the trappings, Phil breasted the last rise among the trees some paces ahead of Angela, and turned to call back to her.

"See the border?" she asked, striding up the last few yards.

"Yes, there it is." He raised his arm and gestured.

"All right. Hold it, you two."

The voice, conversationally level, seemed to come from nowhere. Angela gasped and spun around, eyes wide. Phil reacted less visibly, but he tensed from head to toe.

Then bushes parted a short distance from them, and helmeted men moved into view. The first to show himself had a lieutenant's bar on his helmet. Two more came out behind him, with carbines slung on their shoulders. One carried a radio. They were all wearing camouflaged battle rig.

The lieutenant looked them up and down. Then he gestured to the man with the radio.

"Tell 'em we found both," he said cryptically.

"Border patrol," Phil murmured. The lieutenant caught the words.

"You're not German?" he said. "You American?"

"That's right."

"And your girl friend?"

"British."

The lieutenant raised an eyebrow, rubbed his chin. He said, "Well, I'll be—! Do you have your passport on you?"

"I guess so." Phil unslung the knapsack. With a sinking heart he saw that his large-scale map was protruding from the back pocket where he kept it. He wouldn't care to have to explain the penciled-in areas he'd marked on it. Luckily he contrived to push it out of sight while extracting the passport. "Angela?"

"Mine's back in the room at the inn." Angela was very white.

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Phil shrugged and handed his over for inspection. The lieutenant glanced at the photograph, back at Phil, then at the radioman.

"Gimme that mike," he said, gesturing. The man obeyed, and the lieutenant went on. "Harry? We got 'em. Man's American, girl's British. I have the man's passport here. Do you want the details?" He waited a moment, then said, "Sure. Just a moment." Lowering the mike, he addressed Phil. "What in the hell are you doing around here, anyway?"

"Painting," Phil said. "Any law against it?"

"Brother," the lieutenant said with feeling, "you could choose better places to paint, couldn't you? Have you looked down this hill?"

"Just got here," Phil said. "You mean we're pretty close to the East Zone border."

"Precisely!" the lieutenant said with an exaggerated nod that almost turned into a bow. "Why the hell do you think we came out after you, anyway? This border is kind of a sensitive area! Let's have a look at some of your pictures, then."

"Sure." Phil gestured to Angela, who went down on one knee beside the knapsack and got out the two she'd done this morning.

"Joe," the lieutenant said, and the third man came forward. "You know this area as well as anybody. Are those right on the frontier?"

"Nope," Joe said after a careful examination. "That's a place about half a mile back toward Welbing, and the other . . . I don't recognize the angle, but it's somewhere pretty close to the first one."

"Carry a camera?" the lieutenant said to Phil, who shook his head.

"Not even hidden in my hair," he said.

"Not funny," the lieutenant said. "We got a Commie along here last year with a sub-miniature movie camera." He put up the mike again. "Harry, you get all that? Or do you want a rundown? Okay, here it comes." He opened

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the passport again. "Philip Russell Burns. Height six three. Hair fair. Eyes gray. Complexion white. Distinguishing marks, none. Place of birth, Montclair, New Jersey. Date of birth, March 5, 1940. Uh—yeah?" He listened to the interruption. "Oh, sure, he fits the description. On the level, I'd say—just naïve. Sure, we'll have to put a report in. I'll give him the good advice and turn him back. See you."

He tossed the mike back to the radioman and turned to hand Phil's passport to him.

"Look, pal," he said. "I don't have anything against you, or against painters. But there's the whole damned world to choose, practically. Do me and yourself a good turn: go away from this piece of it! Otherwise you'll be in our hair and we'll be in yours, and maybe even you'll run into someone who isn't as tolerant as me and takes you in for questioning. The border's *that* way." He pointed. "You go *that* way." He swung around. "Okay, let's see you start walking."

Phil shrugged and replaced the passport in the knapsack before swinging it up on his shoulders. Joe was looking at Angela with open approval. As Phil took her hand and moved back down the slope, he heard the man say, "You know, Lieutenant, if they keep any more like that in England, I wouldn't mind a tour there before I go home." He pronounced it "tower," lumberjack style.

"Flattered?" Phil asked Angela out of the side of his mouth. She made a face and glanced back. On the point of vanishing among the trees, Joe lifted an arm and waved.

"You know, we were talking about American occupation," she said when they had walked in silence for another minute. "Did you ever hear the English opinion of American soldiers? There are three things wrong with them—they're overpaid, oversexed, and over here."

Phil grunted. He was lost in his own thoughts.

"Phil, what on earth are we going to do now?" Angela demanded.

"What? Oh, sorry . . . I was just wondering why they'd

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taken four days to catch up with us. It's absurd. Maybe we were just amazingly lucky."

"'Lucky' you call it?" She tossed her head. "It means four days completely wasted! They'll certainly be looking for us now. We can't just creep back and pretend we lost our way, can we?"

"I guess not." Phil gave her a wry grin. "Say, if you're ever tempted to accuse yourself of being boneheaded again, you can work it off by reminding me of the time when I thought it was a good cover to go painting landscape pictures along the East-West border. Can you think of a quicker way of attracting official attention, short of bringing down a parade of elephants?"

"If I had time, I'm sure I could," she said impatiently. "Phil, it's all very well to try and laugh this off. But what are we going to do?"

"I'm sorry." Phil composed his face. "Well, frankly I feel this business has turned sour. I don't see any alternative to composing a nice, long, detailed letter to the U.S. Embassy in Bonn, mentioning Greer, whom we know to be interested in the Moritz case anyway, and see what happens."

"What do you think that's likely to be?"

"Right now, my firm opinion is that the tunnel won't exist, Greer will turn out to be an East German double agent, Hollweg will prove to be an employee of the State Department——"

She began to smile against her will. "Phil, you're impossible," she said fondly.

"I don't believe in myself most of the time," Phil agreed.

They picked their way across a field full of cattle back to the road. A car went by as they prepared to clamber over the bank topped with barbed wire, which kept the cattle in. Phil caught a glimpse of it as it vanished around the next corner—a yellow Ford Taunus 17M.

"Welbing has another visitor," he said.

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"Probably the American army come to investigate us," Angela muttered, taking his arm to get over the wire.

"More likely one of the organizers of the *Singverein*, come to check on Saturday's arrangements," Phil said. "Willi mentioned that somebody was expected."

On seeing the yellow Taunus parked outside the Gasthof zur Mühle when they re-entered the village, he assumed his guess was the correct one. They were approaching the bridge when the driver came out—a portly man in his fifties, wearing a dark topcoat, followed by Frau Schenker and another man, considerably taller, with his arm in a white sling.

By a minor miracle, the second man was turning to speak to Frau Schenker, not looking in their direction. Phil seized Angela by the arm and dragged her down, out of sight behind the end of the bridge.

"For God's sake don't show yourself," he breathed. "And pray the car moves off the other way. That's Hollweg!"

CHAPTER XXVIII

For an eternity they crouched out of sight, hearing the car start up, then rev as if maneuvering. Was it turning around or continuing along the road past the village? Phil held his breath.

Going on. He relaxed, waited another few seconds to make sure it would be out of sight, then raised his head cautiously.

"Are you in trouble?" asked a courteous voice. Having crossed the bridge from the other side, Willi Langbaum was staring directly at them.

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"Not—uh—not exactly," Phil said.

"Were you hiding from the men in that car?" Langbaum gestured at the diminishing yellow dot, now leaving the far end of the village. "Hiding won't do any good."

He gave them a sharp, inquisitive look. Phil wiped his face.

"Who are they, then?" he said.

"You don't know, and yet you're hiding?"

"It was . . . it was a game," Phil said, hoping his growing desperation didn't show in his voice.

"Ah, yes, a game." Langbaum was politely sarcastic from the vantage point of advanced middle age. "Well, I'll tell you who has honored us with a visit. Bodo Schellenfreund was in that car. Do you recognize the name?"

Phil shook his head.

"If you get a chance to see him again, look well." Langbaum wasn't kidding; there was a sudden uncharacteristic fierceness in his manner. "He is a Nazi. I say *is*. Maybe you thought the breed was extinct, but in him it lives on. This is what he looks like—somewhat older now, somewhat fatter, but recognizable."

He took from the inside pocket of his jacket a very old billfold, and extracted a number of much-creased papers. He sorted one of them out and displayed it. It bore a photograph of a round-faced man in an SS uniform. In heavy black lettering above and below, it said, *WANTED—Bodo Schellenfreund, alias Kolb, alias Wachter. The government of the German Democratic Republic offers a reward of one million marks for the arrest of this man.*

Phil had seen handouts like this before. They were a standard Cold War tactic. He remembered a similar leaflet offering a reward for the arrest of a NATO general, and another for the arrest of Adenauer's secretary, Globke, who drafted the anti-Jewish "Nuremberg laws" before the war.

He said, "Are you thinking of collecting the reward?"

"I?" Langbaum twisted his mouth. "When I have friends, socialists, who were jailed under the Nazis, and now are

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back in jail in the East Zone? But they order some things better over there; certainly Schellenfreund would not be allowed to exhibit himself in public." He took back the leaflet and put it away. "And you?" he said. "You have become tired of painting and returned early?"

"Uh—no, we just came back for something," Phil said, thinking swiftly. "We'll be going out again."

"I'll see you this evening, then," Langbaum said, gave a polite half-bow to Angela—who managed an answering smile—and walked on.

"Come on," Phil said softly, taking Angela's arm. "Don't hurry, but come on."

"What was all that about?"

"Hollweg has his backer with him, according to Langbaum. A real, live, practising Nazi. We've got to get through the village and try to spot that car, because there's only one reason I can think of why Hollweg should have brought the man out here—to show him the way across the border and convince him that the deal is on."

They went through the village. It must be about three o'clock, Phil judged, because as they passed the inn they heard the mail van hooting before crossing the bridge, on the way to make the once-a-day collection from the mailbox. Frau Schenker gave them a surprised greeting. She had opened the double doors leading from the street directly into the "banquet hall," and was mopping the floor in preparation for Saturday's big event.

At the first bend in the road beyond the village Phil swung the knapsack off his shoulder and dropped it to the ground.

"Warn me if anyone's coming," he said under his breath, reaching to the bottom of the bag.

"What are you doing?" Angela demanded.

"Taking some necessary precautions." He found what he was after. Rapidly rolling back his right sleeve, he put on his wrist sheath and slipped his knife into it, rolled the

sleeve down again. Then he felt for the hard coolness of the nine-millimeter Biretta he had acquired from Hollweg, and the handkerchief in which he had tied up the shells.

"Damned glad that patrol didn't search us," he muttered. "I'd have hated to try to explain this gun."

He loaded it quickly, slipped it in one of the front pockets of his jeans, and pulled the zip across to stop it from falling out. Rising, he took up the knapsack and continued forward.

"Right! Now we know there are only so many places you can reach by car on this road. If we go off the road to the left at the next bend and up to the top of the hill, we ought to be able to spot the car: it should stand out like a lemon on a coal heap. We may even spot Hollweg and Schellenfreund. In any case, they'll have taken the car along the road to make sure no one was in sight, and as close as possible to the right place. I want you to stay back and keep an eye on me. I'll try to make sure I remain visible to you, but not to them. You notice that they must have gone past the edge of the area we've worked over. If they hadn't, they'd have left the car before the next bend, in among those trees."

"Phil—you will be careful, won't you?" Angela's face was white and drawn.

"You're not kidding," he said. "I've had a taste of Hollweg's methods, and I promise I'm going to watch myself."

He gave her a quick kiss on the cheek, looked both ways along the road to make sure no one was in sight, and scrambled up the side of the road and into the adjacent field.

His heart was pounding. He had gambled so intensely on the existence of this hypothetical tunnel under the border that he was unwilling to let himself believe he was now going to have it proved to him. Instead, he forced himself to think only of Hollweg and his companion.

This rolling ground, with its patches of uncleared woodland

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and the banks alongside the road, offered excellent if intermittent cover. Making sure at regular intervals that there was no one visible watching him, he went to the top of the first hill. Beyond, the road wound briefly down into a dip, thickly set with bushes along the bottom.

And there, right in front of him, was the yellow car. It had been drawn off the road on to a patch of muddy ground.

He dropped flat on his face and peered between tufts of grass as he wormed forward. He had just obtained his second clear sight of the car when Hollweg and his companion decided to get out. He imagined they had been consulting a map. At any rate, Schellenfreund was tucking something inside his coat as he shut the car's door, and Hollweg was glancing up at the sun and back to something held in his good hand. A compass, probably.

In passing, Phil reflected that his knife must have done considerable damage for Hollweg still to be needing a sling.

He watched them set off up the hillside, roughly at right angles to the road at this point. Waiting for them to go over the top of the rise and out of sight, he planned his own route, behind cover, to parallel theirs. Satisfied, he glanced back. At first he could see no sign of Angela. Then a bush stirred and an arm waved to him. Excellent—she wasn't taking any chances about Hollweg's spotting her. He reminded himself to tell her that she grossly underestimated her own abilities. Then he decided that maybe she'd been cured of the habit.

Hollweg and Schellenfreund were out of sight now. He moved cautiously after them. Over the brow of the hill he watched them again, pausing to consult—yes, it must be a map of the locality. Schellenfreund looked down distastefully at the mud covering his city-clean shoes, and said something that came to Phil only as indistinct noise.

When he reached the next brow, they had disappeared.

He lay on his belly, staring in disbelief. Ahead was a clump

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of trees and bushes on the opposite slope. Past it, so close that the long branches of the bushes spread over it, was a double-rutted track, now almost hidden by grass. A tractor . . . ?

Phil was tempted to kick himself from here to Sacramento. And he would have had great pleasure in taking with him the responsible officials from the Office of the Receiver-General, who disposed of aerial survey planes and could have taken advantage of the obvious fact: you could hide the entrance and exit of a tunnel such as he had posited, but if you were shifting hundreds of tons of earth, you had to put it somewhere; you had to have trucks and excavators, which left tracks.

That wasn't made by a farm tractor, that twin line of ruts. It had been made way back in 1944 or 1945. And it led past a hill on his right, toward the point at which he well knew the road curved to touch the yard of one of the local farms.

He waited. Time trickled away. Then at long last the bushes parted and Hollweg and his companion peered circumspectly out. Seeing no one, they emerged, brushing themselves down.

Hollweg said something which Phil could guess at—probably "So you're satisfied that it can be done?"

Schellenfreund: Yes, now that I've seen with my own eyes.

Hollweg: Excellent. I'm sure you agree we must hurry if we're going to do it at all. The longer the wait, the greater the chance that something will go wrong.

Schellenfreund: Go wrong? (*With a suspicious cock of the head.*)

Hollweg (*hastily*): Not on this side. Over there. You know how risky it is for them.

Schellenfreund: Yes, of course. How soon can you deliver the goods?

Past that point, however, Phil's imagination could not complete the distant mime with words. Still, he had more

than he had dared hope for. *Now* he could pass the buck to someone better fitted to handle it.

He gave a weary sigh and concentrated on hugging the earth so that Hollweg and Schellenfreund would not notice him.

"Phil! Thank goodness—I was getting worried!" Angela started up from her hiding place. "The car drove away ages ago, back toward the main road."

"Sorry," Phil said, dropping on his knees beside her. His face was grimy, and his hands, knees, and feet were mud-smeared. "How would you like a little jaunt into East Germany, honey?"

"You found a tunnel?"

"A tunnel!" Phil gave a laugh in which he thought he heard a touch of hysteria. "I've found the great-granddaddy of all tunnels! I don't know why they don't dig it up and sell it to the States—use it to extend the New York subway!"

"Does it really stretch under the border?"

"And then some. Honey, I haven't dared go the whole way along it, because I didn't think to bring a flashlight, but I went as far as I dared and I saw daylight at the other end—just a tiny little smudge of it. Do you know that tunnel is fifteen feet wide, tall enough for me to stand up in, and floored, walled and roofed with concrete? There are rusty steel rails on the floor—I almost roughed up my ankle treading on them—and at least half a dozen little spoil trucks tailor-made for transporting the crates of guns from this end to that!"

"Fifteen feet wide?" Angela repeated, wonderingly. "Then how on earth has it escaped notice?"

"The ends were blocked off. This end, the opening, is just about man-size; you walk three or four paces, and it suddenly opens out. There's a thick screen of bushes grown up from what must have been a truckload of dumped dirt—the sides of the pile are steep and there are a lot of rocks. You wouldn't stumble on it by accident; you'd go around

and not give it a second glance." He picked up the knapsack and thrust his arms through the straps. "We've got to get back to the village. I want to put the completest possible report on this in the mail before I go to bed tonight. Come on!"

CHAPTER XXIX

When they got back to the inn, Willi Langbaum was already in his usual place, with his beer, his *Wurst*, and his newspaper. He gave them an ironical smile.

"You have been painting on your knees, apparently," he commented.

"I fell down," Phil said, a little more curtly than he intended. "Herr Langbaum, can we buy postage stamps at the store here? I have an urgent letter to send."

"Certainly," Langbaum said. "But you understand that there is only one collection of letters a day, and it is not until three o'clock tomorrow afternoon."

"I know," Phil nodded. He'd been worrying about that point. Now that Hollweg had actually been here, there was real need for haste.

"Perhaps I can help you," Langbaum continued. "Herr Kronecker is driving to Hersfeld this evening, and I am going with him; I have some business in the town. If your letter is urgent I will happily take it for you. By what time will it be ready?"

Phil glanced at Angela, forgetting for the moment she had picked up only a few words of German. Then he said, "That's very kind of you, Herr Langbaum. What time are you intending to leave?"

"In about an hour."

"Excellent. I can have it ready by then."

He took Angela's hand and hurried her through the "banquet hall." Frau Schenker, aided by the wild-eyed girl—about whom they had learned only that she was called Maria—was still at work dusting and mopping for Saturday's visit by the *Singverein*. He explained about Langbaum's offer to Angela in snatches.

"Even if it only saves a few hours, I think it's worth having the letter in the mail as soon as we can," he added. "It'll mean I have to keep it short, but that's no disadvantage—they'll be more likely to take it seriously."

He unslung his knapsack, dumped it on the bed they were not using, and took out his pen. There was a rough wooden table under the window. He sat down to it, headed his first sheet, and began by going directly to the point.

About two kilometers northeast of this village, Welbing, there is a concrete-lined tunnel, apparently the pilot tunnel for a World War II underground factory. It extends roughly northeast-by-east for an estimated three kilometers and passes under the East Zone frontier . . .

Well within the promised hour, he inscribed slow, careful, capital letters on the envelope: BOTSCHAFT DER VEREINIGTEN STAATEN, BONN, NORDRHEIN-WESTFALEN. And added, heavily underscoring the words, "For immediate and urgent attention." He picked up the many sheets he had covered with close writing, folded them, and sealed them in the envelope. Pushing back his chair, he said, "Thank God that's over. Hang on—I'm only praying Langbaum hasn't left already."

He hadn't, although Kronecker's car—the old Opel Rekord they had seen on the day of their arrival—was waiting outside.

Langbaum took the envelope, read the address so carefully that it didn't seem like inquisitiveness, and placed it inside his jacket. "I am glad to be of service," he said.

"Thank *you*," Phil countered. Now that it was done, he felt a sudden terrible access of weariness, as if virtue had gone out of him. He made his way slowly back to the bedroom.

"Did you catch him?" Angela asked.

"Yes, luckily." Phil dropped on the chair. "I think I managed to get everything of importance in the letter, didn't I? The only bits I left out were ones that I couldn't have explained anyway—such as how Hollweg is going to get away with bringing truckloads of guns here. When a single car is news, and two strangers a sensation, you wouldn't think it possible. But he's a clever bastard, and I'm sure he'll find a way."

"You don't think they'll take it for a crank letter, or a hoax?" Angela said after a pause.

"That'd be just dandy, wouldn't it?" Phil gave a wry grin. "But I don't think so. I mentioned my two encounters with Greer, and presumably they'll know there's a CIA operative of that name working on the Moritz murder—or was. Got a cigarette?"

She took a pack from the pocket of her jeans and gave it to him. "So what do we do now?"

"Wait. Today's—uh—Tuesday, isn't it? The letter will get there either tomorrow afternoon or Thursday morning, and I imagine it'll be acted on pretty promptly. If Hollweg only brought his backer here today, he'll need a while to bring the goods down—probably in batches, which will have to be hidden. I wonder if one of the local people is helping him."

"Langbaum?" Angela offered the suggestion straight-faced.

"Him? After what he said about Schellenfreund? That reminds me; we can use the opportunity to teach you some more German. I don't like having to keep you out of all my conversations."

"So long as you don't keep me out of your life, I can put up with it."

"Thanks. Did I tell you you're beautiful today?" He blew a kiss at her. "But if you don't learn more of the language,

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how are you going to get off with those handsome young men in the *Singverein* next Saturday?"

She made a face. "From their photographs they all look like puddings. Phil, what is this affair, anyway?"

"You'd think it was the Fourth of July, the way everyone's talking about it. Old Willi gave me the details the other day. Apparently Frau Schenker's husband—he died in the war—was a founder-member of the *Singverein*; it's a combined choir and social club, and there are a lot of them in Germany. They get together once a month, pile into a bus with a barrel or two of beer, and make for some small country inn for dinner and an evening's singing. Sounds like good, clean fun. They used to come here before the war because Herr Schenker was a member. Now they come as a sort of 'in memoriam' gesture."

"Is that all they do?"

"Oh, they probably give concerts for charity, or go in for choral competitions. I'm not sure. But one thing is certain: when they hit Welbing, it stays hit for the next twelve months. I overheard Frau Schenker making up her lists this morning. Come to think of it, that may be the business old Willi's gone to town about. The big room downstairs will be packed, because not just the choir comes here, but their wives and friends, and everybody—but *everybody*—from the neighborhood. She was talking about supper for a hundred and seventy people."

"It's going to be noisy up here," Angela said reflectively, glancing around the room.

"I doubt that we'll be up here," Phil said with a grin. "Or if we are, we won't be trying to go to sleep."

They were wakened next morning by the roaring arrival of a beer truck and the draymen's shouts as barrels and crates were unloaded and brought inside. That was the start of it. From now until Saturday, apparently, the Welbing road was due to carry its greatest traffic of the entire year. From the surrounding farms came potatoes, freshly killed pigs,

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mounds of cabbages. A consignment of folding chairs rented from a supply company appeared in the "banquet hall." The ceiling blossomed with extraordinary paper chains and tinsel bells.

The air was thick with an excitement that was galling to Phil and Angela, taut from a different kind of expectation. The most marked effect was on Langbaum. In spite of the way he had addressed them their first evening here, they had come to regard him as a rather reserved and self-contained person. He must have known Frau Schenker for many years, but whereas other people in the village, even farm laborers, would speak to her as Hilde, to him she was always Frau Schenker. Phil was invariably Herr Burns and Angela *Ihre gnädige Frau*, or at most *Ihre schöne Frau*.

Now, however, apparently affected by the mood of the people about him, he began, as he had not done before, to seek them out during the day, to offer to guide them to particularly attractive spots near by, to question them about their background, their work, their painting especially. At first Phil was only worried that they might be prevented from doing what they chiefly intended—surveying the Welbing road to make sure nothing came along that might carry Hollweg's guns. Later he grew desperately afraid that the fabric of lies he was erecting around them might run out of his control. He was compelled to invent a whole history for his acquaintance with Angela, for his art, and for his presence in Germany.

Wednesday went, Thursday came. There was no shortage of strangers in the village. Two representatives of the *Singverein* called to make sure everything was *in Ordnung*, and delivery trucks in an incredible stream passed through. But no sign of response to his letter. When he managed to get away from Langbaum for a while, he went to look at the mouth of the tunnel. There was no sign of disturbance yet, and no suspicious-looking new potato clumps or anything that might have concealed crated guns.

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By noon on Friday, he was almost at the limit of his endurance.

"If it turns out that some stupid petty clerk *did* throw that letter away because he thought it was a hoax," he fumed to Angela, "I'll raise hell from here to Washington! I'll have Greer's hide! I'll——"

"Are you sure they've had the letter?" Angela said, her face very pale. "Have you asked Langbaum whether he posted it?"

"Are you kidding?" Phil drew a deep breath. "Oh, of course—you still don't speak the language. I'm sorry; I keep forgetting. Yes, I did ask him, day before yesterday, and he gave me a hurt, reproachful look as if I'd accused him of—oh, I don't know. What's a sizable crime in his book? Betraying his socialist principles, maybe. Listen, if nobody shows up by tomorrow morning, we'll have to call the embassy."

"Would they necessarily send someone here?" Angela asked. "Wouldn't they just notify a local military base?"

"I specifically asked for someone to come to Welbing, as inconspicuously as possible. You were reading the letter as I wrote it, for God's sake!" He checked himself, and wiped his forehead with the back of his hand. "Sorry, didn't mean to snap at you. But you know as well as I do, what with old Willi hanging around our necks these last couple of days, we *could* have missed something arriving here. There've been all these delivery trucks; just at this time, people have stopped mentioning that they saw a strange vehicle on the road, because there are so many, whereas ordinarily we'd have been told if we failed to see a big truck near here." He pounded his fist into his palm. "Hell, I don't want to do anything as conspicuous as calling Bonn! There are exactly two phones in this dump—one in the store and one here, right in the kitchen where everyone can hear you. People would be gossiping within an hour!"

"You'd be speaking English, though."

"Yes, but I couldn't hide the fact that I was calling

our embassy. I don't have the number—I'd have to ask the operator. Even if I asked for an English-speaking operator, that in itself would be peculiar. And if I'm right in suspecting that Hollweg has a local contact, word could so quickly get to him that this American visitor has called Bonn. He may not have thought of reporting that a couple of wandering artists are in Welbing. That would settle it." With shaking hands he lit a cigarette. He was smoking too much. "Hell, what are they playing at?" he exploded.

He got very little sleep that night, and when he made his way downstairs in the morning, intending to ask Frau Schenker for the use of the phone, he was bleary-eyed and intensely depressed. In the "banquet hall" a man was tuning the upright piano and wished him a cheerful good morning, but there was no sign of Frau Schenker, either in the public room or the kitchen.

Where the—

Then he saw her through the front window, standing beside a car that had drawn up at the inn. He could see nothing of the driver, to whom she was speaking, except the sleeve of his overcoat.

That was enough. He'd recognize that tweed anywhere.

He went outside at a run, almost knocking into Frau Schenker in his haste, and exclaimed, "So somebody finally took my letter seriously! Jesus, Greer, I never thought I'd be glad to see you!" And to Frau Schenker he added quickly, "This man is an old friend of mine."

CHAPTER XXX

Greer, however, scowled. It was immediately clear that, no matter how glad Phil was to see him, the feeling wasn't mutual. He said, "Letter? I don't know what you mean. I came down to check on a report from an army base near here about an inquisitive American stranger. I figured it was you again." He opened the door of the car and got out. "Whatever the hell you've been doing," he concluded, "you've done too damned much of it."

For a moment Phil felt dizzy. He took a deep breath. "Do you mean to say that you haven't come as a result of the embassy getting my letter with all the facts in?"

"I told you: I don't know anything about a letter. I—"

"Shut up for a moment." Phil turned to Frau Schenker. "*Wissen Sie, wo Herr Langbaum ist?*"

"*Weiss nicht.*" She shook her head. "*Heute Morgen habe ich ihn nicht gesehen.*"

So Langbaum wasn't around. Next time he showed, Phil promised himself, he was going to take him by that scrawny rabbit neck and lift him off the ground and shake him till he confessed to having lost the letter.

"I'm tired of this double talk," Greer said. "The fat woman says you've been staying here. As of now, you're not. Get your gear and get in the car."

If anyone ever had a one-track mind . . . Suddenly Phil was boiling with rage.

"What are you—a one-man posse?" he flared. "A Mountie sworn to get his man? I don't know what you're doing frig-

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ging around the country dogging my footsteps, but I can tell you something you'd be much better occupied with! What do you know about Moritz and Hollweg and their—"

He checked himself, abruptly conscious that he was on the verge of shouting a so-far well-kept secret to the four corners of Welbing.

Greer's expression changed magically. He said in a tone that hinted at relief and even respect, "I was wondering if I'd got you wrong. Is there somewhere we can talk?"

"That's better," Phil said. "I guess you'll have to come up to my room. Everywhere else, they're getting ready for a big beanfeast this evening. Through here."

Cautiously, as if wary of being ambushed, Greer followed him. Coming to the bedroom door, Phil tapped at it.

"Who is—uh—*Wer da?*" Angela called.

"Girl friend?" Greer asked in a low voice.

Phil nodded. "Me, honey," he said. "I have a friend with me—an American friend."

"O-o-oh!" Her gusty sigh of relief came clearly through the door. "At last! I won't be a moment—just putting my sweater on."

"This girl friend of yours," Greer said. "She wouldn't by any outside chance be an ex-employee of the firm of Moritz and Hollweg, would she?"

Phil's respect went up a corresponding notch. He nodded.

"I look forward to this conversation," Greer said with a grim smile. "I think it's going to be very interesting."

The door opened. Angela stood back to let them in.

"So that's how it was," Greer said, and gave a sigh. "Got a cigarette? I left my pack in the car."

"Here you are." Phil passed one over. "Now maybe you'll do us a favor and say how much of it you already knew, and how often we've risked our necks to no purpose."

Greer glanced at his watch. "Okay, I reckon I can spare time for that. I want to make sure there's a guard posted on this tunnel of yours, but we can be pretty certain they'll

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deliver the goods under cover of dark, so there's a while to go yet. We knew the transaction was scheduled for somewhere in this area—that much was obvious from Max Moritz's movements just before he was killed—but I sure never imagined this tunnel. We were expecting a diversionary move somewhere a few miles along the border, maybe with people in a vehicle trying to break out, and some shooting to draw our patrols." He gave a crooked grin. "So you see, we haven't been as boneheaded as you appear to have thought."

He paused. "I came in on this when Max Moritz was killed, as you know. Moritz had been known to the police here in Germany for some time, but his chief racket was trading in currency between East and West. That did them more harm than us. Anyway, he never actually got jailed, for whatever reason. But the police kept tabs on him. And they passed it to my people when it occurred to them to ask why he'd been killed by a napalm bomb with a Czech-made detonator."

Phil nodded several times. "I'd been wondering why you were interested in Moritz. Did you ever find the man in overalls?"

"The one who presumably fired the bomb? No—he would have been over the border the same night."

Phil sighed. "Go on."

"Well, anyone who's in the arms business we watch. There are honest men in the trade, but there are plenty who'd sell guns to their country's worst enemies; and when we found that Max Moritz had had meetings recently with a partner in an arms company, we began to check up on that company. I hear your girl friend has caused something of a furor by sending some private papers to the Fraud Squad of Scotland Yard. That was an inspiration. Moritz has panicked, and we don't know where he is right now, but we'll get him. Hollweg has been pushed to the point at which he doesn't take time to cover his tracks properly." He raised fingers and ticked off subsequent points. "An arms firm in

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financial trouble . . . has been dealing with a notorious crook in West Germany . . . killed by a bomb with a Czech detonator . . . on the way back from the border area. We're interested, all right." He eyed Phil wryly. "I could have cursed you, you know. Okay, I did, more than once. I tell you, if it wasn't that I know it might set off a general war, I'd say to Hollweg good luck and hope the poor bastards over the border had a successful revolution. But I was afraid you might not be so levelheaded. I was afraid you'd join Hollweg out of misplaced idealism."

"You haven't met Hollweg, have you?" Phil said.

Greer shook his head. "I know the file on him, that's all."

"Well, he's not the sort of person around whom idealism is apt to flourish."

"Just as well," Greer muttered with a cynical grin. "By now you've probably figured that I was trying to make you sheer off—playing down the danger, making open threats. It didn't work, but even so, I feel like apologizing. You must see, though, that I didn't want to be fouled up by amateur interference."

"Nothing could have made me more determined to stick with it," Phil said.

"So I gather." Greer tapped ash from his cigarette. "Anything else you think you need to know?"

"Yes. You don't know where the guns are, do you?" Phil leaned forward, eager for the reply.

Greer looked uncomfortable. "I know where they *were*. They were in a Belgian warehouse until just about a month ago. I'm very much afraid they're in this country now. A consignment of 'machine tools' was put under customs seal at Steinbruck last month, supposedly to be delivered to Karlsruhe. The stuff never turned up. We're still looking for it. And we think that was Hollweg's guns."

There was a moment of silence. Then Phil said dispiritedly, "I wish to God I hadn't been so put off by the way you treated me. It would have saved me a hell of a lot of trouble. You'd checked on Max Moritz; you knew about his connec-

tion with Hollweg; you found out about the guns . . . We could have stayed home."

"Like hell," Greer said. "I hate to admit it, because it means I've fallen down on my own specialty. But if Angela here hadn't located that stolen document in Moritz's safe, which put you on to the idea of a tunnel, I'm pretty damned sure Hollweg's scheme would have come off. We'd have had our patrols lined up all along the border, staring at the Commies—and the guns would have gone quietly through beneath their feet." He shook his head, looking dazed. "Brother, do you realize you've come about as close to saving the world as anybody this century?"

Phil felt his mouth drop open. He couldn't prevent it.

"Right!" Greer said, getting up. "Now I'm going to call the nearest army base and get the news on the wire. Is there a phone here?"

"In the kitchen—I'll show you." Phil moved toward the door.

In the kitchen Maria was peeling potatoes in fantastic quantities; Frau Schenker was preparing a vatlike pot of soup; and a woman from one of the local farms was cleaning cutlery. The air was steamy and full of the smell of food. Waiting for Greer to get through on the phone, Phil grinned at Angela. His sensation of relief was overpowering—he almost couldn't even care that Langbaum had failed to mail his letter. But not quite.

"Frau Schenker!" he called. "*Haben Sie Herrn Langbaum noch nicht gesehen?*"

She glanced up from her pot of soup. "He was here ten or fifteen minutes ago. I don't know where he is now, though."

"Is something wrong?" he heard Angela say behind him, addressing Greer. He turned.

"Phone's dead," Greer said with a frown.

Phil and Angela exchanged worried glances. Phil said, "Are you sure?"

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Greer made a disgusted noise and cradled the hand set. "Is there another in the village?"

"Yes, at the store. We'd better get down there."

But at the same moment the outer door opened and Frau Gengel, wife of *Herr Beamter* Gengel, came in, calling loudly for Frau Schenker and saying that the phone was out of order at the store.

"Use mine!" Frau Schenker shouted back. "Mine's working—I had a call this morning."

"*Entschuldigen!*" Frau Gengel said, excusing herself for reaching past Greer for the phone. He decided to let her find out for herself that this phone was also on the blink, and drew Phil aside.

"Sounds like the line down," he said in a low voice.

Phil nodded, a chilling presentiment moving up his spine. "We'll have to drive to another phone," he suggested.

"If we're going anywhere, we might as well make directly for the army base." Greer wiped his forehead. "Listen, are you sure that nobody in this village knows what you've been up to here?"

"Not *sure*," Phil admitted reluctantly. "I told you about losing that letter."

"Losing?"

"I don't know." Phil shook his head. "As far as I know, Langbaum doesn't speak English; he's never uttered a word of it in my hearing, at least, and he's a nice old stick. But right now I've no idea where he is, and we don't have time to find him."

Greer bit his lip. By now Frau Gengel had found out about the phone, and Frau Schenker had come over to investigate, and Maria and the woman cleaning cutlery were staring curiously in their direction. He signaled Phil and Angela to go outside.

"I think it would be best if you both came with me," he said. "I was going to take you along anyway, Burns, to point out the location of the tunnel. But there's something fishy

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about these phones failing. I guess we'd better not leave Angela here. She'd come in too handy as a hostage."

Angela gave a stifled exclamation. Greer eyed her wryly.

"If you hadn't thought of that, your instinct of self-preservation is less well developed than the rest of you. Come on."

They hurried into his waiting car. He started the motor, engaged reverse, and released the brake, craning back over his shoulder. Immediately there was an explosion and the car tilted off the level.

"Christ!" Greer said. "A blowout is all we need!"

Phil flung his door open and strode to the rear of the car. Dropping on one knee beside the burst tire, he saw at once what had happened. A beer bottle had been dropped—maybe during yesterday's deliveries—and shattered on the flagstones. By chance, a long, pointed splinter had lodged upright in a crevice. Greer, in backing the car, had driven the spike of glass clear through the casing of the tire.

Greer, fuming, was inspecting the spare. "It's a rented car," he muttered. "Lay you a bet there's no pressure in this damned thing . . . What did I say?"

He poked at it. It was dough-soft.

"There's no service station here," Phil said. "But maybe we can borrow a pump. Is there a jack?"

"Hell of a sight quicker to commandeer a lift," Greer said, slamming the lid of the trunk. "There are plenty of cars around."

"So there are!" Angela exclaimed. Phil shared her surprise. Now was the first time this morning that he'd looked along Welbing's narrow main street, and he found at least six cars in view, and ten or a dozen strangers.

"You sound surprised," Greer said to Angela. "What is it?"

"They're not local people," she answered doubtfully, with a glance at Phil. "Are they?"

"No. Members of the *Singverein* turning up early, I guess."

"What's this deal?" Greer demanded.

"Annual visit by a local choral society, due here about four

or five this afternoon. Big supper with singing. Everybody from the neighborhood will be there."

"Tonight!" Greer said. "For God's sake, why didn't you tell me about this? You mean the whole population will be down at the Gasthof?"

"Yes, I think so." Phil stared. "I don't see what——"

"Don't you?" Angela interrupted. "It means that tonight of all nights in the year you can do what you like half a mile from where we're standing and know that nobody will see or hear you. They'll all be at the inn stuffing themselves and getting drunk!"

CHAPTER XXXI

After a small eternity, Phil said, "I keep telling myself I wasn't cut out for this business, and I'm damned right. It was staring me in the face all the time. No wonder Hollweg has been in such a hurry!"

"It's nothing to the hurry we're in!" Greer snapped. "Come on. Let's get hold of one of these cars and find that phone! Do you know any of the people around here?"

"Some." Phil stared up and down the street. "Yes, over there—see that beat-up Opel? Belongs to a farmer called Kronecker. We've had a drink with him at the inn. But I'm not sure he'd be good to pick on. I think he's a buddy of Langbaum, who didn't mail my letter."

"Pick on someone else, then," Greer said. "Him, over there!"

He pointed to a mild-looking little man with glasses just going around a Volkswagen checking the locks on the doors and trunk. They converged on him. Speaking rapidly and in

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confused chorus—Greer's German was as fluent as Phil's and equally well accented—they managed to convey to him a vague impression of serious illness and the urgent need for a phone, as the one at the Gasthof was broken.

The expression on the little man's face was immediately grave. "Well, that is lucky!" he exclaimed. "I am a doctor!" He gestured at the sticker on his car's windshield, which they had failed to notice: it bore a caduceus.

Jesus. Phil improvised frantically, trying to distract the doctor's attention from Greer's all-too-obvious fury. Waving his arms and talking confusedly about inside the house, through the big room, and up the stairs, he managed to steer the astonished little man into the Gasthof, and dashed back. Angela had gone after Greer, who had marked the owner of an open Citroën convertible as his next target. This was a blue-jowled man with a broken nose. He wasn't a doctor, and he reacted instantly.

"Get in!" he said, throwing open the doors of his car. "Which way shall we go?"

Immensely relieved, Greer looked to Phil, who spoke under his breath. "The way the car's facing—I can point out the location of the tunnel, though you can't see it from the road."

"Great!" Greer said. He added to the driver, "Straight on!"

"But I think there is a telephone at a house in the other direction!" the man said, making as if to turn the car around.

"Uh—the road behind us may be blocked by a delivery truck!" Phil invented brilliantly. Greer gave him a flattering look and slammed the door as he jumped in beside the driver.

"Just as you say!" the driver agreed, and started off.

After the phone, Greer's tires, and the episode with the doctor, Phil found himself holding his breath. Not until the car was racing down the winding road beyond the village did he feel he could relax a little. He glanced at Angela and gave her a smile.

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She didn't respond but raised her arm and pointed ahead. Phil turned to look, at the same moment that the driver put his foot on the brake and said puzzledly, "Are you sure it was the other direction that was blocked by a delivery truck?"

At one of the points where the road ran between earthen banks, there was visible the upper part of a large covered truck, quite stationary.

Oh, no. Phil found Greer looking at him with mute dismay, and was forced to say something.

"Perhaps it's possible to get by!" he exclaimed. "There are places where the road has soft shoulders!"

"What the hell is it doing there, anyway?" Greer muttered. Before he could get a reply, they rounded a bend and came in clear sight of it. "Another goddamned blowout," he added. "Look at it!"

The hood of the truck was open, but that didn't seem to have anything to do with the delay. Two men in overalls were lackadaisically removing one of the rear wheels.

"They used to say God is on the side of the big battalions," Phil commented despairingly. "Right now it looks as if He's on the side of the megaton bombs! We'll have to go back."

"Can't they move the damned thing?" Greer was leaning over the passenger's door, peering past the truck at the overalled men. "They've got twin rear wheels; both tires can't have gone!"

The driver leaned out also and shouted to the working men. One of them called back something insulting about not being able to break down where it suited other people's convenience. But after a moment he and his companion seemed to change their attitude. Phil had the impression they were listening to something he couldn't hear. An indefinable sense of menace seized him. He felt with his left fingers for the hilt of the knife. The sheath was well up his forearm at the moment, because he had not wanted even a chance glimpse to betray its presence.

Now the overalled men were coming forward. He froze.

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One of them was swinging a wheel brace, and the other held, negligently, the long lever arm from the truck's jack. Phil's eyes flickered from them to the truck. The light was reflecting off the glass of the windshield, and the raised hood made it still more uncertain, but he thought he had seen a movement in the cab.

One of the men came up on either side of the car, not saying anything, smiling artificially. The driver said something about illness and the need to find a phone, and the man on his side glanced toward the truck.

Through the open window of the cab an arm moved once, up and down.

Then everything happened so fast that no time at all seemed to be taken up by events. The man standing at the driver's side, who held the wheel brace, lifted it and brought it down with smashing brutality on the blue-jowled man's skull. He collapsed. Phil reached out over the back of the seat as Angela cried out. Greer, whose attacker—the one with the jack lever—had been fractionally slower, flung open his door and caught the man behind it, knocking him backward and off balance. Phil snatched the wrist of the hand holding the wheel brace and forced it further downward. With his other arm he flat-handed the near side of the man's head, and drove his temple against the pillar of the windshield violently enough to daze him. The man fell back a yard, dropping the wheel brace and shaking his head dizzily. Cursing the interruption that had stopped him from bringing his knife sheath back to the ready position, Phil stood up, tugging at the right sleeve of his sweater and wishing for the Biretta he had left at the inn.

Greer had gotten out of the car, drawing the heavy police-model .45 he carried in the holster concealed under his coat. The man with the jack lever exclaimed, raising his weapon. From the cab window of the truck there was another movement, and a sound no louder than a bursting paper bag.

The shock was so appalling that Phil was petrified for a long and fatal second. One moment Greer was a human

being, with a face. An instant later he was a *thing*, a falling dummy limper than a rag doll, and on the front of his head there was nothing but a red wet mess, repeated even worse on the back.

That was the image Phil carried with him when something exploded at the top of his head, bringing a fireball of pain, then darkness.

When Phil began his staggering journey back through the dark passages of his mind toward full consciousness, he could not at first separate one sense datum from another. The racket in his ears, the cramp in his limbs, the ache in his head, the nausea in his guts—all blended into a writhing gray fog.

Little by little, he assembled his memories, and abruptly what had happened became clear.

He was tied to something hard that pressed on his spine. His arms had been crossed behind him and lashed tight, and his ankles had been roped side by side. He was standing up. This therefore wasn't an ordinary post, or he would have been able to slump further while he was unconscious. As it was, his elbows and shoulders were shot with fire-hot cramps, for he had been hanging his weight on his twisted arms. He reasoned foggily, *A ladder, and I'm tied to one of the uprights.*

He began to try to move his fingers, and found confirmation in the distorted roundness of a rung on which one hand was resting.

He hadn't opened his eyes yet. Now he tried it. His right eye opened and saw indistinct gloom-sunken walls, a doorway with the ill-fitting door closed. Some sort of shed. His left eye resisted his first attempts to open the lid. Then some stiff, gummy substance covering it broke, and he felt a powdery touch on his cheek. More slow, difficult logic: *It's blood from my scalp, run down and dried on my face.*

Then the racket in his ears. What had happened to it? There was silence now. He moved, startled, and fresh agony

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lanced his arms and legs. *Noise now! Singing . . . a solo tenor . . .*

He struggled to match words to what seemed a familiar tune, aware that it was irrelevant to his situation, but unable to put his mind to anything till the riddle was solved.

. . . Was Martin Luther spricht!

He'd gotten it. Now a lusty roar of four-part harmony as the whole choir chimed in:

*Wer nicht liebt Wein, Weib und Gesang,
Der bleibt ein Narr sein Leben lang,
Und Narren sind wir ni-i-icht!
Und Narren sind wir NICHT!*

And while they concentrated on wine, women, and song, the door to World War III was creaking open behind them and Death was peering through with a naked grin.

Phil licked his lips, finding a crust of blood on the left corner of his mouth. For a terrible moment his physical sickness, the pain, and sheer despair combined to drive him toward defeat. Then he remembered the disappearance of Greer's face. He remembered Greer saying that the guns might go through under the feet of border patrols. He remembered the truck, and the crucial point he had overlooked—that this day of the year was not only the one when you could move under cover of dark and know there was nobody to see you, but also the one day when there were too many strangers in Welbing for every one of them to be accounted for.

He moved his hands, dominating the pain in his arms. First he felt for his knife under the sleeve of his sweater. It was gone, of course. The man in the truck's cab might have been Hollweg, and Hollweg had good reason to know about that knife. There was no one else in the shed (*Where's Angela, what's become of her?*) and nothing that

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might be of use in freeing him was within his reach. The point of tying him to a ladder was obvious: if he tried to move, he would fall, and the clatter would be heard.

Was there a guard? The point struck him, and he stared toward the twilight outline of the door, ill-fitting in the frame. Yes, there was a shadow moving. A guard. *Someone pretending to be tipsy, gone out for a breath of air?*

And the darkness, the significance of the darkness . . . *It must be eight or nine at least, and the guns are on their way.*

He pulled, tugged, and strained to work some slack in the rope on his arms. He doubled back his fingers as far as they would go, trying to get a hold with his nails. A book about Houdini, once read, scarcely remembered—something important about the narrowest part of the hand . . .

His whole mind seemed to drain down into his wrists and hands. Sweating, dizzy, he fought and—without a sound—damned the ropes.

A fraction of an inch at a time, pressing and tugging with his fingertips, he persuaded the main knot to come within his reach. Eyes shut for fear of distraction, sweat prickling on his back and forehead, he identified the turns of the rope, located the last one to be tied, pushed it open, and the next, and the next—found enough play to move one forearm back and forth, squeezed his hand through a rough, tight loop—let it fall exhaustedly to his side. He was past the point of feeling the pain from his abraded skin. The hand was numb—he dared not lose his ability to command its movements. He forced it back up behind him, and freed the other arm. At that point he was so sick and pain-ridden that he came close to losing his balance and toppling, taking the ladder with him. He avoided it—just—then found that it was impossible to bend to his ankles without either moving the ladder or falling forward.

He could not reach a wall—the top of the ladder rested against a wooden beam crossing the middle of the shed's roof. And there was no chance of freeing a leg without bending to the knots. As far as his numbed senses could tell, the

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rope was passed around each ankle separately, around the upright of the ladder, then around the lowest rung.

He was trying for the third or fourth time to get down to the knots by hanging on the rungs of the ladder with one hand for balance, and stretching out the other arm, when there were voices outside the shed. The massed choir had stopped for a while, and someone was singing *Die Forelle* with the tinkling piano for accompaniment. He could hear the words plainly.

"Good evening! It's—uh—cooler out here, isn't it?"

Langbaum!

A gruffer voice answered, a stranger's. There was some beat-around-the-bush conversation, an offer of cigarettes, the faint glimmer of a match. Phil breathed a silent word of relief, and risked shifting the ladder as he attempted the ankle rope again. It scraped noisily on the roof beam, but the voices outside continued.

In moments he had freed his ankles. Now he looked around for a weapon. A chunk of wood lying on the ground caught his eye. He had to move cautiously to pick it up, for something gritty crunched under his feet at each step. Coal, probably—this must be the Gasthof's coal shed. He came to the door, his mouth set in a grim line.

The door was closed with a hasp and staple—he could just see the padlock through the crack. He tested the wood with his only unbroken fingernail. Old and soft. *Right*.

Keeping the chunk of wood in his right hand, he took up the ladder and moved back as far as its eight-foot length would allow. Drawing a deep breath, he hurled himself forward and smashed the end of the ladder against the door, bursting the hasp and staple away from the decaying door-post.

Outside, Langbaum and the man with him turned, exclaiming with alarm. Phil dropped the ladder and swung his chunk of wood with all the strength remaining to him. He cracked the stranger on the temple, and the man went down as if poleaxed. Langbaum squeaked something about waiting,

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he wanted to explain—but to hell with him, to hell with his age and his rabbitiness, this was no time for delay. Phil changed hands on the chunk of wood and hit him under the jaw with his fist, catching him and lowering him to the ground as he collapsed.

A roar of applause went up for the singer of *Die Forelle*, and voices shouted for more food and more beer. He was just behind the "banquet hall," but luckily there was no window on this wall.

Breathing hard, Phil rolled over the unconscious stranger. Definitely, this wasn't anyone he had met. He was a sullen-faced man of about twenty-five, with a knife cut healing on his left cheek. Phil prodded his chest and left side through his jacket; there was just a chance of getting hold of a gun. No luck. He picked the man up and half dragged, half threw him into the coal shed, then carried Langbaum after him. He couldn't fix the door, but he could hide the pair of them.

Obviously Langbaum hadn't just lost that letter.

The choir thundered into a *Ländler* now. They sounded very drunk, and the harmony was blurring. A clattering of dishes and stamping of feet underlined the music. The thought of food and drink went straight to Phil's guts, and he had to turn, plant a hand on the rough wall of the shed, and vomit. A few ounces of sour-tasting fluid spilled from his mouth.

Strangely, the act seemed to clear his head. Priorities became plain to him. He dared waste no time on looking for Angela, or locating Hollweg or anyone else in particular. He had only one task—to create a disturbance at the tunnel and attract the attention of everyone he could. How? By dragging out the soberer people from the Gasthof? There probably was no one left in a condition to help him, and anyway, it would take time to explain what had happened.

No, this job was up to him. He took a fresh grip on his chunk of wood and walked into the darkness, limping a little from the pain in his ankles.

CHAPTER XXXII

He made a brief detour to the edge of the stream to sluice cold water over his face. He rinsed his dry mouth and spat. The acid foulness of the vomit faded. He went on.

Once the road from the Gasthof was left behind, his eyes and ears began to pick up clues to what was being done. He went parallel to the road as soon as he was clear of the village, seeing nobody at all. Probably, once the population and the legitimate visitors had assembled, Schellenfreund's men—he didn't see that they could be anyone else—would have been posted to watch the Gasthof, with orders to intercept and delay with a minimum of fuss anyone coming outside. The guard he had knocked out would have been responsible not only for watching the shed, but the whole rear area of the inn.

Meantime, out where the truck had been "stuck" earlier, the rest of Schellenfreund's men got on with the actual job. Possibly there had been guns in the truck used to block the road, but Phil doubted it. Other trucks would have come down later, and the far end of the road where it rejoined the highway would be barricaded with *Road Closed* signs.

But how about the other direction?

He glanced back. In the darkness he could just see a looming bulk parked on the far side of the bridge. Of course, the coach that had brought the *Singverein*. That would have come down in the other direction like a stopper, later in the

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afternoon. With the phones dead since morning, Welbing would have been closed in.

Faint lights showed ahead. That must be where the road passed the first farm. It was from that point that the overgrown tracks to the mouth of the tunnel ran. Phil moved more cautiously than ever. There would certainly be guards posted. But they were more likely to be on the road than in the fields.

Abruptly his heart was in his mouth. In the distance, but clear, he heard the noise of an explosion, then a rattle of carbine fire. Then there was a brilliant light in the sky. He dropped on his belly, by reflex.

Yet it hadn't come from ahead of him, or even from the direction of the tunnel. He raised his head and stared. It had come from miles away, over to the east.

Greer had mentioned the possibility of a diversion at the border, possibly a fake breakout from the eastern side. That would be what was happening now. And both East and West border guards would have been drawn to it.

Jesus. He got to his feet and stumbled forward.

Along the side of a bank, under cover of sparse bushes and shadows, he reached a place where he could see the source of the lights he had spotted a few minutes before. There was a truck parked in the farm's gateway, facing away from the village. The one used as a roadblock must have gone much earlier. There were flashlights moving in the interior of the vehicle. The thin beam of one light shone over the tailboard for a second, and he saw a group of four sweating men, rather young, in dark shirts and pants, moving to accept a heavy wooden crate as it slid down to them. The light snapped off, and he heard grunts as they took the weight and moved away. Another party, returning, passed them in the dark and exchanged a muttered greeting.

The new arrivals reached the truck, and one spoke distinctly to the men inside.

"Those crates of ammo are heavy! How many more of them?"

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"This is the last," a man from inside the truck replied.

"*Prima!* And this is the last truck?"

"No, there's another with more guns waiting at the bend. Hurry up—then we can change over and you can have a breather!"

The words came with the strange clarity of an image in the wrong end of a microscope—immensely faint, immensely sharp. Phil clenched his teeth. Either they weren't delivering the whole three thousand guns, or it was much later than he thought.

In any case, his target wasn't here. He would have to go out to the end of the tunnel.

The short distance was a nightmare. He was terribly aware with every step he took of the sound of his own feet brushing through the grass, and of the noise of the four men sweating on a parallel course with the crate of shells between them. If they had been listening for intruders, they would easily have detected him. Luckily they had made several journeys already, had tired, and were eager to rest after delivering the final crate. They concentrated on haste.

The rough track curved, avoiding the crest of the last rise before the tunnel mouth. Phil was on a higher level. He thought of the risk of silhouetting himself, even against so dark a sky, and though it cost him real effort to pause, he did so, to let the burdened men get ahead of him. The impulse saved his life.

Twenty yards further, and a shadow under an isolated bush moved and spoke to the four men. Phil didn't get what it said, but he heard the reply.

"Last one off this truck. One truckload to go!"

The man under the bush sighed. When the party with the crate had gone on, he stretched, relaxed, put down beside him something that made a clinking noise when he lowered it, and appeared to fumble in a pocket.

The clink had been the sound of a gun sling tapping the gun.

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Phil wished achingly for his knife. The man under the bush was getting out a cigarette. When he struck a match for it, Phil could have put the knife accurately through his neck.

But short of that . . . Phil went down on hands and knees and moved cat-soft toward the unsuspecting guard.

He was within a few yards, coming on the man from behind, when he made a noise sharp enough to attract attention. He spared a fraction of a second for a curse, saw the man's head start to turn, got up on his toes and knuckles like a sprinter, and hurled himself forward.

The glow of the cigarette located the man's chin for him. With the edge of his hand he chopped under the jaw, aiming for the Adam's apple to stop any risk of his crying out. The blow went home. He felt the vocal cords break like a paste-board box. There was a revolting gurgle as the man tried to take his last gulp of air past the roots of his tongue, forced upward to block his windpipe, and Phil was all over him, sprawling. His hands went to the collapsed throat and clamped, vise-tight.

The guard was dead in half a minute. During the period of terrible waiting, Phil heard the sound of the truck driving away from the farmyard gate. Another engine, further along the road, started up when the departing truck flashed its headlights.

There must be forty or fifty men on the job, Phil thought. And added silently, *Minus one*.

He let go of the dead man and reached for the gun on the ground. It was one of the FN carbines he had been shown by Schwann and Lotte—God, how many thousand years ago! And, as his fingertips touched it, he froze.

There was a laugh from the darkness.

He snatched up the cigarette the guard had dropped, meaning to stub it. He was too late. Another group of four young men was walking slowly back down the track. The first glanced his way.

"Hey, Günther! Only one more load to move—hear that?"

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He made an indeterminate grunt for an answer, and it passed muster. The young man retorted in simulated anger, "I'll trade my job for yours, if you like!"

And they went past.

Phil waited till they were out of sight in the darkness before he dared move again. He took up the gun, ground out the cigarette, and headed for the mouth of the tunnel.

CHAPTER XXXIII

He took a roundabout route, darting from bush to bush and choosing the deepest shadows. As he went, his hands explored the gun he had secured, checking the magazine, finding the single-and-automatic lever. Over at the frontier another light bloomed in the sky, and there were two or three more shots. Then there was silence.

He dropped on hands and knees again behind the first bush to afford him a sight of the tunnel mouth, and strained to make out details. There was a small group of men there. No lights were showing, apart from the glow of two cigarettes. There was a faint murmur of conversation.

How long before the next delivery arrived? The sound of truck engines had stopped again. A long way off in the night—perhaps close to the border—a helicopter droned like a late-surviving fly.

Phil spent some of his precious remaining time in balancing risks. If he fired now, he would get the men by the tunnel mouth, but he would be heard by their companions before he was heard by anyone who could help him. There must be other guards posted out in the night, armed as Günther had been. On the other hand, Günther's body

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would almost certainly be found by the next party bringing a crate this way, and the alarm would be given and he might be overpowered with nothing accomplished.

Something moved in the tunnel mouth and a flashlight shone out. The waiting men turned, said something to a man inside the tunnel and hidden by the screen of foliage. They bent and heaved up what he had not noticed before, a crate lying at their feet. It was passed into the tunnel. That must be the last crate of ammunition to be carried here. Presumably it would be loaded on the little hand truck and pushed along the rails to the far end of the tunnel.

He would have to wait at least until the men pushing the truck had gone some distance. He couldn't shoot blind past the screening branches, but someone in the tunnel could fire at him. He decided to use the available time to get closer.

Stooping, he scurried twenty yards and dropped behind a tall clump of grass. There was no better cover here. The crate was being eased between the branches and put on the hand truck now. It vanished. The men stood back. There was a momentary creaking, as if rusty wheels were being forced to turn. Then it faded. The men went back to their quiet conversation and cigarettes.

Phil put the carbine on automatic, raised it above the clump of grass, laid his right leg straight back and put his left leg, slightly bent at the knee, out to the side. He closed his left eye and sighted with care. He aimed for their bellies, because he thought the risk of firing low was less than that of firing high. The two on the left were standing close enough together to offer a chance of shooting through both bodies with one slug.

Three men, two targets, five shots, three corpses.

The noise seemed loud enough, after the whispering darkness of the past quarter-hour, to waken the dead in Welbing cemetery. Phil didn't wait to see. He jumped to his feet and ran for the mouth of the tunnel.

There *were* other guards out there. Cries rang out. A shot—a tug at his leg and a feeling as if a red-hot poker

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had been laid across the back of his thigh. He almost fell. He came now to the mound in front of the tunnel, where three men were sprawled under the concealing greenery. One of them wasn't dead yet; his chest was dark with blood, but he was rising to his hands and knees, and there was a gun leaning against one of the saplings on the mound. Phil reversed his own gun, clubbed down with the butt at the wounded man's head, and he groaned and fell on his face.

Inside the tunnel there was light, and it showed in patches behind interlocked branches. Phil made to scramble up, hauling on boughs for a grip. There was another shot, then several in a wild burst, and a white chip sprang from a thin tree trunk above him, stinging his outstretched hand.

From inside the tunnel shouts: "Get that gun! Someone look outside and see what's happening!" Phil threw himself against the steep muddy bank beside the tunnel mouth. A man holding a flashlight stepped out of the narrow opening, intent on parting the foliage and looking beyond. Phil clubbed his gun again and drove the butt at the man's head. He fell down with a cracking of twigs to the ground below.

The next man behind would probably have a gun. Phil found his own trigger, went across the tunnel mouth, fired the remaining shots in a single burst at about waist height, trying to make them sweep the whole fifteen-foot width of the tunnel. He caught the noise of a single ricochet, like an insane bee. There was no answering fire, although someone was shooting toward the tunnel mouth from out there in the dark, and he heard the plop of the slugs in the soft earth. There were shouts, and the truck's engine by the farm had started up again.

Panic. Great!

He looked cautiously into the tunnel now. The light he had seen came from swinging kerosene lamps on hooks along the wall. He could see two men, both dead—one armed, who must have been coming toward him when a slug ripped into his chest, the other further away, sprawling over the hand truck on which the crate of ammunition was loaded.

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But someone else was in the tunnel, down at the other end. A shot, magnified out of measure, boomed around him, and a slug whined by. That was a lucky one. The next one struck an obstacle ahead, and so did the next, and that one ricocheted. He had no wish to be torn apart by a distorted lump of metal. He caught up the gun let fall by the nearer of the dead men, throwing his empty one aside, and sent an answering burst past the hand truck on its rails. He was delighted to hear a scream of agony echo toward him a few seconds later.

But was even this going to achieve his single object of alerting the border guards? There was plenty of noise from the shooting, and the attention of people in Welbing would have been drawn. With the diversion at the border, though . . .

There was something else he could do to make sure.

The idea never formed into words in his head; he simply saw what could be done and was already doing it when he had it worked out. He made his way forward as far as the hand truck, keeping low except for one brief moment when he stretched up to his full reach and snatched the nearest kerosene lamp off its hook. He got to the hand truck, putting the lamp out as he went, twisting the filler cap off the reservoir. He threw the lamp into the bottom of the truck. Another burst of slugs whined past him, and one of them splashed on the front of the truck.

He sighted two more lamps. They were a long way off. But one wasn't enough, and two might not be. He wanted three. He made for them. He got the second. As he was unhooking the third, something blazed agonizingly into his calf.

Overlying the pain that dizzied him for a moment, strangely clear, was the sensation of wetness as blood ran down to fill his shoe.

Somehow he got back to the truck. Somehow he got the two lamps there. Somehow he spilled the kerosene from one of them over the balanced wooden crate. Somehow he got the remaining lamp, still burning but with its chimney smashed, into the pool of kerosene from the first of the

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three. A sudden smoky blaze shot up, caught at the kerosene on the sides of the ammunition box.

The pain from his leg was maddening. He turned, stumbled toward the mouth of the tunnel. He got to it, paused with a hand on the side of the opening to gather his strength for the descent—and a vast, vast detonation flung him forward, crashing through the branches outside, sliding helpless down the mound of earth toward the ground.

When he came to rest, he stayed there. He had no energy left to move.

CHAPTER XXXIV

Disconnected flashes of events, like images in a dream, came to him. There were screams and explosions and sometimes there was light. A deafening noise of engines ceased. Running feet and shouts. A man bent over him and said, "It's the American artist we saw the other day. Check that wound in his leg."

He felt gentle hands around the injury, heard the sound of tearing cloth; then stabs of pain seemed to melt into the same sensation. He was picked up on a stretcher and carried rocking through the night. Passive, he let it all happen.

Then it was the "banquet hall" of the Gasthof, and he was laid on a table, and the little doctor with glasses whose car Greer had attempted to borrow was examining him, in shirt sleeves, a smear of fresh blood on the white shirt front, saying something about being very fit and not seriously hurt; and he tried to sit up, and an arm supported his head and another put a small glass of fiery schnapps to his lips.

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Time, which had been ungeared from him and running wild like an engine with the throttle jammed, ground back into its normal relation. From the crown of his scalp to the soles of his feet he *hurt*—aches, bruises, strained muscles, and one superficial shot wound and one rather deep one. But he was aware enough to look around and know what he was seeing.

The big room looked like an overcrowded morgue. There were four or five American soldiers, three state policemen, and some other people he recognized from the neighborhood, among them Frau Schenker and the girl Maria. Those were the ones on their feet. Those flat on their backs were mostly strangers whom the doctor was attending to.

It was an American soldier who had given him the schnapps. Phil turned his head and brought his eyes into close focus.

"You okay now?" the man said.

"You're Joe," Phil said thickly. "I saw you the other day."

"That's right. We headed you off from the border." Joe half-turned to find a place for the empty schnapps glass. "Brother, believe me, if we'd known what you'd got hold of, we'd have said keep going and hurry up!"

Memory flooded back. "Did you stop them?" Phil said. He clutched at the shoulder of Joe's tunic. "Did you stop the guns?"

"They were stopped okay. Was it you that blew the tunnel?"

Phil licked his lips. He said, "I guess it must have been. I put kerosene on a box of shells and— Where's Angela? For God's sake, where is she?"

"Relax!" Joe said, holding him as he attempted to struggle down from the table. "She's in with the colonel, telling him the background. She saw you when you were brought in and the doc said you'd be all right. You weren't taking any notice of anything."

Phil closed his eyes. "Jesus. You know, for a moment . . . Did they get Hollweg? What happened?"

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"We got just about everybody, I guess. We brought up four 'copters with searchlights and ran 'em down as they tried to get away."

"But most of the guns had gone through!"

"They got to the other end of the tunnel. They stopped right there."

"What?" Phil snapped his eyes open again.

"That's what they tell me." Joe shrugged. "Apparently it wasn't as much of a secret as all that. There was a gunfight on the other side. It was over about the time we brought you in. They had searchlights hidden in the trees—must have had a hundred troops in ambush, waiting for the guns to be delivered."

Troops? No, it was no good. Phil couldn't cope with paradoxes like that right now.

"You just stay there," Joe said, rising. "I'll tell Colonel Farman you're ready to talk."

"Phil! Phil! Oh, God, I'm so glad you're all right!"

At a stumbling run, Angela pushed between people on the crowded floor, came to his side, clutched his arms, and bent to press her face against his. There was a blue bruise on her cheek, and her lower lip was puffy from a healing cut, but she was unhurt apart from these trifles. Behind her came a chicken colonel and a pfc with a pen and a big scratch-pad.

"Oh, yes; I'm all right," Phil said. He tried to hug her, and found that one of his elbows was painful.

"That's Mr. Burns, Colonel," Joe said somewhere in the background.

"I guessed that," the colonel said dryly. "Get some chairs around, will you? And fix something for Frost to make his notes on. Small table, something like that."

There was some scraping of furniture. Phil paid no attention, concentrating on the touch of Angela's cheek against his, the pressure of her hands on his shoulders.

"If you'll excuse us, Miss Walker," Colonel Farman said

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eventually, and coughed. Angela drew back. Joe had put a chair alongside Phil and signaled her to take it. She sat down, holding Phil's hand tightly.

"Right." The colonel eyed Phil. "Miss Walker filled us in on most of the background, Burns. We know your story, and we have the evidence necessary to back it up. We found a truck full of crated carbines, run off the road into a bank on the way back to the highway. We've picked up about forty members of a right-wing extremist faction, most of whom were armed, and Miss Walker showed us where to find the body of a man whom we've positively identified as being with the CIA."

"Greer," Phil said thickly, and licked his lips.

"That's right. His body had been hidden in the undergrowth not far from where he was killed."

Phil rolled his head toward Angela. "What did they do to you?" he demanded.

"They . . . they gagged me and tied me up. Then they put me, and you and the man driving the car, in the back of their truck, and when it got darker they brought the car back into the village. I was tied up in one of the sheds behind the inn. And you?"

Phil explained. The explanation spread out, and came to include his nightmare walk in the darkness, the killing of Günther the guard, the blowing of the tunnel. They heard him out in silence.

At last he said, "And then Joe tells me—that man there, we met the other day—he says there were troops the other side. He says there were searchlights ready. I don't understand."

"That seems to be right," Colonel Farman confirmed. "They were waiting in ambush for the guns to come over."

Phil shook his head dazedly. To Angela again, he said, "I wanted to go look for you, honey. But there wasn't time. There just wasn't any time at all."

She squeezed his hand. "I was all right. When it got dark, old Langbaum came and untied me and told me——"

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"What?"

Alarmed by his vehemence, she drew back slightly for a moment. "That's right. He came and untied me and told me where I could go and hide, and he said he was going to try to find you. But I guess you got loose before he managed it."

Phil took a deep breath. He started to say something, and changed his mind. "Have you found Langbaum?" he demanded of the colonel.

"God knows," Farman said.

"But I knocked him out," Phil said. "Him and—I guess the guard Hollweg left to watch the back of the inn. I put them in the coal shed where I was tied up."

"Where is this coal shed?" Farman said, jumping to his feet. "He may still be there!"

"Darling, what is this about Langbaum!" Angela demanded.

"I don't know," Phil said. "I've thought about it till my head's going around. Let him explain himself if he can. I can't."

They brought him in, grimy with coal dust, leaning for support on the arm of a soldier, but he still had a kind of petty formal dignity. When he stopped in front of the table on which Phil was lying, he let go of the soldier's arm and straightened to his full height.

"I tried to explain to you, Herr Burns," he said. "But you acted too quickly. You are a very strong young man. Perhaps you were a boxer in your school days." He put his hand to his chin and touched it gingerly. "When he recovered, Schellenfreund's man tied me up. Otherwise I would have been able to come and see you before. I gather that everything has gone well." He looked around. "May I have a chair? I feel very weak."

Colonel Farman indicated the one he had been using, and Langbaum took it with a word of thanks. He put his hands in his lap and gave a faint smile.

"I did not even have time to explain to your gracious

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lady," he added, with a nod to Angela. "She insisted that she wanted to look for you, Herr Burns, and I was fully occupied in convincing her that she would be better advised to hide away. Our opponents would recognize her only too easily, whereas until the very last moment I contrived to conceal my part in the affair."

"Except for stealing that letter I gave you to mail," Phil said.

Langbaum looked genuinely distressed. "I would prefer you not to think that I *stole* it!" he exclaimed. "Say, rather, I took the liberty of reading it and corrected your estimate of its importance."

Phil put his hand to his head. "In the Devil's name, make yourself clear!"

"I am an old man," Langbaum said. "I had not realized till tonight that I am almost a prehistoric relic. I have a long, long memory which goes back to Dachau concentration camp in the year 1940. Forgive me if I take a roundabout way to my point, but you will see why."

He wiped his face, leaving it grimier than before from the coal dust on his hand.

"It was there that I first heard the name of Max Moritz. I was a political prisoner, because I was active in the Social Democratic party, and the Nazis would not tolerate rival parties. Certain—deportees arrived in the camp from the Sudetenland, sent from their homes on the orders of that same Max Moritz."

A blinding light seemed to break on Phil's mind. He said, "I see, I see! Go on!"

"They let me out. I was a German born in Germany, fit to be put in a uniform and sent to reinforce the struggling armies in Russia. They did that to many of their former political prisoners. They did not do it to those whose homes had been in the East. I believe that the persons Max Moritz deported were—liquidated."

"They were," Phil said. "There are exactly two survivors, both of whom were children at the time."

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"How do you know that?" Colonel Farman cut in. He looked puzzled, but he was gamely following Langbaum's story.

"I've met them," Phil said curtly. "Go on," he added to Langbaum.

"You know I have little sympathy for the East regime," Langbaum said. "I would be no happier there than here. But they have been more thorough in cleaning house. You have seen one from my collection of these things, but not this particular one."

He felt inside his jacket and took out the papers from which he had shown Phil and Angela the leaflet offering a reward for Bodo Schellenfreund. Now he selected another, which bore a very faded photograph of Max Moritz, and offered a hundred thousand marks for his arrest.

"That man came to Welbing. I didn't know why; I didn't know about arms or a tunnel or anything. I had retired here, an embittered old man, to eke out my pension until my death. But the sight of that former Nazi, rich now, free to go about, unpunished, using his own name and not even trying to hide his past, made me suddenly very angry. I wrote a letter about his visit. I tied it to a stone. I went to the frontier, and when I saw an East German soldier on the other side, I threw the letter across to him."

"But when was that?" Phil said. "Did he come here more than once?"

"No."

"But he was killed on his way back from here! That must have been the day I hitched a ride in his car and got mixed up in this business!"

"Yes, they told me about that. Or, rather, somebody did. I had a telephone call three days, four days afterward, from a woman. She wouldn't give her name. She simply thanked me for the letter, told me that Max Moritz was dead, and asked me to do the same if I saw any more old or new Nazis in the neighborhood. And when Bodo Schellenfreund came here, I did. This makes me alive again!" Langbaum

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leaned forward. He was addressing Phil in an almost pleading tone. "You are young—you might not understand what it meant. In a sense I was already dead. I had ceased to affect the world. And now, suddenly, an act of mine has importance. At first I even thought I had brought about the death of Max Moritz, though later of course I understood that it could not have happened so quickly—he was probably dead when my letter was still in the pocket of the soldier across the frontier. But none the less, it was like being brought back from the grave.

"When you came here at first I didn't know what to think of you. I spoke harshly to you of Americans, because to me it is Americans who have hired Hitler's generals and put them in command of NATO troops. I—I cannot love anyone who served Hitler.

"Then came the opportunity to discover all about you." His voice dropped almost to a whisper. "I am sorry. I read your letter—very slowly, with the help of a dictionary. And I thought, 'What if he is naïve? He is a young man; he has no knowledge of the secrets of Cold War politics. What if this, that he takes for a private plot, has the support of extremists in the seats of power? What if the smuggling of the guns is aided, not hindered?' I have seen too much of war and violence, Herr Burns. I have seen my country defeated twice in my lifetime, and I do not know which time was more terrible; but I am certain that it must not happen again. Not civil war, not world war. So I took your letter and I did the same with it as I had done with mine."

Colonel Farman, who had been following with total attention, whistled under his breath. He said, "So that's why they were waiting on the other side!"

Langbaum nodded. "I don't know who was to receive the guns. Maybe honest men passionately seeking freedom—God forgive me if they were! But that isn't the way. I know—I *know* that isn't the way!"

He put his head in his hands, and after a moment his thin old body began to rack with sobs.

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The hall had become very quiet while he was talking. The little doctor had finished ministering to the wounded, and Frau Schenker had taken him away for refreshment. The soldiers stood easy by the double doors, smoking and talking in low voices. Now, however, there was a commotion outside, and they turned to look as the soldiers by the doors sprang to open and see what was happening. Colonel Farman rose.

Into the hall was forced, between two muscular soldiers, a man whom they instantly recognized, although he was smeared with foul-smelling dirt from head to foot. Angela gave a low gasp.

The escorts urged their captive toward the colonel. One of them, breathing heavily, addressed Farman.

"Found this man hiding on that farm out there, Colonel! Found him in the manure pile, as you can tell. Refused to identify himself; hasn't said anything except to cuss us, I guess. But when I threatened to bring him here, he got so violent, like he was scared to death, I figured that was the right thing to do."

"It was," Phil said. He raised himself on his elbow. "You have a prize there, soldier. That's the man whose guns they were trying to sneak through the tunnel. That's Hans Hollweg." He added, seeing Langbaum raise his head and look around, "You might say it's the first time he's shown himself in his true colors."

Angela's hand closed convulsively tight on his. When he glanced at her, he saw that she had put her other hand to her mouth and her shoulders were shaking. She was trying to stifle her laughter. The attempt failed in seconds, and she whooped joyfully. He began to smile too. Farman gave a broad grin, the soldiers grinned from simple contagion, and while Hollweg, dung-smothered, glared at them, the rafters echoed with laughter that threatened to grow hysterical.

Farman cut through it at last, moving toward Hollweg to interrogate him, and there was no one near Phil but Angela and Langbaum.

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Phil spoke to the old man in German. "At least you did something," he said. "You might have done nothing."

"That is kind," Langbaum muttered. "But it must be the right thing."

"I thought for a while," Phil said, "that it must have been because of you that I was nearly killed in Moritz's car. But it wasn't. There's only one person I can blame for that, and now I know who it was."

"It is of no interest to me," Langbaum said. "In this world I am finished. And in the next—who knows?" He essayed a smile, but it was a disaster, and he buried his face in his palms again.

"What are you saying?" Angela murmured.

"Nothing important," Phil said. "I mean, this is all over, isn't it? Apart from the traces it's left. Like that cut on your lip—is it serious?"

She shook her head. "Prove it," she said, and leaned forward to kiss him.

After that, not even Hollweg seemed important right now.

CHAPTER XXXV

This last matter he must settle on his own.

Outside, the wind was lashing the streets with half-frozen rain. Although it was midday, the low roof of clouds made the city dark, as dark as the mind of Phil Burns. The heating in the apartment building was heat-wave stifling.

He looked at the little card on the apartment door. It said, *Dr. und Frau H. Schwann*.

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He put his finger on the bell and kept it there.

It was a long time before there was a shrill, angry cry from the other side of the door, and longer still before it was opened to him. She stood there in a silk robe, her eyes clouded with sleep. When she recognized him, she didn't say anything. She put her hand to her mouth and took a step back.

He came in, making her go back further, and shut the door, not taking his eyes from her face. He said, "You're very clever, Lotte. I should have known, after seeing you at the Denkmalskeller. Shouldn't I have known? You could make the Devil himself believe any lie you chose."

From the door of the bedroom, which she had left ajar on coming to answer the bell, there was a faint sound. Phil kept his gaze steadily on the beautiful, fine-drawn face before him, but raised his voice.

"Schwann! Schwann, come out!"

"Why, it's Herr Burns," the piping voice said with a feeble attempt at affability, and pink-cheeked, chubby Schwann came into the room, tying the sash of a robe around him. "You find us sleeping late, I'm afraid. Last night at the club—"

Phil looked at him, and Schwann's words broke off as he read in the visitor's expression the message that Lotte had already understood.

"Congratulations on your successful murder of Max Moritz," Phil said. "Why did you pick that moment rather than any other? Why did you wait so long? Because you were instructed to?"

Schwann made a huge gulping noise, his eyes growing round with fear.

"I don't know why I was so ready to assume that it was Schwann in the bedroom," Phil said to Lotte. "It might have been anyone else you had orders to take to bed to—soften him up. I suppose Max Moritz was a pipeline of information to this neo-Nazi organization, and that's why you were forbidden to take his life, although he was at your mercy. When he started to show an interest in this arms-

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smuggling deal, it was decided that he must die to create an obstacle and delay the crisis. I don't have to ask if I'm right. I know. Now, I know."

He had not noticed before that Schwann was shorter than his wife. Now, as they moved closer together as if for support, the fact was clear.

"Why at Limburg, not at the frontier? Too obvious to have him die so close to East Germany? I guess so." Phil licked his lips. "But there was only one person in the world who could have said, 'On such a day Max Moritz will travel such a route at such a time.' . . . You, Lotte. He told you his movements almost to the minute, because he was afraid he might not come back, and he wanted you to look for him if he did not."

Neither of them said anything.

"Was that where you got your training as an actress—in making love to the man on whom you had sworn vengeance?"

"No," she said, and her voice seemed to come from a long way off. "No. I learned it in order to survive in a concentration camp. I had no choice."

"So some of it was the truth," Phil said.

"It was all true," Schwann said. "Except—what you have said." He wasn't trying to lie any more, nor was she. Phil could sense the aura of surrender surrounding them.

"What will you do?" Lotte said.

Phil hesitated. Even now, even here, he had not made up his mind. But . . .

"Nothing," he said finally. "Nothing."

There were blank looks on their faces. He had to explain, as much to himself as to them, and words came stumbling.

"In Welbing, in that village, you see, there was an old man called Willi Langbaum." He stopped. "Ah, I see you recognize the name! You called him up to tell him Max Moritz was dead, didn't you? Well, I guess it's because of him. I don't *want* to do anything to you. I was nearly killed because of you. But if I went to the police and said—what? —'Lotte Niemand and her husband, Dr. Schwann, are—

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are spies, are agents who report to the East German secret service,' you'd think it was because I hated you, because I wanted revenge." He slammed his clenched fist into his palm. "I don't want to hate anybody! I don't want to be made to hate the way you hated Max Moritz! Listen, I went out, that night, to the tunnel by the village where they were taking the guns. I killed a man with my hands, and I killed others with a gun. I don't know who they were—I only know what they were doing. And what they were doing was—was unconnected with me! It began before I was even born, and it was over when I was still a little boy. The first newspaper I ever read, when I was five years old and I'd just learned to spell out the words, was the one saying 'War Ends in Europe—Germany Surrenders!'" "

"They had just let me out of the concentration camp," Lotte said. "Looking like an old woman."

"Yes, but God's name! Is it to happen again? Do you hate so much that you want others to go through what you endured?" Phil's voice was unsteady with passion now.

"If Moritz had done what he meant to do," Schwann said, "by now perhaps the war would have begun."

"Yes, but that wasn't why you wanted him dead," Phil countered.

"No," Lotte whispered. She wasn't looking at him. She was looking into the past.

Phil drew breath for one last torrent of words.

"You aren't in service with your masters because you have political ideals," he said. "You can respect someone's ideals even if you disagree with them. It's never a clash of ideals that takes men to a battlefield—it's a conflict of greed that does it. And your greed is for revenge. And I can't hate you even for that, because everything else was starved and tortured out of you. I'm just not going to let it happen to me, that's all."

He was shaking from head to foot, and had to clench his hands to try to master the trembling.

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There was a very long silence. At the end of it, Schwann stirred, and spoke with a kind of wondering incredulity.

"When you were here—the first time—I remember Lotte said that you must be an honest man, and that it was so long since she had met one that she had failed to recognize you. Herr Burns, I—I believe that was true. You must be not only an honest man, but a good one."

"Oh, God!" Phil said with violence, and spun around. They made no move as he snatched open the door.

Out in the street, the wind flung its icy needles of rain in his face. Little by little the cold calmed his raging mind. Head bowed, he went down the street, still limping from the stiffness left by the bullet in his calf.

But that would heal of itself eventually. Only injuries in the mind needed effort; decision, direction, to make them heal.

I've made my decision, he thought. *I didn't realize it, but I have.*

He came to the café two blocks away where he had left Angela waiting, and went in. From her table she looked up. She had been puzzling out the headlines in *Die Welt*, which said, *Arms Smuggling Incident—Russia Claims Risk of War.*

"Finished?" she asked, smiling at him.

He sat down, his face still grim, and shook his head.

"I thought that was the last thing you had to do!" she exclaimed, her face falling.

"Uh? Oh!" He checked himself, and put his hand on hers reassuringly. "That wasn't what I meant. I meant, we're together, aren't we? So how can it be finished?"

Doubtful, she studied him. "You don't seem glad," she suggested.

"Cold, wet, miserable—that's all. I'd like some sun." He pulled his chair a little closer to hers.

"Well, why can't we go somewhere warm, then? Maybe we could go to Cyprus. I'd like to see my home again."

"Great idea," he said. "Have to get a job, or something."

"I speak Greek, of course, so I can teach you, and . . ."

WEAR THE BUTCHERS' MEDAL

His mind wandered. *Cyprus? Why not? There's the whole world, and one part of it is in pretty much as bad a mess as any other. . . .*

But it was better to talk about the future than the past, and after a while, holding her hand, his knee touching hers under the table, he found his enthusiasm for the idea growing, and the sun seemed to break through the clouds.

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It all began innocently enough.

He was an American bumming the face of Europe. Then, in a gas station, a man offered him a hitch to Düsseldorf. But before they got there two things happened.

First, on learning that he was headed for England, the man offered him a ridiculously large sum of money to deliver the wrist watch that he was wearing to his brother in London.

Secondly, as they passed an ordinary workman standing beside a pile of innocent pipe, a roaring flame shot out across the road and engulfed them.

The driver was killed instantly.

Why? What could there possibly be about an ordinary wrist watch that could make it so important?

Before he found out, he was almost murdered in London; experienced a nightmarish adventure in a macabre German night club; and in a tiny Bavarian mountain village, stumbled upon a secret that might have plunged the world into another war.